

# Newsletter



## THIS ISSUE

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- Setting Boundaries
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Dear Friends,

When we think of child safety in sports, we usually think about helmets, shin guards, and other mechanisms we use to prevent our children from having physical injuries. The very thought that one of your young athletes may be a victim of sexual abuse by a coach may seem unthinkable and unlikely. In Wisconsin, almost 90 percent of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement were committed by someone the victim knew. Although this newsletter may seem directed towards coaches, its information is intended to help coaches, parents, teachers and other adults so sexual abuse doesn't go undetected.

There are many wonderful coaches working with our kids and the bond between an athlete and a good coach can compel them to be the best they can be. As adults, we have to do everything in our power to ensure that we are vigilant and hold our athletic programs to the highest standard.

Amy Peterson  
Victim Assistance Coordinator  
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### Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children in Sports

- Coaches play an important role in a young person's development, both on and off the field. Because young players want to please their coach and because their self-esteem is developing, many find it difficult to refuse what a coach asks of them. This gives a coach an enormous amount of power.
- Most coaches use this power positively and work hard at helping to develop a young person's sense of success, self-worth, confidence, and positive values. Unfortunately, there are a few people who seek out opportunities, such as coaching, looking for a chance to take advantage of a young person.
- Situations that may set the stage for abuse:
  - **Overnight tournaments, whether local or far away in other countries**
  - **One-on-one coaching sessions**
  - **Driving home alone with the coach from practices or games**
  - **During personal interactions with the coach outside of team activities**



### Setting Boundaries

Not everyone feels the same about their personal space so it is important to set the boundaries to ensure that there are no misunderstandings. It is up to coaches to take the lead in helping the team, including the players, parents, and everyone involved, understand and determine where the appropriate personal space boundaries lie.

The heightened awareness of the risks of sexual abuse means that we have to be more conscientious than ever about boundaries and about not crossing those lines.

Here are some guidelines on boundaries.

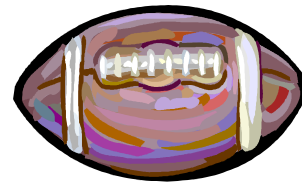
- Coaches often have to stand close to an athlete or touch them while demonstrating or correcting a skill. Coaches, athletes and parents should be in agreement about what kind of contact is necessary and appropriate for a specific age group in a specific sport. Any physical touching that makes an athlete uncomfortable is inappropriate. Coaches should not be in dressing rooms or showers while athletes change. Children too young to dress themselves after a sporting event should be accompanied by a parent.
- Attending sport-related events like awards banquets and team barbecues is completely appropriate—it is integral to building individual and team spirit. However, a coach should avoid non-sport related parties or other activities with athletes.



### Six Point Game Plan for a Safe Environment

1. Learn what sexual abuse is and work to ensure that it does not take place on your team.
2. Report any situation where you suspect a child may be in need of protection, as in the case of possible sexual abuse. Know who to talk to and how to make the report.
3. Learn and fulfill your responsibilities as defined by your league or organization.
4. Introduce the players to the Players Code of Conduct and their parents to the Parents Code of Conduct. If one doesn't exist in your program, create one.
5. Communicate regularly with your players and their parents throughout the season, so that everyone is clear about the rules and expectations.
6. Have fun!!

Most of this information was adapted from Sport Safe, BC Coach's Guide.



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