

Protecting Youth Athletes from Sexual Abuse Key Actions for Parents and Coaches

Child predators tend to avoid children who have vocal adults looking out for them. This document and accompanying video, at www.kidpower.org/youth-sports/, provide practical ways to protect your children from sexual abuse.

You can't identify child predators by how they look. The key is to pay attention to behavior.

Common warning signs of sexual abuse by coaches:

- Giving individual players special gifts
- Spending extra time (by phone/email/text/in person) with individuals outside of official practices/games
- Telling players to keep secrets such as not sharing their conversations or activities with their parents

What can you do as a parent?

- Ask your organization's leadership for its policy on protecting athletes from abuse. If it doesn't have one, share this information sheet with them and tell them about the Youth Sports Child Abuse Prevention policy at <http://www.kidpower.org/youth-sports/child-abuse-prevention/>.
- A major key to child protection is "No secrets." Tell your children that any problems, favors, gifts, or touch should never be a secret.
- Give your children language to use if someone is making them feel uncomfortable. Teach them to say, "*Please stop! This makes me feel uncomfortable.*"
- Encourage kids to tell you any time someone's behavior makes them feel unsafe. Even if you feel concerned about what a child has told you, act calm and ask open-ended questions like, "*Tell me more about this.*"
- Tell your children you want them to tell you any time they have a safety problem even if it's uncomfortable to talk about, even if someone might get upset. Assure them you will do everything you can to keep them safe.
- If your child is receiving individual instruction or working with a private coach, make sure you can drop in any time, that your child knows personal safety skills, and that activities happen in public settings.
- If something makes you uncomfortable, address the coach calmly and respectfully. If you don't get a satisfactory response, take your concerns to organizational leadership, or perhaps the police if appropriate.
- Listen to your gut feelings. If anything seems wrong, even if you can't prove anything, have the courage to ask questions and to be persistent until you are satisfied. Potential abusers look for youth who do not have strong advocates, so your speaking up can help protect your child!

What can you do as a coach?

- Recognize that you are part of a network of people committed to protecting kids in youth sports!
- Give this sheet to all your parents. Tell them that you want them to approach you immediately if they are ever concerned about anything during the season.
- Avoid being alone with an athlete, except in the case of an emergency.

Other Resources

- Learn more about child protection and teaching kids personal safety skills from [Kidpower \(www.kidpower.org\)](http://www.kidpower.org).
- Learn more about how youth sports can increase kids' emotional safety from [PCA \(www.positivecoach.org\)](http://www.positivecoach.org).
- To make an official report or for information, contact a children's advocacy center such as The National Children's Alliance at www.nca-online.org or call 1-800-239-9950.
- For coach and volunteer background checks, visit www.KidSafePlus.com

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