

Ontario Volleyball Association (OVA)

Safesport - Abuse Prevention

Person in Authority (PIA) Code of Conduct

Introduction

1. Coaches play a vital role in shaping the youth of tomorrow through sport. The OVA relies on them and other persons in authority to be role models and to put young athletes on a path to success. The dynamic between coach and athlete gives rise to a power imbalance and a culture of unquestioned trust that can result in abuse. As such, it is imperative that all persons in positions of authority be held to a high standard of conduct. Abuse in sport, particularly sexual abuse and the grooming behaviour that precedes it, destroys the positive impact of sport and causes untold harm to victims and those around them. Consequently the OVA has a strong obligation to establish and maintain systems that prevent abuse and respond to conduct that poses risk to OVA athletes.

Purpose of Code

2. The OVA values the safety, rights and well being of our athletes and their families. It is the responsibility of every OVA club, coach, volunteer and staff member to participate in the effort to create a safe environment for all OVA participants.
3. This Person in Authority Code of Conduct is intended to protect OVA participants from abuse. It provides guidelines for conduct that are consistent with the development of healthy relationships between adult persons in authority and youth sport participants. The Code provides behaviour guideposts that identify inappropriate or concerning behaviour at an early stage to help better protect athletes and coaches.

Objectives

4. This Code of Conduct establishes boundaries for persons in authority and requires that those boundaries be respected and maintained. Defining and teaching appropriate boundaries reduces a young person's risk of sexual exploitation and the likelihood of being groomed. Grooming is a slow gradual and escalating process of building comfort and trust with a young person that is often very difficult to recognize. The process allows for inappropriate conduct to become normalized. It is often preceded by the grooming of an adult 'gatekeeper' (who provides access to the young person) to build confidence and comfort that the individual can be trusted with the care of the young person. Behaviour that presents risks often begins by breaking

boundaries with children and adolescents. Boundary violations can occur when the adult places his/her needs above the needs of the young person and gains personally or professionally at the young person's expense.

5. The boundaries established in this Code are intended to protect athletes from grooming, inappropriate, abusive, discriminatory and harassing behaviour. By identifying behaviour that violates boundaries, the risk of abuse to athletes is reduced and expectations for the conduct of persons in authority are clearly outlined.

Definitions

6. a. "Persons in authority" (PIA) includes any person who holds a position of trust or authority over an "Athlete" pursuant to the role assigned to them by the OVA or an "OVA Decision Maker". PIAs include but are not limited to coaches, managers, trainers, officials, staff, administrators, club directors, third party service providers (i.e. strength and conditioning trainers or yoga instructors), and volunteers.
- b. "Athlete" is any OVA member under the age of 18 years or any player on an OVA team. It includes but is not limited to a player, coach, official, volunteer, or any player attending a try-out for an OVA club prior to the player's registration with the OVA.
- c. "OVA Decision Maker" is a person who is authorized to make a decision on behalf of the OVA or an OVA club and includes but is not limited to OVA or club staff, coaches, directors and administrators.
- d. "Inappropriate behaviour" includes conduct by a PIA toward an athlete that involves any form of sexualized interaction or that constitutes a boundary violation or is associated with grooming behaviour.
- e. A "Child in need of protection" is any athlete whose life, health, or emotional well-being is endangered by the act or omission of any person.

Application of this Code

7. This Code applies to conduct that may arise during the course of OVA business activities and events, including but not limited to its office environment, competitions, practices, training camps, tryouts, travel and any meetings of the OVA.

8. This Code also applies to the conduct of PIAs that may occur outside of the OVA's business activities events and meetings when such conduct adversely affects relationships within the OVA (and its work and sport environment) or is detrimental to the image and reputation of the OVA. Such applicability will be made by the OVA in its sole discretion.
9. Behaviour referred to in this Code of Conduct includes:
 - a. One-time or continuous behaviour
 - b. Conduct directed at an individual or group
 - c. Conduct that was without intent to abuse power or trust
 - f. Conduct that was without intent to harass or discriminate
10. This Code comes into effect on September 1, 2018. A report regarding a breach of this Code may be made at any time after the breach.
11. There is no time limitation on the period to report a breach of this Code as long as the parties met the definitions of a PIA and an Athlete at the time of the conduct in issue.

Obligations of Persons in Authority

12. All PIAs must comply with this Code of Conduct including the reporting requirements.
13. All PIAs must treat young persons with dignity and respect.
14. Rule of two
Any one-on-one interaction between a PIA and an individual athlete must take place within earshot and view of a second PIA. If possible one of the PIAs should be the same gender as the athlete. If a PIA is not available, another screened volunteer, parent or adult can be recruited. An exception is made for medical emergencies.
15. Importance of maintaining boundaries
All PIAs must establish, respect and maintain appropriate boundaries with athletes.

Prohibited Behaviour by Persons in Authority

16. A PIA must not engage in inappropriate behaviour or grooming behaviour.

17. In assessing whether behaviour is inappropriate one should consider whether the behaviour would raise concerns in the mind of a reasonable observer. The behaviour may also be assessed by determining whose needs are being met (the athlete or the PIA) and what objective appears to be guiding the interaction.
18. Grooming Conduct Specifically Prohibited
A PIA shall not engage in the following:
- a. Nudity or exposure of genitals in the presence of an athlete;
 - b. Sexually oriented conversation or discussions about personal sexual activities;
 - c. Spending time with an individual athlete outside of team activities;
 - d. Excessive gift-giving to an individual athlete;
 - d. Socially isolating an athlete;
 - e. Restricting an athlete's privacy;
 - f. Providing drugs, alcohol or tobacco to an athlete;
 - g. Becoming overly-involved in an athlete's personal life;
 - h. Making sexual or discriminatory jokes or comments to an athlete;
 - i. Displaying material of a sexual nature in the presence of an athlete;
 - j. Mocking or threatening an athlete.
19. Physical Contact Specifically Prohibited
A PIA shall not engage in the following:
- a. Physical contact that does not take place in public;
 - b. Physical contact that is not for benefit of the athlete (i.e. instead it meets an need of the PIA);
 - c. Lingering or repeated embraces with an athlete;
 - d. Having an athlete sit on the lap of a PIA or making such a request;
 - e. Cuddling or prolonged physical contact with an athlete;
 - f. Butt-pats, tickling wrestling horseplay with one or more athletes;
 - g. Giving massages, piggyback rides or shoulder rides to an athlete;
 - h. Continued physical contact that makes the athlete uncomfortable whether expressed or not;
 - i. Physical contact that an athlete has specifically requested not occur.
20. Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited
A PIA shall not engage or participate in the following:
- a. Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, slapping or purposely injuring an athlete;
 - b. Displaying offensive materials, gestures or symbols to an athlete;
 - c. Negative or disparaging comments about an athlete's disability, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or gender identity;

- d. Withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on the athlete's disability, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or gender identity;
- e. Overlooking hazing or other activity that is humiliating, degrading, abusive or dangerous to an athlete.

Mandatory Communication Protocol for Persons in Authority

- 21. All persons in authority must comply with the following protocol when communicating with athletes:
 - a. Group messages, group emails or team pages are to be used as the regular method of communication between PIAs and athletes;
 - b. PIAs may only send personal texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individual athletes when necessary and only for the purpose of communicating information related to team issues and activities;
 - c. The content of all electronic communication between PIAs and athletes must be professional in tone and for the purpose of communicating information related to team issues or activities;
 - d. All communication between PIAs and athletes must be between 6 am and 12 am unless extenuating circumstances exist;
 - f. No communication concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is permitted between PIAs and athletes;
 - g. No sexually explicit language or sexually oriented conversation is permitted between PIAs and athletes;
 - h. PIAs are not permitted to request athletes to keep a secret for them;
 - i. PIAs may not send inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures or videos to athletes.

Mandatory Travel Protocol for Persons in Authority

- 22. All persons in authority must comply with the following protocol concerning transporting and traveling with athletes:
 - a. No PIA shall drive an athlete alone unless the PIA is the parent of the athlete (see Rule of two).
 - b. A PIA may not share a room with an athlete unless the PIA is that athlete's parent.
 - c. A PIA may not be alone in a hotel room with an athlete unless the PIA is that athlete's parent.

Reporting Requirements

- 23. All PIAs have a duty to report allegations or suspicions regarding inappropriate behaviour to the OVA. This can be done by email at: Safesport@ontariovolleyball.org.

24. Conduct that violates this code may be subject to the sanctions of the OVA's Discipline and Complaints Policy. The OVA will have the discretion to consult with the affected athlete and PIA and will apply a contextual analysis taking into account the purpose and objectives of the Code.

25. A person that learns of a "child in need of protection" must report to a Children's Aid Society under the Ontario Child Youth Family Services Act. This legal obligation includes a situation where a person becomes aware of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child at the hands of a person having charge of the child. To locate your local Children's Aid Society click on: <http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/>