



Tips for Sport Clubs and Coaches

Electronic and Mobile Communications

Sexual misconduct and other types of inappropriate interaction between coaches and athletes require secretive communication, often achieved through electronic devices and digital channels (email, instant messaging, texting and social media). To reduce inappropriate communication, a sport club can promote transparency and ensure multiple adults are involved in all communications.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Instruct coaches, staff and administrators to copy parents on all electronic and mobile communications to athletes in middle to late adolescence (14–18 years old); alternately, the parent can approve direct communications between the sport club and the athlete to respect the athlete's growing independence.
- #2 - To ease communications, set-up e-mail groups with parents and texting groups with athletes and make this group communication a norm for your organization. Include parents on all text messaging groups.
- #3 - Should any member of your sport organization inadvertently send an athlete an electronic or mobile communication without including the parent, acknowledge the oversight to the parents and forward the communication to the parents as soon as possible.
- #4 - Don't hesitate to speak with a parent if your coaches or staff receive any electronic and mobile communications from athletes or other participants that make them uncomfortable.



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Locker Rooms and On-Site Private Spaces

Athletes are particularly vulnerable to bullying, harassment or hazing from other athletes in changing areas due to the general lack of privacy. Similarly, on-site private spaces, such as personal offices, can be the setting for inappropriate adult-athlete contact. The goal is to find a balance between maintaining privacy and monitoring these places to reduce the risk of all forms of athlete misconduct.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Post copies of any relevant policies in locker rooms and changing areas.
- #2 - Prohibit the use of recording devices of any kind in the locker room and establish an athlete common area in or near the locker room that is distinct from the changing area where phones could be used.
- #3 - If the locker room is a shared facility (such as a city gym), encourage athletes to come dressed for practice or competition and shower and change at home.
- #4 - Talk with your athletes about bullying, hazing and harassment at the beginning of each season. Remind them that locker rooms are a high-risk area for bullying, hazing and harassment, which are never appropriate.
- #5 - Encourage team captains to act as another set of eyes in locker room. This tip may be particularly helpful if the coach of a team is of a different gender than the locker room/private space being used by the athletes.



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Local Travel

Local travel involving one-on-one situations between an athlete and an unrelated adult is a high-risk situation. The goal of these guidelines is to prevent athletes from routinely spending time alone with other adults.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Plan an early team social event so that families from the same neighborhood can meet one another and discuss travel arrangements.
- #2 - Create team directories, neighborhood maps and sign-up sheets to help parents arrange their own carpools.
- #3 - Provide parents with the club's central phone number or coach's cell phone number in case of emergency or delay.
- #4 - Provide the coach with parents' cell numbers as well as a list of back-up contacts for alternate transportation for each athlete in the event that practice ends early.
- #5 - Notify parents and athletes of schedule changes as soon as possible so that they can arrange alternative transportation if needed.
- #6 - Ask parents to notify the organization when their transportation plan changes, such as when a child rides home with a different teammate.



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Overnight Travel

Overnight travel poses specific challenges for organizations, since these trips can create opportunities for athletes to be alone with an adult. During official team travel, it can be difficult to monitor athletes at all times, especially with larger teams. By implementing the right policies and communicating them to coaches, staff, parents and sport clubs, we can work to keep athletes safe.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Schedule overnight travel as far in advance as practical so parents can make travel arrangements to attend.
- #2 - Prepare for a trip by making a list of chaperones to accompany traveling athletes.
- #3 - For mixed-gender teams, try to include both male and female adult chaperones if possible.
- #4 - With younger athletes, consider having chaperones stay in a nearby room. Often times, the hotel will block rooms in groupings of three to make this easier.
- #5 - Ask athletes to wear team gear during travel to ease monitoring.
- #6 - Establish a curfew and conduct bed checks with adults visiting rooms in pairs.
- #7 - Schedule time for a team breakfast, team meetings and entertainment outings to maintain a predictable level of interaction with the athletes.
- #8 - De-brief experiences with all athletes and adults to identify and address any problems.



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Travel for Younger or Less Experienced Athletes

Misconduct often consists of a series of actions that extend beyond normally accepted behavior. Inexperienced athletes are at risk because they aren't aware of the boundaries and look to a coach or other adult for guidance. Sport clubs can reduce the risk of misconduct by preparing athletes for overnight travel and involving parents in monitoring and prevention.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Communicate the rules of travel (such as traveling in groups and multiple chaperones) to athletes.
- #2 - Identify first-time travelers so that chaperones can offer additional monitoring and support to these athletes.
- #3 - Pair first-time travelers with more experienced athletes of a similar age.
- #4 - Provide a full itinerary to families as soon as possible so that the athlete can become familiar with the schedule.
- #5 - Assign rooming/travel groups before travel.
- #6 - Where practical, consider scheduling an early season competition trip that is close enough for families to drive so that they can become familiar with the routines of competitive travel.



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Parent Communications

Engagement between parents and athletes is an important component of monitoring travel to competitions. It helps athletes to feel safe and connected and provides another level of oversight. Clubs can encourage parent involvement by promoting transparency through information sharing and access to athletes. The goal is to maintain open lines of communication between parents and their children.

Tips to Consider

- #1 - Provide parents with the cell phone numbers for all of the adults on the trip for emergency contact as well as information for all hotels and venues.
- #2 - Encourage athletes to use their cell phones and other forms of electronic communication during trips and encourage them to send information to their parents—especially regular updates from the road and changes to schedules.
- #3 - Dedicate times for athletes to contact their parents and provide a team cell phone for athletes who don't have their own cell phone.
- #4 - Provide a detailed travel itinerary including times and progress (such as reaching the airport/hotel, etc.) as well as the times of practice and competition.
- #5 - Establish an e-mail and text group for broadcasting information to parents as a group and set a schedule for broadcasting travel progress to parents.
- #6 - Communicate information in line with travel and communication policies. For example, administrators can list travel groupings and assigned chaperones to let parents know that procedures are being followed.
- #7 - Create a social media platform group for parents using Google+, Skype, Facebook or other channels to enable video and online communications at the team hotel.



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