

Abuse Avoidance Training for Minors Ages 13-17

Introduction

Sports are supposed to be fun, but on rare occasions the bad actions of some adults may result in child abuse. Children need to be informed about the different types and warning signs of abuse, be aware of situations to avoid to reduce the risk of abuse, and know when and how to report incidents.

In 2018, Congress passed a new federal law, "The Safe Sport Act." This law requires sports organizations, subject to parental consent, to provide training for minors regarding prevention and reporting of child abuse, and a process to allow a complainant to easily report any incident of child abuse to the appropriate persons.

At a minimum, we strongly recommend that parents review this training document, and based on your child's age and maturity level, discuss only age-appropriate content contained herein with your child in the privacy of your home.

It is also recommended that parents should view additional, [free training resources on how to keep your child safe](#) from the U.S. Center for Safe Sport.

What is Abuse?

Abuse is any intentional behavior or action meant to hurt, threaten, intimidate, or control another person. Abuse can be sexual, physical, or emotional, and even broader. We will cover the different types of abuse:

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can be adult to minor or even minor to minor if there is an age difference. It includes any sexual touching or spoken sexual interactions. These may be aggressive, threatening act, or actions with an intent to exploit a power imbalance between a minor and an adult. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- An adult or someone older than a child touching the private parts of a child's body that a bathing suit or underwear would cover, or an adult making a child touch the adult's private parts. This includes such touching whether or not either party is clothed.
- An adult showing a child pictures or movies of people without clothes, engaging in sex acts, or taking these types of pictures or movies of a child.
- An adult discussing sexual matters with or in front of a child whether in person or electronically through email, texting, or social media.
- By law, minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult. As a result, any sexual activity with an adult is strictly prohibited.
- Minor-on-minor sexual abuse occurs where there is an aggressor or where there is a difference in age, power, or intellectual capabilities.

Grooming

Adults who sexually abuse children slowly groom them by gaining their trust by doing kind things for them and paying attention to them. Next, adult abusers find ways to be alone with the child and they begin nonsexual touching such as tickling or wrestling, which gradually turns into touching private parts. Once the sexual touching starts, adult abusers want to continue the sexual touching and to prevent the child from telling an adult. Abusers accomplish this by blaming the child, making them feel guilty for what has occurred, or threatening the child or the child's family with violence. Below are typical grooming behaviors and situations that lead to abuse.

- Abusers target their child victims by trying to identify a susceptible child with needs that are not being met by their parents, such as being misunderstood, lack of attention, lack of spending money, etc.

- Abusers pretend to be responsible adults, such as coaches and teachers, who care about children to win the trust of their child victims, their parents, and other staff members.
- Be alert for adults who appear to care too much and want to hang out around children too frequently outside of official team practices and games.
- Abusers often offer children gifts, money, special trips and activities, rides home, babysitting, help with homework, and other favors to be liked and trusted and to spend time alone with them.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is intentional physical contact or the threat of contact including hitting, shaking, choking, burning, pinching, beating, or other methods used to cause pain or injury. Physical abuse also includes other forms of noncontact abuse. A child who is physically abused will likely have cuts, bruises, or other marks on his/her body.

Examples of Physical Abuse

- A coach or player purposely hitting another player with a bat.
- A coach or player purposely striking a ball against another player.
- A coach forcing an athlete with an injury to play before a doctor says it is okay to play again.
- A coach or parent denying water breaks, nutrition, or medical assistance.
- A coach providing alcohol, illegal drugs, or nonprescription drugs to a player.
- Locking an athlete in a confined space.
- Forcing an athlete to hold a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is deliberate, noncontact behavior that can cause emotional or mental harm to a child that is repeated over time. Noncontact behavior can be verbal and physical, or denying a child attention or support. This includes making another person feel worthless, unwanted, or not cared for.

Examples of Emotional Abuse

- A player or players calling another player worthless, an embarrassment, or making fun of them.
- A coach refusing to allow a player to miss a practice for a family matter, or threatening to bench the player in future games if they miss practice.
- A coach throwing equipment, water bottles or chairs at or in the presence of athletes.
- A coach punching walls when the team loses the game.
- A coach or parent ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time.

Bullying is intentionally aggressive physical and/or nonphysical behavior repeated over time that hurts, threatens or frightens another person. Bullying can take place both on and off the field. Bullies can be teammates, parents, coaches, spectators, or umpires. Examples of bullying are:

- Hitting, pushing, tripping, choking, slapping, spitting, throwing objects, etc.
- Teasing, taunting, name calling, threatening, etc.
- A coach making an athlete feel like they are not part of the team.
- Fans verbally abusing players from the opposite team by saying mean things.

Cyberbullying is the use of the internet or smart phones to harass and bully another person. This can be in the form of threatening and rude text messages to an individual or group that is often repeated, flaming (an online fight with harsh language or pictures), exclusion (purposefully leaving a person out from an online group and making mean comments about them), outing (posting private and personal information, pictures, or videos), and masquerading (creating a fake social media account and pretending to be someone else).

Harassment is unwanted behavior that is repeated over time and that annoys, puts down, threatens, or offends someone else. Below are examples:

- An athlete being called bad names by teammates or a coach.
- Teammates or a coach making bad comments about an athlete's gender, disability, religion, race, or sexual orientation.
- A player who is humiliated by a coach or parent yelling at them while on the field.

Hazing is a physically harmful or offensive act that is forced onto someone or that someone is forced to do. Hazing often occurs as an initiation for a new member of a team. Hazing occurs even if an athlete agrees to go along with it. Examples of hazing are:

- A new player being taped or tied up and forced to stay in a closet.
- A player being forced to drink alcohol or to take an illegal drug.
- Forcing a player to dress or act in an inappropriate way.

Situations to Avoid

- No single child should ever be alone with a single adult other than a parent unless the child has written permission from the parents.
- Have a child buddy when alone with another adult who isn't a parent. This could be when in a car, a locker room/changing area, or in an individual coach meeting or training session. Otherwise a second adult should always be within an observable and interruptible distance.
- Do not friend any adult staff member on Facebook or send private/direct messages to an adult staff member on Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat.
- When communicating by text or email with an adult staff member, make sure that another staff member or parent is always copied on all incoming and outbound communications.
- When spending the night in hotel rooms, athletes should be paired with the same gender of a similar age. Adult chaperones should never spend the night inside the room, always remaining outside the room yet close enough to supervise.
- If an adult gives a child a gift, the child should always inform their parent or another trusted adult.

What to Do and Who to Tell

If you think that you are being abused, the most important thing you can do is to immediately tell someone you trust. Do so even if the person hurting you tells you that something bad will happen if you tell anyone. You should immediately tell your parent or guardian. If you can't trust anyone at home, talk to someone at school like a teacher, counselor, or school nurse. A family friend, pastor or neighbor can also help.

No matter what, abuse is never your fault and you don't deserve it. It's normal to feel upset, angry, and confused when someone hurts you. But don't blame yourself or worry that others will be angry with you. Even if you think you've done something wrong, that does not make it okay for someone to hurt you. All kids deserve to have adults in their lives who love and support them as they grow up.

Source:

USA Baseball: Pure Baseball Abuse Awareness for Minors Course-Master Script.

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