



# Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Amateur Sports SafeSport Review

## THIS DOCUMENT REVIEW IS MANDATORY.

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### WHY SAFESPORT?

In 2014, the USOPC recommended the implementation of the SafeSport program, and it has been mandated for national governing bodies since 2015. Statistically, one in five youth report being bullied, while one in 10 will be victims of sexual abuse. The SafeSport training is designed to help members become more proficient at identifying, preventing, and responding to misconduct and abuse in sport.

In light of this initiative, the Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Amateur Sports has summarized and created a review of the SafeSport Program training and background check policy relevant to our member programs. We recommend this condensed program be administered to State Games Staff, Board of Directors, Commissioners, and the Medical Team.

## Creating a Safe & Respectful Environment

Every person involved with the Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Amateur Sports has a responsibility to help ensure a safe & respectful environment, including recognizing and reporting inappropriate or potentially harmful behavior when observed. The Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Amateur Sports is committed to the safety and well-being of all athletes, volunteers, coaches, officials and spectators who engage in this annual community event.

**SafeSport is a front-line abuse and misconduct prevention measure that raises member awareness of misconduct and abuse issues in sport.**

## Recognizing Emotional & Physical Misconduct

**Physical misconduct** includes: bullying, hazing and harassment while **emotional misconduct** includes any verbal or physical acts that deny attention or support.

### PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT:

**Bullying:** Bullying is defined as repeated and/or severe aggressive behavior among minors (under age 18) that is intended or likely to hurt, control or diminish another person emotionally, physically or sexually. Bullying can be:

- Verbal (name-calling, teasing, intimidation or threatening to cause harm)
- Physical (hitting, kicking, tripping, or other forms of physical aggression)
- Social (spreading rumors, embarrassing someone, ignoring a teammate)
- Damaging or threatening to damage an individual's personal belongings

**Hazing:** Any conduct that subjects another person, physically, mentally, emotionally or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade or intimidate a person as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a group, team or organization.

**Harassment:** Repeated and/or severe conduct that causes fear, humiliation or annoyance, defends or degrades, creates a hostile environment, or reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual athlete or group based on age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, national origin or mental or physical disability.

**Always model respect toward athletes, parents, spectators and officials.**

### EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT:

SafeSport defines emotional misconduct as repeated and/or severe non-contact behavior involving verbal acts, physical acts and/or acts that deny attention or support. Emotional misconduct is determined by the objective behaviors, not whether harm is intended or results from the behavior.

#### Verbal Acts:

- Verbal assault that repeatedly attacks someone personally (e.g., calling a person worthless, fat or disgusting; taunting a person for being too effeminate)
- Repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular athlete or other participant in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose

#### Physical Acts:

- Physically aggressive behaviors, such as throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at or in the presence of others, or punching walls or other objects

#### Acts That Deny Attention or Support:

- Ignoring or isolating a person for extended periods of time
- Routinely or arbitrarily excluding a participant from practice

**FACT:**  
**1 in 5 youth report being bullied, while 1 in 10 will be victims of sexual abuse.**

# Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Misconduct

**Individuals should not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of any harassment or abuse allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN REGARDING POSSIBLE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, IMMEDIATELY REPORT THE CONCERN DIRECTLY TO THE APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES.**



## VIRGINIA CONDUCT POLICY:

The Virginia Commonwealth Games & Virginia Amateur Sports has a Zero Tolerance policy. Commissioners reserve the right to disqualify or eject an individual or team for unsportsmanlike conduct from players, coaches or spectators or for any of the following reasons: false representation, use of alcohol and/or drugs, destruction of property, rules infraction, unsportsmanlike conduct or disorderly behavior. Unsportsmanlike conduct resulting in any type of altercation on the field of play, the venue grounds, etc. will result in disqualification for the entire tournament or event with no refund. Spectators affiliated with the participants are responsible for knowing and adhering to the rules and policies of the tournament. Athletes and coaches are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following the rules, policies and code of conduct for their sport(s).

Document courtesy of the Rocky Mountain State Games



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Make a report anytime you see something or hear something that makes you think abuse is happening, such as:

- Sexual contact between an adult and minor
- Sexual contact between minors significantly different in age (such as a teen and an elementary-age child)
- If a minor tells you they have been abused, including any of the following:
  - Touched inappropriately
  - Propositioned
  - Asked to send sexual photos
  - Received sexual photos
  - Asked to engage in inappropriate email or other electronic communications
- **Legally, every state requires adults that have a reasonable suspicion or belief of abuse to report it to authorities within 24 hours.** For complete State Reporting Requirements, visit: [www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/)

**How to respond if an athlete discloses abuse to you:**

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Report suspected criminal behavior immediately in compliance with your state/provincial/territorial law.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See Resources for legal requirements</li><li>• Follow your organization's policy for reporting to them</li><li>• <b>Make a report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport Response and Resolution Office</b></li></ul></li><li>✓ Each jurisdiction specifies certain people whose involvement with children requires they report abuse. But no matter the law, law enforcement will take a report from anyone who suspects abuse.</li><li>✓ When someone reports being victimized:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assure them you will do what you can to help.</li><li>• Tell them they have done the right thing by reporting.</li><li>• Let them know the abuse was not their fault.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Confront anyone you suspect may be abusing a child.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Report a concern to the appropriate authority in your state/province/territory.</i></li></ul></li><li>✗ Share a child's report of abuse with anyone prior to notifying law enforcement.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Law enforcement or social services will make the appropriate notifications.</i></li></ul></li><li>✗ Make promises to someone who reports being victimized.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>You can't control the outcome or promise that everything will be okay.</i></li></ul></li></ul>

## Barriers to Reporting

- *"Everyone will know I made the report."* Reporters can choose to remain anonymous or request the investigators to keep your identity confidential.
- *"Maybe the report isn't true."* Only one in 10 child victims of sexual abuse report it and studies show false reporting is extremely rare, especially from children. *Reminder, it is not your responsibility to confirm or evaluate the validity of any harassment or abuse allegations.*
- *"If I'm wrong, I've ruined someone's reputation."* Investigators are trained to uncover information to corroborate a report before action is taken.
- *"The alleged offender would never do this."* It can be difficult to believe something so bad about someone we think we know and trust; Sexual abusers spend time in advance protecting themselves against suspicion in order to gain access to young people.

**Reporting abuse allows the abused athlete to get help, contributes to keeping other athletes in your program safe and maintains the integrity and reputation of your sport organization. Thank you for your vigilance and participation in ensuring safe & respectful competition environments in your sport.**

**SIGN**