

USA Gymnastics Safe Sport

SAFE SPORT POLICY SNAPSHOT



USA GYMNASTICS.

INTRODUCTION

The “2019 USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy Snapshot” is a top-line summary of the safety and prevention responsibilities for all USA Gymnastics members and individuals participating in USA Gymnastics activities or events. These policies apply to adults who are USA Gymnastics members or authorized by a USA Gymnastics member or member club to participate in any USA Gymnastics event, activity or member club. This overview is intended to provide a quick and easy-to-understand look at the important fundamentals of the policy. Everyone needs to read and become familiar with the Safe Sport Policy in its entirety, because the policy is the official governance document and takes precedence should questions arise.

This Safe Sport Policy is the foundation for rules, policies and responsibilities regarding athlete safety and well-being and the prevention of abuse. The policy requires mandatory reporting; defines misconduct; creates standards that set boundaries between professional and athlete members; establishes a structure for investigation of complaints and their underlying circumstances; and promotes greater accountability and compliance. It also encompasses the requirements of the Center’s SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement and the federal law, Protecting Young Victims and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017.

Each and every one of us has the same goal-promoting a safe, positive and encouraging environment where athletes and professional members alike can thrive, follow their dreams and enjoy a sense of accomplishment, whether it is learning a basic skill, competing or representing the United States on the international stage.

The 2019 edition of the policy represents a months-long, collective effort, and we appreciate the input, feedback and perspectives provided by former athletes, members, club owners, parents, abuse survivors, and outside experts in mental health, health care, child advocacy and youth development. We also want to thank the members of the USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Committee, which includes coaches, club owners, athletes and medical and mental health professionals, for their work on developing the policy, as well as for guidance from the U.S. Center for SafeSport, the United States Olympic Committee and the Deborah Daniels report.

The safe sport area on the USA Gymnastics website, usagym.org, has additional materials to assist you in learning and understanding the Safe Sport Policy, including frequently asked questions, the Safe Sport Policy, and educational materials and opportunities.

Athlete safety and well-being are the responsibilities of all of us – athletes, parents, coaches, judges, meet directors, club owners and administrators, staff and the community – and we need to work together to foster a safe and positive environment where athletes can train, compete and thrive.



OUR PLEDGE

USA Gymnastics is committed to fostering a safe, positive and encouraging environment throughout the gymnastics community.

The USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy provides the framework of prevention. By recognizing the importance of professional standards, USA Gymnastics is dedicated to education, prevention, and care.

Table of Contents

Duty to Report	4-6
Types of Misconduct	7
Grooming in Sport	8
A Closer Look at the Types of Misconduct	9-11
Staying Proactive	12
About the Prevention Policies	13-15
Stay Vigilant and Informed	16

DUTY TO REPORT

Any adult under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics who becomes aware of an incident of child abuse or sexual misconduct involving a minor must immediately report the incident to law enforcement and the U.S Center for SafeSport.

WHO TO CONTACT



Local Authorities

All instances of the below must be reported to law enforcement:

- Child abuse
- Sexual abuse or criminal activities involving a minor



U.S. CENTER FOR
SAFESPORT™

- Child abuse
- Any sexual misconduct
- Sexual harassment
- Grooming



USA GYMNASTICS.

- [Emotional misconduct](#)
- [Bullying](#)
- [Hazing](#)
- [Physical misconduct](#)
- Retaliation related to Safe Sport
- [Prevention Policy violations](#)



Gymnastics Club

- Gym cleanliness
- Equipment issues
- Financial disputes
- Scores
- Competitive progression concerns
- Employment disputes

JURISDICTION



U.S. Center for SafeSport Jurisdiction

The U.S. Center for SafeSport (“Center”) is an independent, national non-profit organization that has the exclusive authority to investigate and resolve possible violations of the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement involving sexual misconduct. The Center also provides education and training to promote respect and prevent abuse in sport.

USA Gymnastics and its members must report any allegations of sexual misconduct and child abuse that they become aware of to the U.S. Center for SafeSport for investigation and resolution.

To report sexual misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport



[uscenterforsafesport.org/
report-a-concern](https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern)



720.531.0340



USA Gymnastics Jurisdiction

USA Gymnastics has jurisdiction over its member clubs and members, including all adults authorized by USA Gymnastics or a USA Gymnastics member/member club to have regular contact with or authority over minor or amateur athletes. USA Gymnastics handles reports of the other forms of misconduct. Any violation of the SafeSport Code or USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy can and should be reported to USA Gymnastics.

To report all forms of non-sexual misconduct to USA Gymnastics Safe Sport



[usagym.org/pages/
education/safesport](https://usagym.org/pages/education/safesport)



833.844.7233

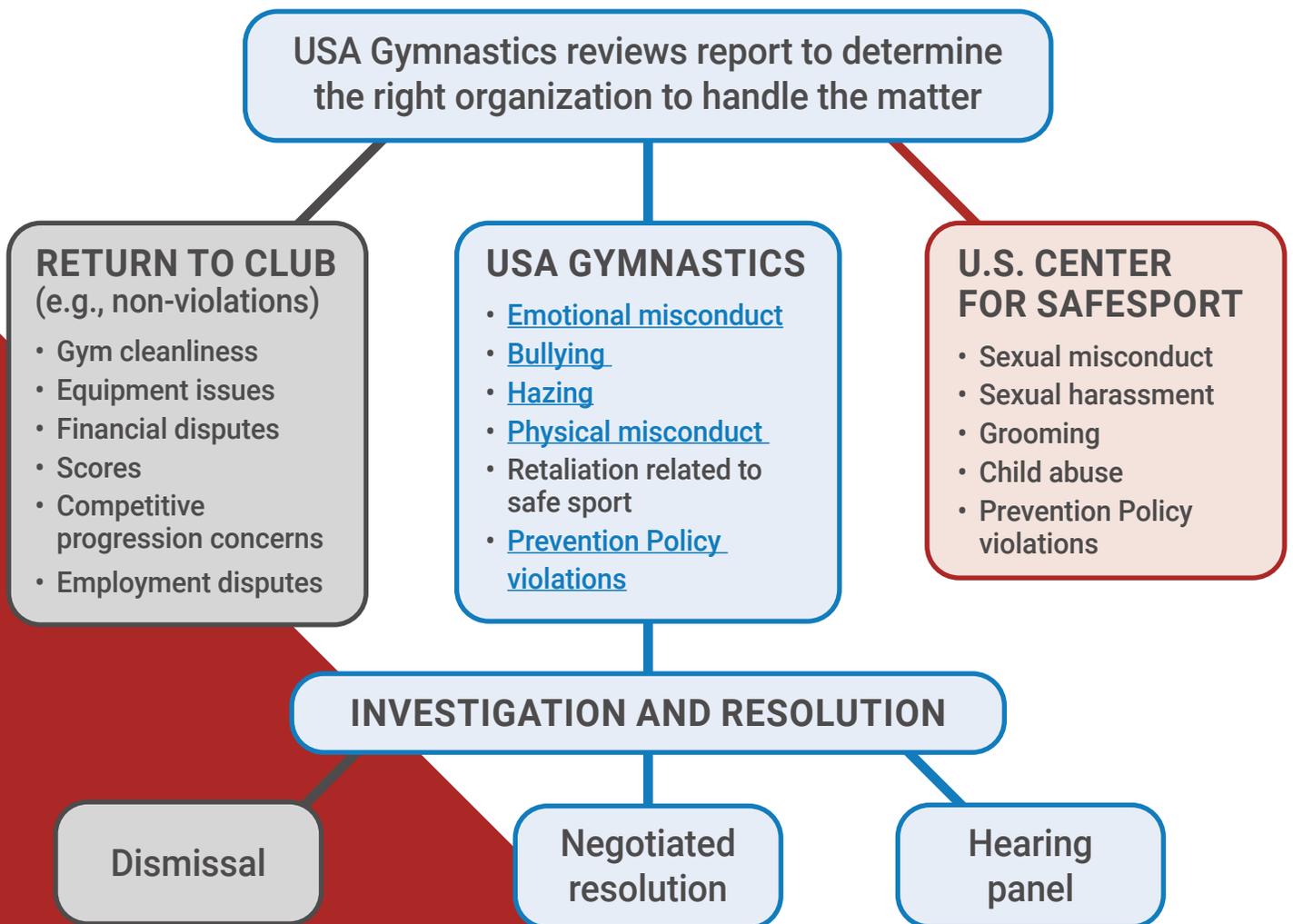
Making a Report to USA Gymnastics

All USA Gymnastics professional members, athletes and parents play important roles in fostering a safe, positive and encouraging environment for all members, which includes reporting suspected misconduct. USA Gymnastics takes every report seriously, and your report matters!

Child abuse in any form, including sexual abuse, must first be reported to local, state or federal authorities before filing reports with USA Gymnastics or the U.S. Center for SafeSport. Reporters should not attempt to conduct their own investigation.

To find your state reporting laws: [childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/can/reporting](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/can/reporting)

What happens after I make a report to USA Gymnastics?



TYPES OF MISCONDUCT

SEXUAL

Sexual misconduct includes sexual conduct without consent, sexual relationships involving a power imbalance, sexual harassment and any attempts to engage in sexual misconduct.

EMOTIONAL

Repeated and severe non-contact behavior that includes any act or conduct described as emotional abuse under federal or state law. There are three forms of emotional misconduct: verbal, physical, and acts that deny support.

PHYSICAL

Any intentional contact or non-contact behavior that causes or reasonably threatens to cause physical harm to another person.

STALKING

Unwanted or repeated surveillance by an individual or group towards another person.

BULLYING

Behavior that is repetitive and involves an imbalance of power that is aggressive, directed at a minor, and intended to hurt, control or diminish a child/athlete/individual.

HAZING

Conduct that endangers, abuses, humiliates, degrades or intimidates the person as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a group/team.

HARASSMENT

Repeated and severe conduct used in an attempt to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance. Creates a hostile environment, offends, degrades or reflects discriminatory bias.

MISCONDUCT RELATED TO REPORTING AND PROCESS

Abusing the Safe Sport process is a serious offense and could lead to severe consequences. Misconduct related to reporting and/or the process is dangerous for the gymnastics community.

RELATED TO REPORTING

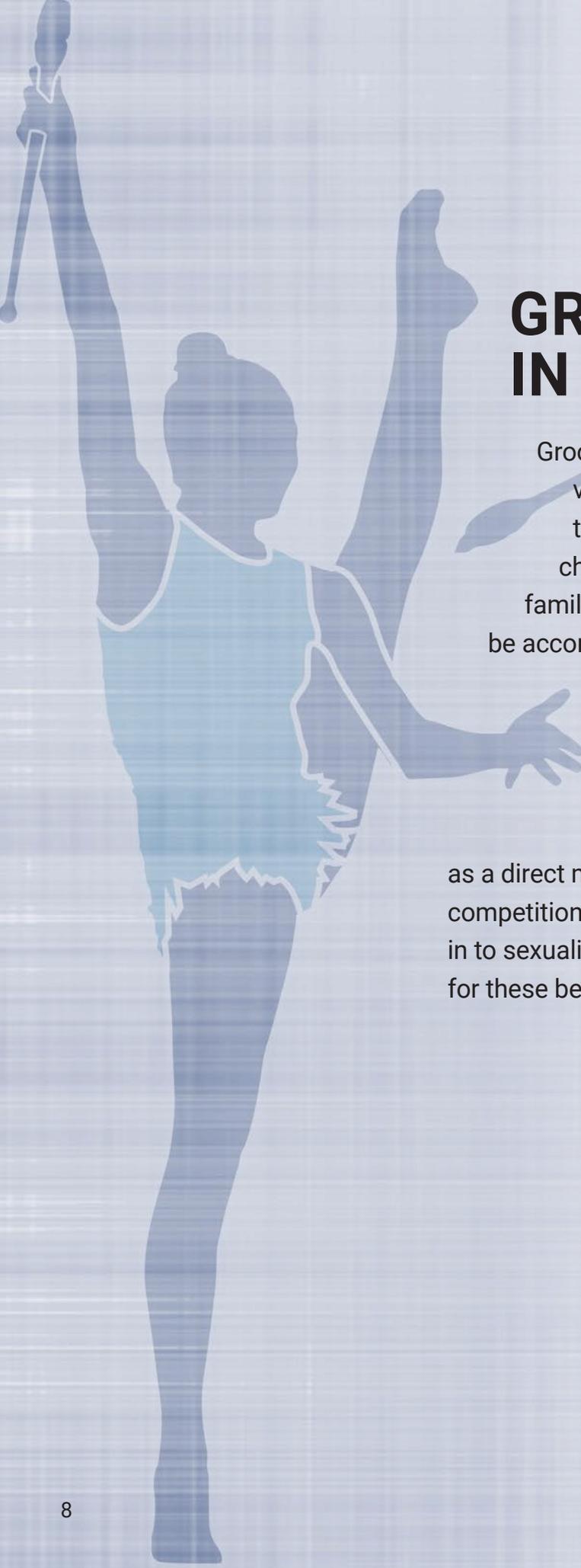
- Failure to report
- Intentionally filing a false allegation

RELATED TO PROCESS

- Abuse of process
- Retaliation

AIDING & ABETTING

Knowingly facilitating, promoting or encouraging a violation of any restriction placed on a member or participant by the U.S. Center for SafeSport or USA Gymnastics.



GROOMING IN SPORT

Grooming is a process where offenders gradually draw victims into a sexual relationship and maintain that relationship in secrecy. A person grooming a child seeks to gain trust with both the child and the family through the process of desensitization. This can be accomplished by offering to take the child home from practice or offering a personal gift, even when that gift is not part of a club's motivational reward system. Those seeking to lure children will often find ways to communicate with the child outside of gymnastics activities, such as a direct message on social media or during travel for a competition. The grooming process is a way of luring a child in to sexualizing the relationship. It's up to all of us to watch for these behaviors.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TYPES OF MISCONDUCT

SEXUAL | Sexual misconduct and sexual abuse are examples of some of the most damaging power one person can hold over another. The reasons athletes stay silent and/or are afraid to speak up are many, from fear of retaliation to not being believed. The effects of sexual misconduct can range in severity from physical symptoms of eating disorders, changes in sleep patterns and increased startled response, to emotional effects including depression, anxiety, guilt, fear and self-blame. Sexual abuse can happen to both girls and boys. If you are told about abuse, you should listen, believe and report immediately.

Sexual misconduct offenses includes:

- Any sexual conduct between an adult and a minor;
- Gender or sexual orientation harassment;
- Non-consensual sexual contact;
- Sexual exploitation;
- Sexualized bullying or hazing;
- A coach asking about an athlete's sex life or discussing his or her sex life with an athlete;
- Sending or requesting nude photos;
- Exposing athletes to pornographic materials.

Believe the Athlete

Sexual misconduct is defined as sexual conduct without consent, sexual relationships involving a power imbalance, sexual relations with a minor, and sexual harassment, among others.

All sexual contact between a coach and athlete, regardless of age, is strictly prohibited.

Sexual misconduct is not limited to sexual contact between a minor and adult and includes any non-consensual sexual contact between two persons.

EMOTIONAL | Emotional misconduct is one of the hardest forms of abuse to recognize. It can be subtle and manipulative or overt and blatantly obvious. Athletes who have been emotionally abused will often show signs of depression, loss of interest in gymnastics, anxiety before practice and uncontrollable crying. Emotional misconduct is confusing to describe because abuse is often confused with "tough coaching" and will often have elements of humiliation and embarrassment. It's about power and control.

Some signs of emotional misconduct:

- Pattern of verbal abuse, such as name calling, yelling, and repeated personal attacks that often start with a negative adjective and "you statements."
 - "You are the **worst** athlete I've ever coached!"
 - "You are **too fat** to ever be successful."
 - "You are **useless**."
- Using language that is discriminatory in nature, such as attacks on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion or body weight.
- Striking or throwing objects to create an environment of fear.
- Deliberate isolation for long periods of time that has no training or motivational purpose.
- Using phrases that are meant to make a victim question his/her own perception of the situation.
 - "You are **too sensitive** to be a good athlete."
 - "You are **such a baby**. Grow up!"
 - "It was a **joke**. You can't take a joke?"

Emotional misconduct is meant to invalidate the opinions, talents or success of an athlete. It may take weeks or months to establish a pattern of behavior, so it's important to listen for words that are meant to degrade, insult and/or single out an individual.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TYPES OF MISCONDUCT *(cont.)*

PHYSICAL

Physical abuse in sports is serious and often happens when the intensity of a coach's demands exceed an athlete's abilities. Physical misconduct is intentional behavior that causes or reasonably threatens physical harm to an athlete and can be identified by contact, non-contact and the absence of athlete care. Physical misconduct can take on many forms, from the obvious to not so obvious, and usually includes elements of emotional abuse and almost always with the intent to humiliate.

Physical misconduct includes:

- **CONTACT:** Beating, punching, slapping, striking.

It is never okay for anyone to strike another person in any setting, and there is no approved coaching method in any sport where physical abuse is considered appropriate. If you have been harmed by being hit, slapped or kicked, please contact your local police or legal authorities immediately. You should also file a report with USA Gymnastics Safe Sport.

- **NON-CONTACT:** Confinement; forcing an athlete to assume a painful position for no athletic purpose; denying hydration, medical attention or nutrition.

Non-contact physical misconduct is difficult to recognize and will often be veiled in the explanation of "tough" coaching practices. It can include isolating an athlete from the rest of the team for an undetermined period of time or denying water as punishment for failing to complete a skill in the correct way. The intent is obedience and the method is through fear.

- **ABSENCE OF ATHLETE CARE:** Encouraging or knowingly permitting an injured athlete to return to practice without clearance by medical professional or parental authority.

In the simplest of terms, this type of misconduct includes the manipulation of a gymnast to train, demanding a gymnast train on an injury against advice of a medical professional, or having an athlete return to training when a medical professional has not approved the return.

STALKING

Stalking is the act of purposefully engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person, knowing the conduct would cause a reasonable person to fear for her/his safety.

Stalkers often:

- Follow their target and show up unannounced or uninvited;
- Send unwanted gifts, letters or emails;
- Calling or texting repeatedly;
- Drive by their target's home or school.

In gymnastics, a stalker may pursue a gymnast who has left the sport or found a new coach or place to train. Stalking is serious and can escalate over time.

For more information on stalking, please visit the Stalking Resource Center at <https://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-information>.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TYPES OF MISCONDUCT *(cont.)*

BULLYING | **Bullying is an unwanted act that is repeated, intentional and involves a power imbalance.** Bullying can also be seen among adults through workplace bullying and is meant to harm the social standing and career of a colleague. Bullying in gymnastics isn't isolated to any age group and can be found in all levels of gymnastics.

- Bullying is meant to create fear in another person who feels helpless to respond, as well as eliminate the social standing of the targeted individual.
- An act of bullying can be committed by one person or by a group.
- Bullying can include name-calling, ridiculing, lying, and taunting based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or disability.

Children who have been bullied often show signs of depression, anxiety, wanting to quit their favorite activity, and fear retaliation if they report to an adult.

HAZING | **Hazing is any situation that intentionally causes humiliation or embarrassment to members trying to gain acceptance from others or a team.** Hazing has often been considered a rite of passage for teammates, where participation in specific initiation activities – like beatings, illegal activities or forced consumption of alcohol – is a requirement for team acceptance. Hazing is considered a crime in most states if it results in bodily harm.

Here are a few specific examples.

- Hazing is any conduct that endangers, abuses, humiliates, degrades or intimidates a person as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a team.
 - Contact acts – tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining another person.
 - Non-contact acts – forcing consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs, personal servitude, excessive training requirements.
-

HARASSMENT | **Harassment demeans or embarrasses a person and is intended to make him/her feel uncomfortable and fear losing his/her job if he/she isn't compliant with the harasser's desires.** Harassment can include inappropriate types of touching and verbal or written remarks.

- Harassment involves repeated attempts to establish dominance, superiority over an individual or group.
- Determining if conduct is harassment depends on the totality of the circumstances, including the nature, frequency, intensity, location, context and duration of the behavior.
- Conduct may not rise to the level of harassment if it is rude, mean or saying something hurtful that is not a part of a behavior pattern.



STAYING PROACTIVE

USA Gymnastics has identified 10 policies meant to set professional and acceptable boundaries between adults in a position of power and athletes. These guidelines are intended to reduce isolated interactions with minors; prevent the grooming process that leads to sexual abuse; and help athletes, parents and other adults recognize inappropriate behavior. These policies help create an atmosphere of confidence in an organization when adopted and embraced by all members.

1 : 1

One-on-one interactions between an adult and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible.

TRAVEL

No minor athlete shall ride alone in a vehicle with an unrelated adult involved in gymnastics.

SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

All electronic communication originating from adults to minors must include a second adult or one other person.

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographs or videos of athletes may only be taken in public view and must observe generally accepted standards of decency.

LOCKER ROOM/ CHANGING AREA

Adults are not permitted to be alone with minors in locker rooms or changing areas.

GIFTING

No personal gifts are permitted. Gifts must be equally distributed to all athletes and serve a motivational or educational purpose.

MASSAGING

All rubdowns and massages require consent from the athlete and minor's legal guardian. Massages are not permitted beyond immediate pain mitigation while on the competition or training floor. All massages must be performed in an open and interruptible location.

ICING/TAPING

Icing or taping performed on an athlete must be in an open and interruptible location.

STRETCHING & OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT

Care should be taken to prevent and avoid any compromising positions while stretching or interacting with athletes.

DRUGS/ALCOHOL

No coach, trainer or instructor who is impaired may interact with a gymnast.

ACCESS TO TRAINING SESSIONS

All member clubs must allow parents of minors to access or observe training.

ABOUT THE PREVENTION POLICIES

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Promoting a safe environment for athletes begins when all adult-athlete interactions are professional in nature and one-on-one interaction is limited. The one-on-one policy applies to all situations, including training, medical and athletic training treatments, office meetings, communications, social media, locker rooms, restrooms and travel. One-on-one contact is not permitted outside of gymnastics activities.



One-on-one interaction is defined as one unrelated adult and one minor athlete alone. All interactions must be observable and at a distance allowing interruption by another adult.

- Office meetings must occur with the door unlocked or open. If the subject matter requires a closed door with a minor, then the minor's parent must be involved.
- Parents have the ability to observe training sessions and all medical/athletic training treatments.
- Social media and electronic communication must remain professional in nature and include other adults.

Observable & Interruptible

- Travel
- Locker Rooms/Bathrooms
- Medical Treatments
- Training Sessions
- Social Media
- Office Meetings

TRAVEL

All member clubs must have a travel policy that is published and provided to all adult gymnasts, legal guardians, coaches and other adults.

USA Gymnastics strongly recommends that the member club obtain a signature by each adult acknowledging the responsibilities for both local and team travel. For Parental consent options, please see Safe Sport Policy.



– One-on-one policy always applies. –

SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

USA Gymnastics encourages members and member clubs to participate in social media by posting their experiences and photos as a show of support for their club and team.



Some key points to remember

- Posts between adults and minors must be open and transparent.
- All communications must be professional in nature and team focused.
- Any electronic communication between a minor athlete and an unrelated adult should copy another participating adult and/or the minor's parent or guardian.

Clubs are encouraged to publish a social media and electronic communications policy for all staff

ABOUT THE PREVENTION POLICIES *(cont.)*

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographs or videos of athletes must be taken in public view and observe generally accepted standards of decency. An athlete and/or his/her legal guardian may request his or her photo be removed from display or posting.



LOCKER ROOMS/ CHANGING AREAS

should regularly and randomly monitor the use of locker rooms, changing areas, and restrooms at their club.

Athletes have the right to privacy in locker rooms, changing areas, and restrooms. At no time should an unrelated adult be alone with an athlete in this environment. Member clubs



– One-on-one policy always applies at all times. –

GIFTING

To prevent the grooming of athletes or an imbalance of power between the athlete and coach, gift-giving by an unrelated member of USA Gymnastics is prohibited.

USA Gymnastics encourages member clubs to set their own guidelines for a reward system that equally applies to all athletes. Gifts must serve a motivational, inspirational, or educational purpose.



MASSAGING, ICING, TAPING

Any rubdown or massage performed by an unrelated adult on a minor or amateur athlete must be conducted in an open and interruptible environment, within the presence of another person. The one-on-one policy must be adhered to at all times. Parents must be notified prior to, and permitted to observe, any massaging, taping or similar treatment.

Any rubdown or massage performed by an unrelated adult on a minor or amateur athlete must be conducted in an open and interruptible environment, within the presence of another person. The one-on-one policy must be adhered to at all times. Parents must be notified prior to, and permitted to observe, any massaging, taping or similar treatment.



Members of USA Gymnastics are not permitted to provide massages to athletes beyond immediate pain mitigation during competition or training.

ABOUT THE PREVENTION POLICIES *(cont.)*

STRETCHING & OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT

USA Gymnastics recognizes the importance for a coach to adjust the body of the gymnast to help him or her understand proper alignment, positioning and overall safety. Best practices include using different approaches in coaching, such as the use of visual and verbal cues when



possible; an appreciation for the personal space of the gymnast while stretching, and to make sure all hands-on corrections are made in a professional manner and in an open and interruptible location.

Physical contact that is reasonably intended to coach, teach or demonstrate a gymnastics skill or to prevent or lessen injury (e.g., spotting, catching) is permissible. Infrequent, non-intentional physical contact, particularly contact that arises out of an error or a misjudgment on the part of the gymnast, participant or coach, does not violate this policy.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Because a coach, trainer or instructor is so directly tied to a gymnast's physical safety during training and competition, it is imperative that such persons not interact with gymnasts while physically or emotionally impaired. Adult members must



refrain from interacting with gymnasts during times when they may have diminished reactions subsequent to using alcohol or drugs.

ACCESS TO TRAINING SESSIONS

All training sessions should be held in open and interruptible locations, and all member clubs must institute measures to allow athlete parents or guardians to watch their children during training. Parameters for parent/guardian viewing may be set for athlete safety and can be in person or via a closed-circuit monitor. Clubs are encouraged to publish rules for viewing.



Parents/guardians demonstrating misbehavior or inappropriate conduct may be asked to leave, but may not be denied access for an undetermined amount of time.

STAY VIGILANT AND INFORMED

The information in this Snapshot is just that, a brief overview of the safety and prevention measures included in the USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy. Members and the gymnastics community need to read the entire policy to understand the full scope of the policy and the associated responsibilities. USA Gymnastics will offer a number of educational opportunities tailored to each segment of the entire membership, including webinars, courses, articles, and seminars. Additional information is also available on the website.

Everyone has a role, and USA Gymnastics encourages all club owners, coaches, parents, and athletes to actively participate in athlete safety initiatives. Safe sport is more than policies and reporting. It is about creating training environments where gymnasts have a voice and can thrive, have fun, be successful and be themselves. Clubs that embrace a philosophy of safety generate an atmosphere where coaches are well trained, parents are well informed, and athletes are heard, encouraged and enjoy success.

At USA Gymnastics, we pledge to offer ongoing information and education, listen to feedback, and seek to innovate as we move forward for the welfare of athletes and all members.

USA Gymnastics uses several methods of communicating to our membership: the website; club and parent newsletters; and social media.

FIND USA GYMNASTICS ON THE WEB

 usagym.org • usagym.org/safesport

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

 Twitter: [@usagym](https://twitter.com/usagym) • [@usagymsafesport](https://twitter.com/usagymsafesport)

 Facebook: [USA Gymnastics](https://www.facebook.com/USAGymnastics) • [Member Services](https://www.facebook.com/USAGymnastics/MemberServices)

CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS

 Safesportpolicy@usagym.org

 Member Services: 800.345.4719

 Safe Sport Helpline: 833.844.7233



USA GYMNASTICS.