

SOUTH VALLEY ATHLETICS ATHLETE SAFETY POLICY

Athletics Volunteer:

Welcome to South Valley Athletics!

At SVA, we take our responsibility to keep young athletes safe very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which athletes may receive the benefits unique to sports participation, preparation and competition.

The policy statements and guidelines in the Athlete Safety Policy are intended to facilitate the mission of SVA and the creation of a safe environment for athletes, coaches and volunteers. The following policies have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this Athlete Safety Policy, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

South Valley Athletics Board of Directors

SVA Athlete Safety Policy

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Zero Tolerance for Abuse

ABUSE TOLERANCE

SVA has **zero tolerance for abuse** in all SVA youth sports activities. It is the responsibility of every coach and volunteer at SVA to act in the best interest of athletes.

Overview of the SVA Safety System

Because we care for athletes and desire to protect them, SVA requires all coaches and volunteers to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** *before interaction with athletes.*

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

SVA requires that all coaches and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Coaches and volunteers are required to report any policy violation to a member of the SVA Board of Directors.

Coaches and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' an athlete for sexual abuse. The 'grooming process' is used by an abuser to select an athlete, win the athlete's trust (and the trust of the athlete's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the athlete into sexual activity and keep the athlete from disclosing the abuse.

To equip SVA coaches and coaches with information necessary to protect athletes from sexual abuse, SVA requires Sexual Abuse Awareness Training for all coaches and volunteers provided at the pre-season coach meeting. Information is also available online at www.AbusePreventionSystems.com. This training will be renewed every year.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Coaches and volunteers are required to complete the SVA Screening Process, which requires:

- A completed application
- A signed authorization for criminal background check (for persons 18 and older)
- References provided by the applicant.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Coaches and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this document and sign the last page indicating he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

SVA requires that all adult coaches and volunteers undergo a criminal background check.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Given SVA's **zero tolerance for abuse**, we encourage a culture of communication regarding matters that place athletes at risk.

SVA is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for athletes. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and federal law, to the SVA Board of Directors, and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

SVA supports and encourages a culture of communication related to abuse or suspected abuse of athletes. If you see or suspect inappropriate interaction with or between athletes, it is your responsibility to report the inappropriate interaction to a coach, supervisor or a member of the SVA Board of Directors.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' athletes for abuse, it is possible a coach or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Coaches and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a member of the SVA Board of Directors.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Members of SVA's Board of Directors are charged with the diligent enforcement of all SVA policies by all participants. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal from SVA activities. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the SVA Board of Directors.

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for athletes, SVA coaches and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to abuse should be directed to a member of the SVA Board of Directors.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by SVA to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from all SVA activities. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be prohibited from future participation as a coach or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves athletes at SVA.

Failure to report a prohibited act to supervisory personnel as designated in this policy is a violation of this policy and grounds for dismissal. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any SVA activities.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

SVA does not investigate suspicions or allegations of physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations, as a condition of reporting suspicions or allegations to appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Coaches and volunteers at SVA are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior to a supervisor or a member of the SVA Board of Directors.

The federal “Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act” passed in February 2018 requires that any adult involved with youth sports must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency if they have knowledge or suspicion of child sexual abuse.

Coaches and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to SVA staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a coach or volunteer, a member of the SVA Board of Directors will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The SVA Board of Directors will take appropriate action when a report of abuse occurs.

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously, and will be reported in accordance with this policy to the appropriate law enforcement agency as soon as possible, no more than 24 hours from the initial report.

Prohibited Substances and Activities

INTOXICANTS

Coaches and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while participating in SVA athletic events. Coaches and volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or illegal drugs to athletes.

TOBACCO AND MARIJUANA

SVA is a tobacco and marijuana-free program. SVA requires coaches and volunteers to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco and/or marijuana products while in the presence of athletes or their parents. SVA coaches and volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco or marijuana products to athletes.

NUDITY

Coaches and volunteers at SVA should never be nude in the presence of athletes in their program. Athletes should come to practices and games already dressed for participation, and remain clothed at all times. (No “shirts vs skins”, for example, regardless of gender.)

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Coaches and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with athletes. Coaches and volunteers are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any athlete. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging, Facebook, and online chat rooms or other social media.

POSSESSION OF SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

SVA coaches and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, videos, etc.) while in the presence of athletes.

Physical Contact with Athletes

Appropriate physical contact between athletes and coaches or volunteers is a productive and inevitable part of sport. Athletes are more likely to acquire advanced physical skills and enjoy their sport participation through appropriate physical contact. However, guidelines for appropriate physical contact reduce the potential for abuse and misconduct in athletics – as well as false allegations of abuse.

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

SVA adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regarding physical contact with athletes:

Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria that make it both safe and appropriate. These include:

1. The physical contact takes place in public;
2. There is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact;
3. The physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult;
4. The athlete is not uncomfortable with the contact.

Safety

The safety of our athletes is paramount, and in many instances we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

1. Positioning an athlete's body so that he or she more quickly acquires an athletic skill, gets a better sense of where his or her body is in space, or improves balance and coordination;
2. Making athletes aware that he or she may be in harm's way due to a projectile, a fall, a piece of equipment, or other practicing athletes;
3. Releasing muscle cramps.

Sports are physical by definition. We recognize participants often express a joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

1. Greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs;
2. Congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, “jump-arounds” and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment.

Consolation

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes, publicly:

1. Embracing a crying athlete – in a public place or circumstance;
2. Putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down (“side hugs”);
3. Lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and “dusting them off” to encourage them to continue competition.

PROHIBITED PHYSICAL CONTACT

Prohibited forms of physical contact, which shall be reported immediately under SVA’s Reporting Policy include, without limitation:

1. Asking or having an athlete sit in the lap of a coach or volunteer;
2. Lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact;
3. Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from an athlete;
4. “Cuddling” or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, competition, or travel;
5. Playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., butt-pats, tickling or “horseplay” wrestling);
6. Physical contact that makes an athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not;
7. Any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

The above physical contact is prohibited between adult and athlete AND athlete and athlete. Coaches and volunteers must model the behavior expected from athletes.

VIOLATIONS

Violations of this policy must be reported to SVA Board of Directors. Violations will be addressed under SVA’s Disciplinary Rules and Procedure. Some forms of physical contact may constitute physical or sexual abuse that **must be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

Misconduct

BULLYING

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at SVA and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to the victim. SVA is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all participants. If bullying does occur, incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Any athlete who is aware of bullying behavior is expected to tell a coach or volunteer of the SVA Board of Directors.

Objectives of SVA's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To clearly communicate that SVA will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give athletes, coaches, volunteers and parents a suitable understanding of those behaviors that constitute 'bullying'.
3. To make it known to athletes, coaches and volunteers that a policy and protocol exist should bullying issues arise.
4. To clearly communicate how to report bullying behavior.
5. To communicate to athletes, coaches, volunteers and parents that SVA takes bullying seriously, and will immediately investigate and address all reports of bullying.

HARASSMENT

Harassment is the repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that

1. Are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance;
2. Offend or degrade;
3. Create a hostile environment;
4. Reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or mental or physical disability; or
5. Any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law.

Examples of harassment prohibited by SVA include, without limitation:

Physical offenses. Behaviors that include

1. Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant;
2. Throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects including sporting equipment.

Non-physical offenses. Behaviors that include

1. Making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete's disability, religion, skin color, or ethnic traits;
2. Displaying offensive materials, gestures, or symbols; and
3. Withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on his or her disability, religion, skin color, or ethnic traits.

HAZING

Hazing is defined as coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for

1. A athlete joining a group or
2. A athlete being socially accepted by a group's members; or
3. Any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law.

Hazing does not include group or team activities that are meant to establish normative team behaviors or promote team cohesion.

Examples of hazing prohibited by SVA include, without limitation:

1. Requiring, forcing or otherwise requiring an athlete to consume alcohol or illegal drugs;
2. Tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining an athlete;
3. Sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature;
4. Sleep deprivation, otherwise unnecessary schedule disruption or the withholding of water and/or food;
5. Social actions (e.g. grossly inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule;
6. Beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault; and
7. Excessive training requirements directed at a particular athlete or a group of athletes.

Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of an athlete's willingness to cooperate or participate.

WILLFULLY TOLERATING MISCONDUCT

It is a violation of the Athlete Safety Policy if a coach, assistant coach or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s).

REPORTING

Although these policies are designed to reduce athlete sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. SVA's coaches and volunteers will follow the reporting procedures set forth in SVA's Reporting Policy.

PEER-TO-PEER SEXUAL ABUSE

Approximately 1/3 of all reported sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other children or minors. Coaches and volunteers have an obligation to report peer-to-peer sexual abuse, in accord with federal mandatory reporting requirements. Whether sexual interaction between athletes constitutes 'sexual abuse' depends on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the athletes, and whether there is an imbalance of power between the parties, including physical or intellectual disabilities. **If you have concern that an interaction between athletes may constitute sexual abuse, report the interaction to appropriate law enforcement authorities and a coach, volunteer, or a member of SVA Board of Directors immediately. All such reports received by coaches, volunteers, or other participants are to be subsequently reported to the SVA Board of Directors.**

Peer-to peer sexual abuse risk is highest:

1. Any location that is less easily seen.
2. Any time athletes are unclothed or changing clothes, for any reason.

Due to this risk, coaches and volunteers will be aware of locations in SVA facilities, as well as practice and competition locations, where this risk is higher, including restrooms, changing areas, locker rooms, bleachers, and areas less easily seen or supervised. These areas will be patrolled or supervised by coaches and volunteers, where possible.

Locker Rooms and Bathrooms

The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of inappropriate touch or talk in locker rooms and changing areas.

FACILITIES

We practice and play at many different public properties. Depending on the activity, there may or may not be access to a locker room, multi-person bathroom, or single/portable toilet. These facilities, if present, will be shared with the general public.

Athletes will be expected to come dressed to participate, and to change and shower at home.

MONITORING

SVA has staggered practices and games, with different groups arriving and departing throughout the day. It is therefore not practical to constantly monitor bathrooms or locker room areas over this extended course of time. While we do not post coaches and volunteers inside bathrooms or locker rooms, we do make occasional sweeps of these areas.

Coaches and staff members make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the bathroom during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.

Parents of young athletes should accompany them to the bathroom. If an athlete needs assistance (for example, an athlete under the age of eight), or an athlete's disability warrants assistance, we ask that parents let the coach or volunteer know beforehand that he or she will be helping the athlete.

USE OF CELL PHONES AND OTHER MOBILE RECORDING DEVICES

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk of other forms of misconduct in locker rooms and bathrooms. As a result, **there will be no use of these items in the locker rooms or bathroom.**

Electronic Communications & Social Media

All electronic communications between a coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the athlete's family. At the request of a parent or guardian, any email, electronic text, social media or similar communication will copy or include the athlete's parents or guardians.

FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may not have athletes join a personal social media page. All posts, messages, texts, or media of any kind shared among athletes or between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes.

SOCIAL MEDIA, INSTANT MESSAGING AND SIMILAR MEDIA

Coaches and athletes may "follow" each other. Coaches cannot "re-tweet" or "share" athlete message posts. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other through social media. All posts between coach and athlete must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

EMAIL AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. All email content between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Where possible, the athlete's parent should be copied on e-mail communications.

TEXTING AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. All texts between a coach and an athlete must be a group text – the text should include another athlete, volunteer, a parent, or another coach/assistant. All texts between coach and athletes must be professional and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

ELECTRONIC IMAGERY

From time to time, digital photos, videos of practice or competition, and other publicly obtainable images of the athlete – individually or in groups – may be taken. These photos and/or videos may be used for athlete instruction (i.e. practice and game films), team videos, program associated websites, or offered to the athletes' families seasonally on disc or other electronic form. It is the default policy of SVA to allow such practices as long as the athlete or athletes are in public view and such imagery is both appropriate and in the best interest of the athlete and the program. Imagery must not be contrary to any rules as outlined in SVA's Athlete Safety Policy.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE

The parent or guardian of an athlete may request in writing that their athlete not be contacted by coaches through any electronic communication. Additionally, a parent or guardian of an athlete may request in writing that photographs or videography of their

athlete not be posted on program or program associated websites, understanding that group photography or videography may render this impracticable.

MISCONDUCT

Social media and electronic communication can be used inappropriately. (e.g., emotional abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communication by coaches, volunteers, administrators, officials, parents or athletes will not be tolerated.

Electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

1. Drugs or alcohol use;
2. Sexually oriented conversation, sexually explicit language or sexual activity;
3. An adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
4. Inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures.

Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationships, family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Parental Contact and Involvement

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents of athletes will be contacted if their athlete becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in SVA activities.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to attend any and all athletic programs or activities in which their athlete is involved at SVA. A parent accompanying an athlete to any SVA athletic practice or activity is responsible for their athlete's safety. Parents must follow instructions given by coaches.

A parent who desires to participate in SVA's athletic program such that he or she will have ongoing contact with athletes other than his/her own will be required to complete SVA's Volunteer Application Process.

Local and Team Travel

Travel

SVA does not sponsor, coordinate, or arrange for travel. For travel, athletes or their parents/guardians (for minor athletes) are responsible for making all travel arrangements. In these instances it is the responsibility of the athlete or their parents/guardians (for minor athletes) to ensure the person transporting the athlete maintains all safety and legal requirements, including, but not limited to, a valid driver's license, proper insurance, well maintained vehicle, and compliance with all state laws.

In an effort to minimize one-on-one interactions, SVA coaches and/or volunteers, who are not also acting as a parent, should not drive alone with an unrelated athlete and should drive with at least two other athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the athlete's parent or guardian, in advance of travel.

We encourage parents/guardians to pick up their own athlete first and drop off their own athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement. We also recommend completing a shared travel declaration form signed by the parents/guardians of any minor athlete who is being transported as part of such a carpool arrangement.

In any case where a coach and/or volunteer is involved in the athlete's local travel, a parental release is required in advance. Efforts must be made to ensure that coaches, assistant coaches and/or volunteers are not alone with an athlete or participant by, for example, picking up athletes in groups.

When only one athlete and one unrelated coach travel, *the athlete must have his or her parents' or legal guardian's written permission in advance to travel alone with the coach.*

SVA Athlete Safety Policy – Safety in Youth Sports
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of SVA’s Athlete Safety Policy and understand the importance of the matters set forth within this document. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service in athletic programs at SVA.

I understand that the Athlete Safety Policy may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by SVA.

I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as policy guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Athlete Safety Policy.

Coach or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Coach or Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____

This page to be signed, detached and delivered to SVA before any participation may begin.