

Parent's Guide to Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program

Breakout Basketball, Inc. has adopted a Child Abuse and Other Misconduct Risk Management Program. Certain elements of this program are being communicated to parents in this parent's Guide in order to enhance education and to help to create an environment that is hostile to abusers. The basic elements of this program are outlined below:

Background: Child abuse/molestation has become a growing concern in recent years on a national level as the topic has received much attention in the media surrounding abuses in churches, schools and sports programs. The recent passage of the Safe Sport Act has set higher standards of care to protect youth and is in response to the failure of sports governing bodies and their local members to adequately protect their youth members.

Purpose: The purpose of this risk management program is to reduce the liability risk and related negative publicity, expense, and trauma to the local sports organization and of the children that we serve. Our program will educate staff on prohibited child abuse and other misconduct, education on how to prevent it, policies that can be implemented to reduce the risk, and how to deal with allegations of child abuse and other misconduct. However, the program is even more effective if parents receive education as well and act as an extra set of eyes.

Prohibited Child Abuse and Other Misconduct and Policies to Protect Against

- All forms of abuse are prohibited, including sexual, physical, emotional, harassment, bullying, and hazing.
- The board will appoint a league conduct official responsible for administering the child abuse and other misconduct risk management program. Responsibilities of the conduct official include staff education, reviewing volunteer applications, conducting criminal background checks, handling appeals from disqualified candidates, conducting investigations on allegations of abuse, and acting as liaison to local law enforcement.
- All staff members with repeated access to youth should be required to complete a staff application and pass a criminal background check. Staff applications and criminal background check results will be reviewed by the conduct official. Any candidate with a conviction involving crimes against a minor should be disqualified, and other charges/convictions may indicate an unsuitable candidate and be grounds for disqualification.
- Prohibited physical acts of sexual abuse include genital contact regardless of whether either party is clothed; sexual penetration; fondling of a participant's breast or buttocks; lingering or repeated embrace that goes beyond acceptable physical touch; sexual assault, exchange of a reward for sexual favors; tickling, wrestling, or massage; continued physical contact that makes a participant uncomfortable.
- Prohibited sexual abuse verbal acts include staff member discussing his/her sex life with participant; making sexually oriented comments, jokes and innuendo; requesting or sending a nude or partial dress photo; exposing participants to pornographic material; asking about a participant's sex life; voyeurism; sexting with a participant.
- Any form of grooming behavior is prohibited.
- Prohibited forms of physical abuse include, striking, choking, punching, beating, biting, slapping, or any intentional hitting a participant with objects or sports equipment; providing an underage participant with alcohol or illegal drugs or non prescribed medications to any participant; prematurely encouraging or permitting a participant to return to play after injury or sickness without clearance of a medical professional; prescribing diet or other weight control routines for humiliation purposes; isolating a participant in a confined space; forcing participant to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose; withholding or denying adequate sleep, hydration, nutrition, or medical attention.
- Prohibited forms of emotional abuse include any pattern of verbally attacking a participant personally (such as calling them worthless, disgusting or fat); physically aggressive behaviors (such as assault or throwing of objects); and ignoring a participant for extended periods of time or excluding them from practice.
- Forms of bullying include intentional, persistent, or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating (e.g., staff not preventing) physical, non physical, or cyber bullying behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate another person emotionally, physically, or sexually. Typically, it is not staff, but other participants perpetrating the bullying. However, a violation exists if a staff member is aware of or should be aware of the bullying behavior and does not intervene on behalf of the targeted participant(s).
- Prohibited hazing includes contact that is intended to intimidate, humiliate, offend or physically harm. Hazing typically serves as a condition for joining a team of being socially accepted by team members.
- Two-deep leadership (e.g. any combination of staff or parents) is required any time an adult is present with a minor participant to prevent isolation with a single unrelated adult, except in the case of an emergency.

- All electronic communications (email, texting, social media, etc.) between a staff member and a minor participant should be limited strictly to legitimate organizational activities.
- Overnight travel exposure should prohibit adults from spending the night in the same room as an unrelated minor participant. Participants should be grouped in rooms by gender and age group. Chaperones should only oversee participant groups of their same sex.
- Drop-off/pick-up of athletes by staff should be strongly discouraged due to the difficulty in preventing one-on-one contact.

Recognizing and Preventing Grooming

Grooming is how sexual predators pave the way for sexual abuse. It is a gradual attempt to gain the trust of and conditioning of minors, parents, and administrators. Parents must be aware of grooming strategies to order to recognize and report it to the conduct official. The steps in the grooming process are as follows:

- Identify a vulnerable child whose needs are not being met. This can be a lack of attention by parents, lack of spending money, not bonding with teammates, etc.
- Fill the child's needs to create a special bond. This can be accomplished by providing transportation, attention, homework help, special favors, confiding in secrets, spending money, gifts, etc.
- Gain the family's trust by spending an inordinate amount of time with them.
- Create one-on-one opportunities to isolate the victim.
- Gradually invade personal boundaries. This can begin with inappropriate electronic communications, photo sharing, wrestling, tickling, massages, and offering alcohol, drugs, or pornography that leads to nudity and sexual activity.
- Maintain control and silence of the child by use of threats and shame.

Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse and Other Misconduct

Reporting requirements to sports organizations: Any staff member or parent who has a suspicion of child abuse or other misconduct should report their concerns to the sports organization within 24 hours. The report should be made to the conduct official or board member.

Reporting requirements to law enforcement: In addition to reporting to the sports organization, staff members are usually required under state and/or federal law to directly report suspicions of child sexual abuse or physical abuse to law enforcement with consequences for failure to do so. The reason is because many sports organizations have tried to suppress the findings of their own internal investigations.

Parents Must Proactively Protect Their Own Children

Parents need to insist that the sports organization adopts and fully implements a written child abuse and other misconduct risk management plan. However, it is not enough to depend on the sports organization solely for protection and parents should in addition take the following steps:

- Have an age-appropriate conversation with the child on sexual abuse and the types of tactics predators use to lure unsuspecting youth.
- Encourage the child to have another youth "buddy" who is with their child at all times.
- Always either monitor their own child and their interaction with staff at practices and events or arrange for another parent to do the same.
- Understand that it's a red flag any time a staff member offers or is paying too much attention to a child.
- Be aware of grooming tactics and be an extra set of eyes to protect not only their own child, but others as well.

Thank you for taking the time to better understand the risk management program that is being implemented by our sports organization. Your concern and vigilance is not only appreciated, but also is an essential element of this program.