



*USA Federation for Sport Cheering*

# Athlete Protection



# Course Outline

- I. Athlete Training
  - A. Bullying
  - B. Hazing
  - C. Physical and Emotional Misconduct
  - D. Sexual misconduct and abuse
- II. The Reporting Process
- III. Policies
  - A. Team Travel
  - B. Electronic Communication
  - C. Code of Conduct Standards to ALL Cheerleading



# Goals and Objectives: Athlete Training

- Understand –
  - The definition and potential applications of Bullying, Hazing, Physical and Emotional Misconduct and Sexual Abuse
  - Define the grooming process and common behavior of offenders
- Recognize –
  - Signs, symptoms & effects of abuse and harassment
- Reporting –
  - Appropriate ways to handle and respond to a report of or suspicion of abuse

# Staying True to Athletes

- Too many instances of abuse and harassment of young people are ignored because adults fail to recognize or admit that it is occurring. An effective recognition and protection policy depends on all of the adults involved, being both aware of the possibility of abuse and vigilant in guarding against it, while being knowledgeable to report any potential abuse to the appropriate entities. This also includes athletes understanding what is appropriate and not appropriate with standards on their treatment as an athlete and knowing how, when and where to report concerns.



# Hazing vs. Bullying

- **Bullying** involves acts of physical, emotional or social behavior that are intentional, controlling and hurtful based on power imbalance between bully and target.
- **Hazing** is a term used to describe various rituals and other activities involving harassments, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group.

# Bullying

- This power imbalance may be based on age, physical prowess, or socio-economic status.
- Bullying often occurs without apparent provocation.
- Can be written, verbal, or electronic.

# Bullying Examples

- Examples of bullying, include but are not limited to:
  - Exclusion or social isolation
  - Negatively being held to a different standard than the rest of the team
  - Consistent ignoring or interruption in front of other teammates
  - Personal attacks (name calling, profanity, etc.)
  - Encouraging of others to turn against a teammate
  - Sabotage
  - Stalking
  - Unwelcomed touching or invasions of personal space
  - Verbal abuse

# Cyberbullying

- Intentional and repetitive mistreatment perpetrated through the use of technology, such as cell phones, computers, and tablets
  - Communication tools include, but are not limited to, social media sites, text messages, chats, websites, and video communications.

# How is Cyberbullying Different?

- Can be posted anonymously, distributed quickly, and it can be nearly impossible to trace the source
- Causes as much or more distress than traditional bullying:
  - *Anonymity intensifies cruelty*
  - *Invisibility lessens empathy*
  - *Victimization is 24/7*
  - *Impact is instant, far-reaching*

# What is the impact of bullying on the target individual?

- Depression
- Isolation and loneliness
- Anxiety
- Poor performance in school
- Health-issues
- Low self-esteem
- Thoughts of suicide

# Hazing

- Hazing is any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate
- All matters involving hazing issues must be reported to law enforcement officials, school personnel and/or parents.

# Examples of Hazing

## Below are just some examples of hazing practices that occur:

- Forced activities for new recruits to 'prove' their worth to join
- Forced or required consumption of alcohol
- Requirement to eat spicy foods, or other substances
- Requirement to endure hardships such as staying awake, menial tasks, physical labor, running while blindfolded, etc.
- Humiliation of new or potential members
- Isolation of new or potential members
- Beatings, paddling, or other physical acts against new or potential members
- Requirements for new or potential members to do things established members are not required to do
- Illegal activities such as requirement to steal local items as part of a scavenger hunt



# Is this Hazing?

If you're not sure whether or not something happening to you or to someone else is hazing, ask yourself these questions:

- *Would I feel comfortable participating in this activity if my parents were watching?*
- *Would we get in trouble if a school/college administrator walked by and saw us?*
- *Am I being asked to keep these activities a secret?*
- *Am I doing anything illegal?*
- *Does participation in this activity violate my values or those of this organization?*
- *Is this causing emotional or physical distress or stress to myself or to others?*



# What Can You Do

- Hazing is everyone's problems and everyone's responsibility
- Take responsibility if you see it occurring or if it happens to you. Speak up and report it immediately – you may save a life.
- Make others aware of what hazing is and their responsibility for preventing it.



# Anti-Bullying/Hazing Reporting

- Promptly report all complaints and concerns to allow for rapid resolution to the Head Coach, superior administrator, law enforcement and/or parents.
- Anyone who knows bullying and/or hazing is occurring is expected to report these activities due to its counterproductive effects on the team and the harm to the victim.

# Emotional Misconduct

- How to recognize, reduce and respond to emotional misconduct
- A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behavior includes verbal and physical acts, as well as actions that deny attention or support. It also includes any act or conduct (e.g., child abuse and child neglect) described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law.

# Emotional Misconduct Examples

- Verbal actions
  - Verbally attacking an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting)
  - Repeatedly and excessively yelling at participants
  - Cursing and/or using a degrading manner of speech
- Physical actions
  - Throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants
  - Punching walls, windows, lockers or other objects

# Emotional Misconduct Examples

- Acts which deny attention/support
  - Ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time
    - Pretending they don't exist
  - Routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice
    - Not relating to disciplinary actions

# Emotional Misconduct Exceptions

- Does *not* include:
  - Professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement
  - Physical conditioning
  - Positive team building activities
  - Prudent disciplinary actions
  - Improving athletic performance

# Physical Misconduct

- Physical misconduct involves contact or non-contact behavior that can cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants. It also includes any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect and assault).

# Physical Misconduct Examples

- Contact
  - Harmfully touching an athlete (e.g., punching, beating, choking or slapping)
  - Intentionally striking an athlete with an object
  - Providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (under U.S. law)
  - Providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete

# Physical Misconduct Examples cont.

- Contact
  - Encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play prematurely or without the clearance of a medical professional, following a serious injury or physical exam (e.g., a concussion)
  - Prescribing dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of the athlete

# Physical Misconduct Examples

- Non-contact
  - Isolating an athlete in a confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space)
  - Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g. requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface)
  - Withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep

# Physical Misconduct Exceptions

- Does *not* include:
  - Professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement
  - Physical conditioning
  - Positive team building
  - Appropriate discipline
  - Improving athlete performance

# Recognize

- The first step in being able to help abused, maltreated, or neglected athletes or to know if you are the one being abused or neglected is learning to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect.

# How Prevalent is Sexual Child Abuse

- More than 3.4 million reports of child abuse occur nationwide each year.
- Children are being abused at an alarming rate.
- One out of five children are abused during their lifetime.
  - One out of four girls is sexually abused before age 18.
  - One out of six boys is sexually abused before age 18.

# Facts About Child Abuse

- Only about 1% - 4% of sexual abuse allegations prove to be false.
- In more than 90% of the abuse cases, the offender is a person that is known to the child or parent.
- In 80% of the abuse cases the abuse is by the parent.

# Facts About Child Abuse Cont.

- Victims tend to minimize and deny abuse, not exaggerate or over report such incidents.
- Child sex offenders seek opportunities for access to children and teenagers through youth organizations that lack strong screening and protection practices.

# Maltreatment Statistics

- This is the breakdown of reported Maltreatment cases in 2018 according to the US Department of Health and Human Services: 678,000 children were determined to be victims of maltreatment
  - More than 60 percent (60.8.%) suffered neglect
  - More than 10 percent (10.7%) suffered physical abuse
  - 7% suffered sexual abuse
  - More than 15% were victims of two or more maltreatment types

# Under-Reporting by Victims

- Young people often fail to report sexual abuse because they fear disclosure will bring consequences even worse than being victimized again.
- Offenders are able to convince their victims that it is their own fault.
- In many cases, victims of child sexual abuse do not report the abuse until they are adults.

# Who Are the Offenders?

- In over 80% of the cases of physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect the birth parents are the abusers.
- The majority of perpetrators in sexual abuse cases are nonrelated caregivers - baby-sitters, step-parents, boyfriends, girlfriends, or adoptive parents.
- Most sexual abuse is by the caregiver and 90-95% is someone they know (parent, cousin, and/or sibling).
- Children often love the person who is abusing them and simply want the abusive behavior to stop.

# Understanding

- Child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment is more than broken bones and bruises.
- The physical and emotional effects stay with the victim for a lifetime.

# Sexual Misconduct & Abuse

- Sexual abuse is behavior towards an individual or group that involves sexualized verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior, whether intended or unintended, legal or illegal, that is based upon an abuse of power and trust
  - Sexual abuse involves any sexual activity where consent is not or cannot be given
  - Sexual abuse often involves a process known as 'grooming'

# The Grooming Process

- Children who rely on the offender for care, love, affection, or other things are vulnerable to the demands of the abuser and do not realize and recognize they are being groomed to be taken advantage of.
- Throughout the process of engaging the child in the abuse, the offender is evaluating whether the child has been groomed sufficiently (i.e. whether they show interest, will not protest, will keep the secret).
- The offender uses a range of strategies and activities to engage the child in a relationship where the abuse can happen and to desensitize the child to abusive behavior.

# Strategies Used for Grooming

- ***Trust*** - Creating situations where the perpetrator gains the trust of the athlete
- ***Favoritism*** - Paying special attention to or giving special benefits to the athlete
- ***Isolation*** - Identifying opportunities to be alone with the athlete
- ***Secrecy*** - Cultivating a trusting and secretive relationship
- ***Desensitization*** - Making the athlete feel at ease and as if the behavior is normal and acceptable

# Targeting a potential victim

Observing which athletes are vulnerable

Finding occasions to test them out for secrecy and reliability

Striking up a friendship

Being overtly nice

# Building Trust and Friendship

- Making them feel special
- Giving gifts and rewards
- Spending time together
- Listening
- Being consistent
- Beginning to bargain “you have to do this, because I have done that”.

# Developing Isolation & Control

- Refusing the person access to significant others and/or demeaning any previous sources of friendship and support
- Restricting access to or reliance on parents and care givers and non sport peers
- Being inconsistent, building up hopes and joy one moment and then punishing the next to increase the persons desperation for attention
- Checking the persons commitment through questioning and setting small tests

# Initiation of Sexual Abuse & Securing Secrecy

- Gradual incursion into ambiguous and sexual boundaries
- If athlete objects saying “you didn’t mind last time” to entrap them.
- Invoking co-operation “you owe me/it’s the least you can do”
- Invoking guilt “now look what you’ve done”
- Offering protection “I won’t tell/it’s our little secret”
- Discrediting the victim so they have no choice but to remain “other’s won’t understand” or “nobody will believe you”
- Threatening the victim “if you tell anyone, I’ll hurt you/tell others what you’ve done/hurt someone you care about/drop you from the team...”

# Signs and Symptoms of Abuse and Harassment

- Any physical signs of abuse, such as a repeated pattern of injury or an accident for which the explanation doesn't fit the injury
- Changes of behavior, including
  - Extreme mood swings
  - Becomes extremely active or extremely withdrawn
  - Irritability
  - Angry outbursts
  - Fearfulness
  - Excessive crying
  - Aggressiveness or becoming a “risk taker” – especially common with boys

# Signs and Symptoms of Abuse and Harassment Cont.

- Fear of certain places, people, or activities; reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- High levels of anxiety or depression
- Unwillingness to participate in extracurricular activities; difficulties at school
- Ridding oneself of memories or difficult experiences
- Poor peer relationships; isolation, lack of interest
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares, or night terrors
  
- Distorted body image, including or resulting in
  - Eating disorders/change in eating patterns – especially common with girls
  - Self mutilation
  - Other related behaviors



# Signs and Symptoms of Abuse and Harassment Cont.

- Graphic or age-inappropriate knowledge of sex or sexual behavior
- Suicide attempts or gestures
- Obsessive behaviors
- Diminished self-esteem
- Expresses general feelings of shame
- Self-medicating through drug or alcohol abuse
- Problems with authority or rules

# Misconceptions and Fallacies

- ***Sexual abuse is about the act of sex. Not true!*** In fact, most sexual abuse and harassment is about power and control.
- ***Only girls are at risk.*** Although the majority of victims are girls, boys are also at risk. Some studies have shown that as many as one in six boys under age 16 has experienced unwanted direct sexual contact with an older person.
- ***Only men are abusers.*** Although this is most common, women are abusers also.
- ***Girls are only at risk from men, and boys are only at risk from women.*** There has been an increase in same sex sexual abuse in children over the past several years.
- ***Sexual abuse is always overt. Most abusers are unknown to their victims. Not True!*** Most abusers are known and trusted by their victims.

# The Effects Molestation and Abuse

- Psychological Issues
- Physical Issues
- Inability to Trust
- Sexual Abilities and Engagement
- Post Traumatic Stress

# Reporting Incidents

Mandated reporters are by law required to report child abuse or elder abuse. In some states, mandatory reporting requirements apply to all people in the state. In other states, mandated reporting requirements generally apply to staff members of a public or private institution or caregiving facility, as well as to a variety of public safety employees and medical professionals, or a public or private school responsible for the safety and well being of vulnerable persons. Please be familiar with the state laws and reporting processes that apply to you and the location you are in.



# Where to Report Abuse

- Review and utilize your organization's, school, city, county and state reporting practices
- All laws have specific reporting requirement, you should be familiar within your state
- The US Department of Health and Human Services Website is an excellent resource for reporting abuse information.
- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/can/reporting/>



# SafeSport

“The U.S. Center for SafeSport is an independent nonprofit committed to ending all forms of abuse in sport. This includes bullying, harassment, hazing, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual misconduct and abuse. The Center is the first and only national organization of its kind. The Center provides services to sport entities on abuse prevention techniques, policies and programs and provides a safe, professional and confidential place for individuals to report sexual abuse within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements.”



# SafeSport



## [Report a Concern](#)

Notify us of a potential violation



## [Complete Training](#)



## [Disciplinary Records](#)

Search past decisions

<https://safesport.org/what-we-do>

# Athlete365

## Safe Sport Guide

- Provides relative and timely content by athletes for athletes
  - Courses to help improve athletic understandings of physical performance and maltreatment awareness

<https://www.olympic.org/athlete365/library/safe-sport/>



# Athlete Protection

- All athletes should be treated with respect.
- Coaches should be approachable and willing to listen to problems/concerns.
- Athletes should be provided contact information for individuals they can go to with questions or concerns should they ask or approach coaches or administrative staff regarding any questionable incidents.



# Minimizing the Risk of Maltreatment

- One adult/coach should never be alone with a participant.
- Do not go into a room with a coaching staff member alone and close the door.
- One on one skill instruction or First Aid treatment should be in an open area, and visible by others.

# Minimizing the Risk of Maltreatment Cont.

- Unexpected visitors should be introduced and identify their purpose of arrival.
- Athletes are encouraged to travel in groups of at least two or more.
- Staff members should not be in the same room or common restroom at the same time as a participant.

# Team Travel Policy

- Goal is to minimize one-on-one interactions between minors and adults while traveling
- Reduce opportunities for misconduct
  - Coach to player
  - Player to player
- Policies provided to all athletes, parents, coaches, and other traveling staff
  - Signature required of acknowledgment and agreeance to the travel policy



# Team Travel Policy cont.

- An itinerary should be provided in advance:
  - List of names of all individuals traveling and purpose
    - No unscheduled guests will be permitted in or reside in athlete rooms
  - Departure date and time, return date and time
  - Mode of transportation; name of carrier
  - Lodging with name, address, and phone number
  - Contact information of all coaching staff and other traveling officials
  - Schedule of events

# Team Travel Policy cont.

- Only one athlete per bed is recommended.
- Athletic staff, including coaches, sports medicine personnel, equipment managers, administrators, etc., are prohibited from sharing rooms with athletes.
- One athlete, one bed, one gender, one room

# Team Travel Policy cont.

- At no time will only one adult be present in a room with minor players, regardless of gender.
- Individual meetings between a coach and player will be held in public settings or with additional adults present, with at least one of those adults being the same gender as the athlete.

# Team Travel Policy cont.

- No coach or adult shall at any time be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their coaching duties.
- Prior to travel, all players and parents will be made aware of expectations and rules.
- If disciplinary actions are required, then except where immediate action is necessary, the athlete's parents will be notified prior to action or immediately after.

# Team Travel Policy cont.

- Athletes may report any concerns regarding the Team Travel Policy to their coach or advisor, superior athletic administrator, Director of Athletics, or Risk Management or Safety officer.
  - If it causes discomfort, report the concern.
- Should incidents occur during travel conducted under a Team Travel Policy that cause concern for personal safety but do not result in any personal injury or accident, the reporting of such incidents may help improve the safety of future Team Travel.

# Electronic Communication Policy

- Communications involving participants should be appropriate, productive, and transparent.
- Use of various forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and also provides potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to participants.
- Any content of an electronic communication should be readily available to share with the public or families of the player or coach. If the player is under the age of 18, any email, text, social media, or similar communication must also copy the player's parents.
- Social media should be used for communicating team activities, not personal.



# Code of Conduct

- Promotes values of good sportsmanship
- Promotes accountability for words and actions on and off the field
- Promotes physical, social and emotional development of the student-athlete
- Includes and presents expectations for disciplinary action should misconduct occur
  - Verbal and written warnings, suspensions, removal from team
  - Include signature of student-athlete and parent (if a minor)



# Code of Conduct

- Acknowledge, understand, and agree upon behavior
  - A manner that will not disrespect, discredit, or dishonor yourself, teammates, team, or administrative organization/school
  - Adhere to all local, state, and federal laws
  - Adhere to all rules and regulations at events or activities in which you may participate
  - Appropriate behavior is your responsibility at all times
  - To requirements of the sport and a position on the team
  - To the disciplinary actions and consequences that may arise should the Code of Conduct be violated in any way



# Code of Conduct

- Adhere to team/school press and media outlet policies and procedures
- Adhere to team/school social media policy
- Maintain sportsmanlike conduct
- Refrain from conduct detracting from your ability or that of your teammates to optimally perform
- Respect all members of the team, including coaches and staff, other teams/opponents, spectators and officials
  - Will not engage in any form of verbal, physical, or sexual harassment or abuse



# Code of Conduct

\*\*Understand that all Codes may not include or establish a complete set of rules, which denotes every aspect of appropriate behavior

Ask a coach or superior for clarification, if required. If clarification is needed, it is most likely a behavior that should not be demonstrated.



# USA Cheer National Governing Body

- National Governing Body (NGB) for Sport Cheering in the United States as recognized by the International Cheer Union (ICU).



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