



USA WEIGHTLIFTING

SafeSport Policies and Procedures

*Recognizing, Reducing and Responding to the Potential for
Misconduct in the Sport of Weightlifting in the USA.*

**CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT OF PROTECTION, SAFETY, AND
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR ALL**

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SafeSport | WHERE YOUR GAME PLAN STARTS

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INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of reasons to participate in Weightlifting – at any level. A life-long activity which promotes and encourages a healthy lifestyle, and builds self-confidence, weightlifting athletes learn about discipline, teamwork and many other lifelong skills.

Unfortunately, sport can also be a high-risk environment for misconduct, including emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and physical & sexual abuse to either minors or adults. As part of these SafeSport Policies and Procedures, we identify seven primary types of misconduct:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct
- Sexual Misconduct, including Child Sexual Abuse
- Professional Misconduct

All forms of misconduct are intolerable and in direct conflict with the tenets / ideals of USA Weightlifting.

Misconduct may damage an affected athlete's psychological well-being. Athletes who have been mistreated experience social embarrassment, emotional turmoil, psychological scars, loss of self-esteem and negative impacts are likely to ensue on family, friends and the sport. Misconduct from others often hurts an athlete's competitive performance and may cause him or her to drop out of USA Weightlifting entirely.

USA Weightlifting is committed to improving the safety of athletes and participants involved in our sport. These policies and procedures should guide behavior of all USA Weightlifting members.

In addition to reporting any abuse to USA Weightlifting, persons must also report suspected child physical or sexual abuse to the appropriate law enforcement authority. Members of USA

Weightlifting (including USA Weightlifting employees) should not under any circumstances attempt to valuate credibility or validity of any sexual or physical abuse allegation before reporting to the relevant law enforcement authority.

USA Weightlifting provides the following general links provided by the Federal Government and United States Olympic Committee for information on the issue and reporting on this issue;

United States Olympic Committee (USOC) SafeSport Hub;

<http://www.safesport.org>

United States Department for Health & Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway; How to report Child Maltreatment;

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/how.cfm>

United States Department for Health & Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway; State by State Child Abuse and Neglect Information;

https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id=5&rate_chno=11-11172

JustTell.Org – Empowering Kids to Speak Up about Sexual Abuse;

<http://www.justtell.org>

DEFINITIONS

Child, children, minor and youth

Anyone under the age of 18 or otherwise considered a minor by State law. Here, “child,” “children,” “minor” and “youth” are used interchangeably.¹

Child physical abuse

- Non-accidental trauma or physical injury caused by contact behaviors, such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. Child physical abuse may also include non-contact physical misconduct as described in these policies and procedures.

Child sexual abuse

¹ Saul J, Audage NC. *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2007.

- Child sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a minor that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between minors can also be abusive if there is a significant imbalance of power or disparity in age, development or size, such that one child is the aggressor. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive written or electronic communications, exposure or voyeurism.²

Misconduct

Conduct which results in harm, the potential for harm or the imminent threat of harm. Age is irrelevant to misconduct. There are six primary types of misconduct in sport: emotional, physical and sexual misconduct, bullying, harassment and hazing.

Participants

Participants are minors who participate in a sport activity through a club or organization (e.g., athletes, officials or referees).

² *Id.*



USA WEIGHTLIFTING STRATEGY, POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR 'SAFESPORT'

1. Defining Member Abuse

USA Weightlifting defines member abuse as any non-accidental action that causes injury or harm to a USA Weightlifting member or member athlete, including but not limited to sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, hazing, bullying, threats and harassment.

2. Responsible Person

USA Weightlifting will appoint a member of its staff to be responsible for Athlete Protection. The responsible party currently is the Chief Executive Officer.

3. Responsible Persons within USA Weightlifting Clubs

Each local USA Weightlifting club affiliated or associated with USA Weightlifting is required to designate their responsible SafeSport officer within the club, commencing on their next renewal of membership of USA Weightlifting from the activation of this policy. This named individual will have responsibility for championing the USA Weightlifting SafeSport strategy within the club, and for providing informational materials and training to constituents of the club. Clubs that do not designate such an individual will be assumed to be designating the President of the Club as the designated person.

4. Background Checks

USA Weightlifting coaches and administrators who will come into contact with minors (*any individual under 18*) are required to undergo a confidential background check every two years. It is the express policy of USA Weightlifting to exclude, or potentially remove, any member, coach or employee who has a red light applied to their background check for a Crime of Moral Turpitude or for any crime involving illegal drugs, as defined by the Federal Government from situations which involve interactions with minors. USA Weightlifting may also permanently expel any members who have any Felony convictions. USA Weightlifting may also permanently expel or suspend members, employees, contractors, or, volunteers who have been adjudged as liable in a civil case involving harm to minors of any sort.

Additionally, any person(s) who has had their parental rights terminated, has a reference or history of complaints of sexual, physical or emotional abuse with any other organization (regardless of position), or who has resigned or been terminated from a position in another organization (regardless of volunteer, coach, member or employee) for reasons of behavior towards minors may also be expelled or suspended by the organization.

The balance of any membership fees for a remaining term will not be refunded. For the avoidance of doubt, any person listed in the National Sex Offender Public Website will be automatically and permanently excluded from USA Weightlifting.

All Directors and Employees of USA Weightlifting shall also go under screening every two years, with the very same restrictions imposed upon them. USA Weightlifting sanctioned event volunteers and

coaches that will have significant exposure to minors will also be required to pass a background check.

USA Weightlifting will deem non-consent to a background check as a FAILURE of the background check, and such individuals may be permanently expelled from USA Weightlifting or prohibited from participating in any activities involving significant contact with minors related to USA Weightlifting programs, teams, and activities.

USA Weightlifting requests that Clubs also take on this responsibility for club coaches and volunteers and ensure that they report any failures to USA Weightlifting to ensure nationwide protection in the sport of USA Weightlifting.

Member clubs are responsible for supervising the program for events sanctioned in their area.

USA Weightlifting does this for the following reasons;

- To deter offenders from interest in USA Weightlifting to the extent where known offenders do not have access to offend through the medium of USA Weightlifting
- To deter offenders not yet caught from interest in USA Weightlifting to facilitate their offending because USA Weightlifting is taking steps to protect its members.

The existence of a red light must be kept confidential between USA Weightlifting, the member club and the individual.

For employees of USA Weightlifting, the CEO shall hear the appeal and his decision will be final with no right of further appeal.

For all others, a Special Hearing Panel will hear the appeal and their decision will be final with no further right of administrative appeal. The Hearing Panel shall consist of the following individuals: the elected Athlete Representative, the Grassroots Director of USA Weightlifting, and the CEO of USA Weightlifting. On notification of a red light, the individual has five days to submit an appeal to the Chief Executive (or in the case of the Chief Executive, the Chairman of the Board). USA Weightlifting will reply within 28-calendar days of a finding of the hearing panel or, for a case regarding Employees, within 28-calendar days of the date of filing the appeal.

5. Sexual Abuse

USA Weightlifting holds a firm policy that there shall be no sexual abuse tolerated of any minor involved in USA Weightlifting by any USA Weightlifting member, employee, volunteer, coach, referee, umpire, official, club director, club owner, club operator, tournament director, USA Weightlifting contractor, or other participant.

Sexual Abuse occurs when the offending party touches a minor for the purposes of sexual gratification or arousal. Sexual abuse will also be deemed to have occurred when a minor touches an adult employee, volunteer, coach, member or other participant for the purposes of sexual gratification or arousal for either the minor or the adult if the touching occurs with the consent of the adult.

Neither consent of the minor, mistake as to the participant's age, nor the fact that the sexual abuse did not take place at a USA Weightlifting event are considered defenses. Sexual abuse may also be between adults, this occurs where sexual interactions take place that are non-consensual or involve force, coercion or manipulation regardless of the age of the victim. Sexual abuse may also be between two minors if there is a significant age difference between the two participants, regardless of the consent or otherwise of the minor(s) involved.

Sexual abuse may consist of one or more of sexual penetration, sexual touching, and non-contact sexual acts inclusive but not exclusive to exposure, voyeurism, sending sexually explicit electronic messages or photos (by email or cell phone message or otherwise) to a minor, exposure of minors to pornography, deliberate exposure of a minor to sexual acts or deliberate exposure of a minor to inappropriate nudity.

Upon proof of violation of USA Weightlifting's Sexual Abuse policy the offender will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Normally this action will be a suspension or expulsion from USA Weightlifting and referral to law enforcement authorities.

6. Physical Abuse

USA Weightlifting holds a firm policy that there shall be no physical abuse of any minor or adult involved in USA Weightlifting by any employee, volunteer, coach, member or other participant. Physical abuse is defined as any physical contact that intentionally causes, or has the potential to cause, physical harm or bodily injury.

In addition to physical contact, physical abuse also includes the provision of alcohol to a person under the statutory law in that location, usually 21 in the United States. It also includes the provision of illegal drugs to any participant, regardless of age.

Physical abuse does not include reasonable demonstration of USA Weightlifting techniques by a participant or coach designed as a part of fair play of the Game according to the International USA Weightlifting Federation Rulebook.

However, an individual may have been deemed to be in violation of this policy where there is intent to physically harm or cause bodily injury to an individual during the course of play.

Upon proof of violation of USA Weightlifting's Physical Abuse policy, the offender will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Normally this action will constitute expulsion or suspension from USA Weightlifting and referral to law enforcement authorities.

7. Emotional Abuse

USA Weightlifting holds a firm policy that there shall be no emotional abuse of any minor involved in USA Weightlifting by any employee, volunteer, coach, member or other participant.

Emotional abuse is defined as a pattern of non-contact behavior towards any participant that results in or is designed to result in psychological or emotional harm towards any USA Weightlifting participant inclusive of members, coaches, players, volunteers, employees or directors.

This pattern of behaviors may include for example, verbal attacks (such as name calling, degrading comments to them or about them or shouting at an individual in a manner that provides no motivational or other genuine playing reasoning). It may also consist of physical aggressive behavior short of physical abuse (e.g. punching walls or throwing sports equipment) that is designed to intimidate the individual.

Age appropriate coaching methods is not considered emotional abuse.

It is noted that those who are in violation of USA Weightlifting's policy on Bullying, Threats and Harassment may or may not also be in violation of USA Weightlifting's emotional abuse policy.

Upon proof of violation of USA Weightlifting's Emotional Abuse policy, the offender will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Normally this action will be suspension or permanent exclusion from USA Weightlifting and referral to law enforcement authorities.

8. Bullying, Threats and Harassment Policy.

USA Weightlifting requires all of its participants, employees, directors, volunteers, members and coaches to provide an environment which is conducive to a fun and enjoyable environment to practice the sport of USA Weightlifting, therefore an environment that is free from bullying, threats or harassment.

Bullying

Bullying is the use of manipulation or coercion to obtain control of another individual. Bullying involves a pattern of intentional behaviors, both physical and non-physical in nature which seeks to isolate or intimidate a participant.

Bullying extends to both physical intimidation including but not exclusive to punching, kicking or choking and also to verbal behaviors and additionally to the use of electronic media inclusive of social media and cell phones.

Threats

A threat is an express wish to physically injure or cause harm to someone else. This may be expressed in any form – physically, verbally or via electronic means.

Threats may be directed at a participant or alternatively may be directed via a third party.

Harassment

Harassment is a pattern of behaviors that seek to do one or more of the following: cause fear, humiliation, annoyance, offend, degrade, create a hostile environment, or reflect discrimination in any way.

Racial harassment is covered by this policy and includes the making of negative comments on any USA Weightlifting member's skin color, or ethnicity inclusive of the display of offensive materials or symbols.

Sexual orientation harassment is also covered by this policy. It is the USA Weightlifting policy that participation in USA Weightlifting is open to all regardless of sexual orientation. Discrimination in any fashion on the basis of one's sexual orientation is expressly prohibited by USA Weightlifting.

Sexual harassment is covered by this policy. It is considered a violation of this policy for any member, Director, Employee, or coach within USA Weightlifting to harass a participant or fellow member through their conduct or through any type of communications. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct may constitute sexual harassment even when the harassment is by members of the same gender.

Upon proof of violation of USA Weightlifting's Bullying, Threats & Harassment policy the offender will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Normally this action will be suspension or permanent exclusion from USA Weightlifting and referral to law enforcement authorities.

9. Hazing Policy

USA Weightlifting expressly prohibits the practice of initiation ceremonies or hazing designed to cause embarrassment, offense or otherwise degrade the victim. This policy extends to the hazing of any individual involved in USA Weightlifting.

This prohibition does not prohibit team building activities designed to establish team bonds, and do not have potential to cause harm to a participant, coach, volunteer, director, employee or member of USA Weightlifting. For example, acceptable behaviors may include a younger player or rookie bringing in equipment at the end of practice.

Upon proof of violation of USA Weightlifting's Hazing policy the offender will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Normally, this action may be expulsion or suspension from USA Weightlifting and referral to law enforcement authorities.

10. Professional Conduct Policy

Professional conduct covers the general conduct of USA Weightlifting members attending any USA Weightlifting function or sanctioned event.

The expectation is that USA Weightlifting attendees, including those who are not members of the organization are required to behave in professional manner towards USA Weightlifting Directors, USA Weightlifting Staff, USA Weightlifting Members, USA Weightlifting Coaches, USA Weightlifting Technical Officials and all fellow attendees of that event inclusive of non-USA Weightlifting members.

Professional conduct includes, but is not exclusive to, the following;

- Language, including the use of profanity and the use of raised or aggressive language
- Physical contact, to be clear, with the exception of a hand shake, or invited contact, no physical contact should be made with a fellow attendee.
- Hygiene, all attendees are expected to carry a reasonable level of personal hygiene at each event or function.
- Disruption, behavior to disrupt the flow of play or the otherwise course of an event is considered professional misconduct.

11. Overnight Travels Policy

USA Weightlifting recognizes that individuals are placed at increased risk in unfamiliar surroundings, during travel and especially travel where an overnight stay is involved.

USA Weightlifting holds a firm recommendation that overnight stays involving minors should be avoided whenever possible.

Where this is not possible USA Weightlifting requires that the following rules are adhered to;

- No USA Weightlifting adult member (unless a parent), employee, volunteer, coach, referee, umpire, official, club director, club owner, club operator, meet director, USA Weightlifting contractor, or other participant shall share a sleeping arrangement with a minor.
- Players should share with other players of the same gender, with 1-4 players assigned depending on availability of accommodations.
- Regular monitoring of curfews and rooms should be conducted by a party of two appropriately screened adults, working in tandem.
- The hotel or accommodation must be requested to block any and all adult channels including free to air adult channels where available.
- Individual meetings between any adult and minor should take place in a public place, such as a lobby and expressly not in a private area such as a hotel room.
- Team administrators and coaches must permit regular check-in calls to parents, and at the request of any participant allow further unscheduled check-in calls to home.
- Family members travelling with the party should be encouraged to use the same hotel as the team.
- A team chaperone of at least one person of the same gender of the team (properly screened) must accompany the party at all times.
- The properly screened adults must keep a written log of events happening during the overnight stay, available upon request to the inspection of the parents of minors involved.

USA Weightlifting recognizes that teams have to travel for training, camps and meets. USA Weightlifting requires all participants, coaches, teams, volunteers, directors to adhere to the following rules:

- In all cases, parents have the right to transport their child, and have the player stay at a hotel of their choosing at their own expense.

- No coach, chaperone or otherwise suitably screened adult shall be at any time permitted to consume alcohol or drugs while performing their duties as an appropriate adult or chaperone.
- No coach, employee, volunteer, director or chaperone will engage in travel without proper safety provisions as per state and federal law. This includes the possession of a clean driving license, proper insurance, a well maintained vehicle and that all adults in the party have passed a USA Weightlifting national screening check.
- Teams should travel in groups rather than individual cars where possible.
- USA Weightlifting recommends the provision of 1 properly screened adult for every five to seven minors.

Any USA Weightlifting member found to be in violation of the USA Weightlifting travel policy will be subject to a disciplinary process which may result in expulsion or suspension from USA Weightlifting.

11. Awareness & Training for USA Weightlifting Members

USA Weightlifting treats its commitment to SafeSport very seriously and will require that all members of USA Weightlifting read and sign off on their training element as a condition of their membership.

Initial training is available at www.safesport.org and will be required for all coaches upon renewal of their coaching certification, or the acquiring of their certification.

12. Reporting

It is of fundamental importance to USA Weightlifting that individuals feel able to come forward and report abuse, or suspected abuse in a safe and, if requested, anonymous manner. All stakeholders in USA Weightlifting should be aware of how to report abuse and USA Weightlifting is committed to removing any and all barriers to the safe and effective reporting of abuse within USA Weightlifting.

Who Must Report?

Any member, volunteer, participant, employee, Director, coach, referee, umpire, official, Club Director, Owner, Club Operator, Meet Director, or contractor of USA Weightlifting must report both actual and perceived breaches of any policy outlined in this documentation. Where appropriate they should ensure they report to both USA Weightlifting and additionally to the local law enforcement authorities.

It is vital that no individual hesitates in reporting either violations or perceived violations. DO NOT attempt to evaluate the credibility of any claim and instead refer to USA Weightlifting and to the local authorities.

To Whom to Report

Suspicious or allegations of violations of any part of this policy should be reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer of USA Weightlifting without delay. In the event the allegation is made against the Chief Executive Officer, the allegation must be made to the Chairman of the Board.

In some instances, a victim may feel more comfortable reporting to their responsible person within the affiliated or associated club, it is entirely appropriate that they be able to do this. In this instance the local responsible person will co-ordinate with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure a quick and effective investigation.

What Information Do I need to make a Report?

USA Weightlifting encourages victims and those reporting to do so in the way most comfortable for them, be that email, online, in person or by telephone.

An individual has the absolute right, as far as the law allows, to report anonymously if they wish to do so, however it is strongly encouraged the following information is included in your report;

- Name of the complainant or complainants
- Type of Misconduct alleged
- Name or Names of the individuals alleged to be committing misconduct or misconducts
- Exact if known, approximate if not known dates of misconduct (there is no time limit on misconducts).
- Names of any other individuals who it is believed may have (any) information regarding the misconduct
- Summary of reasons to believe the misconduct has taken place.

Will my report be treated confidentially?

USA Weightlifting commits that, and to the extent permitted by the law only, it will keep the reporters, victims and the accused perpetrators names confidential from the public and from members of USA Weightlifting. The individual responsible for the confidentiality of information is the Chief Executive Officer, except in the event where the Chief Executive is a party to the case where the responsible individual is the Chairman of the Board.

Can I report anonymously?

It is more difficult to effectively investigate and take action if reporting occurs anonymously. However, USA Weightlifting takes all reporting seriously and encourages members to report using the above information. However, if it is more comfortable for the reporter you can absolutely report anonymously simply by leaving your name and contact details off of the form.

When reporting please include all the information you are aware of, as this will assist USA Weightlifting to investigate the matter effectively.

I've blown the whistle on an alleged offender, what protection am I afforded?

Regardless of the outcome of an investigation, USA Weightlifting will not tolerate any type of retaliation or victimization of any individual who comes forward to report misconducts in good faith. Any such action shall be considered itself a breach of the SafeSport strategy and subject to USA Weightlifting disciplinary procedures, the punishment for which will usually be permanent expulsion from USA Weightlifting.

Bad Faith Allegations

USA Weightlifting has a policy of no tolerance to Bad Faith allegations. A report that is made in Bad faith, is malicious or frivolous will be considered in breach of this policy and face disciplinary action, which may result in the permanent suspension or expulsion from USA Weightlifting.

13. USA Weightlifting Response to Reports

Referral of Child Abuse to Legal Authorities.

An independent investigation into child abuse, sexual or physical abuse, can be detrimental to any legal process or investigation. Therefore it is USA Weightlifting policy to refer each report to the relevant law enforcement body for that area and to cooperate fully with any investigation made by that law enforcement body.

In some states, it is mandatory for a person holding any office (in this case, with USA Weightlifting), to report any suspicions to the authorities.

Immediate Suspension

USA Weightlifting has a policy of no tolerance to both SafeSport violations as well as to Bad Faith allegations. A report that is made in Bad faith, is malicious or frivolous will be considered in breach of this policy and face disciplinary action, which may result in suspension or permanent expulsion from USA Weightlifting. When an allegation of a breach of any element of the USA Weightlifting SafeSport strategy is made, the accused individual will face similar and equivalent ramifications.

The individual will remain suspended until the outcome of a USA Weightlifting hearing, or until the completion of a law enforcement process. This suspension in no way implies guilt on the part of the accused but is made purely to provide precautionary protection to USA Weightlifting membership.

Hearings & Outcomes

USA Weightlifting shall conduct a hearing for the accused after proper preliminary data gathering is complete by the responsible person (as assigned by the Chief Executive Officer).

The complainant, victim, and accused individual shall have the right to receive written notification of the hearing and be invited at their own expense to present relevant information, and also at their own expense to be represented by a legal counsel.

The hearing panel should convene in the absence of any of these noted individuals if these individuals cannot be located, do not make contact within reasonable deadlines or decline to attend.

All individuals have a right to a written summary of the decision made by the hearing panel, although the panel is recommended to consult with a legal counsel before making any findings public.

Where the decision of the BOD is to permanently expel an individual, that individual has the right to make a written appeal to the Board of Directors of USA Weightlifting, whose decision is final.

The appropriate sanction shall be up to the panel (or CEO) in each complaint and the panel will consider the following, in no particular order;

- Any legal proceedings and their outcome.
- If the individual poses a future risk to any person connected with USA Weightlifting.
- The seriousness of the offence or act.
- Age of the accused individual when the offence or act occurred.
- Any information produced by the accused individual, or on their behalf, to the effect of their rehabilitation and/or good conduct.
- The interests of USA Weightlifting and its members, including its member clubs.

A sanction may range from reprimand, formal warning, suspension of membership, or permanent expulsion from USA Weightlifting.

Where the sanction is less than permanent expulsion the individual or individuals will be expected to undergo further training to their appropriate conduct.

14. Compliance Monitoring of SafeSport Strategy

The most important element of this SafeSport Strategy is the ability for our members, employees, volunteers, coaches and Directors to be actively involved in monitoring it across the United States.

Everyone has a responsibility to monitor the USA Weightlifting SafeSport Strategy but below USA Weightlifting has allocated some specific areas where individuals are expected to be particularly vigilant;

Team Coaches;

- A coach should oversee the correct participation in the SafeSport Strategy of his team, especially the Locker Room Policy, Social Media Policy, and Travel Policy.
- Coaches are encouraged to ensure that other coaches involved with practice or competitions are properly qualified by USA Weightlifting including a current background check.

USA Weightlifting Clubs

- USA Weightlifting clubs are required to ensure that a coach has received their proper background check and screening and have proper USA Weightlifting coaching experience, certification, and accreditation before allowing contact with players. Club Coaches are required to be USA Weightlifting Members.
- USA Weightlifting clubs are required to ensure that any individual involved in their club are USA Weightlifting members AND have passed a current background check before having any exposure to minors.
- USA Weightlifting Clubs should promptly report any violation of this strategy to the Chief Executive Officer of USA Weightlifting.