

SAFE SPORT HANDBOOK

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

This handbook is intended to help parents and guardians understand how they should behave and what they can do to help make sport safe and fun for everyone. Included are behaviour expectations for young athletes, parents, and guardians, examples of maltreatment, possible indications that a child may have experienced maltreatment, and guidance on what parents and guardians should do if they believe a child has experienced maltreatment in sport. Knowing how to behave and how to recognize and respond to inappropriate conduct is an important part of being a parent or guardian. Remember, safe sport is everyone's responsibility!

BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

As a parent or guardian, it is important for you to understand how young athletes should conduct themselves and what they need to know to help keep them safe in sport. All young athletes have responsibilities in sport, including:

Respecting everyone

- Young athletes are expected to treat all teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators with kindness and courtesy. Respectful behaviour includes using polite language (in person and online), refraining from physical violence, respecting others' belongings, and acting with integrity during and away from athletic competitions. Young athletes have a responsibility to treat everyone the way they want to be treated.

Including everyone

- All participants in sport deserve to feel welcomed and valued. Exclusion goes against the spirit of sport. Young athletes are expected to help create a supportive and inclusive environment by including people of all backgrounds and abilities. Everyone deserves the chance to be involved in sport in a safe and positive manner.

Respecting sport

- Respecting sport means taking pride in how athletes show up and participate. This includes wearing the appropriate attire and equipment, caring for facilities, refraining from any actions that could damage property, and avoiding the usage of prohibited substances. Athletes are expected to uphold respectful behaviour both on and off the field, reflecting the integrity of the sport at all times.

Being open and honest

- Honesty builds trust and integrity in sports. It's important for athletes to speak up and tell the truth if something happens to them that makes them upset, or if they believe something is wrong. Equally important, athletes should never make up stories or accuse someone of doing something inappropriate if it didn't happen.

Following the rules

- Rules help keep sports fair, safe, and fun. Athletes are expected to know and follow the rules of their sport, listen to officials, and accept decisions without engaging in inappropriate behaviour. Officials deserve to be treated with the utmost respect.

Rule of two

- Young athletes should never be in a situation where they are alone with a coach, whether in-person or during electronic communication. All interactions should be observable.

BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

As a parent or guardian, you play a critical role in ensuring that young athletes are safe and have positive experiences. It is important for all parents and guardians to adhere to the following behaviour expectations:

Duty to report

- In Manitoba, it is the legal responsibility and duty of anyone who reasonably believes that a child is, or might be, in need of protection or suffering from child abuse, to report the information to Child and Family Services (CFS) at 1-866-345-9241. If it is an emergency, contact your local police emergency number.

Read the policies

- Take a moment to learn about your child's sport organization's policies. Important policies like the Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy are meant to help create a safe, respectful, and positive sport environment for everyone involved.

Know who's coaching

- Ask if your child's coach has complied with background screening requirements and what sort of coach education/training they have.

Explore parental education

- Stay informed of safe sport education opportunities for parents and guardians, including the [Respect in Sport for Parents](#) e-learning module. This module details appropriate parental behaviour, examples of maltreatment and inappropriate conduct, and what parents and guardians should do if these situations occur in sport.

Inform your child

- Sport Manitoba has created [safe sport tips for young athletes](#) (8U, 9-12, and 13+) to help keep them safe. Share these tips with your child to ensure that they understand that inappropriate behaviour is never acceptable in sport. It's important that your child understands to treat everyone as they would like to be treated. Also, ensure that your child knows they should contact you or another trusted adult immediately if they ever don't feel comfortable or safe in sport.

Check in on your child

- Talk with your child regularly on how they feel about their teammates, coaches, and others in sport. For older children, check in on their social media usage.

Act as a role model

- Model positive and respectful behaviour by being polite and courteous to others. This will influence your child to behave appropriately and treat others in sport with respect.

Respect the rules

- Adhere to the rules of your child's sport. Also, encourage your child to compete within the rules and resolve potential conflicts without resorting to inappropriate conduct such as physical violence.

Respect all sport participants

- Never disrespect any participants involved in sport. This includes your child, their teammates, and their opponents. Children do not like to hear their parents or guardians yelling at or criticizing others while they are playing sports. This distracts them and takes away from their enjoyment.

Respect the coaches

- Respect the decisions of your child's coaches during practices and games. It is never appropriate to criticize or yell at your child's coach during sporting events. It is equally important to respect the opposing team's coaches.

Respect the officials

- Be polite and respectful toward officials. Encourage your child to do the same. It is never appropriate to confront, criticize, or yell at officials.

Respect other parents

- Never harass other parents, guardians, or spectators at any time. Parental and spectator altercations are completely unacceptable in sport.

Rule of two

- Ensure all interactions with your child and their coach are open and observable. Never allow your child to be alone with a coach in a private setting. Also ensure that all electronic communication between your child and their coach is through a group chat or includes you. One-on-one electronic communication between your child and a coach is never acceptable.

Understand the difference

- Understand that it is okay for young athletes to be challenged and disciplined in sport. Encouraging young athletes to try their hardest and knowing that athletes may face consequences for behaving inappropriately is important for parents and guardians. However, it is never acceptable for a young athlete to experience maltreatment. If you think a young athlete has experienced maltreatment, report it immediately.

Substances

- Refrain from consuming cannabis and/or alcohol during youth sport competitions.

Be supportive

- Encourage and support your child to play sports that interest them to their fullest abilities. Try not to control your child's athletic decisions, live vicariously through your child, or compare your child to other children.

Prioritize fun

- Promote fun, hard work, and respectful participation with your child. Refrain from promoting a win-at-all-cost attitude.

Relax and enjoy

- Enjoy watching your child play sports. They are young for such a short time. Try not to put too much pressure on them or rush them through childhood – it is a very brief and important period of time in their lives.

MALTREATMENT IN SPORT

It is a violation of Sport Manitoba's Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy for all participants, including parents and guardians, to engage in any of these behaviours:

Psychological maltreatment

- Any deliberate conduct that has the potential to be harmful to a person's psychological well-being.
- Examples:
 - Verbal conduct: verbally attacking someone; unwarranted personal criticisms, including in online forms; body shaming; derogatory comments related to one's identity (e.g., race, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, etc.); comments that are demeaning, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening.
 - Non-assaultive physical conduct: throwing objects at someone without hitting them; damaging another's personal belongings.
 - Actively denying attention and support: socially isolating a person for an extended period of time; abandoning a participant as punishment for poor performance; unreasonably denying feedback, training opportunities, support or attention.

Physical maltreatment

- Any deliberate conduct, including contact behaviours and non-contact behaviours, that has the potential to be harmful to a person's physical or psychological well-being.
- Examples:
 - Contact behaviours: hitting or kicking a participant; hitting a participant with an object.
 - Non-contact behaviours: the use of exercise as punishment; denying adequate rest, hydration, nutrition, or medical attention; permitting a participant to return to play prematurely following an injury.

Neglect

- Failure to provide adequate care and attention based on a participant's needs and requirements.
- Examples:

- Failing to consider: an athlete's injury or illness.
- Failing to provide: adequate recovery time following an injury or illness; adequate supervision; safe equipment; hydration, nutrition, and medical attention.

Sexual maltreatment

- Any pattern or a single incident, whether physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened, or attempted, and that has the potential to be harmful to a person's sexual integrity. Sexual maltreatment can take place through any form or means of communication (e.g., online, social media, verbal, written, hazing, etc.).
- Examples:
 - Contact behaviours: any non-consensual touching of a sexual nature; forcing or coercing a person into sexual acts.
 - Non-contact behaviours: indecent exposure; non-consensual distribution of sexual images; unwelcome sexual jokes or remarks; sending explicit images or messages.

Grooming

- Deliberate conduct comprised of one or several acts that either make it easier to engage in sexual maltreatment or reduce the chance that sexual maltreatment will be reported.
- Examples:
 - Online and/or in person conduct including: being overly nice to a young athlete; building trust with a young athlete; testing a young athlete's ability to keep a secret; making a young athlete feel special, often by providing them with gifts or special treatment; creating opportunities to be alone with or have unsupervised time with a young athlete; testing boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (e.g., "accidental" touching, comments about sexual topics, etc.); making a young athlete feel like they are responsible or guilty for speaking out.

Boundary transgressions

- Interactions or communications that breach reasonable boundaries or are inconsistent with a participant's role or responsibilities. These include a wide range of activities that do not meet the threshold of maltreatment but are nonetheless viewed as inappropriate.
- Examples:
 - Communicating privately with a minor through social media or text; sharing inappropriate personal photographs; arranging for or engaging in inappropriate sharing of locker rooms; one-on-one meetings with minors that are not held in an open and observable environment.

Discrimination

- Behaviour, policies, and/or practices that contribute to differential, inequitable, adverse or otherwise inappropriate treatment of or impact on an individual or class of individuals based on one or more prohibited grounds which include, but are not limited to, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, Indigeneity, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, language, and genetic characteristics or disability.
- Examples:
 - Denying someone access to services or opportunities; communicating harmful messages; perpetuating misogynistic, racist, ableist, homophobic, or transphobic attitudes and stereotypes.

Subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment

- Placing participants in situations that make them vulnerable to maltreatment.
- Examples:
 - Instructing an athlete and coach to share a hotel room when travelling; knowingly hiring a participant who has a past history of committing acts of maltreatment.

Aiding and abetting

- Any act or communication with the purpose of assisting or encouraging the commission of maltreatment by or against a participant.
- Examples:
 - Knowingly allowing any person who is suspended, or is otherwise ineligible, to participate in a sport organization's activities.

Failure to report

- Adults failing to submit a report when they know, or ought to have known, of a participant engaging in maltreatment.

Intentionally reporting a false allegation

- Knowingly reporting, or influencing another to report an allegation of maltreatment that did not occur.

Interference with or manipulation of process

- Directly or indirectly interfering with or manipulating an investigation or disciplinary review process.
- Examples:

- Destroying, falsifying, concealing, or misrepresenting information; attempting to discourage or prevent a person's participation in the processes.

Retaliation

- Taking an adverse action against any person for making a good faith report of possible maltreatment or for participating in any enforcement process.
- Examples:
 - Threats, intimidation, coercion, or any other behaviour that would discourage a person from participating in an investigation or disciplinary process.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS THAT A CHILD EXPERIENCED MALTREATMENT

Parents and guardians must be aware of the possible physical and behavioural signs that may suggest a child has experienced maltreatment. Below are some common indicators associated with various forms of maltreatment. While some of these indicators are specific to certain types of maltreatment, please note that other indicators may appear across multiple forms:

Possible Indicators of Psychological Maltreatment
<p><i>Physical Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bed wetting ● Frequent headaches ● Evidence of self-harm ● Chronic crying or illnesses
<p><i>Behavioural Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear of failure or having overly high standards ● Fear of consequences of actions, sometimes resulting in lying ● Being overly compliant, too well-mannered and wanting to please others ● Showing extreme attention-seeking behaviours ● Becoming unusually anxious ● Increased isolation or anti-social behaviour ● Avoidance of specific people and/or places ● Difficulty forming peer relationships ● Low self-esteem or negative self-image ● Difficulty managing emotions ● Showing extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness ● Exhibiting violence often expressed in art form or writing ● Self-harming behaviour including suicidal thoughts or attempts ● Running away or runaway attempts ● Loss of interest or excitement for sport or school

- Fear or reluctance to attend sport or school

Possible Indicators of Physical Maltreatment

Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises or marks
- Unexplained fractures, sprains, swellings, dislocations, or head injuries
- Bruising in unusual places (e.g., neck or behind the ears)
- Numerous scratches or scars in a consistent pattern
- Injuries that look like they may have been caused by an object
- Missing hair or teeth

Behavioural Indicators:

- Increased anger, frustration, or verbal outbursts
- Begin to act out or display risk-taking behaviour
- Expressing suicidal thoughts or show self-destructive behaviour
- Demonstrating fear to those in positions of authority
- Acting frightened when faced with disapproval or criticism
- Wearing clothing attempting to cover up injuries
- Flinching at sudden movements or shying away from physical touch
- Acting defensive about injuries

Possible Indicators of Neglect

Physical Indicators:

- Injuries from a lack of supervision
- Injuries where medical care has been delayed or avoided
- Medical needs not attended to
- Appearing sick or dehydrated
- Sudden weight loss
- Poor personal hygiene

Behavioural Indicators:

- Tired, exhausted, or unable to concentrate
- Persistent hunger
- Appearing unusually sad
- Appearing disinterested in surroundings
- Lack of response to affection or positive attention
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Seeking attention in negative ways

- Reduced participation in school or sport
- Declining performance in school or sport

Possible Indicators of Sexual Maltreatment

Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained or persistent pain, or itching in physical private areas
- Bruises, bleeding, or swelling of physical private areas
- Difficulty going to the bathroom or swallowing
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Frequent stomachaches
- Frequent headaches
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Vomiting without clear medical cause
- Noticeable changes in appearance
- Sudden weight gain or loss

Behavioural Indicators:

- Suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Possession of unexplained gifts or money
- Sexual knowledge or behaviour that is not age-appropriate
- Being overly angry or hostile towards others
- Significant changes in school and/or sport performance and attendance
- Reluctant to participate in sport or physical activities
- Reluctant to undress or take showers after sports
- Disordered eating habits
- Sleep disturbances, such as nightmares, or fear of falling asleep
- Fear of closed spaces
- Poor self-care
- Withdrawing from others
- Significant amounts of time using the internet
- Secretive behaviour

WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD EXPERIENCED MALTREATMENT

Be a helpful bystander

- Support all efforts to stop and prevent inappropriate conduct. Listen to sport participants and notice when an event is harmful or potentially harmful. You can

document/make note of any inappropriate behaviour that has occurred. If you feel safe to do so, directly intervene by discouraging the negative behaviour. Another option is to delegate/ask someone else with authority, such as a coach or administrator, to address the situation.

Sport Manitoba safe sport line

- If you witness or suspect inappropriate conduct in sport and are unsure what to do, contact the Sport Manitoba safe sport line at 1-833-656-SAFE (7233) or email address at help@safesportline.ca.

Call 911

- If you believe a young athlete is in immediate danger, contact the police by calling 911 or your local police emergency number.

Non-emergency

- If you believe a child has been harmed but is not in an immediate emergency, contact Child and Family Services (CFS) at 1-866-345-9241. In Winnipeg, contact (204) 944-4200.

Support services

- A number of support services including the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (1-800-532-9135) are available to provide you with additional forms of assistance. Visit Sport Manitoba's [Safe Sport Support Services](#) page to view additional support services.

How to report a maltreatment complaint - [CLICK HERE](#)

- If you believe that your child has experienced maltreatment in sport, click on the link above to watch a video that will show how you can make a report to an Independent Third Party. Make the report by visiting Sport Manitoba's [safe sport webpage](#).