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INTRODUCTION

As the National Governing Body of softball in the United States, USA Softball (USAS) is committed to creating and upholding traditions of excellence in softball by building and maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment in which youth may grow, develop, and prosper. We join with the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) and the United States Olympic Paralympic Committee (USOPC) in its commitment to building a sport community where participants can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct. Simply put – USA Softball will not tolerate ANY abuse whether it is physical, mental, emotional, or sexual.

Purpose

As part of this commitment, USA Softball has developed Safe Softball as a foundation from which all participants in the softball community, be they athletes, coaches, umpires, administrators, or volunteers, play an active role in creating an environment free from emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Safe Softball is a comprehensive program of policies and process, screening, education and training, reporting, monitoring, and enforcement designed to help participants detect and report abuse, respond to it, and prevent future occurrences.

This handbook explores each of these elements in detail and documents USA Softball's policies and processes designed to implement Public Law 115-126 Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017 (the "SafeSport Act") as incorporated into the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (the "Ted Stevens Act"), as well as the mandate issued by the U.S. Center for SafeSport in its Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies dated January 1, 2022.

Although immediately applicable to all USA Softball Local Associations, sanctioned events, and programs, USA Softball recognizes that social norms continue to develop, as does the legal framework under which we operate. Accordingly, the Safe Softball Handbook will always be subject to modification, amendment, and further development by USA Softball, in its discretion.

The purpose of this Handbook is to clearly communicate the key principles of USA Softball's Safe Softball program and USA Softball's commitment to athlete safety. The Safe Softball rules and policies set forth in this Handbook, and as set forth in the Code of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, apply to all USA Softball Participants, as defined below. A violation of the Safe Softball policies as found in this Handbook may be considered a violation of the USA Softball bylaws.

How to use this Handbook

The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP) were developed by the Center to provide a collection of proactive measures to help guide those entities that have obligation to uphold the above noted Federal law(s). Entities with this obligation include the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), National Governing Bodies (NGB), Local Affiliated Organizations (LAO), and Paralympic Sport Organizations (PSO) within the Olympic & Paralympic Movement (each an "Organization").

The policies set forth below are adopted by USAS and approved by the Center. Where the policy is indicated as "Mandatory," the policy must be followed. Where the policy is indicated as "Recommended", the policy is recommended by the Center and is considered optional for USAS and local associations and may be followed or required when it is appropriate for the situation.

There may be occasions from time to time when USAS changes a policy from “Recommended” to “Mandatory.”

USAS requires these policies be adopted and followed by related LAOs, including its local associations. USAS requires employees, contractors, athletes, and members to follow the policies set forth below.

Definitions

- » Respondent: a participant who is alleged to have violated the Code.
- » Claimant: the person who is alleged to have experienced conduct that constitutes a Code violation.
- » Third-Party Reporter: reports brought by individuals other than the claimant are referred to as “third-party reports” and those bringing them are “third-party reporters.”
- » Event Personnel: volunteers, media, vendors, medical personnel, athlete assistants, coaches, and umpires with pre-authorized event access
- » Registered Participants: The Code applies to all individuals who participate in USA Softball. This includes a wide range of individuals who participate in softball in various capacities, including members, license holders, or employees of USA Softball or its local associations, as well as volunteers, trainers, coaches, athletes, or contracted individuals who have been “authorized, approved, or appointed by USA Softball, its local associations, or the USOPC to have regular contact with or authority over Minor Athletes. Participants also include those who are otherwise considered to be “within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of USA Softball, its local associations, or the USOPC.”
- » Exclusion List: list of individuals who are unable to participate in any event, program, activity, or competition authorized by, organized by, or under the auspices of USA Softball.
- » MAAPP: Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies. The USAS MAAPP is derived from the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s MAAPP.
- » Event: includes travel, lodging, practice, competition, and health or medical treatment.
- » Regular Contact: ongoing interactions during a 12-month period wherein an Adult Participant is in a role of direct and active engagement with any Minor Athlete(s)
- » Authority: When one person’s position over another person is such that, based on the totality of the circumstances, they have the power or right to direct, control, give orders to, or make decisions for that person.
- » Adult Participant: Any adult (18 years of age or older) who is:
 - A member or license holder of an NGB, PSO, LAO, or USOPC;
 - An employee or board member of an NGB, PSO, LAO, or USOPC;
 - Within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of an NGB, PSO, LAO, or USOPC;
 - Authorized, approved, or appointed by an NGB, PSO, LAO, or USOPC to have Regular Contact with or Authority over Minor Athletes.
- » Minor Athlete: An amateur athlete under 18 years of age who participates in, or participated within the previous 12 months in, an event, program, activity, or competition that is part of, or partially or fully under the jurisdiction of, an NGB, PSO, USOPC, or LAO.

The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 authorizes the Center to develop training and policies to prevent abuse—including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse—within the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement. 36 U.S.C. § 220542(a)(1). Federal law requires that, at a minimum, national governing bodies and Paralympic sports organizations must offer and give consistent training related to the prevention of child abuse: (1) to all adult members who are in regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors and (2) subject to parental consent, to members who are minors. 36 U.S.C. § 220542(a)(2)(E). Federal law requires that these policies contain reasonable procedures to limit unobservable and uninterrupted one-on-one interactions between an amateur athlete, who is a minor, and an adult, who is not the minor’s legal guardian, at facilities under the jurisdiction of organizations within the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement. 36 U.S.C. § 220542(a)(2)(C).

Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This policy constitutes the Code of Conduct of USA Softball. This Code of Conduct is intended to protect the safety and well-being of individuals who associate with USA Softball, and to ensure that all individuals who associate with USA Softball conduct themselves with integrity, maintain a high standard of ethical conduct, and promote the Olympic & Paralympic values, spirit, and ideals.

2. Applicability of Policy

This Policy applies to all USA Softball members, board members, officers, directors, committee members, task force members, employees, coaches, independent contractors, officials, and volunteers, and anyone participating in USA Softball events and activities (collectively, “Affiliated Individuals”). All such Affiliated Individuals should become familiar with the rules and standards of this Code of Conduct.

3. Legal Compliance

USA Softball requires that Affiliated Individuals follow the Code of Conduct and abide by all applicable USA Softball policies and procedures; United States federal, state and local law as applicable, including the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act; and foreign law as applicable. If an Affiliated Individual should ever encounter a conflict of law, such as a conflict between United States and foreign law, or have any questions about the legality of any action, contact USA Softball’s Chief of Staff for further information and guidance.

4. The Code of Conduct

All Affiliated Individuals must:

- Adhere to the anti-doping rules and policies of the International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee, USOPC, World Anti-Doping Agency, U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, and World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC).
- Adhere to the rules and policies of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, including, but not limited to, the SafeSport Code and the USA Softball athlete safety policy.
- Comply with the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions and/or the IPC Code of Ethics, as applicable, and commit to promote sport free from manipulation, corrupt conduct, or using or disclosing inside information for any purpose.
- In competition, compete to the best of his or her ability while being safe and sportsmanlike.
- Respect and comply with the laws of the state and/or country in which I am training, traveling, or competing, including, but not limited to, laws governing the possession and use of drugs and alcohol, and providing of drugs to any person and of alcohol to minors.

- Be responsible for his or her own behavior and for reading, understanding, and abiding by all applicable policies, including those of USA Softball, as well as the competitions and events in which he or she participates.
- Respect and abide by all other rules, policies, and procedures of USA Softball, and of the facilities and accommodations in which he or she trains and lives at and/or uses.
- Never engage in discrimination of any kind on whatever grounds, be it race, color, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, national origin, or other status.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship by showing respect toward teammates, coaches, competitors, officials, and audience members at all events and competitions.
- Refrain from foul language, violence, and behavior that could reasonably be deemed dishonest, offensive, intentionally malicious, or illegal.
- Respect the property of others and not vandalize, damage, or steal any such property.
- Agree to refrain from authorizing the use of photographs, films, or videos of a member in USA Softball apparel or equipment or the use of the USA Softball logo for the purpose of trade, without the prior written consent of USA Softball.
- Understand that any act, conduct, or personal appearance, even if not expressly enumerated above, that violates the spirit and intent of this Code of Conduct, or brings disrespect or dishonor to myself, my fellow athletes, USA Softball, or the United States, is a Code of Conduct violation.
- Understand that, if under the age of 18, his or her parents or legal guardians may be notified of all written reports of counseling or misconduct.
- Understand that any dispute or action arising from this Code of Conduct will be resolved through USA Softball's Complaint Procedures.

Specifically, all Board/Committee Members and USA Softball staff must:

- Function primarily on behalf of USA Softball and not on behalf of any one constituency or group.
- Respect confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature.
- Maintain a thorough knowledge of USA Softball governance documents, policies and procedures.
- Be independent and impartial and not influenced by self-interest, outside pressure, expectation of reward or fear of criticism.

Specifically, coaches, and those functioning as coaches, must:

- Treat all athletes with respect at all times.
- Be aware of the health and safety of all athletes at all times in regard to our sport. If the conditions are unsafe, follow best practices and not allow the health and safety of the athletes to be compromised.
- Recognize the signs of injury, physical and psychological stress in themselves and in athletes, take these indicators seriously, and refer or seek out appropriate and qualified support.
- Be prepared with an executable emergency plan for their primary use facilities that has been shared and practiced.
- Assist the athlete in forming goals and expectations that are realistic and practical with consideration of the age, resources and experience of the athlete.
- Consistently give the athletes the opportunity to develop their sport and non-sport skills translating into other facets of their lives (e.g. time management, goal setting) at a minimum of once per season.

Specifically, umpires, and those functioning as officials must:

- Maintain a current and thorough knowledge of the rules and officiating procedures of our sport and officiating procedures.
- Conduct themselves impartially, professionally and in good faith.
- Assist with the development of lesser-experienced officials as needed.
- Take ownership of actions and decisions made while [officiating].

Specifically, parents, fans, and spectators must:

- Encourage athletes to compete within the rules and to resolve conflicts positively.
- Never ridicule a participant for making a mistake during a competition, practice or training session.
- Respect the decisions of officials and encourage participants' continued effort.
- Respect and show appreciation to all competitors, officials, and volunteers.

5. Reporting Obligations

No code of conduct can address every situation, nor can it take the place of good judgment and integrity. USA Softball maintains an “open door” for anyone who has questions or concerns. USA Softball will support all efforts to comply with this Code of Conduct.

If Affiliated Individuals need advice or assistance concerning the application of any aspect of these standards, consult your supervisor or manager, or USA Softball's Chief of Staff. Affiliated Individuals are expected to seek advice and clarification promptly when they are uncertain about proper actions or practices. Affiliated Individuals should be alert and sensitive to situations that could result in unethical, illegal, or improper actions. Affiliated Individuals have an obligation to report potential or actual violations of this Code of Conduct to the online Incident Reporting Form.

USA Softball has zero tolerance for retaliatory conduct by any Affiliated Individual against any person who comes forward with a good faith complaint or issue. Retaliation for reporting in good faith an alleged violation of this Code of Conduct will itself constitute a violation of this Code of Conduct.

For more information about the definition of retaliation and USA Softball's zero tolerance approach to retaliation, please see the USA Softball Safe Softball Handbook.

6. Investigation of Potential Violations

USA Softball takes its obligation to investigate potential violations of the Code seriously. All properly filed complaints regarding the violation of the Code will be investigated and resolved in accordance with the USA Softball complaint procedures as outlined in the Bylaws as published and available on USA Softball's website.

In no event shall USA Softball deny or threaten to deny an athlete, coach, official, or administrator the opportunity to participate in protected or amateur athletic competition without fair notice and an opportunity to a hearing in accordance with the requirements of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, the USOPC Bylaws and the USA Softball Complaint Procedures.

7. Resources

Affiliated Individuals may contact USA Softball's Chief of Staff with questions or complaints. Athlete members also may contact the athlete representative(s) to the Board of Directors as well as the Athletes Advisory Council.

Specific to the Olympic and Paralympic Movement:

Team USA athletes may contact the Athlete Ombuds for independent and confidential advice on a variety of sport related matters, including their rights, applicable rules, policies or processes, and questions related to resolving disputes and grievances. The Athlete Ombuds can also help Team USA athletes connect with legal counsel or mental health resources if needed. All other NGB athletes (i.e., athletes competing domestically at the masters or youth level, recreational athletes, foreign athletes), are welcome to visit the Athlete Ombuds website to review informational resources and should work directly with their NGB to understand additional resources and options available to them.

EMAIL: ombudsman@usathlete.org

WEBSITE: www.usathlete.org

Individuals who wish to report concerns related to this Code of Conduct as it relates to involvement in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement may also submit a report using the [USOPC Integrity Portal](#). The Integrity Portal allows individuals to submit concerns to the USOPC confidentially and/or anonymously. Reports may be made online or by telephone.

Website: usopc.ethicspoint.com

Hotline: 877-404-9935

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Organizational Requirements for Education & Training and Prevention Policies

USAS/LAOs must implement proactive policies designed to prevent abuse. These organizational requirements are described below.

- A. Organizational Requirements for Education & Training
 - 1. USAS must track whether Adult Participants under its jurisdiction complete the required training.
 - 2. USAS must, on an annual basis, offer and, subject to parental consent, give training to Minor Athletes on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
 - a. For training to Minor Athletes, USAS must track a description of the training and how the training was offered and provided to Minor Athletes.
 - b. USAS is not required to track individual course completions of Minor Athletes.
 - 3. USAS must, on an annual basis, offer training to parents on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
- B. Required Prevention Policies and Implementation
 - 1. USAS must develop minor athlete abuse prevention policies that contain the mandatory components of the Center's model policies in Part III. These model policies cover:
 - a. One-on-one interactions
 - b. Meetings and training sessions
 - c. Athletic training modalities, massages, and rubdowns
 - d. Locker rooms and changing areas
 - e. Electronic communications
 - f. Transportation
 - g. Lodging

2. The policies must be approved by the Center as described in subsection (C) below. The policies may include the recommended components in Part III and the recommended policies in Part IV. Given the uniqueness of each sport, however, some recommended components or policies may not be feasible or appropriate. USAS may choose to implement stricter standards than the model policies.
3. USAS must also require that its LAOs implement these policies within each LAO.
4. USAS/LAO must implement these policies for all In-Program Contact.
 - a. At sanctioned events and facilities partially or fully under its jurisdiction, USAS/LAO must take steps to ensure the policies are implemented and followed.
 - b. For In-Program Contact that occurs outside a USAS sanctioned event or facilities, implementing these policies means:
 - i. Communicating the policies to individuals under its jurisdiction;
 - ii. Establishing a reporting mechanism for violations of the policies;
 - iii. Investigating and enforcing violations of the policies.
5. USAS/LAO must have a reporting mechanism to accept reports that an Adult Participant is violating USAS minor athlete abuse prevention policies. USAS must appropriately investigate and resolve any reports received, unless the violation is reported to the Center and it exercises jurisdiction over the report. This requirement is in addition to requirements to report abuse under the SafeSport Code.

C. Policy Approval and Submission Process

1. USAS may adopt the MAAPP as-is or adapt it to fit their needs. Regardless, USAS must submit their policies to the Center at compliance@safesport.org for review and approval by January 31, 2021. The Center will approve, approve with modifications, or deny the policies. If the Center denies the proposed policy, the mandatory components of Part III become the default policy until the Center approves the policy.
2. USAS must require their LAOs to incorporate the mandatory components of Part III. USAS may require that their LAOs implement the USAS policies, which may be more stringent than the policies in Part III.
3. USAS may, in its discretion, require its National Member Organizations (NMO) to implement these policies.
 - If USAS chooses to require its NMOs to implement the Education & Training Policy, USAS must obtain advanced, written approval from the Center to expand the training access to additional persons. Requests must be submitted to ngbservices@safesport.org.
4. The mandatory components of Part III will serve as the default policy for any organization that fails to develop its own policy as required by this section.

Education & Training Policy

A. Mandatory Child Abuse Prevention Training for Adult Participants

1. Adult Participants Required to Complete Training
 - a. The following Adult Participants must complete the *SafeSport Trained Core* either through the Center's online training or the Center's approved, in-person training:
 - i. Adult Participants who have regular contact with any amateur athlete(s) who is a minor;
 - ii. Adult Participants who have authority over any amateur athlete(s) who is a minor;
 - iii. Adult Participants who are an employee or board member of USAS /LAO
 - b. Adult Participants who are medical providers (Medical Staff/Trainers [all levels and statuses] that medically assists any person in youth play or in affiliation with the

USAS National Teams Programs [this excludes emergency/ambulatory professionals]) required to take training under Section (a) can take the Health Professionals Course in lieu of the *SafeSport Trained Core*.

2. Timing of Training

Adult Participants must complete this training:

- a. Before regular contact with an amateur athlete who is a minor begins; **and**
- b. Within the first 45 days of either initial membership or upon beginning a new role subjecting the adult to this policy.

3. Refresher Training

The above listed Adult Participants must complete a refresher course on an annual basis, beginning the calendar year after completing the *SafeSport Trained Core*. Every four years, Adult Participants will complete the *SafeSport Trained Core* training. Medical providers can take the Health Professionals Course in lieu of the *SafeSport Trained Core* and are required to take the refresher courses on an annual basis if they meet the criteria for A(1).

B. Minor Athlete Training Must Be Offered

1. USAS and LAOs, on an annual basis, must offer and, subject to parental consent, give training to Minor Athletes on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
2. The Center offers youth courses, located at www.safesporttrained.org, that meet this requirement.

C. Parent Training Must Be Offered

1. USAS and LAOs, on an annual basis, must offer training to parents on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
2. The Center offers a parent course, located at www.safesporttrained.org, that meets this requirement.

D. Optional Training

1. Adult Participants serving in a volunteer capacity, who will not have regular contact with or authority over Minor Athletes, should take the Center's brief Volunteer Course (or *SafeSport Trained Core*) before engaging or interacting with any Minor Athlete(s).
2. USAS may provide training *in addition to* the *SafeSport Trained Core*, although they cannot refer to this training as "SafeSport" training. **Training other than the SafeSport Trained Core or Refresher does not satisfy this policy.**
3. Parents of Minor Athletes are provided free online access to the Center's parent course and are encouraged to take the training.

E. Exemptions and Accommodations

1. Exemptions from this Education & Training Policy may be made on a case-by-case basis for victims/survivors. Requests may be made directly to the U.S. Center for SafeSport at exemptions@safesport.org or to USA Softball at sbrown@usasoftball.com.
2. The Center will work with the USAS/LAOs on appropriate accommodations for persons with disabilities and individuals with limited English proficiency to satisfy these training requirements. USAS/LAOs must provide reasonable accommodations and track any exemptions for individuals with disabilities and individuals with limited English proficiency.

Adult Participants

Adult Participant	Regular Contact	Authority
USAS & USAS LAO Appointed Staff (full or part-time & inclusive of interns)		X
USAS & USAS LAO Board Members		X
USAS National Teams (Players, Coaches, & Staff)	X	X
USAS Local Association Coaches & Team Staff (inclusive to any other non-coach adult member of a youth team that will engage in regular contact with minor athletes)	X	X
USAS & USAS LAO Designated Council Members (Commissioners, Junior Olympic Commissioners, At-Large Athlete Representatives, Regional Player Representatives, Athlete Representatives, Regional Umpire-in-Chief)		X
Officials (Umpires that officiate youth play or that are appointed by the NGB to national championship events or international events)	X	X
Adult Athletes (on a team with minor athletes)	X	
Adult Athletes		
Team Authorized Volunteers (parents or other individuals over the age of 18 that will be assisting on the field or in the dugout in youth play, monitoring, lodging with, transporting minor athletes that are not solely their own biological or legally designated child[ren])	X	X
Grounds Crew & Field Maintenance Staff		
Facility Management & Support/Volunteer Staff (inclusive of park administrators, announcers, concession/apparel/novelty workers, security personnel [public or private], third-party vendors, ticket sales/gate monitors, sponsors, scoreboard operators, and other volunteers that do not have regular contact as defined by the USAS MAAPP.)		
Media Members		
Tournament (Event)/Clinic Directors		X
Event Medical Staff/Athletic Trainers (includes emergency/ambulatory professionals as well as on-site medical personnel or athletic trainers that are retained by event management as support staff.)		
Team Authorized Medical Staff/Athletic Trainers (includes any medical personnel or athletic trainers that are retained by a team or league for routine use and travel or in affiliation with the USAS National Teams Programs.)	X	

Any individual who was previously terminated from a youth sports organization for an offense covered by the Ted Stevens Act is prohibited from registering with USA Softball and must file an appeal to participate.

Background Check Policy

USA Softball, Inc. ("USA Softball") and/or USA Softball's state/metro associations reserve the right to screen any volunteer, contractor and/or employee who has access to minors in USA Softball programs. The screening may consist of (1) a Staff and Volunteer Application Form, (2) an interview, (3) consent to reference and fingerprint for a background check report, and/or (4) approval by staff and/or committee members.

Please note that the 50 states of the United States adopt different laws and categorize the offenses differently. The USA Softball list of offenses below is not intended to be an exhaustive list of offenses but a list of commonly used terms to define the offenses. Other convictions, accusations, charges or facts should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If a reportable record or disclosure that contains a disposition or resolution of a criminal proceeding, other than an adjudication of not guilty,¹ or the existence of pending charges, for any of the below criminal offenses, USA Softball, its National Background Check Committee, and/or its state/metro associations shall undertake a review of such individual's application to determine whether such person should be permitted to participate in USA Softball programs:

1. Any felony;² and
2. Any misdemeanor involving:
 - a. ** All sexual crimes, criminal offenses of a sexual nature to include but not limited to; rape, child molestation, sexual battery, lewd conduct, possession and distribution of child pornography, possession and distribution of obscene material, prostitution, indecent exposure, public indecency, and any sex offender registrant;³
 - b. Any drug related offenses;
 - c. ** Harm to a minor or vulnerable person, including, but not limited to, offenses such as child abandonment, child endangerment/neglect/abuse, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and DUI with a minor;
 - d. ** Violence against a person, force, or threat of force (including crimes involving deadly weapons and domestic violence);
 - e. Stalking, harassment, blackmail, violation of a protection order, and/or threats;
 - f. Destruction of property, including arson, vandalism, and criminal mischief; and
 - g. Animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect.

If a background check is performed and reveals a conviction of any of aforementioned offenses, then the application shall be reviewed by a member of the National Background Check Committee (or such person's designee) for a determination of eligibility. A denial of eligibility may be appealed by the applicant to the entire National Background Check Committee.

In addition, if the background check reveals that the applicant is listed on a sex offender registry **, then the applicant shall be ineligible for participation in USA Softball programs.

Appeal Process:

USA Softball recognizes that no policy can encompass every situation, so USA Softball has formed its National Background Check Committee to evaluate applications and decide appeals variance requests on a case-by-case basis in certain situations where good cause exists.

An applicant may appeal a denial of eligibility to the entire National Background Check Committee, so long as the appeal is timely filed within fourteen (14) days of the date stated on the denial correspondence. The appeal process shall provide the applicant with an opportunity to present his/her side of the story. An appeal may advise the Committee of incorrect information appearing in a background check report, a mistaken identity with another individual, or extenuating circumstances as to why the person should be permitted to participate despite a conviction of one of the aforementioned offenses.

Any person whose application for participation in USA Softball's program has been denied may appeal the denial within fourteen (14) days to USA Softball's National Background Check Committee by filing his/her appeal with his/her USA Softball State/Metro Local Association Commissioner. All appeals shall be in writing and sent first to the Commissioner of the State/Metro association. The written appeal submission must contain a statement of the specific grounds why the prior determination should be reversed and must be accompanied by all evidence supporting the request for reversal. With the written appeal submission, the person filing the appeal may also file any other information or evidence in support of the appeal. The USA Softball State/Metro Local Association Commissioner will review the information and make a recommendation to the National Background Check Committee in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The National Background Check Committee shall review the appeal and decide whether the applicant's appeal should be granted or denied.

Subject to the **Mandatory Ineligibility** requirements below, in extenuating circumstances and for good cause shown, USA Softball's National Background Check Committee shall have the authority to, but not be required to, grant an appeal and permit an individual to participate in USA Softball's program even though that person has been convicted of one of the above non-mandatory offenses (or its equivalent).

Mandatory Ineligibility for Certain Offenses and Applicants listed on a Sex Offender Registry:

Any of the following shall constitute an applicant's mandatory ineligibility from participation in USA Softball programs: (a) an applicant's current listing on any sex offender registry; or (b) for any offense(s) marked with an "***". For all such applications, the National Background Check Committee may consider appeals based upon incorrectly reported information and/or mistaken identity but the Committee shall not have the authority to grant an appeal for extenuating circumstances or good cause shown in instances where the applicant is currently listed on a sex offender registry or has been convicted of the type of offense marked with a "***" above.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, to the extent this Policy directly conflicts with any terms or conditions of any policy of the USOPC or U.S. Center for SafeSport concerning a person's ineligibility to participate, then the USOPC or U.S. Center for SafeSport's ineligibility determination or policy shall be controlling and shall apply.

Individuals presently subject to USA Softball's Background Check Requirements

- Any volunteer, contractor and/or employee who has regular access to minors in USA Softball programs; and
- Any additional person(s) required by applicable law to undergo a background check, including persons required pursuant to the laws of the State of Pennsylvania; and
- Any additional person(s) required by rules or requirements of USA Softball's local association members to undergo a background check as a condition of participation in that local association member's programs and activities; and
- Any members of the media who are provided media credentials and/or access to minor athletes or members of a National Team at USA Softball events.
- Any persons ages 17 and older that are participating or assisting with the USA Softball National Team Programs. Those age 17 will need a signed parental consent.
- All adults (ages 18 and older) assisting on the field/dugout during Junior Olympic (youth) play.
- Any umpire age 18 years or older that is appointed by the NGB to national championship events or international events
- All voting members of the USA Softball General Council (inclusive to appointed/approved proxies).
- Local Association Softball Officials, including:
 - Board of Directors
 - Commissioners appointed by USA Softball
 - JO Commissioners appointed by the USA Softball Commissioners
 - Player Representatives appointed by USA Softball Commissioners
 - Umpires-In-Chief appointed by USA Softball Commissioners
 - National Championship Tournament Directors appointed by USA Softball or USA Softball Commissioners

ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICIES

The U.S. Center for SafeSport recognizes that youth-adult relationships can be healthy and valuable for development. Policies on one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relationships. As child sexual abuse is often perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations, it is critical that organizations limit such interactions between youth and adults and implement programs that reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

One-On-One Interactions

Mandatory Components: Observable and Interruptible

1. All one-on-one In-Program Contact between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be observable and interruptible, except in emergency circumstances.
2. The exceptions below may apply to specific policies, and if the exceptions apply, they are listed in the policy. These exceptions also apply to all one-on-one In-Program Contact not specifically addressed in other policies:
 - a. When a Dual Relationship exists; or
 - b. When the Close-in-Age Exception applies; or
 - c. If a Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant, and:
 - i. the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete; and

- ii. the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
- iii. the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.); or
- d. In other circumstances specifically addressed in this policy that allow for certain one-on-one interactions if the USAS/LAO receives parent/ guardian consent.

Meetings and Training Sessions Policy

Mandatory Components

1. Observable and Interruptible: Adult Participants must follow the one-on-one interaction policy in all meetings and training sessions where Minor Athlete(s) are present.
2. Individual Training Sessions
 - a. One-on-one, In-Program, individual training sessions must be observable and interruptible except if:
 - i. A Dual Relationship exists; or
 - ii. The Close-in-Age Exception applies; or
 - iii. A Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant, and:
 - a) the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete; and
 - b) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - c) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.).
 - b. The Adult Participant providing the individual training session must receive advance, written consent from the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian at least annually, which can be withdrawn at any time; and
 - c. Parents/guardians must be allowed to observe the individual training session.
3. Meetings with licensed mental health care professionals and health care providers (other than athletic trainers²): If a licensed mental health care professional or licensed health care provider meets one-on-one with a Minor Athlete at a sanctioned event or a facility, which is partially or fully under USAS/LAO's jurisdiction, the meeting must be observable and interruptible except:
 - a. If the door remains unlocked; and
 - b. Another adult is present at the facility and notified that a meeting is occurring, although the Minor Athlete's identity needs not be disclosed; and
 - c. USAS/LAO is notified that the provider will be meeting with a Minor Athlete; and
 - d. The provider obtains consent consistent with applicable laws and ethical standards, which can be withdrawn at any time.

Recommended Components

1. Monitoring: If a permitted meeting or training session takes place between an Adult Participant(s) and a Minor Athlete(s) at a facility partially or fully under USAS/LAO's jurisdiction, another Adult Participant will monitor each meeting or training session. Monitoring includes reviewing the parent/guardian consent form, knowing that the meeting

or training session is occurring, knowing the approximate planned duration of the meeting or training session, and dropping in on the meeting or training session.

2. Parent Training: Parents/guardians receive the U.S. Center for SafeSport's education and training on child abuse prevention before providing consent for their Minor Athlete to have a meeting or training session with an Adult Participant subject to these policies.

Athletic Training and Modalities, Massages, and Rubdowns Policy

Mandatory Components

1. Athletic training modality, massage, or rubdown

All In-Program athletic training modalities, massages, or rubdowns of a Minor Athlete must:

- a. Be observable and interruptible; and
 - b. Have another Adult Participant physically present for the athletic training modality, massage, or rubdown; and
 - c. Have documented consent as explained in subsection (2) below; and
 - d. Be performed with the Minor Athlete fully or partially clothed, ensuring that the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals are always covered; and
 - e. Allow parents/guardians in the room as an observer, except for competition or training venues that limit credentialing.
2. Consent
 - a. Providers of athletic training modalities, massages, and rubdowns or USAS/LAO, when applicable, must obtain consent at least annually from Minor Athletes' parents/guardians before providing any athletic training modalities, massages, or rubdowns.
 - b. Minor Athletes or their parents/guardians can withdraw consent at any time.

Recommended Components

1. Parent Training: Parents/guardians receive the U.S. Center for SafeSport education and training on child abuse prevention before providing consent for their Minor Athlete to receive an athletic training modality, massage, or rubdown.
2. The provider should narrate the steps in the massage, rubdown, or athletic training modality before taking them, seeking assent of the Minor Athlete throughout the process.
3. When possible, techniques should be used to reduce physical touch of Minor Athletes.
4. Only licensed providers should administer a massage, rubdown, or athletic training modality.

Coaches, regardless of whether they are licensed massage therapists, should not massage Minor Athletes.

Locker Rooms and Changing Areas

Mandatory Components

1. Observable and Interruptible

Adult Participants must ensure that all one-on-one In-Program Contact with Minor Athlete(s) in a locker room, changing area, or similar space where Minor Athlete(s) are present is observable and interruptible, except if:

- a. A Dual Relationship exists; or
- b. The Close-in-Age Exception applies; or

- c. A Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant and:
 - i. the Minor Athlete’s parent/guardian has provided written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete; and
 - ii. the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - iii. the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.).
2. Conduct in Locker Rooms, Changing Areas, and Similar Spaces
- a. No Adult Participant or Minor Athlete can use the photographic or recording capabilities of any device in locker rooms, changing areas, or any other area designated as a place for changing clothes or undressing.
 - b. Adult Participants must not change clothes or behave in a manner that intentionally or recklessly exposes their breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals to a Minor Athlete.
 - c. Adult Participants must not shower with Minor Athletes unless:
 - i. The Adult Participant meets the Close-in-Age Exception; or
 - ii. The shower is part of a pre- or post-activity rinse while wearing swimwear.
 - d. Parents/guardians may request in writing that their Minor Athlete(s) not change or shower with Adult Participant(s) during In-Program Contact. USAS/LAO and the Adult Participant(s) must abide by this request.
3. Media and Championship Celebrations in Locker Rooms
- USAS/LAO may permit recording or photography in locker rooms for the purpose of highlighting a sport or athletic accomplishment if:
- i. Parent/legal guardian consent has been obtained; and
 - ii. USAS/LAO approves the specific instance of recording or photography; and
 - iii. Two or more Adult Participants are present; and
 - iv. Everyone is fully clothed.
4. Personal Care Assistants: Adult Participant Personal Care Assistants are permitted to be with and assist Minor Athlete(s) in locker rooms, changing areas, and similar spaces where other Minor Athletes are present, if they meet the requirements in subsection (1)(c) above.
5. Availability and Monitoring of Locker Rooms, Changing Areas, and Similar Spaces
- a. USAS/LAO must provide a private or semi-private place for Minor Athletes that need to change clothes or undress at sanctioned events or facilities partially or fully under USAS/LAO jurisdiction.
 - b. USAS/LAO must monitor the use of locker rooms, changing areas, and similar spaces to ensure compliance with these policies at sanctioned events or facilities partially or fully under USAS/LAO jurisdiction.

Recommended Components

USAS or a Local Association may include any of the following Components:

1. To minimize the risk of bullying and hazing, USAS/LAO uses locker room monitors to ensure that minor athletes are not left unsupervised in locker rooms and changing areas, including, when appropriate, Adult Participants listening-in from nearby to locker room interactions among minors.
2. Adult Participants make every effort to recognize when a minor athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, will check on the minor athlete's whereabouts.

We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent when other minor athletes are changing in the same locker room or changing area. If this is necessary, parents should let a coach or administrator know about this in advance.

Electronic Communication

Mandatory Components

1. Open and Transparent
 - a. All one-on-one electronic communications between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be Open and Transparent except:
 - i. When a Dual Relationship exists; or
 - ii. When the Close-in-Age Exception applies; or
 - iii. If a Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant and:
 - (1) the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete; and
 - (2) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - (3) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.).
 - b. Open and Transparent means that the Adult Participant copies or includes the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian, another adult family member of the Minor Athlete, or another Adult Participant.
 - If a Minor Athlete communicates with the Adult Participant first, the Adult Participant must follow this policy if the Adult Participant responds.
 - c. Only platforms that allow for Open and Transparent communication may be used to communicate with Minor Athletes.
2. Team Communication: When an Adult Participant communicates electronically to the entire team or any number of Minor Athletes on the team, the Adult Participant must copy or include another Adult Participant or the Minor Athletes' parents/guardians.
3. Content: All electronic communication originating from an Adult Participant(s) to a Minor Athlete(s) must be professional in nature unless an exception in (1)(a) exists.
4. Requests to discontinue: Parents/guardians may request in writing that USAS/LAO or an Adult Participant subject to this policy not contact their Minor Athlete through any form of electronic communication. USAS/LAO and the Adult Participant must abide by any request to discontinue, absent emergency circumstances.

Recommended Components

1. Hours: Electronic communications should generally be sent only between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. local time for the location of the Minor Athlete.
2. Social Media Connections: Adult Participants, except those with a Dual Relationship or who meet the Close-in-Age Exception, are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with Minor Athletes and should discontinue existing social media connections with Minor Athletes.

Transportation Policy

Mandatory Components

1. Transportation
 - a. An Adult Participant cannot transport a Minor Athlete one-on-one during In-Program travel, except if:
 - i. A Dual Relationship exists; or
 - ii. The Close-in-Age Exception applies; or
 - iii. A Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant and:
 - (1) the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete; and
 - (2) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - (3) the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.); or
 - iv. The Adult Participant has advance, written consent to transport the Minor Athlete one-on-one obtained at least annually from the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian.
 - b. Minor Athlete(s) or their parent/guardian can withdraw consent at any time.
 - c. An Adult Participant meets the In-Program transportation requirements if the Adult Participant is accompanied by another Adult Participant or at least two minors.
 - d. Written consent from a Minor Athlete's parent/guardian is required for all transportation sanctioned by an USAS/LAO at least annually.

Recommended Components

1. Shared or Carpool Travel Arrangement: USAS/LAO encourages parents/guardians to pick up their Minor Athlete first and drop off their Minor Athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement.
2. Parent Training: Parents/guardians receive the U.S. Center for SafeSport education and training on child abuse prevention before providing consent for their Minor Athlete to travel one-on-one with an Adult Participant.

Lodging Policy

Mandatory Components

1. Hotel Rooms and Other Sleeping Arrangements
 - a. All In-Program Contact at a hotel or lodging site between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be observable and interruptible, and an Adult Participant cannot

share a hotel room or otherwise sleep in the same room with a Minor Athlete(s), except if:

- i. A Dual Relationship Exists, and the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided USAS/LAO with advance, written consent for the lodging arrangement;
 - ii. The Close-in-Age Exception applies, and the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided USAS/LAO with advance, written consent for the lodging arrangement; or
 - iii. The Minor Athlete needs a Personal Care Assistant, and:
 - (1) The Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided advance, written consent to USAS/LAO for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the Minor Athlete and for the lodging arrangement;
 - (2) The Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - (3) The Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the USAS screening policy (Background screening and checks are not covered by this policy; please see the separate policy, required by the USOPC, regarding individuals who must be background screened.)
- b. Written consent from a Minor Athlete's parent/guardian must be obtained for all In-Program lodging at least annually.

2. Monitoring or Room Checks During In-Program Travel

If USAS/LAO or team performs room checks during In-Program lodging, the one-on-one interaction policy must be followed and at least two adults must be present for the room checks.

3. Additional Requirements for Lodging Authorized or Funded by USAS

- a. Adult Participants traveling with USAS National Teams must agree to and sign USAS lodging policy at least annually.
- b. Adult Participants that travel overnight with Minor Athlete(s) are assumed to have Authority over Minor Athlete(s) and thus must comply with the USAS' Education & Training Policy.

Recommended Components

1. Adult Participants who travel with USAS must successfully pass a criminal background check and other screening requirements consistent with USAS policies.
2. During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership (two Adult Participants should be present) and observable and interruptible environments should be maintained.
3. Meetings should not be conducted in a hotel room.
4. Parent Training: Parents/legal Parents/guardians receive the Center's education and training on child abuse prevention before providing consent for lodging arrangements under this policy.

Other Applicable Policies

- A. Out-of-Program Contact: Adult Participants, who do not meet the Close-in-Age Exception nor have a Dual Relationship with a Minor Athlete, should not have out-of-program contact

with Minor Athlete(s) without legal/parent guardian consent, even if the out-of-program contact is not one-on-one.

B. Gifting

1. Adult Participants, who do not meet the Close-in-Age Exception nor have a Dual Relationship with a Minor Athlete, should not give personal gifts to Minor Athlete(s).
2. Gifts that are equally distributed to all athletes and serve a motivational or education purpose are permitted.

C. Photography/Video

1. Photographs or videos of athletes may only be taken in public view and must observe generally accepted standards of decency.
2. Adult Participants should not publicly share or post photos or videos of Minor Athlete(s) if the Adult Participant has not obtained the Parent/Guardian and Minor Athlete's consent.

REPORTING CONCERNS

How to Report Concerns

USAS provides three ways for individuals to report violations, abuse, misconduct, and concerns within the sport:

1. The Online Incident Reporting Form
 - The online Incident Reporting Form can be found on the [Safe Softball](#) page of USASoftball.com and is available for the public to use with no associated costs, fees, or other financial barriers attached to submitting a report.
 - Individuals can report anonymously.
2. Contacting the following USAS staff directly via phone or email:
 - Stephanie Brown, Athlete Safety Coordinator
sbrown@usasoftball.com | 405.425.3459
 - Allison Flaig, Chief of Staff
aflaig@usasoftball.com | 405.425.3430
3. Incident reports can also be made to the Center's reporting portal (<http://www.uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern>)

Referral of Report to the Center: Any report received directly by USAS that falls within the Center's exclusive jurisdiction over Adult or Minor Participants of USAS (as defined by the Center) must be referred by USAS directly to the Center immediately and no later than within 24 hours.

Jurisdiction Notification: Upon receipt of complete information related to a report, USAS must promptly inform an identified reporting party of its jurisdictional determination regarding their report, communicating that the matter either is being referred to the Center, being addressed by USAS directly, or being referred to the organization that has jurisdiction over the incident.

Mandatory Reporting

All Adult Participants, regardless of membership with USA Softball, are required to report suspected Safe Softball violations to USA Softball. Participants are required to report suspected child abuse and/or sexual misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport and local law enforcement. All other suspected Safe Softball violations, including violations of the Athlete

Protection Policies, must be reported to USA Softball (or the U.S. Center for SafeSport). There are no fees for filing a SafeSport report with the U.S. Center for SafeSport or a Safe Softball report with USA Softball.

USAS and Adult Participants of USAS follow a mandatory reporting policy requiring the following:

1. Allegations or reasonable suspicion of child abuse, including but not limited to child sexual abuse, must be reported to law enforcement immediately, and no later than within 24 hours
2. Allegations or reasonable suspicion of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and sexual misconduct, must also be reported to the Center and USAS (after the report to law enforcement) immediately, and no later than within 24 hours.
3. Allegations of sexual misconduct, emotional abuse and/or other conduct prohibited by the Center by an Adult Participant, or by a Minor Participant against a minor, must be reported by USAS to the Center within 24 hours.

Reporting Sexual Misconduct

The U.S. Center for SafeSport handles all reports of sexual misconduct. Make a report to the Center if you have suspicions or have heard allegations of sexual misconduct, such as child sex abuse, non-consensual sexual conduct, sexual harassment or intimate relationships involving an imbalance of power (i.e., an inappropriate relationship between a Coach and an Athlete, regardless of age).

- Go to [uscenterforsafesport.org](https://www.uscenterforsafesport.org) to make a report involving sexual abuse and misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport.
- You may also call the U.S. Center for SafeSport at: 833.587.7233.
- Reports to the U.S. Center for SafeSport may be made anonymously.

Reporting other Safe Softball Violations

All questions or concerns regarding possible Safe Softball violations other than sexual misconduct, such as failure to comply with the policies set forth in this Handbook and other misconduct such as emotional or physical misconduct, bullying, hazing or harassment should be made directly to USA Softball.

Go to the [Safe Softball](#) page on USASoftball.com to make a report that does not involve sexual misconduct or abuse.

Reports to USA Softball's Safe Softball may also be made anonymously, but please keep in mind that at times a reporter may need to be contacted for additional information. If a report is filed anonymously, this may not be possible. USA Softball will use reasonable efforts to maintain anonymity but cannot guarantee that a report will remain anonymous. Anonymous reporting may make it more challenging for USA Softball to investigate or properly address misconduct or abuse, but USA Softball recognizes that it may be difficult for a Claimant to report an allegation otherwise. USA Softball strives to remove barriers to reporting.

Reports not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport will first be reviewed by the USA Softball Athlete Safety Coordinator. The Athlete Safety Coordinator will determine if a Letter of Concern is appropriate. A Letter of Concern will identify the alleged infraction and will be sent to the Respondent and Local Association Commissioner with any potential imposed safety measures. The Respondent will have an opportunity to file a written response addressed to the Local Association Commissioner and National Office.

Bad-Faith Allegations

A report of abuse, misconduct or policy violation that is malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith is prohibited. Such reports will be considered a violation of the USA Softball Safe Softball Program and grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the allegation, a person making a malicious, frivolous or bad-faith report may also be subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

Whistleblower Protection and Anti-Retaliation Policy

Purpose

This Whistleblower Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to support a strong culture of integrity and ethical conduct at the USA Softball by encouraging, valuing, and protecting good faith reporting by athletes, parents, coaches, umpires, directors, officers, employees, members, committee members, task force members, hearing panel members, and volunteers (“Affiliated Individuals”) of USA Softball of any alleged violation of any applicable law or policy or any potential ethics issue.

The freedom to speak up means being able to raise concerns in whatever way is most comfortable and effective and feeling free to cooperate in investigations that follow. It also means that USA Softball has zero tolerance for retaliation of any kind against people who speak up in good faith.

Violations Covered by this Policy

This Policy is for use where there may be a violation of:

- any applicable law, rule or regulation
- any USA Softball policy
- principles of ethics
- accounting or financial practices (e.g., fraud)

If an Affiliated Individual is unsure about whether a matter might be a policy violation or is unsure about their reporting responsibility for a particular type of matter, please start by reviewing the particular policy involved. USA Softball staff should refer to the Employee Handbook or reach out to the Chief of Staff for more information.

Also, keep in mind that some violations **must** be reported. Specifically, please be familiar with the requirements in the Safe Softball Handbook. And of course, if an Affiliated Individual suspects any criminal activity against a person or property, they should report this directly to law enforcement immediately.

Nothing in this Policy changes or replaces any mandatory reporting obligations under the SafeSport Code for the Olympic and Paralympic Movements – talk to USA Softball’s Chief of Staff if you have any questions about those obligations.

Reporting

No Retaliation

USA Softball has an open-door policy and encourages Affiliated Individuals to share questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints in the way and to the people with which they are most comfortable. This means Affiliated Individuals have options for how to report any concern about a potential ethical, policy, financial or legal violation.

USA Softball has zero tolerance for retaliation against people who make good faith reports of potential ethical, policy, financial or legal violations, or who cooperate with investigations of those reports. That means no Affiliated Individual may threaten, harass, discriminate against, or take any negative employment (where applicable) or participation related action (e.g., discharge, demotion, suspension, non-assignment, negative review) on that basis.

Any such retaliation can be reported as described above in the same way as any other policy violation. It will be treated as a violation this Policy and USA Softball's Code of Conduct, and may lead to serious consequences including termination of employment or participation for anyone involved in retaliation.

How to Report

Affiliated Individuals may always report to an USA Softball staff member or their supervisor (if applicable). Or, the Affiliated Individual can make a report to the Chief of Staff. This person can also discuss the concern and help make sure it is addressed. Affiliated Individuals can also make reports to the Chair of Ethics Committee, Board member or other governance lead as designated by USA Softball.

Please remember that as a reporter, Affiliated Individuals do not need to (and should not) investigate the matter of concern or determine fault or how to fix it. The Affiliated Individual does his or her part by making it known so the right people can take action. Investigations or of reports are discussed below.

Acting in Good Faith

Just as we need to make sure that no one in our community is fearful of speaking up, we also need to make sure that no one in our community is fearful about false reports that might harm them.

With that in mind, anyone reporting a perceived ethical, policy, financial, or legal violation must be acting in good faith and have some basis for believing there may be a violation. Anyone that makes a false report knowing that it is false or that it has no basis is violating this Policy and the USA Softball Code of Conduct in the same way as someone retaliating against a good faith reporter. Such a violation may itself be reported under this Policy and it may lead to serious consequences, including termination of employment or participation.

Investigation

Once a report is made in one of the ways described above, the person receiving the report is responsible for getting it to the person who can best address the concern, based on the matter reported and in keeping with other appropriate policies. In all cases, USA Softball is committed to ensuring that no good faith report goes unheard or ignored.

The Chief of Staff is responsible for coordinating among these people so that reporters can be confident that reported concerns get to the people best positioned to act on them. The Chief of Staff will report regularly to the USA Softball Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality

In many cases, a reported matter will need investigation in order to reach the right resolution. Cooperation as a reporter or otherwise may be very helpful and much appreciated. Reports will be treated as confidentially as possible; some information may have to be disclosed to certain

parties in order to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law, and to provide accused individuals access to due process.

If a matter is reported anonymously and the reporter chooses to remain anonymous as it is investigated, USA Softball will respect that.

Follow Up

If an Affiliated Individual reports an alleged violation of ethics, USA Softball policy, or applicable laws, USA Softball will report back to the Affiliated Individual on the progress and investigation results as appropriate. And of course, the Affiliated Individual is always free to follow up to learn more from the person they reported to. Confidentiality and legal obligations may affect the details available.

For additional applicable policies, refer to the Safe Softball Handbook and/or Bylaws to review how follow ups to complaints will be handled under the auspices of the appropriate policy (Conflicts of Interest, Code of Conduct, etc.) and those policies have appropriate investigation procedures and appropriate checks to ensure that conflicted individuals are not involved in the decision-making process.

If the investigation of a report that was made in good faith is not to the satisfaction of the reporter, then the reporter may report that, too.

Grievances

The following compliant procedures are delineated in Section 16 of the Bylaws and should not be used to file complaints which should be brought, in the first instance, with a Local Association Judicial Committee or Tournament Protest Committee according to Section 15 of the Bylaws. A failure to adhere to the Bylaws and complaint procedures shall constitute independent grounds for denial of a complaint.

Designation of Complaints

The following kinds of complaints may be filed with USAS's National Office:

- A. Administrative Grievance: USAS, any member of USAS, or any member of any USAS Local Association may file a complaint pertaining to any matter within the jurisdiction of USAS, including but not limited to any alleged violation of or grievance concerning:
 - i. any USAS rule or regulation,
 - ii. any USAS program or service,
 - iii. any provision of USAS's Bylaws,
 - iv. any covered individuals defined in the Athlete Safety Policy, or
 - v. any provision of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act relating to USAS's recognition as a National Governing Body.
- B. Disciplinary Proceeding: USAS, any member of USAS, or any member of any USAS Local Association may file a complaint against another member of USAS, or former member of USAS if the action occurred while the individual was a member, regarding any alleged violation of USAS's Code of Conduct, USAS's Safe Softball Handbook, or any other rule or regulation relating to conduct.
- C. Right to Participate: Any athlete, coach, trainer, manager, administrator or official may file a complaint pertaining to any alleged denial, or alleged threat to deny, of that individual's opportunity to participate in a USAS competition or protected competition. Any such aggrieved athlete or coach may file a protest or complaint pertaining to any such denial of that individual's opportunity to participate in a USAS National Team program.
- D. Membership: USAS may file a complaint against any member seeking to revoke such

member's membership in USAS or such member's membership in any USAS' Local Associations.

- E. Appeals: Any individual subject to a decision of a hearing panel of a Local Association or the Local Association may file an appeal to the USAS Judicial Committee subject to the requirements of Bylaws Section 15.17.

Agreement to Be Bound

Any member of USAS and/or any member of an applicable USAS Local Association, by reason of such membership, agrees to be subject to these complaint procedures and agrees to be bound by any decision rendered pursuant to these complaint procedures, including its mandatory arbitration provisions.

Resolution Prior to Bringing Complaint.

Prior to the filing of a complaint, USAS may, as appropriate, offer the respondent a proposal to resolve the matter. The respondent may accept or reject such proposal. If rejected, the respondent shall be entitled to a hearing on the merits.

Manner of Filing

The complainant shall file the complaint with the Judicial Committee. The complaint shall set forth in clear and concise language, preferably in numbered paragraphs: (i) the alleged violation, grievance, denial or threat to deny, and (ii) the remedy requested. The complainant shall sign the complaint; with the exception for reports of athlete safety violations, those can be filed anonymously.

Filing Fee

Complaints involving reports of athlete safety violations do not require a filing fee. All other complaints filed by an individual shall be accompanied with a \$300.00 filing fee. Complaints filed by an organization shall be accompanied with a \$500.00 filing fee. The complainant may request that the filing fee be reduced or waived for reasons of significant financial hardship. If such request is made, the hearing panel appointed by the Chair of the Judicial Committee, or his/her designee, shall determine whether or not to reduce or waive the filing fee. If USAS brings a complaint, it is not required to pay a filing fee.

Statute of Limitations

A complaint filed under this Section shall be filed within one hundred and eighty (180) days (i) of the occurrence of the alleged violation, grievance, denial or threat to deny of opportunity to participate or (ii) of date the injured party first learns, or by which such person reasonably should have learned, of the facts and circumstances giving rise to the cause of action. There shall be no time bar for actions regarding athlete safety or SafeSport proceedings.

Doping Decisions

A decision concerning a doping violation adjudicated by the independent anti-doping organization designated by the USOPC to serve as the U.S. National Anti-Doping Organization (currently the United States Anti-Doping Agency) shall not be reviewable through, or the subject of, these complaint procedures.

SafeSport Decisions

A decision concerning a SafeSport violation adjudicated by the independent safe-sport organization designated by the USOPC (currently the United States Center for SafeSport) shall not be reviewable through, or the subject of, these complaint procedures.

Field of Play Decisions

The final decision of an umpire or referee during a competition regarding a field of play decision (a matter set forth in the rules of the competition to be within the discretion of the umpire or official) shall not be reviewable through, or the subject of these complaint procedures unless the decision is: (i) outside the authority of the umpire or official to make, or (ii) the product of fraud, corruption, partiality or other misconduct of the referee. For purposes of this Section, the terms "umpire and official" shall include any individual with discretion to make field of play decisions.

Administration

The Judicial Committee shall generally administer and oversee all administrative grievances and right to participate matters filed with USAS. The Judicial Committee shall be responsible to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely, fair and impartial manner. Respondents shall be afforded basic due process protections, which includes respondent(s) in a grievance proceeding are provided a notice of the charges and the requested remedy. The Judicial Committee may promulgate procedures in addition to those set forth in these Bylaws for the effective administration of complaints filed with USAS. All complaint procedures shall comply with the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

Hearing Panel

Upon the filing of a complaint, the chair of the Judicial Committee Chair, or his/her designee, shall appoint a hearing panel consisting of three (3) disinterested individuals to hear the complaint. The chair of the Judicial Committee, or his/her designee, shall also appoint a chair of the hearing panel from the three disinterested individuals selected. Judicial Committee members may be appointed to and serve on the hearing panel. Other disinterested individuals identified by the Judicial Committee may also be appointed to and serve on the hearing panel. At least one (1) member of the hearing panel shall be an athlete. Members of the panel need not be members of USAS or involved in the sport of softball. If the chair of the Judicial Committee is not able to fulfill his or her responsibility, he or she shall appoint a member of the Judicial Committee as designee.

Conduct of the Proceeding

The hearing panel shall rule on all motions and other matters raised in the proceeding. If the complaint is not dismissed, the hearing panel shall hold a hearing on the complaint. The hearing panel shall set such timelines and other rules regarding the proceeding and the conduct of the hearing as it deems necessary. The hearing shall be informal, except that testimony shall be taken under oath.

The hearing may be conducted by teleconference as determined by the hearing panel. The hearing panel shall take into consideration the convenience of the parties, timing considerations and how best to receive evidence. Each party shall have the right to appear personally or through a legal representative. All parties shall be given a reasonable opportunity to present and examine evidence, cross-examine witnesses and to present argument. Members of the hearing panel shall have the right to question witnesses or the parties at any time.

Any party may have a record made of the hearing. A court reporter may be present at the hearing at the request of a party. However, a hearing held on an expedited basis shall not be delayed on account of the unavailability of a court reporter. The court reporter shall be paid for by the party requesting the court reporter, or if mutually agreed, the cost may be equally divided. Any transcript shall be paid for by the party requesting the transcript. Transcripts shall be made available to the hearing panel at no cost to the hearing panel.

Expedited Procedures

Upon the request of a party, and provided that it is necessary to expedite the proceeding in order to resolve a matter relating to a competition that is so scheduled that compliance with regular procedures would not be likely to produce a sufficiently early decision to do justice to the affected parties, the chair of the Judicial Committee, or his/her designee, is authorized to order that the complaint be heard and decided within forty-eight (48) hours of the filing of the complaint. In such a case, the hearing panel is authorized to hear and decide the complaint pursuant to such procedures as are necessary, but fair to the parties involved.

Complaints Involving Selection to Participate in a Competition

Where a complaint is filed involving selection of an individual or team to participate in a competition, or the participation of an individual or team in a competition, the complainant shall include with the complaint a list of all other individuals or teams, together with their contact information, that may be adversely affected by a decision rendered on the complaint. The adverse party to the complaint shall also submit a list of individuals or teams, together with their contact information, that may be adversely affected by a decision rendered on the complaint. The hearing panel shall determine those individuals or teams who must receive notice of the complaint. USAS shall then be responsible for providing appropriate notice to these individuals or teams. Any individual or team so notified shall have the option to participate in the proceeding as a party. If an individual or team is notified of the complaint, then that individual or team shall be bound by the decision of the hearing panel even though the individual or team chose not to participate as a party.

Interim Measures

In disciplinary, athlete safety or SafeSport matters, prior to the matter being heard on the merits, it may be necessary to implement interim measures against the respondent in the following circumstances: (i) to ensure the safety or well-being of others, or (ii) where an allegation is sufficiently serious. Where either such circumstance exists, the Chief Executive Officer of USAS, or his or her officer's designee, may immediately implement interim measures to protect others, provided the respondent is afforded an opportunity for a provisional hearing within three (3) business days of implementation of the interim measure except in right to participate matters in which expedited procedures pursuant to Section 16.13 are requested. The provisional hearing is not a full hearing on the merits. The sole issue before the hearing panel is whether there is probable cause to impose an interim measure. Interim measures may include, but are not limited to altering training schedules, providing chaperones, limiting contact, removal from the venue and suspensions.

Decision

A decision shall be determined by a majority of the hearing panel. The hearing panel's decision shall be in writing and distributed to the parties.

Arbitration

Subject to the requirements herein, any party may appeal to the American Arbitration Association (AAA) a decision of a hearing panel of the USAS Judicial Committee to initiate the appeal, the appealing party shall file a claim with the AAA with notice to USAS. The arbitrator(s) appointed by the AAA shall have the authority to decide the matter in accordance with the Commercial Rules of the AAA, as provided for by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, as amended from time to time (36 U.S.C. §§ 220501 et seq.). The person commencing the arbitration shall be responsible for any filing fees of the American Arbitration Association, but the fees may be apportioned by the arbitrator(s) pursuant to the Commercial Rules of the AAA. To the extent arbitration hearings or proceedings are conducted, all such arbitration hearings or

proceedings shall be conducted in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. However, a party may petition the arbitrator(s) to conduct the hearing or proceedings in a different location, provided adequate reasons are given for doing so. The arbitrator(s) shall have authority to render a ruling on the location of the hearing or proceeding. Hearings and proceedings may also be conducted telephonically if permitted by the arbitrator(s). The award of the arbitrator(s) shall be final, binding and conclusive on all parties. The arbitrator(s) shall issue a reasoned decision explaining the award.

Response and Resolution of Reported Allegations

Allegations within USAS's Jurisdiction

Reported allegations of abuse and misconduct that fall within USAS's jurisdiction where the Center declines jurisdiction will be addressed and resolved as follows:

1. If the incident is reported via direct communication to USAS staff, the staff must immediately report the incident to USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator and Chief of Staff. The Athlete Safety Coordinator will document the report via USAS's online Incident Reporting Form.
2. If the incident is reported via USAS's Incident Reporting Form, or once the Athlete Safety Coordinator documents the report via USAS's Incident Reporting Form, USAS will then determine if individuals involved are Adult Participants or Minor Participants as defined by the Center.
3. If the individuals involved are not affiliated with USAS, the Athlete Safety Coordinator will then report the incident and provide Athlete Safety Resources to the organization with whom the individuals involved are affiliated. USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is referring the reported allegations to the affiliated organization, if applicable.
4. If the individuals involved are affiliated with USAS, USAS will assume jurisdiction and will investigate the incident. USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is accepting jurisdiction of the incident.
5. While the investigation is on-going, USAS may impose temporary disciplinary measures to parties involved. The decision whether to impose temporary disciplinary measures will be in USAS's sole discretion.
6. Upon receipt of an investigative report, USAS will make a final disciplinary decision and provide all parties with a notice of final decision and any sanctions that may be imposed. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to training and education requirements, temporary or permanent suspension from USAS events and programming, and/or placement of the individual(s) on USAS's Ineligible List.

Allegations within the Center's Jurisdiction

1. The Center has the exclusive jurisdiction to investigate and resolve allegations that an Adult Participant engaged in one or more of the following:
 - a. Sexual Misconduct, including without limitation child sexual abuse and any misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of Sexual Misconduct;
 - b. Criminal Charges or Dispositions involving Child Abuse or Sexual Misconduct;
 - c. Misconduct Related to Reporting, where the underlying allegation involves Child Abuse or Sexual Misconduct;
 - d. Misconduct Related to Aiding and Abetting, Abuse of Process, or Retaliation, when it relates to the Center's process;
 - e. Other Inappropriate Conduct
2. The Center has discretionary jurisdiction to investigate and resolve allegations that an Adult Participant engaged in one or more of the following:

- a. Non-sexual Child Abuse;
- b. Emotional and physical misconduct, including stalking, bullying behaviors, hazing, and harassment;
- c. Criminal Charges or Dispositions not involving Child Abuse or Sexual Misconduct;
- d. Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy or other similar Proactive Policy violations;
- e. Misconduct Related to Aiding and Abetting, Abuse of Process, or Retaliation, when it relates to the processes of the USOPC, USAS or any other organization under the Center's jurisdiction.

Reported allegations of abuse and misconduct that fall within the Center's jurisdiction will be addressed and resolved as follows:

1. If an incident is reported to USAS and the individuals involved are Adult Participants as defined by the Center, USAS will report the incident to the Center and must allow the Center to handle the investigation and make any decision on sanctions.
2. USAS will assist the Center in their investigation as requested by the Center.
3. For cases for which the Center accepts jurisdiction, USAS shall not interfere in, or attempt to influence the outcome of, the investigation.
4. USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is referring the reported allegations to the Center.
5. If the Center receives a report and requests that USAS provide guidance on whether or not the individuals involved are Adult Participants of USAS, USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator will respond to the Center within 72 hours. The Center's requests may include:
 - a. Whether the individual is an Adult Participant or Minor Participant (as defined by the Center) of USAS.
 - b. The eligibility status of an Adult Participant
 - c. The existence of any USAS-imposed temporary measures or safety plans
 - d. Any other information the Center deems necessary

Should a report of minor athlete sexual abuse be reported to anyone within the USAS (staff, contracted staff, Board of Directors, or volunteers) either through in-person communication, phone, text, email or any other electronic communication the following protocol should be enacted:

1. USAS's Chief of Staff and Athlete Safety Coordinator must immediately be notified and will ensure that local authorities have been contacted. If it cannot be confirmed that local authorities have been contacted, or if local authorities have not been contacted, USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator will contact local authorities immediately provided there is enough information given to do so.
2. If not enough information is known to report to local authorities, USAS will provide available information to local authorities. USAS will always report to local authorities and keep all correspondence from law enforcement, even if a report cannot be accepted. If more information becomes available, USAS will update law enforcement.
3. USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator will report the incident to the Center via the phone number provided by the Center's website (833-587-7233). USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is referring the reported allegations to the Center.
4. If the report involves an individual who is affiliated with USAS but is not an Adult Participant or Minor Participant of USAS, USAS will accept jurisdiction and will investigate the incident. USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is accepting jurisdiction of the incident.
 - a. While the investigation is on-going, USAS may impose temporary disciplinary measures to parties involved.
 - b. Upon receipt of the final report, USAS will make a disciplinary decision and provide all parties with a notice of decision and any sanctions that may be imposed.

Sanctions may include training and education requirements, temporary or permanent suspension from USAS events and programming, and/or placement of the individual(s) on USAS's Ineligible List.

5. In the event the reported incident does not involve an Adult Participant or a Minor Participant of USAS, or an individual affiliated with USAS, or a USAS minor athlete, and the softball organization with which either the participating adult or the minor athlete is associated is known, USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator will notify said organization both via phone and via email of the reported incident.
 - a. USAS's Athlete Safety Coordinator will contact local authorities immediately provided there is enough information given to do so.
 - b. The report to the organization with which the individual(s) are involved should include as much known information as possible.
 - c. USAS will also notify the claimant that USAS is referring the reported allegation to said organization.

Allegations within other Organizations' Jurisdiction

Reported allegations of abuse and misconduct that do not fall within USAS's or the Center's jurisdiction will be addressed and resolved as follows:

1. If an incident is reported to USAS and the individuals involved are not affiliated with USAS, the report will be disseminated to the relevant organization with which the respondent is affiliated, and a list of all available resources will be provided to the relevant organization.
2. USAS is not responsible for these investigations and it is up to individual organization on how they will or will not proceed with the information provided.
3. USAS will notify the claimant that the USAS is not accepting jurisdiction of the incident.

USAS's Chief of Staff and Athlete Safety Coordinator are required ensure the Response and Resolution Policy is being followed.

Formal Notice of Interim or Final Resolution by USAS

If, through USAS's response and resolution process, USAS suspends, temporarily suspends, or otherwise renders an individual ineligible, USAS must notify the Center within 72 hours of the affected individual, sanction, and term of sanction. The information will be entered into the Center's Centralized Disciplinary Database (CDD).

Policy to Enforce Sanctions, Temporary Measures, and Administrative Holds Issued by the Center

For any notice of imposed Sanctions, Temporary Measures, or Administrative Holds (a case resolution by the Center when a Respondent is not currently participating in sport, but was an active Participant at some point previously) issued by the Center, USAS:

1. Notifies all affected individuals or organizations within 72 hours
2. Has and follows a U.S. Center for SafeSport Quality Control System that prohibits those individuals with sanctions, temporary measures, or administrative holds from participating in any event, program, activity, or competition authorized by, organized by, or under the auspices of USAS
3. Reports to the Center immediately and no later than within 24 hours any known or suspected incident of an Adult Participant violating existing Sanctions, Temporary Measures, or Administrative Holds and takes prompt and effective action to ensure enforcement
4. Reports to the Center immediately and no later than within 24 hours any instance of "Aiding and Abetting" (as defined in the SafeSport Code) by any third parties, of any individuals under Sanctions, Temporary Measures or Administrative Holds issued by

- the Center.
5. USAS tracks reported allegations and outcomes involving Adult Participants and/or Minor Participants where the Center has taken jurisdiction and within USAS's jurisdiction through the Center's database, and for Adult Participants and/or Minor Participants where the Center has declined jurisdiction but is within USAS's jurisdiction through a third-party database that is connected to the Reporting Form found on USAS's website.

Interference/Restrictions/Enforcement

USAS shall not interfere or attempt to influence the outcome of any Prohibited Conduct investigation regardless of jurisdiction.

USAS must prohibit any individual who is an employee, agent, or contractor, from assisting a member or former member in obtaining a new job (except the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files) if the individual knows that such member or former member violated the policies or procedures of the Center related to sexual misconduct or was convicted of a crime involving sexual misconduct with a minor.

If a USAS Participant is sanctioned or subject to Temporary Measures under the USOPC Athlete Safety Policy, that sanction(s) or Temporary Measure(s) must be reciprocally enforced by and between all NGBs and LAOs within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

Policy to submit to the Center "Data of Matters Addressed by USAS"

USAS must annually submit to the Center, using a Center-provided template, the following data:

1. For reports of emotional or physical misconduct made to USAS:
 - a. Total reported incidents of alleged emotional misconduct
 - b. Total reported incidents of alleged physical misconduct
 - c. Total number of investigations of alleged emotional and physical misconduct
 - d. Total number of violations for emotional and physical misconduct
 - e. Total number of violations for emotional and physical misconduct adjudicated by USAS's Local Affiliated Organizations ("LAO(s)").
2. For reports to USAS that an Adult Participant violated the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPPs):
 - a. Total reported incidents of alleged violations of the MAAPPs, by policy type
 - b. Total number of investigations of alleged violations of the MAAPPs
 - c. Total number of violations of the MAAPPs
 - d. Total number of violations of the MAAPPs adjudicated by USAS's LAO(s)
3. For reports to the Organization that a Participant engaged in retaliation:
 - a. Total reported incidents of alleged retaliation
 - b. Total number of investigations of alleged retaliation
 - c. Total number of violations of retaliation policy
 - d. Total number of violations of retaliation policy adjudicated by USAS's LAO(s)

LOCAL ASSOCIATION SUPERVISION

Athlete Safety Policy

Events are sanctioned by local associations. Commissioners will provide a copy of this Athlete Safety Procedure to tournament director or event coordinator at the time an event is sanctioned.

Overview

The Athlete Safety Procedures for USA Softball Event Organizers outline what steps event organizers must take to pre-authorize event access for all volunteers, media, vendors, medical personnel, athlete assistants, coaches and umpires, etc. (hereafter, “Event Personnel”) and registered participants. Event organizers are encouraged to plan ahead to make sure all “Event Personnel” whose role requires them to have Regular Contact¹ or authority over athletes at a USA Softball sanctioned event, have completed the proper requirements related to USA Softball Background Screening, U.S. Center for SafeSport Training and USA Softball Membership. Additionally, Event Organizers will need to confirm all registered participants and Event Personnel are not listed on the USA Softball Exclusion List (the exclusion list includes individuals who have been banned, suspended or placed on an administrative hold). USA Softball and/or the U.S. Center for SafeSport may audit any USA Softball sanctioned event at any time to verify compliance either in person or through a request for compliance information.

It is the responsibility of each USA Softball event organizer and local association to monitor and enforce the requirements set forth in these procedures, which includes provisions for adhering to the USA Softball Background Screen Policy, [SafeSport Code](#) and [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy](#) (includes U.S. Center for SafeSport training requirements), is also included in the USA Softball Event Agreement, member terms and conditions, and local association member agreements terms and conditions.

The following requirements should be adhered to at all sanctioned USA Softball events to include local, state, regional, national, and international events. Event Organizers should determine which requirements Event Personnel and registered participants will need to complete prior to the event, depending on the structure of their event and that individual’s role at the event. Event Organizers should ask themselves the following questions in determining which requirements are necessary for which Event Personnel:

1. Does my USA Softball Sanctioned Event have minors (under age 18) competing?
2. Do Event Personnel have Regular Contact or authority over athletes, or will their contact be incidental and observable?

Section 1: Event Access Requirements for an Event with Minors Competing

Requirement: If the USA Softball Sanctioned Event **will** have minors competing, registered participants and Event Personnel, depending on their role, may be subject to the following requirements. These requirements must be completed **prior** to start date of the event:

1. [USA Softball Background Check Screening Policy](#)
2. [U.S. Center for SafeSport Training](#)
3. USA Softball Membership

Implementation: Event organizers will implement requirements based on Event Personnel roles as outlined below:

The following individuals are required to complete a USA Softball Background Screening, U.S. Center for SafeSport Training and must have a current USA Softball Membership prior to serving as Event Personnel:

- Officials – USA Softball Umpire

- Staff – USA Softball Staff, Local Association Staff, Tournament Directors, or Contractual Staff
- Coaches – Any individual with a coach credential or whose purpose at the event is to coach an athlete or athletes
- Athletic Trainers – Medical staff that provide massages or athletic modalities that are not in response to an injury

Adult athletes over age 18 who are registered participants and have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors (e.g., on the same team with, practice with) at an Event where minors will be competing do not need a background check screening but do need to complete SafeSport Training and be USA Softball Members.

The following individuals are not required to complete a USA Softball Background Screening, U.S. Center for SafeSport Training (as long as contact with athletes is incidental and observable):

- Scorekeepers – Responsible for scoring management and results
- Media – Photographers, videographers and/or reporters
- Field Crew – Responsible for field set-up, maintenance and tear down
- Vendors – Businesses, sponsors or partners with an event booth
- Water Station Volunteers – Provides water bottles to event participants/staff
- Registration Volunteers – Processes athlete/event personnel check-in
- EMTs/Volunteer Medical – Provides emergency response medical support to event participants/staff

For all Event Personnel and registered participants, event organizers should:

1. Check individual names against the USA Softball Exclusion list, this is a list of all individuals in USA Softball who have been banned, suspended, or placed on an Administrative Hold. A list of all individuals in USA Softball who have been banned or suspended can be found on the [U.S. Center for SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database](#). A list of all Administrative Holds will be provided by USA Softball.
2. Provide a copy of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies email to all registered participants and Event Personnel upon check-in. At check-in the Event Organizer should read this information to all Event Personnel. (see Section 2)
3. For any registered participant and Event Personnel listed above not required to complete U.S Center for SafeSport Training, Event Organizer should distribute a copy of the MAAPP At-A-Glance Document (See Appendix 1) to each individual upon check-in.
4. Event Organizers must prohibit any registered participant and Event Personnel who have not completed the Center’s training but is required to do so, from having regular contact and/or authority over minor athletes at all USAS sanctioned events or competitions.
5. Event Organizers must prohibit any last minute substitutions/day-of participants who have not completed the Center’s training but are required to do so, from participation or placed in a role where they do not have regular contact and/or authority over minor athletes.

Section 2: Communication of the Minor Athlete Abuse and Prevention Policy (MAAPP)

Requirement: Prior to each event, through the registration process or some other form of communication, all registered competitors and “Event Personnel” noted in Section 1, must receive a copy of the [USA Softball MAAPP](#).

Implementation:

- A. Event organizers must communicate to all registered participants and “Event Personnel” that they will be required to adhere to the [MAAPP](#) for the duration of the event. **This information must be communicated no earlier than 30 days prior to the event.** Event Organizers can send emails to registered teams (managers only) in the Tourney Machine by following these steps:
1. Log in to your Tourney Machine account
 2. In the tiled menu, click “Manage” underneath the appropriate tournament
 3. Click on the “Send Message” tab
 4. Complete the fillable sections and click “Send Message”
- B. Please utilize the example MAAPP Communication in the subsequent section for this communication.
- C. Event Organizers are also highly encouraged to post the MAAPP Communication in published event information.
- D. Event organizers will be required to provide proof of [MAAPP](#) communication to registered participants **and** “Event Personnel” upon request from USA Softball. Event organizers may send a separate email to Event Personnel using the same text noted above. Event organizers should keep a record of the email to Event Personnel.
- E. Event Organizers should also post information on How to Report a MAAPP violation on any door that leads to an area that is not observable and interruptible (example restrooms/locker rooms etc.). Event organizers should also conduct random checks in these areas throughout the event to ensure areas remain safe.
- F. Provide a copy of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies email and MAAPP-At-A-Glance to all Event Personnel and registered participants upon check-in if they did not receive it prior to the start of the event. At check-in the Event Organizer should read this information to all Event Personnel.

Section 3: USA Softball Organization Exclusion List – Verification

Requirement: Event organizers will be required to ensure any “Event Personnel” noted in Section 1 and 5, and/or competitors, are not currently listed USA Softball Exclusion list, this is a list of all individuals in USA Softball who have been banned, suspended or placed on an Administrative Hold. A list of all individuals in USA Softball who have been banned or suspended can be found on the [U.S. Center for SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database](#). A list of all Administrative Holds will be provided by USA Softball.

Implementation: Event organizers will need to manually check the final participant registration list against the USA Softball Organization Exclusion list. Any person on this list should be prohibited from participating at the event and from serving in an “Event Personnel” role.

Section 4: Adherence to the MAAPP

Requirement: Event organizers should proactively complete a risk assessment related to the [MAAPP](#) criteria and eliminate all vulnerabilities that may exist as related to the MAAPP when the event has minors registered as competitors.

Implementation: Per the MAAPP, event organizers should actively complete a risk assessment prior to each event to mitigate and/or eliminate applicable risks for:

- One on One Interactions
- Massage and Athletic Training Modalities
- Locker Rooms/Changing Areas
- Social Media/Messaging (Includes Texts and Emails)
 - No event communication should be sent to an individual minor athlete, but rather use group communications only and copy other adults, including the minor's parents.
- Local and Team Travel

Section 5: Event Access Requirements for an Event without Minors Competing

Requirement: If the USA Softball Sanctioned Event **will not** have minors competing, Event Personnel will be checked against the USA Softball's Exclusion list and, depending on their role, may be subject to the following requirements (these requirements must be completed **prior** to start date of the event):

1. [USA Softball Background Screening](#)
2. USA Softball Membership

Implementation: Event organizers will implement requirements based on Event Personnel roles as outlined below:

The following individuals will be required to complete USA Softball Background Screening, and have a USA Softball Membership:

- Staff – USA Softball Staff, Local Association Staff, Tournament Directors, or Contractual Staff

The following individuals are not required to complete USA Softball Background Screening (as long as contact with athletes is incidental and observable):

- Officials – USA Softball Umpire
- Coaches – Any individual with a coach credential or whose purpose at the event is to coach an athlete or athletes
- Scorekeepers – Responsible for scoring management and results
- Media – Photographers, videographers and/or reporters
- Field Crew – Responsible for field set-up, maintenance and tear down
- Vendors – Businesses, sponsors or partners with an event booth
- Water Station Volunteers – Provides water bottles to event participants/staff
- Registration Volunteers – Processes athlete/event personnel check-in
- EMTs/Volunteer Medical – Provides medical support to event participants/staff

In all instances event organizers should make sure adult participants and "Event Personnel" are not listed on the [U.S. Center for SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database](#).

Section 6: Event Personnel List

All event organizers should maintain a roster of Event Personnel and registered participants for each sanctioned event, to include their role and verification that they have each completed the necessary requirements set forth above, prior to the start date of the event. USA Softball Event Organizers must submit an Event Personnel list to USA Softball for every sanctioned event and retain the Event Personnel list for a minimum of 5 years for purposes of USA Softball audit, upon request.

For more information on these procedures please contact safesport@usasoftball.com.

MAAPP Communication

Dear (Athlete or Event Personnel),

USA Softball, in conjunction with policies formulated by the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#), is committed to building a sport community where participants can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct. Through education, resources, and training, the U.S. Center for SafeSport helps members of the sport community recognize, reduce, and respond to misconduct in sport.

Education about child abuse, athlete abuse and bullying, helps everyone become more aware of unsafe situations and encourages discussions about methods to provide a safe and nourishing environment for all athletes. USA Softball encourages all members and all parents to participate in the SafeSport training. More information can be found on [USASoftball.com](#).

The policies set forth in the [USA Softball Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy \(MAAPP\)](#) are adopted by USA Softball and approved by the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

Who should report?

All individuals, regardless of membership with USA Softball, are encouraged to report suspected violations of the SafeSport Code. Adult Participants who are over the age of 18 are required to report suspected SafeSport Code violations related to or accompanying sexual misconduct. Adult Participants who fail to report SafeSport Code violations may be subject to disciplinary action.

USA Softball's designated 'Adult Participants' for SafeSport purposes include:

- National Office Staff
- National Teams, including:
 - o Staff, Coaches, Players, Athletic Trainers, Medical Personnel, and Umpires appointed by the NGB to international events
- Local Association Softball Officials, including:
 - o Board of Directors, Commissioners appointed by USA Softball, JO Commissioners appointed by the USA Softball Commissioners, Player Representatives appointed by USA Softball Commissioners, Umpires-In-Chief appointed by USA Softball Commissioners, National Championship Tournament Directors appointed by USA Softball or USA Softball Commissioners, and Umpires appointed by USA Softball to national championship events
- USA Softball's Local Association Members, including:
 - o Coaches and players over the age of 18

Pursuant to federal law, all adults authorized to interact with minor or amateur athletes who learn of facts that give reason to suspect that a child has suffered an incident of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, shall make a report of the suspected abuse to law enforcement and/or your state's designated agency within 24 hours. Reports of abuse not involving a minor may and should also be reported to local authorities.

To Report Non-Sexual Misconduct, including MAAPP Violations

Contact: Stephanie Brown, Screening & SafeSport Coordinator

Phone: 405-425-3444

Email: SafeSport@USASoftball.com

To Report Sexual Misconduct

Contact: [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)

Phone: 720-531-0340

[Online Form](#)

[Crisis Support](#)

Kind Regards,

KNOW YOUR ROLE

WHAT IS KNOW YOUR ROLE™?

Over the past decade or so, the steady decline of officials and participants involved in youth sports has increased at a staggering rate. The problem has gotten so bad, that several areas and sports have had to limit the number of teams, games, and sporting events they are able to offer. In 2016, the Southern Oregon Sports Commission decided to take a stand against the problem. With the help of local commissioners, including Matt Sayers (Athletic Director of Southern Oregon University), the phrase Know Your Role™ was coined, and development began on a marketing and media campaign that not only draws attention to the problem of poor participant behavior around athletics, but that also aims to change that culture for the better.

WHY KNOW YOUR ROLE™ WAS DEVELOPED

The Know Your Role™ campaign is a marketing campaign created and developed by the Southern Oregon Sports Commission. The campaign addresses the epidemic of poor behavior toward sports officials and aims to correct said problem through a series of positive messages and continued reminders that participant safety, enjoyment, growth, and development are the most important aspects of sports.

KNOW YOUR ROLE™ ROOTS IN SOUTHERN OREGON

After developing much of the Know Your Role™ campaign, SOSC felt it was only appropriate to launch the campaign first in our own back yard. School districts, parks and recreation facilities and several other local entities throughout the Rogue Valley and Southern Oregon began to implement the program. With the help of local news and media stations, SOSC was able to not only spread the message of KYR, but also see the message be openly and widely accepted but the communities in the region.

GROWTH OF KNOW YOUR ROLE™

Since 2022, SOSC has shifted its attention and efforts to spreading the message of Know Your Role™ across the nation. In the first 6 months of pushing the message outside of the state of Oregon, SOSC has presented the campaign to several state and national governing bodies. These entities, including USA Softball, have shown great interest in partnering with SOSC to spread the message. Interest was so great, that SOSC has created a licensing package that allows organizations and entities, like USA Softball, to use Know Your Role™ to drastically improve the behavioral landscape around youth sports across the nation.

KYR LICENSING INFO

The Southern Oregon Sports Commission offers the campaign as part of a three-year licensing agreement, which comes with all of the electronic media files, templates, videos and all other digital assets an organization or group might need to spread this message to its members. In addition, the Know Your Role™ campaign comes with a step-by-step “Game Plan” instructing organizations how to best implement the campaign, how to take advantage of their local assets, leverage local partnerships, and even how often to post the provided content to their social media platforms.

KYR VIDEO LIBRARY AND ASSETS

As mentioned previously, SOSC has developed a wide assortment of various videos, templates and other media assets for those who license the program and join us in our efforts. These assets are protected by copyright infringement laws, and thus are not available to the general public to view.

SOSC has developed several tools to help get this message out in our community. We have supplied outdoor and indoor banners to every school, organization, and club along with posters and flyers. We also created a series of videos and PSAs that have aired on television, radio and social media platforms.

If you would like more information on how you can implement the Know Your Role message in your school, club or organization, contact USA Softball’s Marketing team at marketing@usasoftball.com

APPENDIX

- A. SafeSport Code
- B. Event Signage
- C. Safety Planning Toolkit
- D. Sample Consent Forms
- E. MAAPP At-A-Glance