



# USA SOFTBALL

## ATHLETE SAFETY POLICY



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## Introduction

USA Softball provides people of all ages the opportunity to play the game they love at a variety of levels. USA Softball offers recreational, league, tournament and National Championship play for fast pitch, slow pitch and modified pitch and annually conducts over 100 National Championships.

USA Softball is committed to providing a safe environment for our members and participants, and to deter and proactively address abusive conduct in any form. Every member of this organization should assist in the protection of participants' safety and well-being on and off the playing field while involved in sponsored activities.

## Covered Individuals

USA Softball Covered Individuals are (1) those individuals it formally authorizes, approves or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes; or (2) USA Softball staff, as designated below:

1. National Office Staff
2. National Teams, including:
  - a. Staff
  - b. Coaches
  - c. Players
  - d. Athletic Trainers
  - e. Medical Personnel
  - f. Umpires appointed by the NGB to national championship events or international events
3. Local Association Softball Officials, including:
  - a. Board of Directors
  - b. Commissioners appointed by the NGB
  - c. JO Commissioners appointed by the NGB Commissioners
  - d. Player Representatives appointed by the NGB Commissioners
  - e. Umpires-In-Chief appointed by the NGB Commissioners
  - f. National Championship Tournament Directors appointed by the NGB or NGB Commissioners
4. A.C.E. Program Coaches of NGB's Local Association Members



## Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is strictly prohibited: Bullying, hazing, harassment, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse and sexual harassment) as defined by the U.S. Center for SafeSport's SafeSport program at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

**1** Abuse of any kind is not permitted within our organization. This means we do not tolerate physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse or misconduct from our players, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents or spectators.

**2** Physical and sexual abuse, including, but not limited to, striking, hitting, kicking, biting, indecent or wanton gesturing, lewd conduct, indecent exposure, unwanted physical contact, any form of sexual contact or inappropriate touching, are strictly prohibited within our organization.

**3** Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is also prohibited. These include, but are not limited to such forms of abuse as a pattern or practice of: yelling, insulting, threatening, mocking, demeaning behavior, or making abusive statements in regard to a person's race, gender, religion, nationality/ethnicity, sex or age.

## Criminal Background Check

Criminal background checks are required on an annual basis of any individual that falls in one or more of the Covered Individual categories. Covered individuals must complete their background check before contact with athletes begin and in any event within forty-five (45) days of the new role. USA Softball will submit applicants' information and will track all SafeSport Background Check screening and perform periodic checks to ensure compliance with this policy.

## Education & Awareness Training

USA Softball is excited to partner with the U.S. Center for SafeSport! As of December 1, 2017, USA Softball requires SafeSport education and training for all members that fall under one or more of the Covered Individual categories. Covered individuals must complete their SafeSport education before contact with athletes begin and in any event within forty-five (45) days of the new role.



## Behavioral Guidelines

USA Softball has established the following guidelines of behavior and procedures for our staff, volunteers and participants. All members of this organization, as well as parents, spectators and other invitees are expected to observe and adhere to these guidelines.

**1 Buddy System for Players:** We recommend that every activity sponsored by our program put a Buddy System in place. Each youth participant should be assigned a buddy during sponsored activities. No child should go anywhere – to the bathrooms, locker rooms, or other location – without his or her buddy.

**2 Buddy System for Adults:** To further protect our youth participants, as well as our coaches, officials and volunteers, two adults should always be present at every activity. In particular, we recommend that.

- No adult person should allow him/herself to be alone with a child.
- Do not drive alone with a non-related child participant in the car.
- Do not take a child alone to the locker room, bathrooms or any other private room
- Provide one-on-one training or individual coaching only with the assistance of another adult.
- If you must have a private conversation with a youth participant, do it within view of others, in the gym or on the field, not in a private office.
- Coaches and other adult members of this organization should not socialize individually with youth participants outside of sponsored activities. This would include one-on-one social networking, emailing and texting. Coaches and other adult members of the organization should not nurture one-on-one relationships and/or participate in one-on-one texting, emailing or social networking relationships with individual youth participants. This would not include team-wide or group communications.

**3 Supervision/Chaperone ratio:** We recommend that for any sponsored activity, the ratio of adults to youth participants be 1:8 – one (or more) adults for every eight children, with a minimum of two adults for every activity.

**4** When traveling overnight with youth participants, children should be paired up with other children of same gender and similar age group, with chaperones in separate but nearby rooms.

**5** We encourage parents to become as active as possible in sponsored activities, games, practices and other events. The more the parents are involved, the less likely it is for abusive situations to develop.



## Reporting to Law Enforcement

Most adult persons affiliated with USA Softball are now required to comply with the reporting requirements of section 226 of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (34 U.S.C. § 20341) and report any suspected child abuse to law enforcement authorities and/or child protective services in your jurisdiction within 24 hours. Child abuse is defined in the federal law and includes various forms of abuse, including sexual and non-sexual child abuse. The persons subject to the mandatory reporting requirements are also specifically defined in the federal law (34 U.S.C. § 20341). A failure to timely comply with the mandatory federal reporting requirements may result in criminal liability under federal law, including imprisonment for up to one (1) year and/or a fine. The

[Relevant statutes: 34 U.S.C § 20341; *Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990*; and *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017*]

## Reporting Concerns to USA Softball or the U.S. Center for SafeSport

YOU MAY REPORT ANONYMOUSLY. Anonymous reporting may make it difficult for USA Softball or the U.S. Center for SafeSport to investigate or properly address misconduct or abuse. However, USA Softball and the U.S. Center for SafeSport recognizes it can be difficult for an athlete, teammate, friend or family member to report an allegation of misconduct and strives to remove as many barriers to reporting as possible.

When making the decision to report a concern you have, it can often feel intimidating and overwhelming. Please use these guidelines to help you on the first step “Where do I report?” If you are not sure who to contact with a concern please contact the staff at the USA Softball National Office and we will be sure to talk through your concern, answer your questions and connect you with the correct people.

Report concerns that deal with acts of Sexual Misconduct (including Sexual Harassment, Gender Identity Harassment or Gender Express Harassment) to the U.S. Center for SafeSport by calling (720) 531-0340 (M-F 8am-5pm MT) or online at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org). The U.S. Center For SafeSport administers its investigations, complaints and discipline pursuant to its own procedures and SafeSport Code, which can be found at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

Report concerns that deal with acts of Non-Sexual Misconduct to the USA Softball National office by emailing us at [SafeSport@USASoftball.com](mailto:SafeSport@USASoftball.com) or by calling Stephanie Brown at (405) 425-3444 (M-F 8am-5pm CT).



## USA SOFTBALL ATHLETE SAFETY POLICY

**Is Reporting Mandatory?** Yes, Adult Covered Individuals are REQUIRED to report suspected sexual misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport. A failure to timely report may subject the person to discipline by the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

### Whistle Blower Clause

Regardless of whether the allegation(s) is proven, (NGB) will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. (NGB) will not encourage, allow or tolerate attempts from any individual to retaliate, punish or in any way harm any individual(s) who reports a concern in good faith. Such actions against a complainant may be grounds for disciplinary action.

## Enforcement

USA Softball enforces its Athlete Safety Policy by following procedures established by the USA Softball Bylaws and National Team Policies as well as policies and procedures set in place by the U.S. Center for SafeSport and the SafeSport Code.

## Appeal Rights

All SafeSport disciplinary complaints (involving sexual misconduct) will be administered by the U.S. Center for SafeSport and the decision shall be final and binding.

All non-SafeSport disciplinary complaints will be administered by the USA Softball Local Association Commissioner for the area in which the offending conduct occurred, in accordance with the procedures and rules outlined in USA Softball's Bylaws at <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about/about-us> and for National Team Athletes, in accordance with the procedures and rules outlined in Article 105 of the Board of Directors Policy for International play at <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about/national-team>. Appeal requests of non-SafeSport disciplinary determinations will be handled pursuant to USA Softball disciplinary procedures.

USA Softball reserves the right to amend these policies from time to time as it deems appropriate.