



“ Your culture isn't what you hope it is or say it is. Your culture is what you create and allow each day through the way you work, the behaviors you reward, how you speak to people, how/why you make decisions, how you spend your time. Create your culture on purpose. ”

As coaches, you set the tone for our teams and players. Every word, action, and decision shapes the environment in which our athletes learn and grow. While strategy and skill development are important, our first responsibility is ensuring that this environment is safe, respectful, and aligned with USA Hockey's Safe Sport principles. That means fostering a culture where all players feel protected, valued, and supported—on and off the ice.

Safe Sport is not just about rules; it's about daily choices. It's about how we correct mistakes, the language we use with players, how we model respect in competition, and how we hold one another accountable. Culture isn't accidental—it's intentional. By choosing to emphasize safety, integrity, and respect every day, we create an environment where players can thrive both as athletes and as people.

As we begin this season, I encourage you to lead with purpose. Reward behaviors that demonstrate teamwork and respect. Speak to players in a way that builds confidence and character. Make decisions that prioritize athlete well-being. Be intentional in creating the culture you want for your team—one that lives up to the standards of USA Hockey and the Safe Sport framework.

Together, we have the opportunity to build not only stronger hockey players but also stronger communities. Thank you for all that you do for our athletes each day. Best wishes for a successful season—one that strengthens skills, fosters respect, and lives out the culture we create on purpose.

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### **Locker Room Policy.**

- Review your organization's policy. If you are the coach of a co-ed team, please review your organization's policy regarding co-ed rooms.
  - ✓ Best Practice: Develop Team Rules (same Locker Room policies apply), which could include rotating "Locker Room Captains" to ensure compliance with your program's Locker Room Policy and assist adult monitors.
  - ✓ Best Practice: Set a time frame for players to be in and out of locker rooms (15-30 minutes before/after practice).
  - ✓ Best Practice: Develop a strategy to have players exit the locker rooms quickly before practice (eg., the first six players out of the locker room get to scrimmage for the first 5 minutes of practices instead of doing warm-ups). The quicker players are in and out of locker rooms, the less issues we have in locker rooms!
- All teams must have at least one responsible, background-screened, and Safe Sport-trained adult present at all times and monitoring the locker room during all team events to supervise the conduct in the locker rooms. While it is not always possible, two locker room monitors are preferable.
  - ✓ Best Practice: Schedule sign-ups for monitors using your organization's team software (TeamSnap, Sprocket, etc.)
- Monitors are required when players are using locker rooms in any facility (including while playing in Canada).
- Preferred locker room monitoring includes having locker room monitors inside the locker room while players are in the locker room; at a minimum, locker room monitors must be in the immediate vicinity outside the locker room (near the door within arm's length and so that the monitor can sufficiently hear inside the locker room) who also regularly and frequently enters the locker room to monitor activity inside.
- If a player is removed from the ice during a game due to penalties or injury (or leaves the ice during a practice and does not return in a timely manner), two monitors should go to the locker room and be present while the athlete is in the locker room.
- It is permissible to prohibit parents from the locker room. However, in doing so the team shall be required to have those properly screened adults monitoring and supervising the locker room as required above. Check your program's policy.
- While the Head Coach does not need to be the monitor, they are ultimately responsible to ensure that the locker room is properly monitored.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Associations and/or coaches found in violations of the USA Hockey Locker Room Policy shall be sanctioned in the following manner:

1. First offense \$250 fine to the team and one game suspension to the head coach.

2. Second offense \$500 to the club and two game suspension to the head coach.

3. Third offense the head coach and a program representative shall attend a hearing which may result in further sanctions up to and including fines, suspensions and/or post season sanctions.

- The use of cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities are prohibited.
- Best Practice: No phones in the Locker Rooms.
- Notwithstanding the foregoing, exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, provided that such exceptions are approved by your program, parent/guardian consent is obtained for all involved athletes, two or more locker room monitors are present, and all persons in the locker room are fully clothed and have been advised that photographs or recordings are being taken.
- Coaches must always have a base layer of clothing on at all times while changing in the team locker room with athletes. There shall be no one-on-one interactions between coaches and players, so if there is only one player in the locker room, a coach may not be in the locker room without another player or adult present.

### **One-on-One Interactions Policy.**

- One-on-One In-Program contact between a player and a coach, including meetings and individual training sessions, are permitted only if they are Observable and Interruptible by another adult and the other adult is made aware of the interaction.
  - If a One-on-One In-Program meeting takes place in an office, along with being Observable and Interruptible, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it will occur in an office that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.
  - Written consent for individual training sessions between a coach and player must be obtained from the player's parent or guardian at least prior to the first training session and annually thereafter. Parents, guardians, and/or other caretakers must be allowed to observe the training session, and consent can be withdrawn at any time.

### **Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy.**

- If a coach needs to communicate directly with a player via electronic communication (including phone, email, text or any social media), the player's parent/guardian must be copied on every communication.
- If a player communicates to the coach privately first, the coach should respond to the player with a copy to the parent/guardian.
- When a coach communicates electronically to more than one player (e.g., the team), the coach must copy another coach or at least one parent/guardian of each player.
- All content between coaches and players should be Open and Transparent and readily available to share with the public or families of the player or coach. Where possible, a coach should be provided and use the organization website email center (the coach's return email address will contain "@organization.com") for all communications with the team, players and player's parents.
- Coaches are prohibited from having players joined to or connected through their personal Facebook page, Instagram or any other similar social media application.
- Coaches, team managers, etc. may use web-based conferencing software (ie., Zoom, GoogleMeet, Microsoft Teams) to meet with, train, or otherwise communicate with players. The communication must be non-personal in nature and must include the player's parents/guardians and must adhere to all of the other Safe Sport requirements (i.e., they should be Observable and Interruptible).

### **Transportation/Lodging Policy.**

- Review your organization's Transportation and Lodging Policy.
- Coaches who do not have a Dual Relationship shall not ride in a vehicle alone with a player, absent emergency circumstances and all such travel must be Observable and Interruptible by an adult or include at least two players eight years of age or older at all times.
- Regardless of gender, Coaches shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a player unless the Coach is the parent, guardian, or sibling of, or is otherwise related to the player, and written consent is obtained, when necessary.
- Individual meetings between a player and coach may not occur in hotel sleeping rooms.

### **Reporting.**

- Please review with your organization's administration your internal chain of command.
- In general, it is best to report all incidents of suspected Safe Sport violations to your program's Safe Sport Coordinator, who will then report monthly to the PNAHA Safe Sport Coordinator. While the coach can still work their team players on individual issues, many Safe Sport issues should be reported to and proactively managed by your program's Safe Sport Coordinator, with support from PNAHA.
- Conduct that is prohibited or regulated by the USA Hockey Playing Rules (e.g., rough play, punching an opponent, "intent to injure" incidents, yelling at a referee or opponent, etc.), and complaints related to officiating, are not intended to be covered by the Safe Sport Program policies and are instead to be addressed and/or penalized under the Playing Rules.
- The Safe Sport Program is not intended to address the conduct of persons who are not Participants. Complaints about the conduct of non-Participants (e.g., conflicts, disputes or arguments between parents and/or other adults) should be directed to the program or team to which they are affiliated.
- If the issue involves child abuse and/or sexual abuse, coaches are MANDATORY REPORTS and must report to local law enforcement, the US Center for Safe Sport, AND comply with any other applicable reporting requirements under Washington State law.

## How to Report to Center.

Reports to the Center may be reported by (1) completing an online report to the Center at [uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/](https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/), by (2) calling 833-587-7233, or (3) by clicking on a link to the Center's reporting portal found on USA Hockey's website at [usahockey.com/safesport](https://usahockey.com/safesport). Reports to the Center shall be handled according to the SafeSport Code.

## How to Report to USA Hockey

Reports to USA Hockey may be made by: (1) clicking on the "Report to USA Hockey" link on the USA Hockey Safe Sport Program webpage ([usahockey.com/safesport](https://usahockey.com/safesport)), (2) emailing to [usahockeysafesport@usahockey.org](mailto:safesport@usahockey.org), or (3) calling 800-888-4656. Reports to USA Hockey are initially handled by the office of the USA Hockey General Counsel and the USA Hockey Safe Sport Program Manager.

## How to Report to PNAHA

Reports to PNAHA may be made by: (1) emailing to [safesport@pnaha.com](mailto:safesport@pnaha.com) or (2) calling 509-714-2998. Reports to PNAHA are initially handled by the Affiliate Safe Sport Coordinator and may be referred to the local program Safe Sport Coordinator.

## Resources.

### [Annual Safe Sport Consent Forms and USAH Resources](#) [Conduct and Character | Discipline Committee Handbook](#)

- In addition to information for your program administrators, this Handbook contains information regarding penalties (including Match Penalty suspensions), USAH Hockey Rules (and how they apply to teams playing in Canada), Coaching Code of Ethics, USA Hockey Codes of Conduct, and the following Best Practices Guides:
  - Additional Locker Room Monitoring Best Practices
  - Correcting Locker Room Behavior
  - Sample Team Rules | Player Expectations
  - How to Be a Great Teammate Graphic

### [Locker Room Monitoring Best Practices](#)

### [The Parent Playbook](#)

### [Safe Sport Training and Background Screen Information](#)

### [State by State Mandatory Reporter Guide](#)

### [USA Hockey Safe Sport Program Handbook](#)

### [Who Needs Safe Sport and Background Screens?](#)

**Additional Team/Parent SafeSport Training (US Center for Safe Sport).** These are educational resources offered by the US Center for SafeSport and can be utilized by your team members. There is a course for parents (Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport), SafeSport for Kids Ages 5-12, and SafeSport for Youth Athletes Ages 13-17. Many organizations are having all team members complete these free courses as a way to create a positive team environment. \*Note: These courses do NOT satisfy the SafeSport Trained Core course completion requirement for youth athletes ages 17 and 18 as required by USA Hockey.

Instructions on how to access these courses is as follows:

Q: How do I log into Absorb without an Enrollment Key?

1. Click Login on the home page at [SafeSportTrained.org](https://safesporttrained.org).
2. Enter your email address in the Username box.
3. Enter your password in the Password box. If you do not know your password, click Forgot Password. In the new window, enter your email address in either the Username box or the Email Address box and click Reset Password.
4. You will receive a password reset email in your inbox. If you do not receive the password reset email, check your junk folder. If you still cannot find the email, check the email address you entered in Absorb. If that is correct, contact your organization or our help desk for assistance at <https://safesport.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/4>
5. If you need to sign up for a new account, click Login on the home page at [SafeSportTrained.org](https://safesporttrained.org), then click Sign Up.

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Thank you for the time, care, and commitment you give to our athletes. As we begin the season, let us remain mindful of the responsibility we hold as coaches and leaders. By modeling the principles of USA Hockey Safe Sport and intentionally shaping our culture, we ensure a safe, positive, and lasting impact on every player we serve.