Commitment to a Safer U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Community

The United States Olympic Committee is deeply focused on critical initiatives and collaboration across the entire U.S. Olympic and Paralympic community to protect, support and empower America’s athletes.

Across the world, girls and women in particular are bravely sharing the egregious sexual abuse, harassment and discrimination they have faced for too long. This behavior has no place in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic community, and now is the time for organizations, institutions and individuals alike to reignite a culture of athlete empowerment and competitive excellence – one that is a safe, respectful and supportive environment. The USOC has made significant progress to strengthen protections for athletes, and the collective efforts to improve athlete safety must never cease.

ATHLETE SAFETY & ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN

Building upon actions taken starting in 2010, the USOC created and implemented the overarching, multi-disciplinary Athlete Safety & Advocacy Action Plan in 2018 to provide a safer environment for athletes and enable the organization to more effectively achieve its mission. Through the Action Plan, the USOC is both examining the past, and taking short- and long-term action to create a safer and more empowering environment now and in the future.

1. Important Lessons Learned
   The USOC is at a critical point in its history. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic community has an obligation to find out how the Nassar tragedy and other instances of sexual abuse happened, and take the necessary steps to help prevent such atrocities from ever recurring.

2. Commitment to Change
   While awaiting the findings of an independent investigation, the USOC is taking important actions now based on what is already known.

3. The Path Forward
   Moving forward, the USOC is reviewing the culture of elite sports in the U.S. to determine what safeguards must be strengthened and modernized to ensure the safety of the athletes it serves.

The Action Plan involves four major workstreams, which each involve several projects aimed at addressing shortcomings. Project lifespans range from six months to one or more years and beyond.

ACTION TO DATE (as of January 16, 2019)

1. SafeSport & Athlete Safety Programs

   This pillar is intended to improve the USOC’s athlete safety policies and procedures, while also increasing the capabilities of the U.S. Center for SafeSport via additional funding and support.

   - Originally enacted in December 2012, the USOC Athlete Safety Policy was updated in April 2018 to comply with the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017. Per the Act, any knowledge of possible sexual misconduct must be reported to both law enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport within 24 hours. Following the formation of an Athlete Safety Advisory Group, the policy will be further reviewed and modified as necessary.

   - The USOC hired a vice president of athlete safety in May 2018 to ensure that best practices are regularly reviewed, and athletes and survivors are fully supported. This position replaced the director of ethics and safe sport that was originally created in April 2011.

   - The USOC Athlete Safety Office has been expanded to provide additional support for investigations, program management, and support for NGBs and the U.S. Center for SafeSport.
The USOC has doubled its annual funding of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, enabling the agency to hire additional investigators and staff, improve the speedy resolution of cases, enhance ongoing communication for survivors and their families, provide age-appropriate training on recognizing and preventing abuse, and offer improved and more accessible resources via SafeSport.org.

In exercising increased NGB compliance engagement, the USOC has required NGBs to disclose all designated committee members related to funding and team selection, ongoing investigations, unresolved grievances and ethics complaints, permanently banned members, and suspended members not submitted to the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

All USOC employees and board members have completed safe sport and ethics trainings, and an independent partner is being identified to provide broader cultural training for all NGBs.

With the aim of educating a broader audience, safe sport training resources have been expanded to include agents and representatives. Safe sport training became mandatory for the USOC and NGBs on January 1, 2014.

Planning has begun for an athlete assistance fund that will extend to all sports within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements to provide support and assistance to victims of all types of abuse.

The USOC is supporting efforts to strengthen the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s website, and produced and launched a pair of public service announcements that resulted in a 30 percent increase in traffic to SafeSport.org.

The USOC is working with the U.S. Center for SafeSport to investigate a case management system to track grievances (including non-sexualized cases of bullying and harassment) that will be accessible and integrated with NGB, USOC and center data.

The USOC is supporting the Center’s effort to create a comprehensive information resource on banned and suspended individuals across the USOC, NGBs and the Center. That database will be active in the first quarter of 2019.

The USOC is working with the U.S. Center for SafeSport to agree on how best to ensure response and resolution for non-sexual abuse complaints is being effectively managed.

The USOC and the U.S. Center for SafeSport have established bi-monthly meetings with leadership from both organizations to ensure alignment on key issues.

In the first quarter of 2019, the USOC will begin implementing a new background check policy that outlines minimum standards for all member NGBs, Paralympic Sport Organizations and High-Performance Management Organizations to adopt as part of their background check requirements. The new policy identifies background check search components, inclusion of who is required to complete a background check, and offenses that may disqualify an individual from affiliation and/or participation in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements.

The USOC is working with Guidepost Solutions as an independent consultant and integrity monitor to evaluate process and procedure best practices, and to create a plan to ensure an effective response to the Ropes and Gray Investigation findings.

In November 2018, the USOC’s Coalition for the Prevention of Illness and Injury in Sport partnered with Highmark Health and the American College of Sports Medicine to host the Summit on Sexual Abuse in Sport. The Summit convened more than 100 sports medicine professionals, NGB, NCAA and International Olympic Committee representatives, as well as local and national law enforcement to discuss prevention and management of abuse in sport.
2. Athlete Advocacy

This pillar is aimed at empowering athletes to shape key USOC and NGB policies and programs, and improving education and communication to set athletes up to be successful leaders.

- The USOC sought input from its Athletes’ Advisory Council to identify top issues requiring action by both the USOC and NGBs.

- A total of 939 athletes provided feedback via a survey, allowing the USOC to gather insights into improving policies, programs and services, and to better understand athletes' priorities and issues. The survey results are being shared with the Athletes’ Advisory Council, NGBs, the U.S. Center for SafeSport and athlete respondents, along with immediate actions that the USOC is taking to address feedback.

- The USOC is evaluating and reconstructing portions of its website – including the ombudsman and athlete safety sections – to enhance and highlight the resources available to athletes.

- All athlete informational content across the USOC website has been consolidated into an athlete portal section to ensure athletes can easily find resources available to them.

- In 2018, the USOC doubled its staffing and expanded resources for the Athlete Ombudsman’s office, which offers confidential, independent advice to athletes seeking guidance on conflict and dispute resolution.

- The USOC is working with its Athletes’ Advisory Council to review athlete representation on the USOC board.

- Plans are being developed to host an Athlete Town Hall with the aim of engaging a diverse set of athletes in a dialogue around key issues and actionable response to areas of concern.

- The USOC realigned existing departments under a new athlete and sport services division to enhance efforts around athlete safety, services, engagement and communication. The new division creates separation between athlete and NGB services from high-performance initiatives, while allowing for continued alignment with needs for onfield support.

- The USOC is evaluating technology vendors to partner in developing an athlete app that will be used for two way communication with athletes in sharing content and getting feedback.

- The USOC is developing a plan to enhance mental health services provided to athletes support that improve their overall well-being.

- The Athlete Safety Policy, which applies to all USOC members – including employees, coaches, contracted staff, volunteers, and board, committee and task force members – will be further reviewed and modified as necessary based on input from the Athletes’ Advisory Council and other athlete feedback.

- The USOC responded to facts provided by the Ropes & Gray report by terminating the employment of the Chief of Sport Performance.

- The USOC is closely reviewing facts from the Ropes and Gray Report and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Report while working with Congress and the Borders Commission to plan additional actions and reforms.

3. Evaluate and Reform USOC Engagement with NGBs and Athletes
This pillar addresses how the USOC interacts with and oversees the 49 NGBs, and how the organization can better engage with the athletes it serves.

- The USOC has chartered an Athlete & NGB Engagement Commission and selected former WNBA President Lisa Borders as chairperson. The commission is comprised of athlete, NGB, and independent board representation, plus individuals with governance expertise in relevant organizations. The commission will specifically review how the USOC interacts with and oversees the 50 diverse NGBs, and how the organization can better engage with the athletes it serves. The commission is expected to make a series of recommendations that will be implemented over the coming months, including examining whether changes are needed to the Amateur Sports Act, the USOC or NGB bylaws, or other policies and procedures.

- A board review of the USOC's mission statement was initiated to ensure it is aligned with the responsibilities of the organization.

- The USOC board is forming an Athlete & NGB Engagement Committee with the aim of providing guidance in addressing the issues of greatest importance and concern to athletes and NGBs.

- The USOC continues to develop plans to better align activities within the organization related to support for athletes and NGBs.

- The USOC is supporting a joint meeting between the NGB Council and AAC leadership to ensure alignment on key issues.

- To ensure NGBs comply with conditions of USOC membership, the USOC conducts annual compliance reviews and is increasing the frequency of audits. The USOC expanded its audit and compliance division – and scope – in 2018 and began publishing NGB compliance reports to ensure increased transparency. In 2019, compliance reports for all 50 NGBs will be available publicly at TeamUSA.org.

4. Reform USA Gymnastics

This pillar focuses on the stabilization of USA Gymnastics by way of structural and cultural changes aimed at creating a safe and supportive training environment for its athletes.

- The USOC performed a forensic evaluation of USA Gymnastics to determine the NGB’s ability to support its athletes, and identify the resources required to undergo the necessary changes. Recommendations were offered for options to supplement the executive leadership team in supporting management transition and focusing on organizational transformation.

- The USOC is requiring that USA Gymnastics complete 70 specific actions related to the recommendations made in the Daniels Report, and is regularly auditing the organization for compliance. USA Gymnastics is publishing a real time progress report publicly at http://www.usagymprogressreport.com/.

- Among the leadership changes at USA Gymnastics, Tom Forster was hired as women's national team coordinator, and searches for a chief executive officer, general counsel, and chief marketing officer are in progress. Prior to the action plan, the USOC forced the resignation of both the CEO and full board of directors.

- The USOC has had representation at all of USA Gymnastics' interim board meetings and supported the scheduling of the first meeting of the new permanent board in July 2018.
• Following a mandate by the USOC to reseat its board of directors by July 1, 2018, the USA Gymnastics interim board of directors confirmed the election of the organization’s new board at its meeting on June 20. Additionally, each of USAG’s five competitive disciplines selected two representatives to serve on the newly created Programs Council, which will provide a forum for its representatives to provide input, perspective and guidance on a variety of relevant topics, including operations, strategic planning, and developing best practices and uniform criteria and guidelines for program administration.

• The Ropes & Gray independent investigation was promoted on the USA Gymnastics website to encourage individuals with relevant information to speak with the independent investigators.

• USA Gymnastics expanded its safe sport department to include five new positions – four of which will be regionally based – to better support, train, educate and serve its members.

• The USOC is working with USA Gymnastics on determining how to implement a $1.3 million grant to the Athlete Assistance Fund established by the National Gymnastics Foundation for providing resources to survivors of sexual abuse.

• USA Gymnastics issued broad communication to its current adult athletes, parents/guardians of minor athletes, professional members, member clubs and survivors’ legal counsel regarding medical risks from sexual assault and resources available.

• USA Gymnastics is being required to review and update its ethics and conflict of interest policies, and has conducted ethics training with its board and staff.

• USOC and other NGB policies are being provided to USA Gymnastics to assist in identifying best practices.

• The USOC is working with USA Gymnastics to identify alternative training sites following the removal of Karolyi Ranch as the USA Gymnastics National Team Training Center. While a permanent solution is identified, the USOC has offered the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, as an interim solution.

• The USOC publicly expressed concerns with the leadership of the USA Gymnastics CEO, leading to Kerry Perry's resignation.

• The USOC worked closely with USA Gymnastics to try to stabilize the organization and create a more safe and supportive training environment for its athletes.

• The USOC determined that the challenges facing USA Gymnastics are simply more than it is capable of overcoming in its current form. For this reason, the USOC began the process of revoking USA Gymnastics’ recognition as the NGB for gymnastics in the United States.

• The USOC filed a Section 8 complaint initiating proceeding against USA Gymnastics, seeking to revoke USAG’s recognition as the National Governing Body for gymnastics in the United States and offered USA Gymnastics the option of surrendering its recognition voluntarily.

• The USOC CEO has been providing status updates on progress of the Section 8 complaint to the Gymnastics community through a series of open letters that include Frequently Asked Questions and requests for feedback through a dedicated email address.