USA Fencing Safe Sport Background
USA Fencing’s first Safe Sport Policy was implemented in August 2013. Prior to the creation of an official policy, USA Fencing had formed a task force to review athlete safety policies and procedures, including background screens.

The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC – at that time the USOC) required that all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) implement athlete safety policies prior to December 31, 2013. Our initial policy defined the six areas of misconduct: sexual misconduct and abuse, physical, emotional, bullying, harassment and hazing. This policy applied to “constituents,” defined as USA Fencing employees, coaches, staff, volunteers, board members, committee and task force members, division officers and other individuals working with athletes or other sport participants while at USA Fencing events. Reporting guidelines and procedures and the background screen policy were also included in the Safe Sport policy. Over the next few years, the Safe Sport Policy was revised and expanded to cover additional individuals, and to include additional reporting requirements and prevention policies.

Effective March 3, 2017, upon the creation of the US Center for Safe Sport (“Center”), the Center’s Safe Sport Code superseded and replaced the USA Fencing SafeSport Policy. Among other things, the Center’s Code expanded its coverage to include any individual within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of an NGB, or whom the NGB or USOC had formally appointed to a position of authority over athletes. USA Fencing’s Code amended and restated in July 2017 to include supplemental SafeSport related policies, procedures and requirements that are important to creating and maintaining a SafeSport environment. The current SafeSport Code of the Center and USA Fencing Safe Sport Policy can be found on our website here.

Importantly, from the outset, the Center’s Code vested the Center with exclusive authority over actual or suspected sexual misconduct by a covered individual, meaning that “(a) only the Office will investigate and manage any related hearings involving sexual misconduct and (b) neither the NGB nor USOC will conduct its own investigation with respect to possible sexual misconduct …. ” The Center retained the right to exercise discretionary jurisdiction over other types of prohibited conduct – such as bullying, harassment, etc. – If it did not exercise discretionary jurisdiction over non-sexual misconduct, then the NGB was free to investigate and take action. Although the provisions of the Code regarding exclusive and discretionary jurisdiction have evolved somewhat over time (see Reports of Misconduct, below), these basic distinctions have been maintained continuously to date.
US Center for SafeSport Background
Effective February 14, 2018, the federal Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 authorized the U.S. Center for SafeSport to serve as the nation’s independent safe sport organization with jurisdiction over the USOPC, each National Governing Body (including USA Fencing) and each Paralympic Sports Organization, with regard to safeguarding amateur athletes against abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in sports. The Act gave the Center the scope and authority to investigate and resolve abuse and misconduct reports throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement that includes over 14 million individuals. The Act further provided that the Center’s policies and procedures would be incorporated into the duties of National Governing Bodies under the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, effectively giving them the force of federal law over all NGBs. The Act also extended “the duty to report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, to adults who are authorized to interact with minor or amateur athletes at an amateur sports organization facility or at an event sanctioned by a national governing body (NGB) or member of an NGB.”

The Center develops and enforces policies, procedures, and training to prevent abuse and misconduct and its SafeSport Code governs all participants affiliated with the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. The Code has been and continues to be updated periodically. In addition to the Code, the Center has implemented Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (“MAAPP”) to which all NGBs must adhere.

Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act of 2020 (EOPAAA)
The Empowering Olympic, Paralympic and Amateur Athletes Act (EOPAAA) enacted on October 30, 2020 protects “amateur athletes from abuse, including sexual abuse, by coaches and employees in U.S. Olympic and Paralympic sports.” The Act includes “legislative mechanisms by which Congress can dissolve the Board of Directors of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and decertify national governing bodies; and (2) a duty of care that USOPC owes to amateur athletes, including protecting athletes by requiring it to ensure that any allegation of child abuse of an amateur athlete who is a minor is immediately reported to law enforcement.”

Included in the law is the provision that the USOPC and NGBs cannot interfere or influence the outcome of the Center’s investigations and requires the Center to report to Congress any attempt to interfere or influence within 72 hours of the occurrence. The Act added protection against retaliation as well as the creation of a Commission to study the US Olympic and Paralympic movement. It prohibits former employees or board members of the USOPC or an NGB from working or volunteering at the Center for two years. Funding of the Center was increased to $20 million a year, to be provided by the USOPC and NGBs.

Independence of the US Center for SafeSport
Pursuant to the EOPAAA of 2020, the US Government General Accountability Office (GAO) must
certify the Center’s independence each year. Included in the independence review are the following items:

1) a finding of whether a violation of the prohibition on employment of former employees or board members of the USOPC or NGBs has occurred during the year preceding the certification;

2) a finding of whether an executive or attorney for the Center has had an inappropriate conflict of interest during that year; and

3) a finding of whether the USOPC or NGBs has interfered in, or attempted to influence the outcome of, an investigation by the Center.

The GAO 2020 Certification Report is available publicly here.

**Relationship between the Center, NGBs and the USOPC**

As mentioned earlier, the Center is an independent agency empowered by federal law. NGBs, including USA Fencing, and the USOPC have no influence on the response and resolution of cases once the Center has jurisdiction over an issue.

NGB staff participate in quarterly meetings with the USOPC Athlete Safety staff to discuss best practices and SafeSport concerns. The NGB Council has formed a SafeSport liaison group that meets quarterly with the Center staff to discuss concerns and the Center CEO meets quarterly with NGB CEOs to provide an update on the Center’s work. In addition, the Center hosts a yearly Summit for NGB staff.

The Center conducts yearly audits on all NGBs and the audits will be posted publicly on the Center’s website.

While USA Fencing cannot attempt to influence an investigation, we may provide the Center with membership information and contact information and responses to its inquiries. If the Center takes jurisdiction over a case, USA Fencing is notified, and the notice may or may not include temporary measures, including but not limited to temporary suspensions, to be enforced by USA Fencing and other NGBs. USA Fencing also receives notice after the Center concludes an investigation; the notice includes the Center’s decision and related sanctions, if any.

**Reports of Misconduct**

Reports of misconduct can be submitted to either USA Fencing or to the Center. The Center accepts reports online or by phone. Its *exclusive jurisdiction* now extends to the following:

- Sexual Misconduct, including without limitation child sexual abuse and any misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of Sexual Misconduct
- Criminal Charges or Dispositions involving Child Abuse or Sexual Misconduct
• Misconduct Related to Reporting, where the underlying allegation involves Child Abuse or Sexual Misconduct;
• Aiding and Abetting, when it relates to the Center’s process
• Misconduct Related to the Center’s Process

The Center also accepts reports of emotional and physical misconduct (including bullying, hazing, stalking, and harassment); however, the Center has discretionary jurisdiction in these matters and may send the report back to USA Fencing for resolution.

USA Fencing accepts all misconduct reports and immediately submits any reports of sexual misconduct to the Center. We also have the option to submit all reports to the Center in an effort to provide data on reports that fall outside of the Center’s current jurisdiction.

Both the Center and USA Fencing have formal policies against retaliation, which is itself a reportable violation.

**Response and Resolution**
The Center’s Response and Resolution process has three steps:

1) Reporting and Intake
2) Investigation
3) Resolution

We have included the process flowchart in the appendix.

The Center has also developed informational videos that detail the steps that are taken by the Center. The Center also has a dedicated staff person available to respond to questions about the process: Resource.Advisor@safesport.org or by calling 720-727-4084.

USA Fencing’s Response and Resolution process is detailed in its disciplinary procedures and the flowcharts are also included in the appendix.

In 2018, the Guidelines for individuals Participating in Disciplinary Proceedings was created with the assistance of members in the fencing community, including referees.

**Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy (MAAPP)**
The Center has developed the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP). The MAAPP is a collection of proactive prevention and training policies for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement. It has three primary components:

1) An Education & Training Policy that requires training for certain Adult Participants within the Olympic & Paralympic Movement
2) Required Prevention Policies, focused on limiting one-on-one interactions between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes, that Organizations within the Olympic & Paralympic Movement must implement to prevent abuse.

3) Recommended Prevention Policies.

USA Fencing’s MAAPP is located on our website and is approved by the Center, as all future iterations must also be. A number of resources are available to assist with implementing the MAAPP, including its limitations on one-on-one interactions between adult participants and minor athletes.

**Education**

USA Fencing has partnered with the U.S. Center for SafeSport to offer online SafeSport training for our members. Training is a SafeSport requirement for USA Fencing coaches, volunteers, referees, committee members, vendors, staff and those that have regular contact with minor fencers to complete online training on an annual basis. SafeSport training will be required at the time of membership renewal and will be valid for the membership year. Additionally, the online training is offered at no additional cost to all adult members and can be accessed online through your USA Fencing member dashboard at [member.usafencing.org](http://member.usafencing.org).

Coach, +CheckEd and +Coach members must first complete the core course that includes three 30-minute modules:

1. Sexual Misconduct Awareness training
2. Emotional and Physical Misconduct
3. Mandatory Reporting

After the completion of the Core Training, a 30-minute refresher course is taken in subsequent seasons to satisfy the SafeSport training requirement. The Core training and refresher courses are offered in English, French and Spanish.

USA Fencing **strongly encourages** parents and youth members to take the free training that is currently available on the Center’s platform. *Minors must have parental permission before taking the course.* Please note that the Center will be updating their training platform by October 15, 2021 and will be revising the youth training offerings.

USA Fencing has many educational materials and resources for our members and clubs on our website to help increase awareness and reduce the risk of misconduct. In the appendix, we have included screenshots of the resources available related to the MAAPP such as noteworthy changes to the MAAPP, club signage and posters, and sample consent forms.
We recognize that parents are critical in our efforts to protect young athletes. The USA Fencing website has resources to help increase parents’ awareness around reducing the risk of misconduct and creating a positive sports environment.

Through our various newsletters and eblasts, we strive to keep our members informed of educational opportunities and SafeSport updates.
This flowchart is a general summary for convenience. Complete procedures can be found in the USA Fencing Athlete Handbook, USA Fencing SafeSport Policy and the SafeSport Code of the US Center for Safe Sport.  
*After Center assumes jurisdiction, it may impose interim measures to be enforced by USA Fencing.  
**Adjudicated resolutions are subject to appeal as set forth in the SafeSport Code or Athlete Handbook.
This flowchart is a general summary for convenience. Complete procedures can be found in the USA Fencing Athlete Handbook, USA Fencing SafeSport Policy and the SafeSport Code of the US Center for Safe Sport.

**Adjudicated resolutions are subject to appeal as set forth in USA Fencing Athlete Handbook.**
We have included screenshots to show a number of the resources available on our website such as noteworthy changes to the MAAPP, club signage and posters, and sample consent forms.
Also available on the website are the USA Fencing Codes of Conduct or Code of Conduct Templates to co-brand for their club. We have compiled a list of additional resources for those looking for further information.

Website Links and Training Resources

- The U.S. Center for SafeSport
  - The U.S. Center for SafeSport works collaboratively with sport organizations to ensure a culture of safety through awareness, education and training programs, so that every athlete is safe, supported and strengthened through sport. The Education and Outreach office offers the SafeSport Training courses that are required for USA Fencing’s Coach and Athlete members. The Response and Resolution office investigates and resolves alleged violations of the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

- Positive Coaching Alliance
  - The Positive Coaching Alliance’s mission is to transform the youth sports culture into a Development Zone® where all youth and high school athletes have a positive, character-building experience that results in better athletes and better people. The site offers many educational resources – printable materials, articles, audio-visuals – for coaches, athletes, parents and administrators.

- The Child Welfare Information Gateway
  - The mission of the Child Welfare Information Gateway is to connect child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive resources to help protect children and strengthen families. The site contains detailed information on how to prevent and respond to child neglect and abuse.

- StopBullying.gov
  - This website provides comprehensive information related to bullying. StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.

- Boston vs Bullies
  - Do you want to learn more about bullying? Are you concerned about bullying that you have observed with teammates? This link features a series of videos featuring athletes from Boston’s professional sports teams who share their stories and provide ways for you to stand strong against bullying. This is also a helpful tool for clubs as it can be used to start a dialogue about athlete behavior and how to create a positive team environment.

- TruSport
  - The mission of TruSport is to change the culture of youth sports by providing educational tools to equip athletes with resources to build life skills and core values for success on and off the field. This website contains informative and educational articles, resources, videos for parents, coaches and athletes.
Parent SafeSport Course

An online course was developed by the U.S. Center for SafeSport for parents of athletes of all ages. Titled “Parents’ Guide to Misconduct in Sport,” this course explains the issues of misconduct in sport and helps parents ensure their children have a positive and safe sport experience. To take this free, 30 minute course click here.

Youth Athlete Training Course

The U.S. Center for SafeSport is now offering a Youth Athlete Training course.

These resources include courses for children of preschool age, grades K-2, grades 3-5, middle school and high school. These free online trainings are designed as an introduction for minor athletes and their parents or other caregivers to understand the importance of positive, welcoming environments in sports, where misconduct like bullying or abuse is less likely to happen and to know where to report abuse should it occur.

Each course is hosted on athletesafety.org and requires that a parent or legal guardian create an account to provide consent for their child to access the training. Once an account is created, select not affiliated from the dropdown menu and then parents can choose which course is best for their child based on their actual or developmental age.

Each course will take less than 30 minutes to complete. A printable PDF certificate is available at the conclusion of each training and parents are encouraged to write their child's name on the printed certificate.

- **Preschool course**: The preschool course includes a fun cheer emphasizing that sports should be an inclusive environment that prioritizes safety, respect and fun over winning, and encourages starting an open conversation with children at an early age. This course will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

- **Grades K-2 course**: The grades K-2 course includes an animated video and game that focuses on having a positive attitude, keeping sport fun and speaking up when something doesn't feel right. The course concludes with resources for reporting abuse or misconduct. This course will take approximately ten 10 minutes to complete.

- **Grades 3-5 course**: The grades 3-5 course provides an interactive game to identify and speak up when behavior crosses the line, recognize the difference between discipline and abuse, stresses the importance of being a good teammate and have a healthy