

SafeSport Definitions

The U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Program is our commitment to providing a safe and positive environment for all participants' physical, emotional and social development and promotes an environment free from abuse and misconduct. As part of the SafeSport program, U.S. Figure Skating has implemented policies to address certain types of abuse and misconduct, and to reduce, monitor and govern areas where potential abuse and misconduct could occur. As the program is implemented, this article contains some important definitions that should help coaches become familiar with the terminology associated with SafeSport.

Misconduct:

Conduct which results in harm, the potential for harm, or the imminent threat of harm. Age is irrelevant to misconduct.

Child, children, minor and youth:

Anyone under the age of 18; here, "child," "children," "minor" and "youth" are used interchangeably. A child is someone under the age of 18 or who has not attained the age of legal majority in the state in which he or she resides.

Child Abuse:

A legal definition of child abuse exists in each state; to find guidelines concerning each state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway and to find statute information for a particular State, go to http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/index.cfm

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse means physical contact with a participant that intentionally causes or has the potential to cause the participant to sustain bodily harm or personal injury. Physical abuse also includes physical contact with a participant that intentionally creates a threat of immediate bodily harm or personal injury. Examples include non-accidental trauma or physical injury caused by contact behaviors, such as hitting, shaking, kicking, shoving a skater into a barrier; forcing an individual to skate knowing that he or she is injured; and mandating excessive exercise as a form of punishment. Child physical abuse also may include non-contact physical misconduct as described in the Athlete Protection Policy. Legal definitions vary by state.

In addition to physical contact or the threat of physical contact with a participant, physical abuse also includes the providing of alcohol to a participant under the age of 21 and the providing of illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any participant. It also includes any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect and assault).

Physical misconduct does *not* include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance.

Child sexual abuse:

Child sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a minor that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between minors can also be abusive if there is a significant imbalance of power or disparity in age, development or size, such that one child is the aggressor. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts, such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive written or electronic communications, exposure or voyeurism. It can include touching for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification that involves a child, or forcing a child to pose for or watch pornographic materials. This

includes rape, incest, fondling, exhibitionism, and sexual exploitation.

Legal definitions vary by state. To find guidelines concerning each state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway ([www .childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)).

Sexual misconduct involves any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is nonconsensual or forced, coerced or manipulated, or perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner. It also includes any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority which is considered an imbalance of power. Last, any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape) qualifies as sexual misconduct.

Notes:

- An imbalance of power is always assumed between an athlete, regardless of age, and an adult in a position of authority (such as a coach, official, director, employee, parent or volunteer.)
- Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult. All sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse involves a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to a participant. Clarification: a single incident, e.g., a verbal outburst-while it may inappropriate-does not constitute emotional misconduct, which requires a pattern of harmful over time. These behaviors may include verbal acts, physical acts or acts that deny attention or support. Emotional abuse does not include generally accepted and age-appropriate coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, motivation, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance. Examples of emotional misconduct prohibited by the SafeSport policy include, without limitation:

Verbal Acts:

- A pattern of verbal behaviors that attack a participant personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting) or repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular participant or participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.

Physical Acts:

- A pattern of physically aggressive behaviors, such as throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants; or punching walls, windows or other objects .

Acts that Deny Attention and Support:

- A pattern of ignoring a participant for extended periods of time or routinely or arbitrarily excluding participant from practice.

Bullying:

Bullying is the use of coercion to obtain control over another person or to be habitually cruel to another person. Bullying involves an intentional, persistent or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate another person. Bullying can occur through written, verbal or electronically transmitted expression or by means of a physical act or gesture.

Threats:

A threat to harm others is defined as any written, verbal, physical or electronically transmitted expression of intent to physically injure or harm someone. A threat may be communicated directly to the intended victim or communicated to a third party.

Harassment:

Harassment is defined in various sources such as case law, state legislation, sports organization and professional

association codes of conduct and training manuals, corporation and workplace documents, and Human Rights Commission materials. U.S. Figure Skating has not adopted any specific definition of harassment, choosing instead to defer to such general sources and definitions for reference and application, depending upon the circumstances. The following, however, presents a general overview. Harassment in sport includes any pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that:

- (a) Are intended to cause fear, humiliation, or annoyance,
- (b) Offend or degrade,
- (c) Create a hostile environment, or
- (d) Reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual participant or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, or mental or physical disability .

Hazing:

Hazing includes any conduct which is intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or physically harmful. The hazing conduct is typically an activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members. Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of a person's willingness to cooperate or participate. Examples of hazing prohibited by this policy include, without limitation, requiring or forcing (including through peer pressure) the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs; tying, taping, or physically restraining a participant; sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature; sleep deprivation, or the withholding of water and/or food; social actions or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule; beating, paddling, or other forms of physical

Hazing does *not* include group or team activities that are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or promote team cohesion, so long as such activities do not have reasonable potential to cause emotional or physical distress to any participant. It is also a violation of this policy if a coach or other responsible adult knows or should know of the hazing but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the targeted participant(s).

Willfully Tolerating Misconduct:

Willfully tolerance is demonstrated when a coach, official, director, employee, parent or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s), participant(s), staff member and/or volunteer.

False Accusations:

While nearly every State and U.S. territory imposes penalties, often in the form of a fine or imprisonment, on mandatory reporters who fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect as required by law. It should be noted that to prevent malicious or intentional reporting of cases that are not founded, many States and the U.S. Virgin Islands impose penalties against any person who files a report known to be false such as fines, charges, possible imprisonment and can be held liable for damages. (Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2012). *Penalties for failure to report and false reporting of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.)

It is recommended that all coaches read the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Handbook found at:

www.usfigureskating.org/safesport

