Identifying & Addressing Risks To Create Safer Youth Sports Organizations

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Goals

• Describe prevention and its role in enhancing youth sports safety

• Discuss risks associated with youth sports concerns

• Offer strategies to enhance existing youth safety approaches
Youth Sports Offer Great Benefits
• 41 - 60 million youth sports participants
• Vast majority are healthy, happy & safe
  – linked to higher grades, better self-esteem, health habits, teamwork, etc.
• Gains in safety areas
  - e.g., equipment, concussion, background checks
• Kudos to local organizations, boards, coaches, and parents

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The Need To Enhance Youth Safety
Like retired football coach Jerry Sandusky, this Southern California boxing coach was a highly-regarded coach and mentor to boys and young men. Also like Sandusky, this coach had been accused of abuse before, but investigators never pressed charges. If they had, the recently-reported abuse the coach allegedly committed on a 15-year-old boy might have been prevented.

Instead, Anthony Serrano allegedly molested the boy as many as 50 times over the past year, police told KTLA. The boy was afraid to tell anyone about the abuse until after he recently moved away from Santa Ana, Calif., where Serrano was his boxing coach.

Serrano was arrested Sunday night after the boy's mother called the police with the sexual abuse allegations her son had told her. The boy had participated for five years in the Santa Ana Boxing Club, which Serrano helped run. Three years ago, the coach began mentoring, personally training and spending a lot of time with the boy at the club, tournaments and Serrano's home, the Los Angeles Times reports.

Serrano had been praised by local media for years as a "no-nonsense father figure." And the 15-year-old boy had no father, NBC reports.
Former Coach Pleads Guilty To Lesser Charge In Sex Abuse Case

WLWT.com – July 17, 2013  Pendleton, KY

The commonwealth attorney said Cassandra Elfers pleaded guilty to two felony counts of second-degree unlawful transaction with a minor, which carries a possible one-year prison term. She also entered a plea to one count of distribution of obscene material to a minor, which also carries a one-year sentence.

Elfers was originally facing sexual abuse charges.

Elfers worked in a paraprofessional capacity as an assistant coach for Sharp Middle School's basketball and volleyball teams when she was indicted in January. The victim was a 13-year-old boy, investigators said.
Ex-Christ The King Basketball Coach Pleads Guilty To Sexual Abuse….

Daily News, April 4, 2011

BOSTON - Former Christ the King basketball coach Bob Oliva pleaded guilty to sexual abuse charges in a Massachusetts courtroom Monday, concluding a stunning fall from grace for one of the most celebrated figures in New York City hoops history.

The legendary coach, who was indicted by a Boston grand jury last year on two counts of rape of a child and faced two life sentences, acknowledged that he abused a 14-year-old during a trip to Boston in 1976.

Oliva will not serve any prison time. He will be on probation for five years and requires him to register as a sex offender…
The Bronx High School of Science, one of New York's elite public schools, has been stunned by an alleged hazing scandal that resulted in the arrest and suspension of three track athletes, the New York Times reported March 4.

Three students have been charged as adults with "forcible touching, hazing, harassment and assault" of a freshman team member over several months, the Times reported.
The same Maine West High School (Des Plaines, IL) coach accused of sanctioning the sexual assault of a 14-year-old soccer player in a hazing ritual this year also coached players on the school’s freshman baseball team who were involved in a similar hazing incident in 2008, district officials revealed Sunday.

In a lawsuit filed by the family of one of the 14-year-old boys, lawyer Antonio Romanucci says the hazing was sanctioned by the coaches, who ordered the team to do a “campus run,” code for hazing, the Chicago Daily Herald reports. The complaint alleges that teammates shoved the three boys to the ground and beat them. The older players then held them down, pulled down their pants and underwear and sodomized them. The plaintiffs contend that the ritual dates back several years as part of initiation for being promoted to the varsity soccer team.
Understanding Prevention

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“Intellectuals solve problems; geniuses prevent them.”

- Albert Einstein
Types of Prevention

- **Primary** – Focus on general public
- **Secondary** – Focus on at-risk groups and settings
- **Tertiary** – After-the-fact focus on treatment, rehabilitation, and changes to prevent continued harm and/or reoccurrence

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Making Prevention Effective

• Focusing on after-the-fact intervention & treatment is necessary, but not sufficient to “fix” a problem

• Need to shift the balance - Greater focus on primary & secondary prevention efforts

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Our Goals Often Focus More Exclusively On...

Reducing

Risky, Inappropriate, & Illegal Behavior

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Need For A Balanced Focus on Risks & Protective Factors

Goal
Simultaneously Address A Combination Of...

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Risk/Protective Factor Example

RISKS
- Too few adults for the size of the team
- Frequent 1:1 training
- Social activities

PROTECTIVE FACTORS*
- Enough volunteers
- “Buddy system” or multiple coaches
- Greater parental involvement

* Protective Factors = Naturally Occurring & Created As Solutions

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Prevention Advantages

(Primary & Secondary Prevention)

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Prevention offers a chance to be more effective by intervening with protective factors at multiple levels.
Prevention Advantages

• Offers roles for a larger number of people to participate in the solution

• Fosters a greater investment in “before the problem occurs” prevention efforts

• Creates opportunities for tackling concerns before they become a larger problem

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Risks To Youth Involved In Sports

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Key Safety Target Areas

• USOC “Safe Sport” Program Areas
  – Sexual Misconduct
  – Hazing
  – Harassment
  – Bullying
  – Emotional Misconduct
  – Physical Misconduct

• Additional Areas
  – Unintentional Injury
  – Health

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What Do We Know About Risks In Youth Sports Organizations?
Risks To Athletes

• Virtually all research has been on “elite” athletes & focuses on sexual abuse\textsuperscript{7}

• Estimates suggest that 2\% - 4\% of all athletes experienced sex abuse\textsuperscript{3}

• Abuse in sports is greatly under-reported\textsuperscript{9}

• Abuse has significant adverse health & sports career consequences\textsuperscript{7,8}

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Hazing Risks To Athletes

- Of 325,000 collegiate athletes 250,000+ experienced some form of hazing
- 1 in 5 subjected to potentially illegal hazing
- In 50% alcohol related hazing required
- Two thirds were involved in humiliating hazing
- Only 1 in 5 were involved in exclusively positive hazing

- **Most at risk:** male, non-greek, swimmers/divers, soccer players, Lacrosse players, in the east or south, rural or residential campus, and in states with no anti-hazing law


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Factors That Increase Risk

• At-Risk Athletes
  – Talented\(^1\) & elite athletes\(^5\)
  – Pre-pubescent\(^1\), especially males\(^7\)
  – Low self-esteem & weak friendships\(^1\)
  – Poor family bonds\(^1\)
  – Adolescents, especially females\(^4\)
  – Young & don’t know sex abuse is wrong\(^6\)
  – See coach as role model or father\(^1\)

*Numbers reflect research source – reference list

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Factors That Increase Risk

- **High Risk Locations**
  - Locker rooms
  - Indoor sports site
  - Coach’s car
  - Coach’s home
  - Away competitions
  - Hotels (away meets)
Factors That Increase Risk

• Facilitators
  – Non-sport activities\(^4\)
  – Coaches with high status\(^1\)
  – Powerful coaches\(^1,4\)

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Factors That Increase Risk

- **Lifestyle & Routine Activities**
  - Competing in tournaments\(^2\)
  - Regular training sessions\(^3\)

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Developing Prevention Strategies

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What We Can Do To Enhance Youth Safety

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Develop Game Plan...

To Identify Risks, Promote Protective Factors, & Enhance Prevention Efforts In Your Local Sports Organizations

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Game Plan

Adopt Big Picture Prevention Strategies – USOC “Safe Sport”

Develop A Locally Focused Prevention Strategy – To Identify & Address Your Program’s Risks

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Implement The USOC "SafeSport" Program Strategies

http://safesport.org/what-is-safesport/the-usoc-program/

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Access Other Helpful Models For Youth Sports Safety Policies

rules & regulations, generating a safer sports environment

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Other Resources...
Identifying Safety Risks & Solutions For Local Sports Organizations

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The Critical Need For Local Strategies

- Local organizations vary a great deal by the:
  - Number & type of sports offered
  - Age & gender of participants
  - Organizational structure
  - Number & training of coaches
  - Quality & quantity of parental involvement
  - Types of issues/concerns present
  - Resources

- Prevention is more effective when tailored to actual local risks & needs

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Safety Tools For Local Sports Organizations

• There’s a strong need for safety tools that can be tailored to the specific concerns of local organizations

• These tools should be sensitive to organizational changes over time
  - e.g., risks developing due to changes in coaches & volunteers, age groups served, facilities, meets or tournaments on the schedule, etc.

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The Ideal Local Youth Sports Safety Tool Would….

- Be easy to use
- Have no monetary cost
- Incorporate Local Expertise
  - Coaches, Parents, Older Youth, Board & Community Members
- Be effective at identifying key local risks
- Help create tailored prevention solutions

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The Situational Prevention Approach: A Promising Model For Local Use

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Situational Prevention Approach

• Demonstrated History of Success
  – 50+ yrs. of creating safer housing
  – 20+ yrs. of application in crime prevention

• Rooted in Research

• Adapted For Use With Sexual Violence & Youth Safety Concerns
Situational Prevention Approach

Goals

To help local organizations:

• Integrate a **systematic audit** that works with existing safety strategies
• Identify as many key safety **risks** as possible specific to their setting
• Develop **prevention strategies** tailored to their needs & resources

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Boys & Girls Clubs of America
National Prevention Project
Boys & Girls Club National Prevention Project

• Collaboration with Boys & Girls Clubs of America
  – Jim Clark, CEO, Les Nichols, VP, Mitru Ciarlante, Director

• Funded by the Vision of Hope Grant from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Boys & Girls Club
National Prevention Project

• **PROJECT GOALS:**
  1) Develop a sustainable self-assessment process based on the Situational Prevention Approach to address child sex abuse & other youth risks for 4000+ clubs nationwide
  2) Examine the effectiveness of this approach

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Boys & Girls Club Prevention Self-Assessment Project – Yr. 1

**Process:**
- Apply the SPA with seven clubs in three cities
- Work with clubs in Portland, Pittsburgh & Philadelphia
- Use feedback to improve and tailor the SPA process to the B&GC culture and practices

**Product:**
- SPA Self-Assessment Implementation Manual

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Boys & Girls Club Prevention Self-Assessment Project - Yrs. 2 & 3

• **Goal:**
  
  – To understand the impact of SPA on club safety in terms of effectiveness, satisfaction, and usability

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Boys & Girls Club Prevention Self-Assessment Project (Yrs. 2 & 3)

- **Procedure:**
  - Work with 16 clubs in four states (IN, FL, NJ, OR)
  - Compare clubs - SPA vs. "business as usual"
  - Also collect "pre" – "post" SPA data
  - Collect post-SPA **follow-up** data for all participating clubs

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Very Promising Preliminary Findings

• It’s doable - Clubs engaged despite heavy demands

• Clubs like SPA - High satisfaction ratings

• Its effective - SPA identified 7-10 times more risks than control clubs; solutions generated for all risks; & many solutions quickly implemented

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The Situational Prevention Approach (SPA)

Description

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What Is The Situational Prevention Approach?

• Six step process for identifying org. risks and developing effective solutions

• Focuses on 7 key areas with the goal of identifying as many org risks as possible

• Encourages the development of tailored prevention or risk reduction solutions to fit individual org. needs

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Step 1: Brainstorming To Identify Risks

Coaches, Volunteers, Board Members, Parents, & Youth

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Brainstorming Areas To Identify Risks

1 - High Risk Locations
2 – Characteristics Of At-Risk Athletes
3 – Facilitators
4 – Organizational & Community Policies
5 – Lifestyle & Routine Activities
6 – Larger Community Concerns
7 – Health Concerns, Physical Safety & Unintentional Injury

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Factors That Increase Risk

• High Risk Locations
  – Locker rooms⁴
  – Indoor sports site⁴
  – Coach’s car²
  – Coach’s home²
  – Away competitions³
  – Hotels (away meets)³
Brainstorming Areas To Identify Risks

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\(^1\)Numbers reflect research source

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Brainstorming Areas To Identify Risks

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Step 2: Soliciting Broader Input About Risks

Prioritize Risks & Add Missing Risks

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Youth Serving Organization Risk Questionnaire

Instructions: Please complete the following questions to help us identify areas that may offer an opportunity to increase the safety and security of youth and their family members who use our facilities. Please be sure to provide an answer for each of the items below.

A. Lifestyle & Routine Activities
For each item tell us how often it happens and how much of a risk it is for sexual abuse (Circle one number to answer each question). Add and rate any items that you feel are missing and should be included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Area Of Risk</th>
<th>How often does this happen?</th>
<th>How much of a risk is it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) One-To-One Activities</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Reliance On Volunteers</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Intimate Care Responsibilities (e.g., changing clothes)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Taking Youth On Field Trips</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Taking Youth On Walks When Upset</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Hosting Events For The Public</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Short Staff</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Not Enough Supervisory Staff</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Other:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Other:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Developing Solutions For Identified Risks

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Step 3: Develop Solutions For Each Risk

• For each risk develop a **realistic** solution **tailored** to the local organization’s needs

• Give **priority to prevention** strategies & use risk reduction approaches when necessary

• Identify the **real costs** of each solution

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Step 4: Prioritizing Risks & Intervention Strategies

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Step 4: Prioritize Risks & Intervention Strategies

- Prioritize risks based on cost, resources, and degree of concern
- Divide solutions into “easier” & “more challenging” to implement

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Step 5: Developing Implementation Plans & Taking Action

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Step 5: Developing Implementation Plans & Taking Action

- Select “Top 5” risks to address
  - 3 “easier” & 2 “more challenging”

- Develop a detailed implementation plan for each one

- Work on resolving 5 risks at a time

- Adjust policies as necessary

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Prevention or Risk Reduction Strategy</th>
<th>Steps to Accomplish This Solution</th>
<th>Who Is Responsible For Implementation &amp; Supervision?</th>
<th>Costs (Possible Funding Source)</th>
<th>What Is The Due Date For Each Step?</th>
<th>What Policy Modification Is Needed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child athletes at greater risk in the locker rooms while hosting tournaments.</td>
<td><strong>Prevention:</strong> Restructure tournament sessions to separate younger and older athletes' events into different times of the day. Restrict use of bathrooms in the locker room to the athletes who have events at that time of the day. Restrict adults use of locker room bathrooms to times when younger athletes are using locker rooms.</td>
<td>1) Create the policy to restructure events into morning, afternoon or evening sessions based on athlete's age with youth, parent, board member, and coaches' input. 2) Distribute the new policy to other clubs, board members, parents, and athletes. 3) Distribute the new policy to attendees prior to the tournament. 4) Create signage to restrict bathroom use. 5) Recruit, train, &amp; supervise locker room monitors.</td>
<td>1) Assistant club director 2) Club office manager 3) Assistant director with volunteer &amp; parent help 4) Club office manager 5) Assistant Director (Club director supervises)</td>
<td>1) No cost 2) No cost 3) No cost (Email) 4) Printing or copying 5) Assistant director's Time</td>
<td>1) 10/15 2) 10/22 3) 11/11-11/12 4) 11/17 5) 11/15 - 11/20</td>
<td>Modify tournament structure policy. Modify facility bathroom access policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater risks due to the larger number of older and younger athletes in the locker room at the same time due to overlapping sessions.</td>
<td>Also, higher risk as a result of the larger number of parents of young athletes in the locker room throughout the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 6: Plan For Annual Re-Assessment

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What You Can Do Today...

• Rally the troops! – Make safety a priority

• Adopt big picture strategies
  – Safe Sports

• Create a tailored local safety approach
  - Similar to SPA

• And…
Be a genius!

Focus on prevention strategies to maximize youth safety!

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Contact Me With Questions

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