## 2015 USATF SafeSport Roll Out

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### Education

- Available on 1/1/2014
- Complete by 10/31/2015
- Workshop and Annual Meeting mass education
Coaches, staff members, volunteers. We want your athletes to be free to compete at their absolute fullest. We want to remove distractions so you and your fellow coaches can focus on your important job at hand – preparing athletes for success.

That’s really what SafeSport is all about. Helping coaches create and promote safe training environments that allow every athlete the chance to succeed. Athletes enjoy all sorts of physical, emotional and social benefits as a result of their participation in sport. Athletes:
Have better mental health
Higher grades and graduations rates, and
More productive social relationships

But sport, and its many benefits, must be actively safeguarded. Misconduct and athlete abuse are one of the biggest threats to any athlete and any sports organization. SafeSport’s library of resources and training are all designed with athlete safety in mind. Don’t make the mistake of thinking misconduct won’t happen in our sport or our organization. The problem is widespread. In fact, the rate of athlete abuse is
Before age 18, between 6%-13% of competitive athletes experience some form of sexual abuse or assault within their sport. That’s as many as 1 out of every 8 athletes, and the numbers may be even greater for elite athletes.

We know you’re a community of true professionals and exceptional role models and it’s precisely that professionalism we’re counting on to advance the SafeSport initiative.

The real question is: What can we do as sports professionals to reduce misconduct from happening? The answer: We must educate ourselves so that we can take action. The sports community, with our collective dedication, camaraderie, discipline, and energy, is in the ideal position to better protect our athletes. And SafeSport is specifically built to help you recognize emotional, physical and sexual misconduct.

The training:
Examines the coach-athlete and athlete-athlete relationship
Defines the six primary forms of misconduct: bullying, harassment, and hazing, as well as emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct
Describes sexual abuse and identifies the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse
And discusses how to respond and report misconduct

In short, when the program is complete, coaches, staff members and volunteers, will all have the tools and guidance needed to protect athletes and reduce misconduct. So... Be aware. Study your opponent. Get ready to act. Misconduct in sport is an opponent that can be beat. SafeSport is here to provide you the resources to do it.
In this training session, we’ll talk about three things: the coach-athlete relationship, how that relationship is built on trust and power and examples of how coaches can misuse trust and power to hurt athletes.

Kids love sport. They get to run around, play with friends, and just have fun. The more they play, the more they develop athletic skills, learn to deal with frustration and success, and discover life lessons. At higher levels of organized sport, dedication and discipline help athletes achieve competitive success.

No matter the sport, no matter the age, and no matter the skill level, every athlete’s experience is shaped by one common element: coaches. Athletes see coaches as role models, people who care about them both as athletes and as individuals, and their athletic performance is better for it.

In fact, athletes view coaches as the single most important contributor to their performance. More than the quality of the training environment, the coach’s technical skills, or the coach’s ability to manage competition, it’s the coach-athlete relationship that matters the most.
Successful coach-athlete relationships are built on trust and power. But as trust and power increase, the potential for misconduct in this relationship increases, and this makes sport a high-risk environment for abuse.

It’s critical to understand trust and power, how they work in sport, and how to recognize an abuse of trust and power. So let’s start by briefly defining these two concepts.
“Trust” is the confidence placed in someone else. In sport, an athlete trusts that their coach is looking out for them, that their coach will do everything he or she can to help them succeed. Coaches trust that their athletes will take guidance and look to the coach for support and direction.
Power is a little bit different from trust. Power is the ability to give or take away something of value, something people care about deeply. Coaches directly or indirectly have power over just about everything a competitive athlete values in sport, and therefore coaches possess considerable power. Coaches decide who makes the team, who gets playing time, and who gets a starting position.

Athletes look to coaches for approval, for help securing an athletic scholarship, and even for help achieving a brighter future. Athletes are in awe of their coaches and other adult authorities who hold the key to their potential success.

Whether it’s an athlete’s belief that the coach’s methods will improve endurance or an athlete’s acceptance of the coach’s decision to determine the starting lineup, trust and power are an inevitable part of sport. And that’s the way it should be. This imbalance of power between coaches and athletes helps teams succeed. However, this imbalance can be a problem if a coach misuses their trust and power to harm an athlete.

Critically, every form of athlete misconduct involves an abuse of trust and power.
For example, let’s take a quick look at trust and power in the context of sexual abuse. A coach begins by seeking the athlete’s trust. The coach also seeks the parent’s trust. Once trust is established, the coach has more access to the athlete and it’s easier to spend time with the athlete outside of training, where the coach begins to gradually push the limits of appropriate behavior. With this time and access, the coach learns what the athlete values, such as a starting position. This gives the coach additional power and more control over the athlete’s success, and the coach offers what the athlete values in return for sexual acts and secrecy. It’s this misuse of trust and power that enables the coach to abuse the athlete. As we move through the training, we will look closely at ways trust and power are misused to commit sexual abuse and all other forms of athlete misconduct.
Part of the allure of sport is that teammates generally enjoy spending time with one another developing great relationships. Athletes cite these relationships as one of the main reasons they continue to play sport. Some of an athlete’s best memories are the time spent with friends getting to practice, traveling to competition, competing with each other and working as a team.

One of the most harmful effects to any team dynamic is when athletes mistreat their teammates by bullying or harassing them - which, like all forms of misconduct, involves a misuse of power and is also destructive not only to the individual athlete, but to the morale and performance of the team as a whole.
SafeSport defines bullying in sport as: A persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate the targeted athlete(s).

When you bring a team together and you’re trying to develop your sport and bringing new people into the group, there should never be a position where you have hazing and the harassment that goes on, because all this does is step in the way of the future development of that young person. What you’re trying to do is create an environment of acceptance, an environment where they’re enhanced, an environment where they can develop their personality, an environment where they will contribute toward the team as a whole. And the older athletes need to be in a position where they feel like they are fellowshipping these people onto the team, for the betterment of the whole.
Bullying and harassment can be carried out: verbally, socially, physically and in cyberspace, one of the most recent disturbing trends. Social Media and mobile communications allow 24/7 access to athletes. Teammates and fellow athletes are able to engage in misconduct that's even more difficult to observe directly. Bullies target every kind of athlete – for example an athlete who is overweight, small, lacks confidence, and even the gifted athlete.
Harassment is unwanted, offensive, and intrusive behaviors that are linked to discrimination – such as a bias against a particular group based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

Harassment includes sexual harassment, which is pervasive. Sexual harassment is conduct that creates an inappropriate or hostile environment and includes behaviors such as repeatedly making sexually oriented comments, jokes, or innuendos to, or about, an athlete. 57% of athletes report they have been sexually harassed in sport, and athletes tend to be sexually harassed more by their peers. For example, athletes frequently send “sexts” to other athletes.”

Bullying and harassment affect an athlete’s performance; they lose focus or play and perform tentatively. A bullied athlete will rarely report because they fear retaliation, or fear being viewed as a tattletale. Coaches set the stage for how athletes treat one another. Preventing bullying and harassment requires that we build environments conducive to team building.
An adult is considered to be “willfully tolerating” these actions if he or she is aware of bullying or harassment and doesn’t act to stop it. Adults who knowingly tolerate bullying and harassment of children might be at risk for criminal or civil actions depending on the laws of their particular state.

Another successful approach encourages coaches to ask a cross section of their athletes what they’re seeing. This will give a view of athlete experiences and provide insight into athlete-athlete dynamics. Always talk with the athletes involved in suspected patterns of bullying or harassment and stop it immediately. Also, because it can be difficult for an athlete who is being bullied and harassed to talk openly about his or her experience in the presence of the bully, it’s a good practice to talk to each athlete involved separately to address the situation. You might learn about misconduct that’s occurring in areas that you can’t observe, places such as locker rooms or cyberspace.
Empower your athletes to do the same. Research shows that when peers step in, they’re often successful in getting the bully to stop.

As we’ve discussed bullying & harassment amongst athletes can be detrimental to the success of the entire team. It’s important to set the expectations up front that bullying & harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Educate your athletes on the forms of bullying & harassment and provide examples of it’s effects. Communicate with your athletes throughout training. Ask questions and gauge if there’s any evidence of misconduct. And empower your athletes to intervene and report anything they see.

Creating a culture of disclosure and reporting at the athlete’s level will encourage them to come forward should there be any kind of misconduct or abuse.
Part of what we love about sport is our opportunity to help athletes build a cohesive team by treating others with respect and dignity.

As we’ve all heard, athletes have been initiated into sport to “help them belong.” Sport initiations include activities such as athletes who have been stripped naked and taped up in locker rooms, or required to drink or take drugs. Often tolerated as a rite of passage, this type of sport initiation can be damaging to an entire team.

With 80% of college athletes reporting that they’ve witnessed or experience some form of hazing, the problem is widespread. It’s easy to dismiss hazing as a harmless and traditional way of building team cohesion.
Hazing is “coercing, requiring, or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome, or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for an athlete to join or be socially accepted by a team’s members.”

Hazing does not include group activities that are meant to establish normal team behaviors that promote team cohesion. For instance, to set an example, consider having the entire team set up or carry equipment instead of singling out any one particular group.

Hazing can include any combination of physical, social, and sexual abuse and unlike bullying and harassment, hazing is an attempt to include an athlete into a group or team.

Trends show hazing rituals often include forced and dangerous levels of alcohol consumption, and athletes have died or been permanently injured as a result. In addition hazing has become increasingly sexualized. For example in one high school, senior athletes hazed junior athletes by sodomizing them with broomsticks in the locker room after practice.
So, how can we respond to hazing and reduce its effects?

Educate your staff, coaches, students, and parents about the dangers of it. Providing examples of the consequences of hazing can help everyone understand its seriousness.
Send a clear anti-hazing message, implement a strong anti-hazing policy, communicate it clearly, and enforce it when incidents occur.
Consider consequences if those policies aren’t followed – like team suspension.
A supportive coach-athlete relationship has a tremendous effect on athletes and their competitive success. Coaches support their athletes by motivating them to accomplish more than they thought they could. Athletes thrive on this kind of positive support.

Great coaches are going to have high expectations and they should have high expectations. They’re going to expect you to train hard and they’re going to expect you to dream high, and work hard. That can still be a safe, supportive, healthy training environment. That’s going to be a place where you achieve big goals.

What really makes a person tick? What really makes a person want to become better? What really makes a person want to become great? And so if we can find those things out and we can work with each individual to find out what pushes their buttons, so to speak, then we are on the way to helping that person realize their genetic potential.

A win-at-all costs approach to coaching – or a failure to understand how to teach, motivate, or discipline athletes – can lead to emotional misconduct. Berating,
degrading, or humiliating an athlete hurts their performance and increases the chance that they’ll drop out of sport.
The most reported form of misconduct, emotional misconduct increases as athletes move up the competitive ladder, with as many as 75% of elite athletes reporting that their coaches emotionally abused them during their athletic career.

SafeSport defines emotional misconduct as: a sustained and repeated pattern of deliberate, non-contact behaviors. These non-contact behaviors include (1) verbal acts, (2) physical acts, and (3) acts that deny attention and support.

*This definition is not intended as a substitute for the legal definition of “emotional abuse.”* Check your state’s definition of emotional abuse.

There are acceptable instructional, motivational and disciplinary tactics used in sport...but, for an act to constitute emotional misconduct, the acts must be part of a sustained and repeated pattern – not an isolated outburst that occurs in the heat of the moment.

Outside of these isolated incidents, sustained and repeated verbal acts are the most common type of emotional misconduct. Coaches misuse their authority when they
tear their athletes down by berating, degrading, or manipulating them.
Physical acts (of emotional misconduct) include physically aggressive or threatening behaviors – we’ve all seen this before: the enraged and screaming coach who throws sport equipment or punches walls if an athlete performs poorly.

But denying an athlete attention or support by ignoring an athlete or arbitrarily excluding them from practice or competition is the most threatening form of emotional misconduct. If a coach routinely ignores an athlete, the critical coach-athlete relationship breaks down, compromising the athlete’s relationship with their coach, their team, and their sport.

Emotional misconduct may also be a misguided attempt to motivate an athlete, to punish them for a poor performance, or simply because of an inability to control frustration or anger.

Prevention efforts can start with discussions on appropriate standards of behavior, athlete protection policies, and positive coaching techniques. If you have accidentally crossed the line with an athlete in the heat of the moment, consider apologizing.
As we’ll see in the next several lessons, emotional abuse is often linked with both physical and sexual abuse. Offenders often break down an athlete’s resistance to abuse through emotional abuse by manipulating them with unrealistic promises, praising them one day and degrading them the next, and simultaneously isolating them from their peers. Eventually, this abuse makes it easier for them to abuse an athlete. We’ll take a look at physical misconduct next.
Coaches support their athletes by motivating them to accomplish more than they thought they could, and by tailoring training programs that attend to their athletes’ physical safety. Sport is physical, and with that comes the risk that an athlete will get hurt.

Safety always becomes an issue with all athletes and safety is something that needs to be in the forefront of all coaches minds. Safety is the environment that you work out in, the environment of the track, it’s the environment of the implements, it’s the environment where people are positioned during certain times of the workout, so that they do not put themselves in the place where they can become injured. It’s also providing them with the appropriate medical services that are necessary for them to have proper rehabilitation and healthcare.
“Physical misconduct” is “contact or non-contact behaviors that result in, have the potential to, or threaten to cause physical harm to an athlete. We know you understand what prohibited physical contact is – it’s fairly obvious: don’t choke, hit or try to cause any intentional harm to your athlete.

In other cases, what constitutes physical misconduct depends on the sport. In combat sports, punching, kicking, or striking an athlete is a well-regulated form of physical contact. This type of well-regulated physical contact is the sport. Of course, striking an athlete has nothing to do with figure skating or gymnastics.

Non-contact forms of physical misconduct can be more difficult to recognize. Those offenses include denying adequate hydration, nutrition, or sleep or overtraining an athlete. There is a fine line between pushing and motivating an athlete to do more than they thought they could and over-training that athlete.

Communication, and knowing your athlete, are critical to preventing non-contact physical misconduct. A lot of times your mind wants to give up before your body’s quite ready and I think
that’s what coaches try and get us to reach that potential by pulling that out of us. And going just a little bit farther and then the next time is a little bit farther and doing more than you have ever done before because you want to reach goals that you have never reached before.

Other examples of non-contact physical misconduct include encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play after a concussion or other medical injury. Obviously, we don’t want to ask an athlete who has torn a knee ligament to get back into the game - with or without medical advice.

In part because athletes love their sport, they often want to get back into the game even if they’re hurt, even if getting back in the game means they could hurt themselves more. We need to monitor athletes closely to ensure they’re not pushed beyond their physical abilities.
As we’ve discussed, an imbalance of power always exists between an athlete and coach. The coach has considerable control over athletes and this power difference can lead to sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault or other sexual intimacies that exploit the athlete.
“Sexual misconduct” is any touching or non-touching sexual behavior, with a person of any age, that is nonconsensual or forced, coerced or manipulated, or perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative, or threatening manner.
Sexual harassment is conduct that creates an inappropriate or hostile environment and includes behaviors, such as repeatedly making sexually oriented comments, jokes, or innuendos to, or about, an athlete.

So it may be obvious to many, but it’s not just the individual that’s the target that’s affected by this. The entire team will be affected, the entire team picks up on those behaviors and there will be fears, trepidations built into the team as a result of that. So it doesn’t matter if they’re singling out one individual it does affect an entire team.

Sexual misconduct also includes sexual intimacies between an athlete and a coach, or another person in a position of authority.

Several states recognize coaches as individuals who are in a position of trust and authority.

As we’ve discussed, even when the sexual relationship is between adults, such relationships nonetheless involve an imbalance of power – with the coach continuing to control who makes the team, who gets playing time, and who gets to
compete.

One research study involving elite female athletes revealed that 22% of them engaged in some form of sexual activity with a coach during their athletic careers. If this statistic translated to the number of girls in a starting line-up for a soccer team, that’s approximately two girls in every 11-member starting lineup who had sex with her coach.

Even if a sexual relationship between coach and athlete is consensual and age appropriate, the relationship inevitably affects team morale and raises questions about the misuse of power.

Depending on the age of the athlete, these relationships might be legal in the eyes of law, but still not acceptable because the imbalance of power often exploits the athlete.

We’re about to talk about sexual abuse at length, a form of sexual misconduct that is most difficult to discuss for many reasons we will explore. Throughout the remainder of the training, we’ll discuss what it is, how it happens, what signs to look for, how to intervene and how to report.
It’s hard to admit, but sport is a high-risk environment for child sexual abuse. It happens in every sport, at every age, and at every competitive level.

In an ideal world, every athlete would disclose abuse and every adult would report it, but there are often barriers that impede reporting and cause victims to remain silent.

To create a culture of disclosure and reporting, the next several lessons will help us recognize predator behavior and risky situations. We will discuss what actions to take before a child is abused, and how to respond if a child is abused.
Definitions of sexual abuse vary by state. Here, SafeSport defines sexual abuse as any sexual activity with a minor where consent is not or cannot be given. However, you should always consult relevant law to determine your legal obligations. A “MINOR” is anyone who is under the age of 18.

Sexual activity between an adult and a minor is always abuse and is never the victim’s fault. SEXUAL CONTACT BETWEEN MINORS MAY ALSO BE SEXUAL ABUSE. Rules about sexual conduct between minors ARE also governed by state law, but generally, abuse occurs when there is an aggressor, an age disparity, or an imbalance of power and/or intellectual capabilities.

Like all forms of sexual misconduct, sexual abuse includes both touching and non-touching offenses. Fondling, groping, genital contact, and any other form of touching that is intended to sexually arouse or gratify are clear forms of touching offenses.

Non touching abuse includes discussing sex, showing the athlete pornographic materials, and sending sexually explicit texts, emails, or photos.
Now we need to understand that there are several misconceptions and biases about child sexual abuse. There are a lot of myths that people have about these types of cases. For example, they think that the typical predator is somebody who is a stranger to the child; who looks creepy, that somebody could pick out of a crowd.

Children know their abusers more than 90% of the time. And we can’t “spot” a predator just by looking at him or her. Nor are adult males the only abusers. Approximately 1/3 of all child sexual abuse occurs at the hands of females.

And while adult authority figures – like coaches, medical staff, and sport administrators – are the primary perpetrators of sexual abuse in sport...approximately 1/3 of all sexual misconduct is committed by minors.

People also think that girls tend to be the victim the majority of times. And in reality, victims are more often girls than boys. But boys are victims very, very frequently. They also think that perhaps this is more related to some sports than other sports. People might also think that the skimpy uniforms worn in some sports, for example gymnastics or swimming, that might lead to additional acts of abuse. But what we know is that it actually occurs in all types of sports.

Finally, it’s also believed that, if an individual has passed a criminal background check, he or she is “safe” to work with kids.

An organization might think that if they simply do a background check that that will keep predators out; the reality is that most predators do not have a criminal background that would alert anybody to the danger that that person poses.

Criminal background checks and sexual offender registries only identify people who have a criminal record – and less than 10 percent of sexual predators have been caught or prosecuted. How can an offender go undetected for so long? Offenders are adept at deception, and like many successful professionals, offenders in sport are highly qualified, intelligent, and patient, with good interpersonal skills and a positive self-image.
There are a number of characteristics we can highlight when it comes to identifying the two types of offenders: situational and preferential. A situational offender usually does not have a sexual preference for children. They abuse children for other reasons – because of stressors in their lives, or out of simple insecurity or curiosity. We often see this kind of sexual abuse in sport between a coach and an adolescent female.

A preferential offender has a true sexual preference for children – and many preferential offenders prefer boys to girls. A high percentage of sex offenders are preferential offenders, and they often engage in observable patterns of behavior. Although there is no checklist we can use to identify an offender, there are red flags that help us recognize these behaviors. For example, offenders groom their victims with attention, affection, and gifts. THESE ARE FLAGS THAT REQUIRE ATTENTION, BUT DO NOT MEAN THAT THE PERSON IS NECESSARILY ABUSIVE

Once we recognize these grooming behaviors, we can intervene and report to protect the athlete.
Predators maintain control through a combination of attention, affection, and gifts – part of the grooming process.
Here, we’ll take a look at the six stages of grooming to help us recognize a predator:
Targeting a Victim
Gaining Trust
Recognizing and Filling Needs
Isolating the Child
Sexualizing the Relationship
Maintaining Control

Keep in mind that many of the behaviors alone, or similar behaviors, may occur without them being part of a predatory grooming process. While we want to closely examine any behaviors that may constitute grooming, it does not necessarily mean that the individual is a sexual predator.”

The first step in the process is selecting a victim, or targeting a victim. There are a lot of different things that predators look for. For example, they’re looking for vulnerability in that child. While certain children may be more vulnerable than
others, the fact is that any athlete may be preyed upon by a kind and affectionate adult.

The next step in the process is the predator gaining the trust of the athlete. One of the key things that predators need in order to accomplish their crime is the trust of the victim. The coach is often times perceived as a hero, as a mentor, as a figure to be looked up to by children. And so the trust becomes automatic not only to the victim but to those around the victim. Coaches are in a very unique position to gain the trust of the child. Automatically, because the child is engaged in that particular sport, they have something in common. At the same time, the predator also gains the trust of the athlete’s parents to get access to their children. The predator shows the parents that they’re genuinely interested in their child, offers to pick up the athlete for practice, or mentor them through academic problems. The predator may convince the parents that their child has a promising athletic future and there’s a need for more training and one-on-one coaching.

The next step in the process is the coach recognizing what the needs of the child are and then fulfilling those needs in order to accomplish the abuse. Some of those needs could be attention, positive reinforcement, a starting position, a scholarship, or an introduction to recruiters. The predator is now getting to know the athlete, developing a special relationship with them, and learning what the athlete values. To exert greater power over the athlete, they begin giving gifts, extra attention, and affection – and the predator begins trying to control the athlete, even off the field.

The next step in the process is isolating the child. When somebody is being engaged they might be told that there’s a special relationship that we have. They might share secrets, they might be told that the offender’s the only one that really understands them. And what that does is it not only draws the victim to the predator but it isolates the victims from all others because that relationship is seen as special and unique. At this point, the predator begins to use the special relationship with the child to create situations in which they’re alone together – tutoring, extra coaching sessions, and special sporting trips all enable this isolation and the predator slowly separates the athlete from his or her peers, emotionally, socially, and physically.

A coach is the coach of the team or the entire group of athletes involved in that particular sport. But when a sub-group starts to form, a subgroup that may participate in extracurricular activities with that coach, such as sleepovers or trips or camping outings, those are red flags that should be looked at by the association and stopped. Those are also red flags that should be prohibited by any sort of policy that the association has.
With sufficient emotional dependence and trust, the predator gradually confuses the child about the nature of the relationship through talking, texting, and pictures. The next step in the process is the sexualizing of the relationship. This is of course accomplished after the breaking down of psychological and physical barriers. One of the things that the coach can do is alternate between praise and criticism. While this is a part of coaching any type of sport, when taken to the extreme, it actually results in a manipulation of the child and really a testing of the child. The coach, who is the abuser, is really asking the child: "How much are you going to put up with from me?" and "Can I take this to the next step?“

One of those ways can involve acts—what I would call accidental nudity. The locker room is the perfect place for this to happen. The offender will set up a situation where the victim accidentally sees the offender naked for example. And this can lead to a discussion of sex or nudity or body parts. Another way to groom a child would be to use pornography or to touch a child and get that child desensitized to touch. Confusing the child about the nature of the touch. Once the predator has gotten to this point, they’ve set the stage for sexual assault. They then use secrecy and blame to control the victim.

The final step is maintaining control over the relationship. This is also called the “secrecy” or “concealment” phase. Basically, the better the coach is at picking a victim and breaking down the psychological and physical barriers, the less overt the coach has to be in keeping the secret. It's inherent in the relationship.

The prolonged and purposeful tactics of an accomplished predator allow him or her to avoid detection, and almost always guarantee compliance from the athlete, who is often incapable of understanding whether what’s going on is wrong – especially as the offender becomes bolder and even abuses the victim in public.

People also view these acts as something that takes place in a dark closet when no one else is around. In reality, offenders as they become better at what they do and are not detected become more bold as time goes on. A lot of times offenders will actually progress to the point where they sexually abuse children or commit sexually inappropriate acts against children in front of other witnesses. This does two things. Number one it creates a defense because the offender can then turn around and say, well if that were wrong I wouldn’t have done it in front of other people. But it also sends a mixed message to the child who then may be confused as to the wrongness of the act.
We have learned that predators take considerable time grooming athletes, parents, and fellow coaches to gain their trust. In our next three lessons, we will focus on how to limit a predator’s opportunity to isolate athletes.

The most common opportunities are:
- Locker rooms, bathrooms, or other unmonitored areas on site
- Unsupervised, out-of-program contact, usually at an off-site residence
- Social events involving alcohol
- Local travel to and from practice or competition
- Overnight travel

Training and competition sites provide predators with ample opportunity to abuse athletes. Predators frequently target athletes in "private" spaces, such as locker rooms, bathroom facilities, and other unmonitored spaces, such as a personal office. Though riskier, on-site abuse makes it easier to maintain secrecy because contact at a training or practice facility sends fewer signals that something out of the ordinary is taking place.

Athletes are also more vulnerable to abuse when they’re changing clothes,
showering, or unclothed. If they’re undressed, they often won’t run away to avoid abuse. The risk of abuse increases if the athlete is alone with an adult. Also keep in mind that, if your athlete group includes a wide range of ages and developmental stages, the opportunity for athlete-to-athlete abuse increases.

One suggestion to minimize these opportunities is conduct regular sweeps of the locker room to make sure a child isn’t alone with an adult or older athlete. Finally, if a coach or another adult needs to have a meeting with an athlete, consider leaving the door to the office open, or holding the meeting in a room with windows, or having another person attend the meeting.

Another common way to isolate athletes is through unsupervised out-of-program contact. Predators often use sport to meet children. Unsupervised, out-of-program contacts are particularly problematic if an athlete spends time at an adult’s home. Having built trust through the grooming process, predators can often convince parents to allow their young athlete to spend time at a private residence. It is in this private location that the predator eventually transforms the trusted adult-to-athlete relationship to a sexual act, and further, manipulates the athlete into maintaining the secret.

Sport often involves several social events throughout the season, including end-of-season celebrations. These social events may be very beneficial, forging strong and positive bonds among all members of the group. However, a predator can use these off-the-field social events to groom parents and potential victims even further. While social events are an important part of team-building, the risk of sexual misconduct is increased enormously when alcohol is introduced into such a gathering. When alcohol is introduced to a situation, you could have a couple of different effects. Number one, it could lower the inhibitions of someone who is there with an intention to do something wrong. Another effect that alcohol can have is it can lessen the responsible adults’ attention on what’s going on with the children. Alcohol reduces a predator’s inhibitions, which may allow him/her to become bold enough to isolate a young athlete in a private area during a social event. And although minors shouldn’t be drinking alcohol, one added danger is that alcohol can reduce your athlete’s ability to resist potential misconduct by a trusted adult. Next, we will discuss local and overnight travel, which pose some of the highest risks for abuse.
Because sport involves a big time commitment to training, to competition, and to travel. We often rely on family members, other parents, coaches and other sport staff to get athletes to and from practice. Having already groomed parents and gained their trust, predators often offer to step in and help out with travel, creating controllable periods of one-on-one time with a targeted athlete.

In case after case, in a parked car somewhere between practice and home, a predator sexually abuses an athlete for the first time. Over several weeks, and in those few minutes between home and practice, predators use the travel time to groom the athlete, developing intimacy and trust, learning their needs and manipulating them emotionally. They sexualize the relationship, test the limits, and gradually push the limits.
One way to reduce these grooming opportunities and manage the risk of local travel is by varying local travel arrangements and relying on family to help out.

Make sure that whenever possible several parents share the responsibility for athletes’ travel arrangements, so that no one individual becomes the sole driver over extended periods of time. Set up carpools so that many adults can share these important responsibilities over the course of the season.

Make sure you’ve set up a policy for how athletes can get back and forth to practice and if there seems to be a situation where they need a ride home, see if you can get another parent to help give them a ride home or call and find if there is someone else who can ride with you, but I really would avoid taking an athlete by themselves in the car, even though you have good intentions, you just want to make sure that you don’t open the door for any opportunities for somebody to accuse you of something.

If a coach or staff member does transport athletes, there are a number of ways to minimize the opportunity for one-on-one time. The coach could pick up athletes in
groups so that they’re never alone with athletes, or the arrangement could include their own child as part of a carpool arrangement if they’re on the team. The coach or staff member should always pick up their child first and drop their child off last so that no coach is alone in a car with an unrelated athlete. Overall, the key is to avoid unsupervised travel between an unrelated adult and an athlete.

These basic strategies disrupt predator behaviors and reduce the opportunity for an individual to groom and ultimately abuse an athlete between the practice fields and home.
Some of an athlete’s most memorable experiences are during team travel. They remember joking around with friends, getting ready to play, and developing the close relationships that are important in creating that “family feel” that draws the whole team together.

But overnight travel is the single biggest risk factor for sexual abuse in sport.

With the multiple and unfamiliar changing areas, locker rooms, workout facilities, transportation, and hotel rooms, it’s easy for an offender to find the time and place to isolate an athlete. Predators can manufacture opportunities to socially, emotionally, and physically isolate the athlete. While traveling, fewer adults are around and athletes are in unusual surroundings, which makes them even more reliant on adults, giving the predator direct access to athletes for extended periods of time.

When a child is taken to a competition that involves staying away from home overnight, being out from under the parents' supervision...a younger child can create uneasiness, because the child has no one that they can report to. With older
children, they feel freedom from their parents' oversight so they might engage in more high risk behavior that would be the vulnerability that the offender would need to take advantage of the situation.

While traveling alone with the athlete—which is often the case for athletes who participate in individual sports, such as shooting, swimming, or tennis—the predator could reserve a hotel far from a tournament – maybe claiming a better room rate – assuring the athlete will have no casual social interactions with other teams or same-age peers. Predators also use overnight travel to both isolate the targeted athlete and sexualize the relationship. Long car trips, sitting together on airplane rides, eating meals together, and watching TV in a hotel room with few others around gives predators unsupervised opportunities to incorporate sexual topics into conversation and gauge the athlete’s reactions.
Here are a few ways that as a team we can disrupt a predator and interrupt the grooming process during overnight team travel:
Conduct bed checks in pairs, and in mixed-gender pairs if possible.
Encourage contact between athletes and parents – by phone or by video chats

Additional recommendations include:
Assigning athletes to a hotel room with a same-age and same-sex teammate
Identify an appropriate athlete to chaperone ratio based on the type of travel
To avoid an opportunity for a predator to sexualize a relationship with an athlete by showing them pornographic materials, notify the hotel to block all pay-per-view channels
Reserve a space in the hotel for all athletes, coaches, and chaperones to socialize together in a shared or public area

Some of these recommendations won’t apply to athletes who are traveling alone, or in very small numbers, with an adult – But the same general strategies apply.

There’s a lot of safety concerns when traveling with big groups like that, so just
making sure that there are rules and there’s consequences to those rules so that people have incentive to follow them. And they should be strict, and they should always be enforced, no matter if it’s your best athlete or your worst. Whatever the consequence is, follow through with it so that you can keep your athlete safe.
We have now talked about emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. In this session, we'll talk about the signs and symptoms of abuse. Specifically, we'll:
Discuss why athletes rarely say anything if they’re being abused
Describe the behavioral, physical, and emotional changes in an athlete that may indicate abuse, and
Provide guidance on how to respond if an athlete is signaling that there’s a problem

Eye witness evidence of abuse is rare. As we’ve discussed, most sexual predators, are skillful at concealing their actions and masking abuse. So, to protect athletes, we need to recognize how athletes react when they’re being abused. Because this issue is so tough, athletes rarely disclose abuse.

Children have a limited understanding of sexuality and sexual abuse and they often don’t even recognize that they’re being abused. They might not realize for years that what they experienced even was abuse. Abused athletes often fear the social stigma associated with being classified a “victim.”

There’s a big fear, a big barrier for them to come forth and be the one who reports
something that’s going on. They don’t want to be labeled a snitch; they don’t want to be labeled a victim; and they, they don’t want to be singled out. And so that in itself, if you think about developmentally, it ends up being a barrier and it makes it very difficult for these athletes to step forward.

An athlete may also worry about what will happen if they are believed. They think the abuse is their fault. They worry about whether they’ll still be able to compete. What happens if because of this all being reported the coach loses his job? Now of course they’re the reason that they’re no longer the coach. Maybe the team gets disbanded. Um…and of course they feel they have to bear that burden. The retaliation. What happens if I report all this and somehow now it gets back and that coach retaliates on them for reporting?

As we discussed earlier, most signs of sexual abuse are behavioral so the key is to be aware of any sudden behavioral changes.

Some of the things to observe in, in a youth athlete that again are red flags: they totally lose enthusiasm for their sport; they no longer want to go to practices or do all the extra work like they used to do. Sometimes it’ll be a self-defeating behavior like they just stop trying and they figure if they don’t try, they’ll get tossed off the team. They won’t be as good so they won’t get chosen to be on the travel squad or the varsity squad. You couple it with some of those behaviors in someone who’s now acting depressed, reserved, withdrawn. They don’t interact with people the way they used to.
Sometimes signs and symptoms of abuse are immediately apparent, and we can interrupt that abuse and protect the athlete. But the effects of abuse can plague an athlete for years.

Studies show that the impact of sexual abuse on children can be devastating and long-lasting. The long term effects of sexual abuse include poor self-esteem, difficulty trusting others, anxiety, feelings of isolation and stigma, depression, self destructive tendencies, sexual maladjustment, and substance abuse.

By learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and asking questions, we can offer athletes support and a chance to tell us what’s going on. I think we have done a lot of work on the front side to let them know it is an open-door policy as well because a lot of times they will come to us, if we do not see it, which rarely happens, somebody will come up to us and say, “just so you know this is what is going on.”

Begin by telling the athlete what you see – unexplained outbursts, a decline in performance, skipping out on practice without explanation. Ask the athlete if
anything is wrong. Specifically ask if anything is going wrong around the club or with practice or competition. Tell them that you would like to help with whatever the problem is. You may not get a direct answer when you first ask the question. If the athlete tells you nothing’s wrong, continue to observe the athlete and raise your concerns again if necessary.

If the athlete does report abuse, listen carefully and calmly. Let the athlete know that they have the right to refuse sexual advances, and help them understand that the physical and emotional abuse is not okay. Also make sure the athlete understands it is not his or her fault.

Having someone who truly demonstrates concern and caring about how they’re behaving and, and the perceptions of what they’re going through is, is important. Again putting even more pressure on, on parental or administrative oversight on these kinds of programs because someone has to do it for them sometimes before they will come forth and realize it’s okay or it’s safe enough for them to come forward and report something.

If a child or Minor discloses abuse, then you’ll need to report to the proper law enforcement authorities. Our next lesson will address how to respond to boundary violations and how to report abuse.
We began our discussion of child sexual abuse by noting that there are often barriers that impede disclosure and cause victims to remain silent. Organizational, social and personal barriers also make it hard for adults to report, even if we do have suspicions.
Without even realizing it, sport organizations may send an inadvertent message that they don’t take abuse seriously if they don’t establish a culture of communicating and enforcing clear athlete protection policies. Offenders thrive in this sort of lax environment, and the lack of an organizational response magnifies the power of an abusive adult. Also, tolerating conduct violations for a successful coach or star athlete, to benefit the prestige of an organization, could also create barriers to reporting.

There may also be an incentive to protect the organization by not letting this kind of thing get out, but the bottom line is that always backfires. When something is not dealt with and it continues on, not only does it increase the organization's liability and the liability of the people who knew and didn’t do the correct thing, but when it is finally found out, not only does the organization have to deal with the stigma of what happened in that the abuse itself occurred, but the organization then has to deal with the stigma of we didn't do the right thing.

Many times when coaches or administrators see things that they think are inappropriate, they really feel like they need to protect their own, protect the
coaches, protect their club, protect their sport, protect their university, but what we really find is that the athlete is the one that needs to be protected and we need to be willing to stand up and make sure that we get that taken care of, but it’s not about protecting others, it’s about protecting the person that’s being harmed.

The best way to overcome organizational barriers is by enforcing athlete protection and reporting policies, writing policies that sensitize everyone to abuse and providing guidance on how to stop that abuse from happening.
There are also social barriers to reporting outside the direct influence of the club. By standing, or knowing or suspecting abuse to an athlete and doing nothing about it, especially by people in positions of power, increases the harm to victims and communicates that the abusive behaviors are acceptable.

A lot of times people who abuse children are well-liked and well-respected community. You may feel that if I report this person, I'll lose credibility or I'll lose standing within the community. You still have to report. You also may feel like you'll be stigmatized for accusing somebody, but the law still requires you to report.
And finally, one of the single biggest personal barriers is the fear of false reporting. A perceived lack of clear evidence to corroborate reports can be a strong barrier to keeping coaches and staff from stepping forward. Nobody wants to falsely accuse a colleague of improper actions, and as a result, coaches and staff often hold back until the evidence is clear and strong. In a majority of cases, there never is clear evidence.

One of the concerns you may have is, what if this information is not true? And then I have reported somebody for abusing a child and that person is innocent. First of all, you should keep in mind that it's so hard for children to come forward and report allegations of abuse. That the percentage of times that it is a false report is very low. For the times that it is false report, you should know that the best way to clear someone's name is to report it and have it thoroughly investigated by professionals. To not report it and to have those rumors continue on throughout the organization and throughout that person's association with the organization is not doing that person a favor. Compounding the fear of false reporting, many of us are afraid that we can’t protect ourselves from retaliation and the effects that filing a report may have on our
careers.

We also worry about the effect of reporting on the whole team, the effects on individual team members, and the implications that the problem of abuse could be more widespread throughout the sport. As we know, strong social ties are central to sport, and the chances are that the community really likes, and even blindly trusts the predator.

Whatever the barriers, whatever our fears, nothing trumps our obligation to report abuse.
Now, let’s address one of the most critical pieces of this training: How do we respond to misconduct or policy violations - particularly child sexual abuse?

Whether it's an athletic trainer intervening on a coach's decision to make a seriously injured athlete practice, pulling aside a verbally abusive coach to review effective coaching techniques, or reminding a coach about physical contact, when a fellow coach or administrator takes any of these actions, it not only protects the athlete, but the staff member as well.
Regardless of the policy violation, or the type of misconduct, there are four basic steps for responding: First: Interrupt, or disrupt the conduct Second: Share your concerns Third: Report to your designated administrator Fourth: If you suspect child abuse, report to the proper law enforcement authorities.

It’s important to understand what the boundaries are, what the team rules are in order to keep people in line. The rules aren’t meant to frustrate people, or be broken necessarily, they are meant to protect people.

The most important policy in protecting your athletes and your organization is reporting any suspicion or allegation of abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities. Legal reporting responsibilities vary by State, but we’ll walk through the basics of whom, when, and how to report. These recommendations are based on guidelines from the Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway. Links to reporting laws will also be provided at the end of this lesson.

Every state has a mandatory reporting requirement. As more of these cases come to
light, states are looking at toughening up the mandatory reporting laws. If you are a member of an organization involving kids, sports it’s your responsibility to know the law, what is required of you if you become aware of an abusive situation involving a child.
Let’s start by looking at who needs to report. Most States designate professionals who are required to report child abuse. They are known as “mandatory” reporters, and these individuals usually have frequent contact with children. Several states include coaches as mandatory reporters. While some states identify individuals who must report, in many states, any person who suspects child abuse must report. Failing to report abuse may result in criminal charges.

Even if not a mandatory reporter, we can all voluntarily report suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities. We all have an important role in our athlete’s development and encourage everyone to report suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities.

It’s not easy to be put in a situation where you have to call authorities about something you suspect about a friend or someone you work with or volunteer with. But the bottom line is, you need to do it. There are so many ramifications involved in abuse. For example, the victim him or herself is going to be emotionally impacted, physically impacted, the organization is going to be subject to liability and also you could be subject to criminal liability or civil liability. In the mandatory
reporting laws of the state, they mandate that certain people who work with children, such as coaches, have to report abuse. Either physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect . . . And if you don’t do that, you’re subjecting yourself to criminal prosecution as well as civil liability and that extends to your organization. And the bottom line, it is the right thing to do. If a child is being abused or suspected of being abused, you need to report so that someone can look into that, someone who is an authority and trained to investigate.

So when should we report? This will also vary by State, but the Department of Health and Human Services states that there are two basic standards that are used for both mandatory and permissive reporters. We need to report when we: (1) suspect, or have reason to believe, that a child has been abused or neglected, or (2) have knowledge of, or observe a child being subjected to, conditions that would reasonably result in harm to the child."

If you receive an allegation of abuse or suspect abuse, do not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of the abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. If you start to investigate allegations of abuse, you make yourself a witness and you potentially harm the investigation and the ability of the authorities to determine what really happened.
Finally, who do we report to and how? Most states have toll-free numbers for reporting abuse – and typically, reports may be made anonymously, though it’s useful to know the reporter’s identity. Most States keep their abuse and neglect records confidential, and most States specifically protect the identity of the reporter from disclosure to the alleged perpetrator – even if other information from the report is disclosed. Always consult your state laws and work with an attorney if you have questions.

Regardless of your legal obligations, your club may require you to report suspicions or allegations of abuse or misconduct. Check with your club and ask what you need to report, how you can report, and to whom you should report concerns. Your responsibilities under your club’s reporting policy may be broader than your legal obligations.

For example, your club may require you to report grooming behaviors – such as an adult giving a particular athlete gifts, or spending time with an athlete outside of practice – which may not be reportable under the law.
Ask your club how it handles reports and what you should expect from its reporting process – from how to make the initial report to how the club resolves allegations. Kids may be real young but they are really smart and it’s really, really important for them to know that our number one priority is to keep them safe and to help them accomplish their goals and that we have to work together as a team, the coach and the athletes, or coaches and athletes, in our sport to make that goal happen.

The best way to protect your organization against predators is to have policies that govern behavior...to adhere to those policies...to educate responsible adults to monitor others’ behavior...to educate children as to what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. And to inform people about what their responsibilities are under the law. And by doing that, you’re going to make that organization successful and fun and a big influence in that child’s life – a positive influence in that child’s life.
In conclusion, It is everyone’s responsibility to protect our athletes by disrupting, sharing and reporting any suspicions or allegations of misconduct or abuse. Any suspicions or allegations of child abuse should be reported to YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE PROPER LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES. It is not your responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse. Know your state’s mandatory reporting laws and what constitutes abuse in your state. You may be subject to legal and/or civil liability if you don’t report.

Understanding how to recognize misconduct and properly report it is essential to maintaining the safe and fun environment that sport creates for athletes and coaches of all ages.