

What Is Abuse and Misconduct?



You hear the terms "abuse" and "misconduct" surrounding the SafeSport program, but what exactly do these terms mean and what are the guidelines for establishing each? Below is more information, courtesy of the United States Olympic Committee SafeSport program. A critical step in addressing misconduct is being able to recognizing the specific actions that are qualified as misconduct.

- **Child Sexual Abuse**
 - Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This category includes all sexual contact between an adult and a child as well as sexual contact that occurs through force or threat of force. A child is any participant under the age of 18. Sexual contact between an older child and a younger child can also be abusive when a significant disparity in age, development or size makes the younger child incapable of offering consent.

- **Bullying**
 - Bullying is an intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behavior that is intended, or has the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s) as a condition of membership. It includes any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.
 - Bullying does not include group or team behavior designed to establish normative team behavior or promote team cohesion. For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and push through a difficult training regimen.

- **Hazing**
 - Hazing involves coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members. It includes any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law. Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of an athlete's willingness to cooperate or participate.
 - Hazing does not include group or team activities that are meant to establish normative team behavior or promote team cohesion. Examples include: Allowing junior athletes to carry senior athletes' equipment into the locker room after practice; Encouraging junior athletes to arrive early and set up training equipment; Giving senior athletes first preference in team assignments, responsibilities, accommodations, facilities or equipment.

- **Harassment**
 - Harassment is a repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behavior intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, offend or degrade, create a hostile environment; or 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, sexual

orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability. It includes any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law.

- **Emotional Misconduct**

- Emotional misconduct involves a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behavior includes verbal and physical acts, as well as actions that deny attention or support. It also includes any act or conduct (e.g., child abuse and child neglect) described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law.
- Emotional misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

- **Physical Misconduct**

- Physical misconduct involves contact or non-contact behavior that can cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants. 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.

- **Sexual Misconduct**

- 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. 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. An imbalance of power is always assumed between a coach and an athlete. Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult; and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited.

- **Maltreatment**

- Child maltreatment is the general term used to describe all forms of child abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse.

**USA Volleyball has ZERO TOLERANCE
for abuse and misconduct.**