

P&P/Safesport Report Outline for 2013 Summer Meeting

1. Executive Director's Report
2. Recruitment and Retention Report
3. State Tournaments
4. Expo
5. Branding/USA "aircover"
6. USA Congress/SafeSport
 - *Screening Budget
 - *Screening Vendor
 - *Screening Future
 - * SS Training requirements
 - *Risk Management
 - *Travel
 - *Drivers
 - * SS intro notice to associations

Scott Gray

SafeSport Introduction, Update and Instructions

Greetings. You are receiving this notice as you have been identified as the President, SafeSport Coordinator, or other leader of your local hockey association. Please take some time to read through this important information regarding USA Hockey's SafeSport initiative as it contains information that will require action on the part of each association in Minnesota. Hopefully you have learned about SafeSport already. If so, we now have clearer directives for instituting the program for the 2013-14 season, which are spelled out later in this document. If not, let me begin with a brief introduction.

My name is Scott Gray and I am Minnesota Hockey's SafeSport Coordinator. SafeSport is an USAH initiative aimed at creating the safest possible environment for all participants in USAH and Minnesota Hockey programs, particularly related to off-ice safety, by creating a mechanism that creates and centralizes policies prohibiting abuse & managing hockey environments, mandates education and awareness training, enhances screening protocols, and establishes reporting, investigation and response to violations which may occur. The policy applies not just to players, but all participants in any of our programs all the way down to spectators at our events. USAH has given this initiative the very highest priority and views it as one of the most important programs it has undertaken, and Minnesota Hockey agrees.

*The complete SafeSport Program Handbook is available at both usahockey.com/safesport, and minnesotahockey.org.

How does it work- a brief overview:

The program provides for structure, education, reporting, investigation, and response to issues related to sexual and emotional abuse, bullying, threats, harassment, hazing, locker room supervision, travel, and billeting.

1. Each association names a volunteer to act as SafeSport Coordinator.
2. The association coordinator has a number of responsibilities including oversight of mandated training, insuring that association establishes and enforces all related safety policies, coordination with teams/coaches on such policies, communicating SafeSport information to parents, receiving SafeSport complaints, working with Minnesota SafeSport Coordinator to investigate and respond to complaints.
3. On line training occurs prior to November 1, 2013.
4. Certification of training is reported to Minnesota Hockey SafeSport Coordinator.
5. Participants are made aware of SafeSport Program and how to make reports.
6. Safety policies are monitored and enforced.
7. Reports are received and acted upon.

The first step is recruit a SafeSport Coordinator for your association and communicate their contact information to me. It is suggested that given the importance of this initiative that the SafeSport Coordinator position be made a board level position in your association. Once all of the coordinators are in place and their contact info. is in my possession, I can communicate directly with them insofar as policy changes and interpretations, questions and problems, and to work in tandem to receive, investigate, and respond to complaints.

TRAINING:

Your association SafeSport Coordinator should immediately complete the free on-line training aimed at identifying characteristics of various forms of abuse provided by USAH. To do so, they must register with USAH as a volunteer (free) and obtain a registration number, which they then can use to complete the training videos that are available at above referenced USAH website. USAH has also mandated that at least one representative from each team also complete the training program prior to November 1st, 2013, and all association volunteers by the end of the season. Although training will likely be required in some format for the coaches, the final determination of what that will entail is yet to be decided, so although your coaches may certainly complete the available training in its current format, it is suggested that the team manager be the "representative" that completes the training by 11/1/2013. Obviously issues will occur related to dates of team formation and identifying volunteers for these roles, but generally this is the intended path currently. Then, throughout the season the SafeSport Coordinator will work with all members of the association including your board to insure that everyone complete the training program prior to the end of the season. A census of those completing the registration shall be compiled and reported to the Minnesota SafeSport Coordinator.

SCREENING:

The screening requirements have now changed. USAH is now mandating a more thorough screen for any volunteers who have "regular, routine, and frequent access" to the players. We have identified those persons as primarily coaches and managers. Another possibility would be a regularly scheduled locker room monitor however some one person filling that role on a frequent or consistent basis is unlikely. For those persons who do not have regular, routine, and frequent contact with players, such as random locker room monitors, other volunteers, and board members, we will continue use of our existing screening method. In either case, although the on-line-screening form will be somewhat different in appearance, the process to accomplish the screen will be the same as it has been by visiting Minnesotahockey.org and click on the SafeSport tab. Although the local SafeSport Coordinator will not be involved with the screening aspects of the program, it essential for them to work with the association and the teams to insure that enough locker room monitors are screened and available when needed.

LOCKER ROOM MONITORING POLICY:

A key component to the SafeSport initiative is to insure that our locker rooms are monitored at all times the players are present whether for practices or games. The policy requires that a screened gender appropriate adult be present in the locker room at all times there are more than one player present, and two screened adults when there is only one player present. At no time shall one adult be alone in the room with one player. It cannot be stressed enough how critical it is for each association, and each team, to abide by this policy. Over half of the SafeSport violations of abuse I received the previous season related to incidents that occurred in unsupervised locker rooms- a number of which were quite serious in nature. In all cases, the associations/teams reported that although they were aware of the policy, they didn't take it that seriously and had difficulty finding people to monitor the locker room. Although we acknowledge that it may not be the most desirable assignment, and is often difficult to find volunteers, it is crucial that the locker rooms be monitored. The SafeSport Coordinator should

work with each team manager to identify and screen an adequate number of parents to fill this role, and at the minimum insure that the coaches are cognizant of this requirement sans the presence of a screened parent to fill the role.

REPORTING:

People reporting SafeSport violations can contact USA Hockey SafeSport, the Minnesota Hockey SafeSport Coordinator, or the association SafeSport Coordinator. Violation reports received by anyone else should be immediately forwarded to the SafeSport Coordinator. Once the report is received, Minnesota Hockey will work with the local coordinator to investigate the allegations. It is important to note that one of the goals of SafeSport is to insure that participants can feel comfortable with reporting abuses without fear of retribution. The reporting process allows for transparency, investigation, and action intended to be objective and neutral with the conclusion being reasonable, proportional, and fair. No reporting party should ever experience negative ramifications for bringing a report of abuse to our attention. Some examples of abuses that were investigated last season:

1. Parent threatens parent.
2. Parent threatens coach.
3. Coach threatens parent.
4. Board member threatens board member.
5. Coach threatens opposing player after game.
6. Coach threatens own player.
7. Parent assaults their own child on bench.
8. Minor official assaults minor official.
9. Racial slurs.
10. End of season team hazing.
11. Assaults and bullying in unsupervised locker room.
12. Inappropriate photos/images taken in unsupervised locker room.
13. Coach threatens referee.
14. Referee threatens referee.

These incidents were real and in some cases quite serious and are provided to give a snapshot of what is not only potentially a SafeSport violation, but something that could cause great physical or emotional harm to our participants.

So....

Association Shortlist:

1. Name a SafeSport Coordinator
2. Send me their contact info. or have them contact me directly.
3. Have them familiarize themselves with the SafeSport Handbook.
4. Have them register as a USAH volunteer and complete the training videos.

5. Have them verify that all SafeSport policies are incorporated into your association rules.
6. Have them insure that SafeSport policies will be incorporated into materials distributed to coaches and team managers.
7. Have them develop a method to communicate SafeSport to parents and players.
8. Have them develop a method to monitor that one team representative be completes the training videos by 11/1/2013, and the remainder of the association volunteers/board by the end of the season, and report same to me.

As stated earlier, USAH has identified SafeSport as being one of their most important initiatives and is afforded the highest attention and scrutiny. We all must take the program seriously and work diligently to follow its protocols in an effort to improve the safety and wellbeing of all of our participants. Let's try to create an environment where our participants, no matter whether they are players, parents, coaches, managers, monitors, referees, board members, volunteers, or spectators, go home from our programs in as good or better condition than when they came to our programs.

Please, and I mean please, contact me with questions:

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