

Members of USA Softball,

USA Softball takes great pride in being the National Governing Body (NGB) of Softball in the United States and recognized by the United States Olympic Committee for our commitment to the well-being of the members in our organization. This reputation for providing the best-of-the-best in all aspects of the game is built on a foundation of 80-plus years in sanctioning the sport of softball – a foundation that we will continue to build upon.

The U.S. Congress designated the U.S. Center for SafeSport (USCSS) with the authority to respond to reports of sexual misconduct within the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) by passing the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017. This legislation also known as S.534, designates the USSCS to serve as the independent national safe sport organization, with the additional responsibility for the USSCS to develop national policies and procedures to prevent the emotional, physical, mental and sexual abuse of amateur athletes.

Many of our members have been misinformed that this federal law affects only those NGBs under the umbrella of the USOPC, but that is not the case. This federal law also extends to non-NGB sports organizations if they are engaged in interstate or international commerce or activities. Interstate competition refers to sports organizations that travel across state lines to compete. But even those that do not travel across state lines are indirectly impacted by the act because it sets a new standard of care that will likely apply to all organizations over time. Most states will also move to pass state-specific legislation that directly applies to sports organizations that do not cross state lines.

USA Softball, under USOPC Bylaw Section 8.7.1(c), is indeed under more stringent requirements from the USSCS in regard to implementing abuse prevention training and other measures to reduce one-on-one interaction between adults and minor athletes. However, this should be viewed in a positive light as we continue to set the standard for athlete safety and well-being.

We take protecting our members both on and off the field seriously and are dedicated to building and maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment in which our participants may flourish and grow. We are the leaders in the sport of softball and as such our commitment to athlete safety is unmatched. Simply put – USA Softball will not tolerate ANY abuse whether it is emotional, physical, mental and sexual. That is why for over 10 years, USA Softball has required background checks for adults on the field of play in our Youth/Junior Olympic (JO) program. Since the introduction of the USSCS, the USOPC has developed a Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) and USA Softball has further developed our own MAAPP and USSCS policy designed to protect our members from various types of misconduct and abuse.

As the NGB, we are being given a chance to be first-to-implement in the game of softball and are taking measure that no other softball organization is taking. With the resources afforded to us by the USOPC during the implementation of the USSCS policies and procedures, we are being given a guided path through the USOPC and USSCS process with a set of checks and balances to ensure that we continue to stay on the right track as we carry on our position as leaders in the sport of softball. USA Softball is the first softball organization to implement these measures, but we hope we aren't the last.

By taking the USSCS courses, USA Softball members will come to learn that in order to prevent abuse, one needs to know and understand not only the signs of abuse and misconduct, but how to prevent them. The information that is contained within the USSCS courses will help members monitor and support one another, thus limiting emotional, physical, mental and sexual abuse.

In order to properly implement the measures put forth in the USSCS Code and MAAPP, the USA Softball Board of Directors and General Council voted and approved on Nov. 14, 2019 an important piece of legislation in the Procedural Code that requires “[a]ll adults (on the field/dugout [in youth programs]) must have a background check and be SafeSport certified for the current year”.

So what does this piece of legislation mean? It means that anyone 18-years and older who serve in a position of authority over athletes or have regular contact with athletes 17 years and younger (minors) must complete a background check and complete the USCSS courses.

It is the hope of USA Softball in making this change that we can continue to create and uphold a tradition of excellence in softball by building and maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment in which our youth may grow, develop, and prosper.

We know that the implementation of this policy will be viewed as burdensome by some, but this is not be the first time USA Softball has implemented athlete safety measures such as this. We were pioneers in implementing background checks before they became the norm in youth sports. **Please remember that this policy change is just another step in USA Softball's commitment to its athletes.**

We hope that all of you will continue to work with us in order to promote not only the game of softball, but also the safety and well-being of all those that love the game as well.

Thank you,

USA Softball Staff

Document References:

USOPC Bylaws - <https://www.teamusa.org/-/media/Legal/01242020-USOPC-Bylaws-Effective-January-1-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=66F0050712C5D46F529039763437A9AAEF9730C1>

USCSS Code - <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/safesport-code/>

USA Softball Bylaws - <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about-usa-sb/governance>

USA Softball Procedural Code - <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about-usa-sb/governance>

USA Softball MAAPP - <http://downloads.asasoftball.com/about/pdf/MAAPP-USAS-September%202019.pdf>