

PROTECTING YOUTH ATHLETES FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

KEY ACTIONS FOR LEADERS

Youth sports leaders can establish policies to help keep athletes safe from abusers. Those who would abuse children tend to avoid organizations that have a visible policy and action plan to protect kids and report suspected abuse. This document, and accompanying video, is designed to give you practical ways to discourage child predators from engaging in your organization.

You can't identify child predators by how they look. The key is to pay attention to behavior.

COMMON WARNING SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY COACHES:

- Giving individual players special gifts
- Spending extra time (by phone/email/text/in person) with individuals outside of official practices/games
- Keeping secrets or telling players not to share their conversations or activities with their parents

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A LEADER OF A YOUTH SPORTS ORGANIZATION?

- Ensure that every coach and parent watches our eight-minute video, Protecting Youth Athletes from Sexual Abuse, annually so they know how to protect their child from sexual abuse.
- Officially adopt the Child Abuse Prevention Policy developed by PCA in conjunction with Kidpower (or equivalent policy). Post the policy on your website, and review with coaches and parents annually.
- Prohibit coaches and volunteers from being alone with individual athletes (including in cars), except in an emergency. Individual instruction should occur in a public setting where a parent or other adult can observe or drop in at any time.
- Let everyone know that in your organization you will report all suspected abuse to the police.
- Conduct background checks. Background checks are essential, but they are not enough. Data shows that a majority of those convicted of child sexual abuse would not have been identified in a background check.
- Screen for coaches and volunteers who fit with and support the mission and values of your organization.
- Define and publicize how reports of suspected abuse should be made to the leadership of the organization. Identify the person responsible for following up.
 - ➔ Encourage parents to come to you with concerns, and let them know they will be taken seriously.
 - ➔ Be ready to have direct conversations with any coaches in question.
 - ➔ Follow-up quickly with parents to let them know the specific steps that have been taken to reassure them of their children's safety.
- Make sure people know how and where to report suspected abuse. Childhelp's National Child Abuse Prevention hotline is available at 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

- Learn more about how youth sports can increase kids' emotional safety from PCA.
- Learn more about child protection and teaching kids personal safety skills from organizations such as Kidpower, Child Lures Prevention and Teen Lures Prevention.
- All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Visit www.childwelfare.gov for more information.