

SAFE SPORT TIPS

FOR MEDIA

COMMUNICATING WITH ATHLETES

No Direct Social Media Contact

- Never reach out to youth athletes through social media channels.
- Use team or sport organization-approved methods of communication to avoid any appearance of impropriety or overstepping boundaries.

Follow Team or Sport Organization Protocols

- Coordinate with the team or sport organization's media liaison, communication staff, or other administrative staff to follow their specific media guidelines. Teams or organizations may have procedures in place for managing media access to athletes.
- Respect team schedules and avoid disrupting practices, games, or team events without prior permission from the sport organization or team.

Obtain Consent

- In addition to coordinating with team or sport organizations, obtain consent from a parent/guardian before interviewing, photographing, or obtaining video footage of a youth athlete.
- Ensure the parent/guardian and youth athlete understand the purpose, scope, and format of the media interaction, including if you may be requesting any B-roll/supplemental footage or photographs.
- Ensure the parent/guardian and athlete understand how the final interview product (e.g., article, radio interview, on-camera interview, etc.) will be used and shared.
- Ensure the parent/guardian and athlete understand how and where the final photograph or video footage will be used and shared (e.g., social media, article, etc.).

Include Parents/Guardians

- Include a youth athlete's parent/guardian in all communications throughout the entire process (e.g., in all emails).

INTERVIEWS

Supervised Interviews

- Interviews should take place in the presence of a parent/guardian or team official.
Avoid all interview situations where a media member is alone with a youth athlete.

Provide a Comfortable Atmosphere

- Conduct interviews in safe, public, and comfortable settings, such as a public area within the team's facility or a neutral area where the athlete feels safe.
- Make sure the athlete feels comfortable with the format of the interview. Doing a pre-interview is encouraged to ensure the athlete and their parent/guardian are aware of the topics that will be discussed.

Consider Appropriate Interview Structure

- Try to keep interviews relatively short, recognizing youth athletes have shorter attention spans and less experience dealing with the media.
- Do not ask leading questions that may pressure athletes into saying something they do not mean or are not comfortable expressing. Keep questions open-ended and allow them to answer at their own pace.

Age-Appropriate Communication

- Use language and questions that are appropriate for the age and maturity of the athlete.
- Avoid jargon or complex terminology that younger athletes might not fully understand.

Respect Privacy and Boundaries

- Avoid questions that could be too personal or invasive. Do not ask for or reveal personal information about youth athletes, such as home addresses, schools they attend (unless part of the story), or personal contact details.
- Refrain from discussing sensitive topics that could be uncomfortable or damaging to a young athlete's well-being (e.g., family issues, mental health concerns, etc.).

Be Sensitive to Athletes' Well-Being

- Be mindful of the well-being of athletes. Avoid pushing athletes to speak about recent defeats, injuries, or personal challenges if they seem distressed or unwilling.
- Ensure interviews are not too lengthy, as this can be overwhelming for young athletes.
- Respect an athlete's right to not answer certain questions. If an athlete feels uncomfortable at any point, respect their decision to end the interview or interaction.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO FOOTAGE

Follow Venue and Access Protocols

- Stay within designated areas for the media. **Never enter locker rooms, bathrooms, or changing areas.** Interactions should not occur in or close to these locations.
- Avoid all private team spaces unless explicitly invited and supervised by organization and/or team officials.

Use Appropriate Imagery and Representation

- Avoid using images in ways that could be construed as invasive or demeaning.
- Avoid taking action shots or footage of athletes wearing revealing uniforms (e.g., swim, diving, gymnastics, beach volleyball, etc.) from inappropriate angles or positions.

Avoid Isolated Interactions and Locations

- Never be alone with a youth athlete for a photograph or for obtaining video footage.
- Never conduct one-on-one photographs or video shoots in secluded settings.

FOLLOW-UP COMMUNICATION

Allow for Questions or Concerns

- Offer the athlete's parent/guardian an opportunity to contact you if they have follow-up concerns after any media interaction.
- Provide your professional contact information to the athlete's parent/guardian and sport organization for potential follow-up questions (**all contact information should be exchanged between adults**).

DEVELOPING THE STORY

Observe Legal Requirements

- Media must comply with all relevant local laws regarding child protection, privacy, and the publication of images and interviews with minors.
- Be aware of laws governing how media platforms handle children's personal information.

Ensure Accuracy and Fair Representation

- Present an athlete's views and statements accurately without taking them out of context.
- Avoid exaggerating an athlete's words for the sake of creating dramatic content, which can mislead audiences and negatively impact the young athlete's image.

- Ensure all imagery of youth athletes is respectful and portrays them in a positive and appropriate manner.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Education

- Media personnel should undergo training or briefing on safeguarding protocols for working with youth athletes, including recognizing signs of discomfort or stress in minors.
- Stay informed of updates and changes in safeguarding policies and laws to ensure that interactions remain ethical and legal.

Reporting

- If you witness or suspect any misconduct in sport, report it to the Sport Manitoba safe sport line at 1-833-656-SAFE (7233) or email address at help@safesportline.ca.