



# U.S. SOCCER

## Safe Soccer Framework



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**I. INTRODUCTION: PROMOTING SAFE SOCCER..... 1**

- A. Reporting Concerns ..... 2
- B. How to Use this Handbook..... 3
- C. A note to U.S. Soccer Organizational Members and Local Affiliated Organizations 4
- D. Who is Covered by this Handbook / Covered Personnel..... 5
- E. Statement on Youth Referee Safety ..... 7
- F. The U.S. Center for SafeSport ..... 8

**II. FRAMEWORK POLICIES..... 9**

- A. Prohibited Conduct Policy ..... 9
- B. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement ..... 14
- C. Background Screening ..... 15
- D. Training and Education..... 19
- E. Obligation of Covered Personnel to Report..... 21
- F. How to Report to the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline..... 21
- G. How to Report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport..... 22
- H. Monitoring and Enforcement: No Retaliation ..... 22

**III. PREVENTION POLICIES: LIMITING ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND MINORS ..... 23**

- A. Establishing Boundaries: Avoiding Gifts ..... 23
- B. Appropriate Physical Contact ..... 23
- C. One-on-One Interactions / Individual Meetings ..... 24
- E. Massage and Other Athletic Training Interactions ..... 26
- F. Electronic Communications/Social Media ..... 27
- G. Locker Rooms/Changing Areas..... 30
- H. Local Travel..... 32
- I. Team Travel / Overnight Stays ..... 32

**IV. PHYSICAL WELL-BEING..... 35**

- A. Recognize to Recover™ ..... 35

B. Medical Clearance for Competition.....	35
C. Treating Medical Professional Licensure Policy .....	36

**V. ADMINISTRATION OF THIS HANDBOOK..... 37**

A. Exclusive Jurisdiction and Authority of the U.S. Center for SafeSport .....	37
B. Safe Soccer Review Panel .....	37
C. Grievances.....	38
D. Other Applicable U.S. Soccer Policies and Guidelines .....	38

**VI. U.S. SOCCER ATHLETE AND PARTICIPANT SAFETY POLICY - STANDARDS FOR ORGANIZATION MEMBERS39**

A. Purpose:.....	39
B. Policy Statement: .....	40

**VII. DEFINITIONS FOR CERTAIN TERMS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK ..... 45**

**VIII. APPENDIX – MEMBER TOOLKIT: ..... I**

A. One-on-One Interactions.....	ii
B. Massages and Rubdowns .....	iv
C. Locker Rooms, Rest Rooms and Changing Areas.....	vi
D. Social Media & Electronic Communications .....	viii
E. Local Travel .....	x
F. Team Travel .....	xi

# I. INTRODUCTION: PROMOTING SAFE SOCCER

U.S. Soccer’s mission is to make soccer the preeminent sport in the United States. We work toward this by supporting our members, impacting athletes and serving fans. As part of this commitment, U.S. Soccer has developed the Safe Soccer Framework as a foundation from which all participants in the soccer community, be they athletes, coaches, referees, administrators or volunteers, play an active role in creating an environment free from emotional, physical or sexual abuse. The Safe Soccer Framework is a comprehensive program of policies and process, screening, education and training, reporting, monitoring and enforcement designed to help participants detect and report abuse, respond to it, and prevent future occurrences:



This document explores each of these elements in detail and documents U.S. Soccer’s policies and processes designed to implement Public Law 115-126 *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017* (the “SafeSport Act”) as incorporated into the *Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act* (the “Ted Stevens Act”), as well as the mandate issued by the U.S. Center for SafeSport in its Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies dated September 7, 2018.

Although immediately applicable to all U.S. Soccer-controlled programs, as detailed in Section I.B., below, U.S. Soccer recognizes that social norms continue to develop, as does the legal framework under which we operate. Accordingly, the Safe Soccer Framework will always be subject to modification, amendment and further development by U.S. Soccer, in its discretion.

## A. REPORTING CONCERNS

**U.S. Soccer has zero tolerance for abuse or misconduct.** As part of this Safe Soccer Framework, U.S. Soccer encourages a culture of respect and open communication in which all participants feel comfortable reporting concerns, whether the concerns involve suspected abuse or any other misconduct. Participants are encouraged to raise concerns to coaches, referees, team administrators and U.S. Soccer staff. In addition, we encourage you to use the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline to report concerns:

**[www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline](http://www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline)**

or by calling **(312) 528-7004**

Reports submitted to this Integrity Hotline will be handled as discreetly as possible. In the event U.S. Soccer receives a report to the Integrity Hotline that implicates a reporting obligation (see “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement ” on Page 14), we will make the report directly and/or work with you to make the report.

U.S. Soccer does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes a good faith report will be subject to retaliation, including harassment, or any adverse employment consequence, as a result of making a report.

## **B. HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK**

This Handbook documents U.S. Soccer's Safe Soccer Framework and is incorporated by reference into U.S. Soccer's Code of Conduct, its National Team Policies and the U.S. Soccer Development Academy Rules and Regulations. It provides the guiding policies applicable to all U.S. Soccer-controlled programs implicating the safety of minor athletes, which includes:

- All Youth National Team programs
- Any Senior National Team with a roster that includes an athlete under the age of 18, and
- Any Development Academy-affiliated team
- National-Level Referees
- U.S. Soccer Staff
- U.S. Soccer Board members

This Handbook is not an exclusive statement of all policies applicable to these programs, which may implement additional policies and procedures specific to their operations. In addition, although this Handbook focuses in many areas on concerns unique to minor athletes, the policies in this Handbook are applicable to and designed to protect athletes of all ages. This Handbook is not intended to, and does not, alter or amend the terms of employment for any at will employees who are Covered Personnel.

The Safe Soccer Framework and all policies herein may be amended from time to time by vote of the U.S. Soccer Board of Directors.

Limited exceptions to the Safe Soccer Framework may be granted by U.S. Soccer on a case-by-case basis where appropriate, provided that such exceptions do not materially impact athlete safety.

## C. A NOTE TO U.S. SOCCER ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS AND LOCAL AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

In an effort to serve and support our members, U.S. Soccer makes the Safe Soccer Framework Handbook available on its web-site and continues to work to increase awareness among its National Member Organizations and Local Affiliated Organizations regarding their obligations under the SafeSport Act. Specifically, the SafeSport Act requires applicable amateur sports organizations to:

- Comply with the SafeSport Act’s reporting requirements and prohibit retaliation by the applicable amateur sports organization against any individual who makes a report<sup>1</sup>;
- Establish reasonable procedures to limit one-on-one interactions between an amateur athlete who is a minor and an adult (who is not the minor’s legal guardian) at a facility under the jurisdiction of the applicable amateur sports organization; and
- Offer and provide consistent training to adult members in regular contact with minor amateur athletes and, subject to parental consent, to members who are minors, regarding prevention and reporting of child abuse.

The Appendix of this Handbook is designed to be used as a resource for U.S. Soccer organizational members in developing their own policies, as it includes template policies developed by the U.S. Center for SafeSport to address requirements of the SafeSport Act, many of which inform U.S. Soccer’s policies contained in this Handbook.

The Center strongly recommends that National Member Organizations and Local Affiliated Organizations implement these policies. That said, **this Handbook should not be viewed as creating a legal standard of care or a model of best practice.** Although U.S. Soccer is the National Governing Body for soccer in all forms in the United States, it does not control the day-to-day operations of its organizational members, who are independently organized, nor does it control National Member Organizations or Local Affiliated Organizations who operate individual clubs.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, individual clubs range in size, structure, resources, operations and stakeholder needs and may have different levels of risk based on very different programs. Accordingly, each organizational member, Local Affiliated Organization, and club is encouraged to conduct an independent assessment of its own practices and evaluate how best to implement its own risk management program as required by U.S. Soccer Bylaw 212 and the U.S. Soccer Athlete and Participant Safety Policy.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see the section entitled “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement” on Page 15);

<sup>2</sup> As noted above, the Safe Soccer Framework does, however, apply to all Development Academy teams via incorporation into the Development Academy Rules & Regulations.

## D. WHO IS COVERED BY THIS HANDBOOK / COVERED PERSONNEL

All policies in this Handbook apply to any individual designated as “Covered Personnel”<sup>3</sup> for U.S. Soccer for purposes of jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, meaning **adults authorized by U.S. Soccer to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor**. In addition, where noted, certain policies apply to adults at a facility operating under U.S. Soccer’s jurisdiction.

For U.S. Soccer, “Covered Personnel” are:

	Includes:	Does not Include:
U.S. Soccer Staff and contractors with access to athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees of the U.S. Soccer Federation</li> <li>• U.S. Soccer Board Members</li> <li>• Medical Staff</li> <li>• Scouts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees of U.S. Soccer’s organizational members</li> </ul>
Athletes who directly register with U.S. Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Team Players</li> <li>• Development Academy Players</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players participating in any professional league sanctioned by U.S. Soccer (unless serving on the National Team); or</li> <li>• Players who register in the National Data Center through a National Member Organization or Local Affiliate Organization or a U.S. Soccer organizational member unless they are Development Academy Players or National Team Players</li> </ul>
Individuals who are authorized by U.S. Soccer to have regular contact with/authority over minor athletes/participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Level Referees (Grades 1-4)</li> <li>• Referees assigned by U.S. Soccer</li> <li>• DA and National Team:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coaches</li> <li>○ Administrators</li> <li>○ Staff</li> <li>○ Medical personnel</li> <li>○ Volunteers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• National Coaching Instructors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational Members and their officials</li> <li>• Local Affiliated Organizations and their officials</li> <li>• Referees grades 5-15 (state, amateur and youth), unless assigned by U.S. Soccer</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The definition of “Covered Personnel” for purposes of determining who is covered by this Guide should not be confused with the definition of a “Covered Individual” obligated to report child abuse under the SafeSport Act. Please see the Section below entitled, “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement” on page 15 for more information.



Although U.S. Soccer's member organizations are not currently directly subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, U.S. Soccer's Bylaws and Policies require its members to maintain their own risk management programs.

## **Minor athletes who become adult athletes**

A minor athlete that reaches the age of majority may not be subject to athlete prevention policies if they remain an athlete, and when interacting with minor athletes who are 16 or older. Athlete prevention policies are in effect when this now age of majority athlete interacts with minor athletes 15 or younger. Should a minor athlete reach the age of majority and then obtain a position that presents a potential power imbalance, such as becoming a coach, the individual is subject to athlete prevention policies.

## **E. STATEMENT ON YOUTH REFEREE SAFETY**

The abuse and assault of referees is expressly prohibited by U.S. Soccer Policy 531-9, but a particular note is required regarding referees who are also minors.

Youth Referees are trained game officials, and many are experienced players, but they are minor participants nonetheless and are therefore entitled to all of the protections extended to minor athletes by the Safe Soccer Framework.

Without limiting the foregoing, wherever a policy in this Handbook includes protections for minor athletes or other participants, they should also be read as protecting any referee under the age of 18.

## F. THE U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT

The U.S. Center for SafeSport (the “Center”) is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that receives funding from the U.S. federal government, the USOC, the 50 NGBs (including U.S. Soccer), as well as a number of third-party individuals and organizations.

Pursuant to USOC Policy, the U.S. Center for SafeSport maintains exclusive authority over: (a) actual or suspected sexual misconduct by U.S. Soccer Covered Personnel (and those covered personnel of other NGBs); and (b) misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of sexual misconduct by Covered Personnel. Exclusive authority means: (y) only the Center will investigate and manage any related hearing involving sexual misconduct and (z) neither U.S. Soccer, the USOC nor any Covered Personnel will conduct its own investigation or arbitration with respect to possible sexual misconduct. In 2018, the SafeSport Act amended the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act to codify this jurisdiction, authorizing the Center to “serve as the independent national safe sport organization and...exercise jurisdiction over the corporation, each national governing body, and each Paralympic sports organization with regard to safeguarding amateur athletes against abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, in sports.”

The SafeSport Act further authorizes the Center to:

1. maintain an office for education and outreach that shall develop training, oversight practices, policies, and procedures to prevent the abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, of amateur athletes participating in amateur athletic activities through national governing bodies and Paralympic sports organizations;
2. maintain an office for response and resolution that shall establish mechanisms that allow for the reporting, investigation, and resolution of alleged sexual abuse in violation of the Center’s policies and procedures; and
3. ensure that the mechanisms provide fair notice and an opportunity to be heard and protect the privacy and safety of complainants.

*In addition to the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline, reports may also be made to the Center for SafeSport, including on an anonymous basis, by visiting [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org) and selecting the “Report a Concern” link, or by calling (720) 531-0340.*

## II. FRAMEWORK POLICIES

### A. PROHIBITED CONDUCT POLICY

This Policy applies to all U.S. Soccer “Covered Personnel” as defined in the Section above entitled, “Who is Covered by this Handbook” on page 5, as well as conduct by any subcontractor, supplier, customer or third party and their employees in their dealings with U.S. Soccer employees. All definitions in this policy are taken from the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement the “**SafeSport Code**”), as may be amended from time to time. In the event of any conflict between this Policy and the SafeSport Code, the SafeSport Code will govern. The most recent SafeSport Code is always available at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

U.S. Soccer is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of any legally protected status. Accordingly, U.S. Soccer does not permit any form of unlawful harassment, discrimination or intimidation against its employees by anyone, including managers, supervisors, coworkers, executives, directors, officers, other employees, vendors, clients, customers or third parties. Protected status includes race, color, age, religion, marital status, sex, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, veteran’s status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, protected activity, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. The policy also prohibits harassment on the basis of the protected status of an individual’s relatives, friends or associates.

U.S. Soccer is also committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying and hazing.

Any violation of this Policy by a Covered Individual may subject the Covered Individual to disciplinary action. Appropriate action also will be taken against any subcontractor, supplier, or customer found in violation of this Policy.

#### 1. Harassment

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based upon a person’s protected status. U.S. Soccer will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance, or safety, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Among the types of conduct prohibited by this policy are epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping or intimidating acts based on an individual’s protected status and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility toward an individual because of his or her protected status.

Prohibited conduct can also include jokes, kidding, or teasing about another person’s protected status. While harassing conduct is unlawful only if it affects tangible job benefits and/or interferes unreasonably with work performance and creates an abusive or hostile work environment, this Policy forbids harassing conduct even when it does not rise to the level of a violation of law.

## 2. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual's employment;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance and creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or different gender. It may also occur between individuals of any employment status.

Examples of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment and are prohibited by this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, pinching, or brushing against a person's body;
- staring, ogling, leering, or whistling at a person;
- continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- sexually explicit statements, sexual flirtations, advances, propositions, subtle pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes, or anecdotes;
- graphic or degrading comments about a person's clothing, body or sexual activity;
- sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, calendars, or pictures in the workplace;
- suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations;
- harassing use of electronic mail, electronic or instant messaging, or telephone communication systems; or
- other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

U.S. Soccer prohibits managers and supervisors from threatening or insinuating, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding that employee's wages, assigned duties, advancement, evaluation, shifts, career development, or any other condition of employment.

## 3. Racial, Religious, or National Origin Harassment

Racial, religious, or national origin harassment deserves special mention as well, and is expressly prohibited by U.S. Soccer. Racial, religious, or national origin harassment includes any verbal,

written, or physical act in which race, religion, or national origin is used or implied in a manner which would make a reasonable person uncomfortable in the work environment or which would interfere with the person's ability to perform the job. Examples of race, religious or national origin harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- jokes, which include reference to race, religion, or national origin;
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, or national origin; or
- use of pejorative or demeaning language regarding a person's race, religion, or national origin.

#### **4. Child Sexual Abuse**

Any sexual activity with a child is prohibited. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception, or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

#### **5. Sexual Misconduct**

Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority is prohibited. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative. This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

#### **6. Emotional Misconduct**

Emotional misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Emotional misconduct is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to another person. Non-contact behaviors include verbal acts, physical acts, or acts that deny attention or support; or any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect). Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance.

#### **7. Physical Misconduct**

Physical misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Physical misconduct is defined as contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threatens to, cause physical harm to another person; or any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault). Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance. For example, hitting and punching are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports but have no place in soccer.

## 8. Bullying

Intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have 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 are prohibited. Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

## 9. Hazing

Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group's members are prohibited. Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

## 10. Procedures for Complaints, Investigations and Corrective Action

All Covered Personnel are responsible to help ensure that we avoid misconduct. U.S. Soccer cannot act to eliminate misconduct unless it has notice of the conduct. Covered Personnel are charged with reporting any concerns regarding compliance with the Safe Soccer Framework in the manner provided in the Section entitled, "Obligation of Covered Personnel to Report," on page 21. For the avoidance of doubt, in some instances, Covered Personnel will be required to report to law enforcement and/or the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

Furthermore, U.S. Soccer employees are responsible to help assure that the work environment, on or off-premises, is free from harassment. All employees have an obligation to promptly report any and all allegedly harassing conduct they are the subject of, that they learn of, or that they witness. Our Policy provides for immediate notice of problems to the persons designated in this Policy so that we may address and resolve any problems as quickly as possible.

An employee must report the harassing conduct to either:

- The person to whom you report (supervisor or manager);
- Department Head;
- The Human Resources Department;
- The Legal Department;
- The Chief Executive Officer; or
- The Integrity Hotline.

If the employee feels uncomfortable going to his or her supervisor with the complaint, he/she must report the matter to any other member of management as designated above.

This Policy does not require reporting the misconduct to any individual who is creating the harassment or discrimination.

All Covered Personnel have an obligation to cooperate in any investigation of a complaint of misconduct, including providing any and all information concerning the complaint. Failure to do so may be a violation of this Policy.

U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy offers its employees greater protection from harassment than does the law. Consequently, Covered Personnel who are found to have violated U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy shall be subject to corrective action, discipline or termination, even in cases where applicable laws may not have been violated and without regard to whether the conduct constitutes a violation of the law.

An employee wishing to file a complaint outside the Federation may also contact either the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the fair employment agency in his or her state.

## **11. Training and Education**

Employees and other Covered Personnel over the age of 18 that have regular contact with athletes must successfully complete the U.S. Center for SafeSport training every year, consistent with the Minimum Training Policy found at II.D. on page 21. The U.S. Center for SafeSport training can be accessed at <http://training.safesport.org/>. Minor Athletes that directly register with U.S. Soccer will be offered training from the U.S. Center for SafeSport every year and, may take the training with parental consent.<sup>4</sup>

## **12. Exclusive Jurisdiction Over Investigation/Adjudication of Sexual Abuse or Misconduct**

The investigation and adjudication of matters involving allegations or reports of sexual abuse or misconduct by or against Covered Personnel, or other violations of this Prohibited Conduct Policy that involve prohibited conduct that is reasonably related to and accompanies an alleged violation involving sexualized behavior by Covered Personnel are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States Center for Safe Sport in accordance with the requirements of the USOC and as set forth in the Center's Bylaws or other Center's governing documents. Please see the Section V.A. entitled, "Exclusive Jurisdiction Over Investigation/Adjudication of Sexual Abuse or Misconduct" on page 37 for more information.

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<sup>4</sup> Athletes 18 or older that directly register with the U.S. Center for SafeSport must comply with the training requirements by September 1, 2019 and refresher training each year thereafter.



## **B. REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT**

On February 14, 2017, President Trump signed into law the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017* (the “**SafeSport Act**”). Among other things, this comprehensive law amends the *Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990*, 34 U.S.C. § 20341, *et seq.*, and clarifies who is a mandatory reporter for cases of suspected child abuse. Specifically, the definition of mandatory reporter now includes any “adult who is authorized, by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition, to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sports organization facility or at any event sanctioned by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or such an amateur sports organization.” Consequently, U.S. Soccer urges all of its members and all Local Affiliated Organizations to understand their reporting obligations under this important federal law.

Under the SafeSport Act, the reporting obligation is triggered when a mandatory reporter becomes aware of “facts that give reason to suspect” a child has suffered an incident of child abuse. Child abuse includes physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child. Sexual Abuse is defined to include the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in, or assist another person to engage in, sexually explicit conduct or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children. Mental Injury means harm to a child’s psychological or intellectual functioning which may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or outward aggressive behavior, or a combination of those behaviors, which may be demonstrated by a change in behavior, emotional response or cognition.

The SafeSport Act also includes qualified immunity for good faith reports. U.S. Soccer urges all mandatory reporters to refrain from judging or evaluating the credibility of such allegations—leave that to law enforcement.

Failure to promptly report suspected child abuse to law enforcement authorities may constitute a violation of federal law and, in any event, will be deemed a violation of U.S. Soccer’s SafeSport Framework.

**The message is clear: if you suspect child abuse, report it to law enforcement immediately.**

## C. BACKGROUND SCREENING

### 1. Scope and Purpose

As noted by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, “Sound, practical and reasonable screening practices reduce the chances that an athlete will come in contact with potentially dangerous individuals.” Accordingly, and consistent with the goals of the PROTECT Act of 2003 and the SafeSport Act, U.S. Soccer requires background screening on all U.S. Soccer Covered Personnel, 18 and older (see the section entitled, “Who is Covered by this Handbook” on page 5).<sup>5</sup> In addition, U.S. Soccer also performs background screening on volunteer Board members, officers and candidates for office.

### 2. Mandatory Self-Disclosure

*Any applicant who has been disqualified or declared by another sport organization to be temporarily or permanently ineligible is required to self-disclose this information at the time of application.<sup>6</sup> Failure to disclose is a basis for discipline/disqualification.*

### 3. Designated Background Screening Vendor

Since 2006, U.S. Soccer has used the National Center for Safety Initiatives (“NCSI”) as its designated background screening vendor. A private, woman-owned organization, NCSI is a full-service screening organization that applies the Recommended Guidelines established by the National Council on Youth Sports. NCSI’s process is state law compliant and includes appropriate written release from the applicant.

### 4. Scope of Background Screening

U.S. Soccer uses NCSI’s “Full Service Check-it-Twice™” package, which includes:

- Checks of two independent national databases;
- Checks of all available state sex offender registries;
- Social Security number and address verification;
- Federal prohibited person database check;
- Checks of county criminal records by county courthouse runners for each county where the individual currently lives or has lived during the past seven years, going back the length of time records are available for each county searched; and
- International background checks for countries where the individual has lived, worked, or studied for three or more consecutive months during the past seven years.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition, pursuant to USOC/U.S. Center for SafeSport Policy, Athletes while directly register with U.S. Soccer must complete the background screening requirement by September 1, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Records of temporary or permanent ineligibility within the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movements is available through the [U.S. Center for SafeSport’s disciplinary records search](#).

As part of this process, NCSI automatically performs a limited recheck on active individuals 12 months after the initial background screening, looking at one national database and all available state sex offender registries.

## 5. Screening Results

NCSI will issue its findings to U.S. Soccer based on a "Red Light/Green Light" system. A "Green Light" or "meets the criteria" finding indicates the individual is suitable for the intended U.S. Soccer-related role with regard to the background check. A "Red Light" finding means that the individual "does not meet the criteria".

A record or disclosure from the individual that contains any of the following information will be flagged as a "Red Light" or "does not meet the criteria":

- Any felony (any crime punishable by confinement of greater than one year);
- Any lesser crime involving force or threat of force against a person;
- Any lesser crime in which sexual relations is an element, including "victimless" crimes of a sexual nature (including pornography);
- Any lesser crime involving controlled substances (not paraphernalia or alcohol);
- Any lesser crime involving cruelty to animals; or,
- Any sex offender registrant.
- Additionally, the following information will result in further investigation involving the individual and the appropriate courts, which will lead to a determination of either a "Red Light" or a "Green Light" finding:
  - An arrest involving one or more of the criterion offenses with no disposition noted;
  - Expunctions, restoration of rights, or pardons involving a criterion offense;
  - Any charge involving a child resulting in a disposition favorable to the individual; or,
  - An arrest or conviction where it is not readily apparent if drugs or alcohol are involved.

The above criteria are contained within the guidelines developed by the NCYS and have been adopted by NCSI, consistent with the principles of the federal *PROTECT Act of 2003*.<sup>7</sup>

## 6. Background Screening Review Panel - Non-employees

Should a Covered Individual who is not an individual with a conditional offer of employment, (e.g., either a current employee or another participant such as a DA coach) receive a "Red Light" finding or an adverse action letter, the individual has the right to a hearing before a U.S. Soccer Safe Soccer Review Panel. See the section entitled, "Safe Soccer Review Panel," on page 37.

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<sup>7</sup> The *PROTECT Act of 2003*, Pub. L. 108-21, 117 Stat. 650, S. 151, enacted April 30, 2003, stands for "Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today," and was designed to strengthen law enforcement tools to investigate, prosecute and punish violent crimes against children. The PROTECT Act encourages organizations to obtain national and State criminal history background checks on volunteers, employees and other individuals who work with children, the elderly or the disabled.

## 7. Covered Personnel / Frequency

The following individuals shall undergo background checks prior to accepting an assignment, with a follow-up every two years thereafter:

<b>U.S. Soccer Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All full- and part-time employees</li></ul>
<b>Contracted professionals working on site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All contracted physicians, trainers, massage therapists, nutritionists, scouts and other certified professionals working directly with athletes</li></ul>
<b>Referees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All national level and professional-level referees (licensed through U.S. Soccer);</li><li>• All referees assigned by U.S. Soccer (e.g., but not limited to, to Development Academy or National Team games)</li></ul>
<b>Youth National Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All employees (coaches, team managers, administrators, trainers, etc.) who travel or attend training with any YNT team.</li></ul>
<b>Development Academy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All club staff members (coaches, team managers, administrators, trainers, etc.) who travel or attend training with any DA team.</li><li>• All other individuals who the U.S. Soccer determines, in its discretion, should be subject to a background check.<sup>8</sup></li></ul>

## 8. Applicability to Applicants for Employment with U.S. Soccer

U.S. Soccer is an equal opportunity employer and refrains from conducting background screening on job applicants unless and until an offer of employment is made, with such offer conditioned upon completion of U.S. Soccer’s mandated background screening process described above. The background screening covers major criminal databases but does not search credit or financial history, in compliance with applicable state law.

In the event an individual with a conditional offer of employment from U.S. Soccer receives a “Red Light” result, U.S. Soccer will:

- Consider how long ago the applicable conviction occurred and whether it is directly related to the job;
- Notify the individual in writing, identify the conviction(s) that are the problem, provide the individual with a copy of his/her record, and tell the individual the deadline by which he/she must respond. The applicant’s response may include submission of evidence challenging the accuracy of the conviction history report that is the basis for rescinding the offer, evidence of rehabilitation or mitigating circumstances, or both.

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<sup>8</sup> Development academy rules require all clubs to have a licensed Athletic Trainer (AT) or a medical professional who is trained in U.S. Soccer’s concussion management protocol present at each game or risk game cancellation and fine. If the Club uses non-employee medical professionals, these professionals remain subject to the requirement of a reasonable background check and SafeSport training, except in the limited circumstance of a one-time substitution (e.g., Club’s regular AT is ill and a parent who is an ER physician agrees to substitute for a single game to prevent cancellation). Clubs obtaining services through Athletic Training practices are required to negotiate Services Agreements that provide for reasonable criminal background checks and SafeSport training for all ATs serving the club.

- Provide the applicant with five (5) business days to respond, unless, within the five (5) business days, the individual notifies the employer in writing that the individual disputes the accuracy of the background screening results and that the individual is taking specific steps to obtain evidence supporting that assertion, then the individual shall have five additional business days to respond to the notice.
- Consider information submitted by applicant before making a final decision.
- Any final decision to deny an applicant solely or in part because of the “Red Light” result will be provided in writing to the applicant along with any existing procedure for the applicant to challenge the decision or request reconsideration, the applicant’s right to file a complaint, if applicable, under the relevant state law.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> e.g., the California Fair Chance Act.

## D. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017*, requires amateur sports organizations to offer consistent training to adult members who are in regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors, and subject to parental consent, to members who are minors, regarding prevention of child abuse. The “Core SafeSport Training” offered by the U.S. Center for SafeSport meets the requirements of U.S. Soccer’s Athlete & Participant Safety Policy. It consists of three modules: (1) Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education; (2) Mandatory Reporting, and (3) Emotional & Physical Misconduct.

Training provides participants the necessary tools, vocabulary and information to more effectively monitor our sport, minimize the opportunities for child physical or sexual abuse and other types of misconduct, and respond to concerns.

U.S. Soccer mandates the minimum training requirements provided in the chart below:

### 1. U.S. Soccer SafeSport Training Minimum Requirements

	Core SafeSport Training	Refresher Course <sup>10</sup>
U.S. Soccer Employees and Board Members, Contractors with access to Athletes	Prior to beginning work or within 45 days of being appointed to Board	<b>Effective 1/1/2019:</b> Refresher course every year
Development Academy Coach, Trainer, Athletic Trainer, Sport Scientist, Physician, Massage Therapist, Administrator	Prior to being approved with DA	<b>2016-2018:</b> Retake Core Training every other year  <b>Effective 1/1/2019:</b> Refresher course every year
Youth National Team Coach, Trainer, Athletic Trainer, Sport Scientist, Physician, Massage Therapist, Administrator	Prior to being approved with the Youth National Team	<b>2016-2018:</b> Retake Core Training every other year  <b>Effective 1/1/2019:</b> Refresher course every year
National Level Referees; Coaching Ed. instructors	Prior to being licensed	<b>Effective 1/1/2019:</b> Refresher course every year
DA/YNT Referees	Prior to being assigned with DA or YNT	<b>Effective 1/1/2019:</b> Refresher course every year
Chaperones/Vendors/Consultants	Prior to contact with minor athletes	
Minor Athletes participating with U.S. Soccer (Development Academy, National Teams)	Beginning Fall of 2018/Winter 2019: All minor athletes will be offered access to SafeSport training on an annual basis, with parental consent. The applicable program (including individual DA Clubs) will track the training by description, date and how offered using U.S. Soccer-provided forms.	

<sup>10</sup> Once a Participant has taken all three “Core Training” modules, they have met the “SafeSport Trained” requirement. In the future, they will only need to take the SafeSport Refresher Course available beginning October 1, 2018. Anyone who has NOT completed the core SafeSport Training requirement (which consists of Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education, Mandatory Reporting, and Emotional & Physical Misconduct) should complete those courses and NOT the Refresher.

## **2. Access to Training**

U.S. Soccer contributes financially to the Center and makes SafeSport training available to its members and Local Affiliated Organizations at *no additional cost*.

## **3. Parent Toolkit**

In addition to the training discussed below, the Center has made toolkits available to parents on its web-site. A direct link is available [HERE](#).

## E. OBLIGATION OF COVERED PERSONNEL TO REPORT

In addition to the obligation to report to law enforcement pursuant to the SafeSport Act, (*see* the Section entitled “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement ” on page 14, above), Covered Personnel 18 and older are charged with reporting to each of the U.S. Center for SafeSport and U.S. Soccer. Reports made to U.S. Soccer involving the Center’s jurisdiction will be promptly forwarded to the Center.

Without limiting the foregoing, **all National Team personnel and all Development Academy Clubs**<sup>11</sup> are obligated to report any suspected violation of the Safe Soccer Framework involving team personnel or athletes *of any age* to U.S. Soccer, either through Development Academy staff in Chicago or the Integrity Hotline (*see* the Section entitled, “How to Report to the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline,” below.)

The obligation to report is not always satisfied by making an initial report. Covered Personnel are required to report supplemental information of which he or she becomes aware that may be relevant to a pending investigation.

Importantly, civil or criminal statutes of limitations do not affect or negate the obligation of a Covered Individual to report possible sexual misconduct to the Center under the Safe Soccer Framework. Misconduct should be reported, regardless of when it occurred.

Organizational members who are not “Covered Personnel” under U.S. Soccer’s Safe Soccer Framework may nonetheless have an obligation to report suspected child abuse under applicable federal or state law (*see* the Section entitled “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement ” on page 14, above). U.S. Soccer urges all organizational members to act to report suspected child abuse—only together can we make soccer safer.

## F. HOW TO REPORT TO THE U.S. SOCCER INTEGRITY HOTLINE

You may always raise a concern to coaches, referees, team administrators and U.S. Soccer staff. In addition, we encourage you to use the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline: [www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline](http://www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline) or by calling (312) 528-7004.<sup>12</sup>

Reports submitted to this Integrity Hotline will be handled as promptly and discreetly as possible, with facts made available only to those who need to investigate and resolve the matter. U.S. Soccer is committed to safeguarding the confidentiality of individuals who submit reports. In the event U.S. Soccer receives a report of suspected child abuse triggering a reporting obligation under the Safe Soccer Framework and applicable federal law, we will make the report directly and/or work with you to make the report.

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<sup>11</sup> Failure of a Development Academy to report a potential violation of the Safe Soccer Framework is grounds for remedial action up to and including termination of the Club’s participation in the Development Academy program.

<sup>12</sup> Although you may always use the Integrity Hotline confidentially, in the event you make a report of suspected child abuse to law enforcement, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, or another authority, we encourage you not to make an anonymous report simply because an anonymous report will not provide you with evidence that you discharged your mandatory reporting obligation.



## **G. HOW TO REPORT TO THE U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT**

In addition to the U.S. Soccer Integrity Hotline, reports may also be made to the Center for SafeSport, including on an anonymous basis, by visiting [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org) and selecting the “Report a Concern” link, or by calling (720) 531-0340.

Reports to the U.S. Center for SafeSport falling within the Center’s subject matter jurisdiction will be handled in accordance with the Safe Sport Code and the SafeSport Practices and Procedures available on [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

## **H. MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT: NO RETALIATION**

U.S. Soccer takes all reports of potential violations of the Safe Sport Framework seriously and is committed to confidentiality and investigation of allegations. U.S. Soccer’s Legal personnel may conduct or manage Code investigations. Employees who are being investigated for a potential Code violation will have fair notice and an opportunity to be heard prior to any final determination.

U.S. Soccer does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes such a good faith report will be subject to retaliation, including harassment, or any adverse employment consequence, as a result of making a report.

Violations of the Safe Soccer Framework by Covered Personnel will be handled as provided in the Section V entitled, “Administration of this Handbook” on page 37.

### **III. PREVENTION POLICIES: LIMITING ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND MINORS**

Soccer is a team sport. Although appropriate physical contact and one-on-one interaction between minor athletes and coaches/trainers, etc. may be conducive to improving physical skills, U.S. Soccer believes prudent limitations on one-on-one interactions can reduce the potential for abuse and misconduct without negatively impacting player development or unnecessarily limiting one-on-one time with trusted adults that is healthy and valuable for a child.

#### **A. ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES: AVOIDING GIFTS**

Individuals who groom children will often provide special gifts or privileges, as one strategy to gain the child's trust and fill a need in their life, in advance of sexually abusing the child. Accordingly, U.S. Soccer discourages employees and volunteers from giving gifts or granting special privileges to athletes and prohibits any such gift or privilege when not available to the entire team.

#### **B. APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

U.S. Soccer adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regard to physical contact with our athletes:

##### **1. Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact**

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which makes it both safe and appropriate. These criteria include:

- the physical contact takes place in public
- there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual contact during the physical contact
- the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

##### **a. Safety**

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

- spotting an athlete so that they will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment
- positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination
- making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use

## **b. Celebration**

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

- greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief “side hugs”<sup>13</sup>
- congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, “jump-arounds” and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment

## **c. 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:

- embracing a crying athlete (in a public place or circumstance)
- putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down (“side hugs”)
- lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and “dusting them off” to encourage them to continue competition

## **d. Supervision Generally**

No minor should be left alone at a training session or at any other time until they are picked up by their parent, older sibling or other designated adult. It is recommended that the last adult in addition to the coach or athletic trainer wait at the site until the minor is picked up.

# **C. ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS / INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete’s concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, Covered Personnel are to observe the following guidelines when dealing with athletes/participants under the age of 18:

## **1. Interactions Should Be Observable and Interruptible**

- One-on-one interactions between minors and an adult (who is not the minor’s legal guardian) are permitted if they occur at an observable and interruptible distance by another adult.
- Isolated, one-on-one interactions between minors and an Adult (who is not the minor’s legal guardian) are prohibited, except under emergency circumstances.

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<sup>13</sup> NOTE: this does *not* include “butt-pats” or “chest bumps.” This out-dated means of celebration makes many athletes uncomfortable and is best replaced with a high-five or a fist bump.

## 2. Interactions are Monitored.

When one-on-one interactions between Adults and minors occur at our facilities, adults will monitor these interactions. Monitoring includes: knowing that the one-on-one interaction is occurring, the approximate planned duration of the interaction, and randomly dropping in on the one-on-one.

## 3. Meetings

- Meetings between Adults and minors at our facilities may only occur if another adult is present, except under emergency circumstances. Such meetings must occur where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.
- If a one-on-one meeting takes place in an office, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it will occur in an office that (if available) has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.
- If a mental health care professional meets with minors at our facilities, a closed-door meeting may be permitted to protect patient privacy – provided that (1) the door remains unlocked, (2) another adult is present at the facility, (3) the other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring, and (4) written legal guardian consent is obtained by the mental health care professional, with a copy provided to our organization.

## 4. Individual training sessions

An individual training session with an athlete (meaning not a team training, but training involving one athlete and one coach) may be necessary in order to further player development. Under these circumstances, the individual training session should be open and observable by others. Additionally, parent/guardian permission is required in advance of the individual training session(s), and parents/guardians are welcome to attend the individual training. Parents, guardians, and other caretakers must be allowed to observe individual training sessions. Permission for individual training sessions must be obtained at least every six months.

## 5. Out-of-Program Contacts

Covered Personnel are prohibited from interacting one-on-one with unrelated minor athletes in settings outside of the program (including, but not limited to, one's home, restaurants, and individual transportation), unless parent/legal guardian consent is provided for each out-of-program contact. Such arrangements are nonetheless strongly discouraged.

## E. MASSAGE AND OTHER ATHLETIC TRAINING INTERACTIONS

- Any massage or other athletic training therapy or modality must be provided by a non-coach licensed athletic trainer or other certified professional. Such activities should never be done with only the minor athlete and adult in the room. Where possible without compromising an athlete's privacy, such activities should be performed in open/public areas (e.g., but not limited to, in a training room but not behind a screen) and in any event should be in an interruptible location.
- Even if a coach is a licensed professional provider, the coach shall not perform a massage or athletic training therapy or modality on an athlete under any circumstances.
- Icing and taping, though not limited to certified professionals, should, where possible without compromising an athlete's privacy, be performed in open/public areas (e.g., on the bench; in locker room with others present).
- ***Icing and taping near the intimate areas of the body (i.e. "bathing suit areas") is not permitted*** by a non-licensed medical professional and in any event cannot be done with only the minor athlete and professional alone in a room.

## F. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA

Electronic communications are an ever-changing aspect of the way we communicate today. The specific rules below may reference certain forms of electronic communication, and the specific application of principles may change with regard to a given app, platform or method of communication, but regardless of the means, **the following principles apply across all manner of electronic communication and should be used to guide adult behavior when communicating with minor athletes:**

1. **Content Must be Professional in Nature:** All electronic communications between a coach/team personnel and a minor athlete must be professional in nature (i.e. soccer-related) and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or team-oriented communication (i.e. motivation, instruction).
  - ⇒ Communication or conversation regarding illegal or age inappropriate topics (drugs, alcohol use, sexually explicit language or imagery, or discussion of adult personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues) is not permitted.
  - ⇒ All communications must comply with the Prohibited Conduct Policy.
  - ⇒ U.S. Soccer actively monitors relevant social media posts and reserves the right to remove posts that violate our policies and practices for appropriate behavior and/or to notify the applicable legal guardian of prohibited posts by any athlete.
  
2. **Communications Must be Open and Transparent:** The content of any electronic communication should generally be group-based and should always be readily available to share with the athlete's family, the applicable Club, and U.S. Soccer.
  - ⇒ Administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers may not use SnapChat (or any similar app that automatically deletes the content of a communication) to communicate with minor athletes.
  - ⇒ If a Participating Adult needs to communicate directly with an amateur athlete who is a minor via electronic communications, another Participating Adult or the minor's legal guardian will be copied.
  - ⇒ If a minor athlete communicates to the Participating Adult privately first, the Participating Adult should respond to the minor athlete with a copy to another Participating Adult or the minor's legal guardian.
  - ⇒ Participating Adult communicating electronically to the entire team will copy another Participating Adult.
  - ⇒ Consider using group-focused platforms under team administrative control (e.g., but not limited to, Teamworks, etc.)

3. **Keep Imagery Public:** In posting imagery, adults are expected to be sensitive to the status of minors. This means any imagery posted to a team website or social media should be soccer-related, not private (e.g., taken in public view), and age appropriate.

- ⇒ Under no circumstances should imagery depict any conduct that would violate any of the U.S. Soccer Safe Soccer Framework.
- ⇒ Requests of parents/guardians of minor athletes to remove imagery in which their child is recognizable and individually featured will be honored to the extent practicable.<sup>14</sup>

The following sections apply the above principles to specific areas of electronic communication and should not be viewed as narrowing the above.

## 1. Prohibited Electronic Communications – Direct Messaging

- Covered Personnel are not permitted to communicate privately via electronic communications with amateur athletes who are minors, except under emergency circumstances.
- Covered Personnel are not permitted to “private message,” “instant message,” “direct message”, or send photos to a minor athlete privately, regardless of what platform is used.
- Covered Personnel are not permitted to maintain social media connections with minors; such adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from amateur athletes who are minors and existing social media connections with amateur athletes who are minors shall be discontinued. Instead, Athletes and parents can “friend” the official organization’s team page and coaches can communicate to athletes through the site or through similar group-focused methods of communication.
- Athletes and coaches employed by U.S. Soccer may use email to communicate *provided* the coach is using only his or her “@ussoccer.org” email account and further provided all email content between coach and athlete otherwise complies with this policy. When communicating with a minor athlete through email, another staff or volunteer member or parent must be copied.

## 2. Requests to discontinue

Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor child not be contacted through electronic communication by the organization or by Covered Personnel. We will abide by any such request that their child not be contacted via electronic communication, absent emergency circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Where photos are team photos, generally no child is individually featured, but the request will nonetheless be considered in good faith.

<sup>15</sup> In such an event, the legal guardian’s email will be substituted for the minor child’s email for purposes of National Team call-up communications, etc.

### 3. Social Media (including Texting, WhatsApp, GroupMe and Similar Apps)

- **Keep personal pages personal.** Administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers may not invite or allow minor athletes to join a personal social media page unless they are directly related to that athlete and have the permission of the athlete's parent/guardian. Athletes should be reminded that initiating a "friend" request to administrators/coaches/ staff/volunteers is not permitted.
  - Administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers are encouraged to set their social media pages to private settings.
  - Similarly, those who work with minor athletes are reminded that they set an example for the minor athletes. If a page is not private, U.S. Soccer expects administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers who work with minor athletes to refrain from posting inappropriate, off-color content or content that would violate the Prohibited Conduct Policy or otherwise commenting on posts that would.
- **Choose Apps that support group-based communication.** Apps such as TeamWorks™ and GroupMe™ often provide a helpful way to communicate, but again, individual messages should be avoided.
- **Respect reasonable "soccer" hours:** Real-time electronic communications (e.g., texting via SMS, apps, etc.) between coaches and athletes on a group basis is generally allowed between *8 am - 9 pm*, unless there is a specific safety- or soccer-related need to communicate.



## G. LOCKER ROOMS/CHANGING AREAS

Athletes (especially minors) are particularly vulnerable in locker rooms and changing areas due to various stages of dress/undress and because athletes are less supervised than at many other times. The risk of athlete-to-athlete problems, such as child sexual abuse and bullying, harassment, and hazing, is present when coaches or staff members are not monitoring athletes. This is especially true in locker rooms. Adherence to a locker room and changing areas policy enhances privacy and reduces the likelihood of misconduct.

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

### 1. Use of Cell Phones and Other Mobile Recording Devices Prohibited

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. As a result, **USE OF A DEVICE'S RECORDING CAPABILITIES IN THE LOCKER ROOMS, REST ROOMS, CHANGING AREAS OR SIMILAR SPACES IS PROHIBITED**. Exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, provided that such exceptions are approved by the Federation and two or more adults are present.<sup>16</sup>

### 2. Undress

Under no circumstances shall an unrelated Adult at a facility under our organization's jurisdiction be undressed (disrobed or partial or full nudity where private body parts are exposed) in front of minor athletes.

### 3. Isolated one-on-one interactions / Monitoring

- At no time are unrelated Adults permitted to be alone with a minor in a locker room, rest room, or changing area when at a facility under our jurisdiction, except under emergency circumstances.
- If our organization is using a facility that has access to a single set of such facilities, times will be designated for use by each respective group (e.g., adults, minors, etc.)
- Locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas at facilities under our jurisdiction should be regularly and randomly monitored to ensure compliance with these policies.
- Adults make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, senior national teams comprised primarily of adults may allow the use of recording devices by members of the media or Federation communications department personnel with player consent, e.g., at the half, post-game, etc.

- We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let a coach or administrator know about this in advance.

#### **4. Non-exclusive facility**

If our organization uses a facility not under its jurisdiction (for, e.g., training or competition or similar events) and the facility is used by multiple constituents, Covered Personnel are nonetheless required to adhere to the rules set forth here.

## **H. LOCAL TRAVEL**

Local travel consists of travel to training, practice, and competition that does not include coordinated overnight stay(s).

### **1. Transportation**

- U.S. Soccer generally does not arrange for local travel for individual players from home to training/practice/competition.
- Covered Individuals who are not also acting as a legal guardian, shall not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated athlete who is a minor, absent emergency circumstances, and may only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian in advance of each local travel.
- In any case where a staff member and/or volunteer is involved in a minor athlete's local travel, a parental release is required in advance. Parents/legal guardians are advised to consult the Center's Parental Toolkit concerning child abuse prevention before providing consent for their minor to travel alone with an unrelated adult.

### **2. Shared or Carpool Travel Arrangement**

We encourage parents/legal guardians to pick up their minor athlete first and drop off their minor athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement.

## **I. TEAM TRAVEL / OVERNIGHT STAYS**

Team travel is travel that requires overnight stays away from home and occurs when a team/club sponsors, coordinates or arranges for travel so that teams can compete locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Because of the greater distances, coaches, staff, volunteers and chaperones will often travel with the athletes.

### **1. Participating Adult Requirements**

Participating Adults who travel with a team (whether coach, trainer, referee, staff member, or volunteer/parent) must successfully pass a criminal background check and other screening requirements consistent with U.S. Soccer's screening policies and complete the Core SafeSport Training.

### **2. Travel to Competition**

When only one Participating Adult and one minor athlete travel to a competition, (including, but not limited to, youth referees) the minor athlete must provide evidence of his/her legal guardian's written permission in advance, and for each competition, before traveling alone with the Participating Adult.

### 3. Travel Arrangements

For team travel, hotels and air travel will be booked in advance by U.S. Soccer or the applicable Development Academy Club. Athletes typically will share rooms, with 2-4 athletes assigned per room depending on accommodations. U.S. Soccer will also notify hotel management should any special arrangements be warranted.

For instance, depending on the ages in travel parties, we may ask hotels to block pay per view channels or clear mini-bar areas. Depending on the size of the group, we may also request an additional large room or suite so that our members and athletes may socialize as a group. Meetings do not occur in individual hotel rooms, and we will reserve a separate space for adults and athletes to socialize and/or to support appropriate athletic training appointments.

### 4. Hotel Rooms

Adults shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete (unless the Participating Adult is the legal guardian, sibling, or is otherwise related to the minor athlete). In addition, no Adult Participant should enter the hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete unless necessary for the safety of the minor (e.g., in the event of emergency). Team meetings should never be conducted in a hotel room used for sleeping.

### 5. Meetings / Supervision

- Meetings will be conducted consistent with the organization’s policy for one-on-one interactions – i.e., any such meeting shall be observable and interruptible.
- Meetings may not be conducted in a hotel room used for sleeping.
- During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership and observable and interruptible environments should be maintained.

### 6. Mixed-Gender and Mixed-Age Travel<sup>17</sup>

Athletes may only share a room with other athletes of the same age group (e.g., minors with minors, adults with adults). Athletes will also be further grouped by age (and gender, if applicable) for the purposes of assigning an appropriate chaperone. We will make every effort to provide these groups at least one chaperone of the same gender.<sup>18</sup>

***Regardless of gender or age, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling or spouse of that particular athlete).***<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, U.S. Soccer does not operate mixed-gender teams. In the event of such a team in the future, however, athletes may only share a room with other athletes of the same gender.

<sup>18</sup> Teams relying on parents to serve as chaperones and may be limited in providing this match in gender.

<sup>19</sup> Similarly, and without limiting the impact of the note on page 7, in the event of Referee travel, an adult referee shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a youth/minor referee (unless the adult is the parent, guardian, sibling or spouse of that particular youth referee).

## 7. Coach and Staff Responsibilities

During team travel, coaches and staff members will help athletes, fellow coaches and staff members adhere to policy guidelines in this Handbook.

When not practicing, training, competing, or preparing for competition, coaches and staff will monitor the safety and activities of athletes, fellow coaches and staff during team travel.

Coaches and staff will:

- prepare athletes for team travel and make athletes aware of all expectations. Supplemental information will be given to parents/guardians of athletes who are considered inexperienced travelers, new or relatively new to team travel, or who are under the age of 14 to familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before the initiation of team travel
- conform to, and monitor for others' adherence, all policies during team travel
- encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communications with their parents/guardians
- ensure athletes are not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff and chaperones
- not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching/staff duties (this applies 24/7 throughout a camp or travel trip)
- immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations to U.S. Soccer and the appropriate authorities

## IV. PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

### A. RECOGNIZE TO RECOVER™

[www.recognizetorecover.org](http://www.recognizetorecover.org)

Recognize to Recover™ is U.S. Soccer's education and awareness program aimed at promoting safe play and reducing injuries in soccer players of all ages. This first-of-its-kind, program was developed with the help of medical experts to provide coaches, players, parents and referees with information, guidance and additional educational materials to improve the prevention and management of injuries. This comprehensive program addresses:

- Emergency Action Plan Criteria
- Cardiac Conditions Response
- Head and Brain Conditions / Concussion Management
- Environmental Conditions
- Injury Prevention
- Nutrition and Hydration

U.S. Soccer's National Team Program and all Development Academy teams are required to follow Recognize to Recover™ guidelines and, in particular, the Concussion Management Protocols available at:

[www.recognizetorecover.org](http://www.recognizetorecover.org)

[www.ussoccerda.com/sports-medicine](http://www.ussoccerda.com/sports-medicine)

We urge all members and Local Affiliated Organizations to adopt Recognize to Recover™ or a similar plan.

### B. MEDICAL CLEARANCE FOR COMPETITION

U.S. Soccer requires all members of National Team rosters to obtain appropriate medical clearance before participating at a given National Team camp.

Although U.S. Soccer does not control individual clubs and teams nationwide, whether affiliated with a Development Academy team or not, we encourage all athletes to seek and obtain medical clearance from their personal physician at the start of each season, prior to attending practice, strength and conditioning sessions or competition.

#### 1. Pre-Season Clearance

Annual physical check-ups by qualified physicians may identify medical concerns that could impact safety or performance and are helpful in understanding an athlete's current physical state

of readiness for play. Physicians generally should be asked to review medical history, height/weight, vision, pulse and blood pressure, physical examination, and where practicable, we encourage an orthopedic screening examination and concussion baseline testing. In addition to the foregoing, a physician may recommend additional testing based on an athlete's specific situation.

## **2. Clearance following Injury**

The following applies to U.S. Soccer National Team Program and Development Academy Teams:

- If an injured player is sent to a Physician, the Physician will determine when the injury has healed enough that the athlete may return to participation.
- Once an athlete has been cleared for return to play by a physician, the team's Athletic Trainer ("AT") or licensed health care provider determines when the athlete is prepared to return to practice and game situations.
- Once an athlete has been cleared by the AT to participate in practice and/or games, it is the coaches' discretion as to when the athlete will resume participation.

## **C. TREATING MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE POLICY**

U.S. Soccer requires that treating medical professionals (physicians, trainers, etc.) serving U.S. Soccer National Team programs comply with applicable regulations for licensure, registration and certification established by and consistent with state and federal laws and generally recognized professional and accrediting organizations.

U.S. Soccer also requires primary source verification of temporary permits, licenses, registrations or certifications prior to beginning work. Individuals employed in those positions requiring licensure, registration or certifications, as indicated in the job description are responsible for providing copies of their permit, license, registration or certifications and must possess the required licensure or certification at time of hire in order to perform their duties unless otherwise allowed by regulation (e.g. Athletic Training interns directly supervised by licensed ATs). Employees are responsible for complying with these requirements as well as maintaining their license in good standing, completing all continuing medical education requirements, as applicable, and ensuring timely renewals. Employees will be suspended if required documentation is not received prior to the expiration date and will not be permitted to work until their license, registration, or certification has been verified according to the procedures stated in this policy. Failure to produce documentation within ten working days after suspension may result in termination.

## V. ADMINISTRATION OF THIS HANDBOOK

### A. EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY OF THE U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT

Pursuant to USOC Policy and the SafeSport Act, the U.S. Center for SafeSport maintains exclusive authority over (a) actual or suspected sexual misconduct by a Covered Individual; and (b) misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of sexual misconduct. Exclusive authority means that (y) only the Center will investigate and manage any related hearing involving sexual misconduct and (z) neither U.S. Soccer, the USOC nor any Covered Individual will conduct its own investigation or arbitration with respect to possible sexual misconduct.

Where a report is made to U.S. Soccer, via the Integrity Hotline or otherwise, and the matter implicates the exclusive jurisdiction of the Center, U.S. Soccer will promptly report the matter to the Center.

The responsibility for administering the remainder of the Safe Soccer framework, as it applies to Covered Personnel, rests with U.S. Soccer, with the oversight of the Chief Legal Officer and the Risk and Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.

### B. SAFE SOCCER REVIEW PANEL

Should a U.S. Soccer Covered Individual who is not an individual with a conditional offer of employment, (e.g., either a current employee or another participant such as a DA coach) receive a “Red Light” finding (from background screening) or an adverse action letter,<sup>20</sup> (e.g., based on an alleged violation of any provision of the Safe Soccer Framework that is deemed supported after a reasonable review by U.S. Soccer), the individual has the right to a hearing before a U.S. Soccer Screening Process Review Panel. The Review Panel will consist of a disinterested, three-person panel selected from the standing U.S. Soccer Appeals Committee panel list. The Review Panel shall be appointed by U.S. Soccer’s CEO/Secretary General.

Unless otherwise notified by the applicable U.S. Soccer program that a shorter period is required, the individual shall have five (5) business days from the date that Covered Individual is notified of the finding to request a hearing. The request for a hearing shall be in writing to [legal@ussoccer.org](mailto:legal@ussoccer.org) and shall include all written evidence that the individual wishes the Review Panel to consider and a list of witnesses that the individual may call at the hearing. By requesting the hearing, the individual grants permission for his or her complete background check findings, training history, and other file information to be provided to the Review Panel, the CEO/Secretary General and the legal department for U.S. Soccer, as well as, to the extent necessary, the CEO or President of the Development Academy club involved.

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<sup>20</sup> An adverse action letter may include a temporary or permanent disqualification, a suspension, a removal from future assignments, or other remedial action (e.g. probation) that impacts participation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, U.S. Soccer reserves the right to take any and all available employment action, subject to applicable law, and to require additional training (e.g. SafeSport-certified training) on the part of any participant at any time.



In addition to any evidence or argument provided by the individual, the Review Panel may consider any recommendation of the U.S. Soccer legal department. Such recommendation must be provided to the Review Panel within five (5) business days from that date of the individual's completed request with all supporting documents for hearing, include all written evidence that the legal department wishes the Review Panel to consider and a list of witnesses that the legal department may call at the hearing. Unless otherwise agreed to by the requesting individual, the hearing shall be scheduled within 15 business days of receipt the completed request (with all supporting documents) for a hearing and may be conducted by telephone conference. The Review Panel shall have the authority to determine if the individual should be permitted to participate in the applicable U.S. Soccer program, despite the individual's receipt of a "Red Light" finding or an adverse action letter. The decision of the Review Panel shall be final and binding on all parties regarding the application.

## **C. GRIEVANCES**

Parties continue to have the right to avail themselves of the grievances processes outlined in U.S. Soccer Bylaws 702 and 703, as applicable.

## **D. OTHER APPLICABLE U.S. SOCCER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

In addition to the Safe Soccer Framework, U.S. Soccer maintains Bylaws, Policies and additional policies and guidelines that may provide further guidance on other matters to address conduct not covered by the Safe Soccer Framework. Here is a list of many of these policies, which are subject to amendment from time to time at the discretion of U.S. Soccer, and none of which alter or amend any at-will employment relationship:

- U.S. Soccer Bylaws and Polices and USOC Bylaws and Policies
- U.S. Soccer Code of Conduct
- U.S. Soccer Employee Handbook
- FIFA Code of Ethics
- Policy on the Prevention of Conflicts of Interest
- Development Academy Rules & Regulations
- Development Academy Disciplinary Code

# VI. U.S. SOCCER ATHLETE AND PARTICIPANT SAFETY POLICY - STANDARDS FOR ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

## A. PURPOSE:

Consistent with U.S. Soccer Bylaw 212, Organization Members are required to, among other obligations, 1) comply with applicable law and, in particular, the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (the “**Sports Act**”); 2) if the member recruits, trains, fields or funds soccer players, it must establish a risk management program to promote the safety and protect the welfare of participants; and 3) adopt policies prohibiting sexual abuse. Effective February 14, 2018, Public Law 115-126, the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017* (the “**SafeSport Act**”), amends the Sports Act, and requires applicable amateur sports organizations (as such term is defined in the SafeSport Act, 36 U.S.C. § 220530(b)) to:

- Comply with the SafeSport Act’s reporting requirements and prohibit retaliation by the applicable amateur sports organization against any individual who makes a report (36 U.S.C. § 220530(a)(1));
- Establish reasonable procedures to limit one-on-one interactions between an amateur athlete who is a minor and an adult (who is not the minor’s legal guardian) at a facility under the jurisdiction of the applicable amateur sports organization (36 U.S.C. § 220530(a)(2));
- Offer and provide consistent training to adult members in regular contact with minor amateur athletes and, subject to parental consent, to members who are minors, regarding prevention and reporting of child abuse (36 U.S.C. § 220530(a)(3)); and
- Prohibit retaliation, by the applicable amateur sports organization, against any individual who makes a report of suspected child abuse. (36 U.S.C. § 220530(a)(4)).

The purpose of this policy is to require an Athlete and Participant Safety/Safe Soccer program as part of each Organization Member’s risk management program and set out standards for such a program.

**NOTE:** This Policy has been approved by U.S. Soccer’s Board of Directors and will be included for approval by the National Council at the 2019 National Council Meeting on February 16, 2019, in Scottsdale, Arizona and included in U.S. Soccer’s Policy Manual (excepting Notes and Exhibits).

# Policy 212-3 (approved October 19, 2018)

## B. POLICY STATEMENT:

Each Organization Member that is an “**Applicable Entity**” under Title II of the Sports Act as amended by the SafeSport Act<sup>21</sup> or otherwise has adult members who are in regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors (in each case, a “**Covered Organization**”), must maintain, as part of that risk management program, an athlete and participant safety program that includes the six components listed below. In addition, any *other* Organization Member that qualifies as an amateur sports organization under 36 U.S.C. § 220501(b)(3) but does not have adult participants who are in regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors must nonetheless maintain, as part of the risk management program required under Bylaw 212, an athlete and participant safety program that includes at least a Prohibited Conduct Policy consistent with Paragraph 1, below.

To allow Organization Members adequate opportunity to ensure policy changes and compliance, the required policies must be issued by February 14, 2019, and procedures and communications regarding these requirements must be issued in a manner calculated to effect compliance on or before September 1, 2019, but are nonetheless urged to complete compliance as early as practicable.<sup>22</sup> Effective September 1, 2019, any Organization Member not in compliance with this Policy 212-3 will be subject to enforcement as provided in Section 6, below.

### 1. Prohibited Conduct Policy

Covered Organizations and other Organization Members that qualify as an amateur sports organization under 36 U.S.C. § 220501(b)(3) must implement and enforce a policy or code of conduct that prohibits misconduct including bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct, as those terms are defined by the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements (the “**SafeSport Code**”).<sup>23</sup>

This policy must apply to all activities under the Organization Member’s jurisdiction and at least to (1) Organization Member employees and board members; (2) the members of such Organization Member; (3) amateur athletes who are minors or referees who are minors (collectively, “**Youth Participants**”); and (4) *any* adult individuals the Organization Member authorizes, approves or appoints to have regular contact with Youth Participants (“**Participating**

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<sup>21</sup> 36 U.S.C. § 220541 defines “Applicable Entity” to include any national governing body, amateur sports organization or other person sanctioned by a national governing body under section 220525, an amateur sports organization reporting under section 220530, or any officer, employee, agent or member of the foregoing entities.

<sup>22</sup> These dates are applicable to U.S. Soccer’s Policy 212-3 and provide the date by which U.S. Soccer will enforce compliance with Policy 212-3. Organization Members are advised that the SafeSport Act became effective February 14, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> The SafeSport Code is available at: <https://www.safesport.org/policies-procedures>

**Adults**”). This policy must also prohibit retaliation against individuals making good faith reports of misconduct.

**NOTE:** Youth Participants expressly includes referees and coaches who are minors. In addition, Participating Adults includes, but is not limited to, coaches and all SYRAs and any referee program-affiliated personnel, including without limitation assigners, having regular contact with Youth Participants.

## **2. Appropriate Background Screening**

Covered Organizations must implement and enforce a policy that requires appropriate background screening of at least Participating Adults by the earlier of 1) prior to regular contact with a Youth Participant; or 2) within the first 45 days of the Participating Adult taking on the role giving them access to Youth Participants.

At a minimum, the policy should include screening against applicable sex offender registries in the relevant state and a check against the Organization Member’s suspension database, U.S. Soccer’s disqualification list and the SafeSport disciplinary records available at: [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org)<sup>24</sup>.

An Organization Member may decide that its background check requirements will not apply to certain or all people under 18 years of age, provided that it clearly publishes that fact in its policy documentation.

**NOTE:** Given the many options for background screening and the potential for varying cost impacts on organizations of all sizes, the U.S. Soccer Board is referring to the Youth Task Force the issue of background screening for additional discussions and expects further policy development in this area.

## **3. Education & Training**

Covered Organizations must implement and enforce a policy (1) requiring education and training designed to meet the Organization Member’s obligations under the SafeSport Act to (a) Organization Member employees and board members and (b) Participating Adults, in each case as a condition to participation, and (2) subject to parental consent, offer and provide training to Youth Participants. The Policy should require the following:

### **a. Initial Training for Adults: Core Center for SafeSport Training or Equivalent**

Pursuant to USOC and U.S. Center for SafeSport Policy, and as contemplated by the SafeSport Act, Covered Organization employees, board members and Participating Adults must be required to complete consistent training concerning child abuse prevention. These policies must require Participating Adults to complete either (1) the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Core SafeSport Training (i.e., the Center’s online training or the Center’s approved in-person training), and as applicable, follow-up refresher course training; or (2) similar training designed to meet the Organization Member’s obligations under the SafeSport Act, with all continuing Adult Participants to receive initial training no later than September 1, 2019, and any new Adult

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<sup>24</sup> Please note that many, if not all, of these references and resources for background screening are publicly available at no cost.

Participants, effective no later than September 1, 2019, to receive initial training upon the earlier of:

- Before regular contact with an amateur athlete who is a minor begins, and
- Within the first 45 days of taking on the role giving them access to Youth Participants.

A Covered Organization may provide alternative training to the Core SafeSport Training, but it is strongly encouraged to use the Core SafeSport Training, and any alternative training is at the risk and responsibility of the Organization Member to ensure compliance with applicable law. If an Organization Member provides alternative training, it must not refer to such training as “SafeSport” Training.

### **b. Refresher Course(s) for Adults**

In addition to the initial training, a refresher course is required on an annual basis effective the calendar year following the completion of the initial training. The U.S. Center for SafeSport’s official refresher course is available as of October 1, 2018.

### **c. Training for Youth Participants**

Covered Organizations must – subject to parental consent – offer and provide training annually to Youth Participants regarding the prevention of child abuse. Covered Organizations must track:

- A description of the training(s)
- The date the training(s) was offered and given
- A description of how the training(s) was offered and given.

**NOTE:** The U.S. Center for SafeSport is developing training for Youth Participants. More information on this training and other training resources will be detailed in upcoming member conference calls and at the 2019 AGM in Scottsdale, Arizona.

## **4. Reporting**

Covered Organizations must maintain a procedure for reporting misconduct to the Covered Organization and, to the extent required by the SafeSport Act, mandate reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. The procedure should be clear that reporting may be made anonymously, and that no direct fees or other cost is involved in making a report. Each Covered Organization must also maintain a policy prohibiting retaliation against individuals making good faith reports of misconduct.

## **5. Limiting One-on-One Interactions – Required Policies**

Covered Organizations are required to establish reasonable procedures to limit one-on-one interactions between Youth Participants and any Adult Participant who is not their legal guardian (“Prevention Policies”). These procedures must include athlete prevention policies covering the topics below by February 14, 2019 and require full compliance by September 1, 2019:

- One-on-One Interactions, including meetings and individual training sessions
- Massages and rubdowns
- Locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas
- Social media and electronic communications
- Local travel
- Team travel

NOTE: Template policies are available. To assist Covered Organizations in developing and implementing the above required policies on limiting one-on-one interaction, the U.S. Center for SafeSport has provided model policies. These model policies, which are provided at the Appendix, hereto, include mandatory components applicable to U.S. Soccer's covered programs. Although the form and content of these policies are strongly recommended by the U.S. Center for SafeSport and have been adopted by and for U.S. Soccer's National Team and Development Academy programs, each Covered Organization is responsible for either adopting these model policies or developing its own.

### **a. Minor athletes who become adult athletes**

A minor athlete that reaches the age of majority may not be subject to Prevention Policies in their capacity as an athlete, and when interacting with Youth Participants who are 16 or older.<sup>25</sup> Prevention Policies must be in effect when this now age of majority athlete interacts with minor athletes 15 or younger. Should a minor athlete reach the age of majority and then obtain a position that presents a potential power imbalance, such as becoming a coach, the individual is subject to athlete prevention policies.

### **b. Implementation**

The mandatory components set forth in the model policies set a minimum standard. In implementing the required policies, a Covered Organization may choose to implement a policy that is stricter than the Model Policy, if it includes or is stricter than the mandatory component. *If, in implementing the required policies identified here, Covered Organizations are not in compliance with federal requirements, the organization must implement policies and procedures sufficient to meet such requirements.*

## **6. Enforcement**

### **a. By Organization Members**

Each Covered Organization and Organization Member that qualifies as an amateur sports organization under 36 U.S.C. § 220501(b)(3) must enforce its Athlete & Participant Safety Policy, consistent with the SafeSport Act. Specifically, violations of the policy must be subject to an appropriate grievance process that is materially free of bias and conflicts of interest, to address allegations of misconduct following the report or complaint of misconduct. This grievance process must include the opportunity for review by a disinterested individual or body and a right to appeal a final decision rendered by an Organization Member's process pursuant to U.S. Soccer Bylaw 704.

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<sup>25</sup> For example, an 18-year old teammate is not necessarily subject to disciplinary action for emailing a 16-year old teammate unless that email would, for example, violate the Prohibited Conduct Policy.

**b. By U.S. Soccer**

Pursuant to Bylaw 212, U.S. Soccer reserves the right to, either directly or through a contracted third-party service provider, survey, audit, require certifications of compliance with, and otherwise review compliance by its Organization Members with this policy. Failure of any Organization Member to issue and implement the policies required by this Policy 212-3 will constitute a violation of Bylaw 212 Section 1.

## VII. DEFINITIONS FOR CERTAIN TERMS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK

### a. Center:

The U.S. Center for SafeSport, an independent 501(c)(3) authorized pursuant to the Safe Sport Act, with jurisdiction over the USOC and NGBs with regard to safeguarding amateur athletes against abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, in sports, and which has been further tasked with certain duties in the areas of education and outreach, policy development, and response and resolution.

### b. Core Center for SafeSport Training:

The Center's online training or the Center's in person PPT approved training.

### c. Covered Personnel:

Covered Personnel are those individuals who are authorized directly by U.S. Soccer to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor, as well as the staff and board members of U.S. Soccer, as detailed in the section entitled, "Who is Covered by this Handbook" on page 5. Please note the definition of "Covered Individual" used by the Safe Sport Act extends beyond the definition of Covered Personnel to whom U.S. Soccer's Safe Soccer Framework applies. The Safe Sport Act uses the definition of "Covered Individual" to expand the definition of mandatory reporters to include, among others, any "adult who is authorized, by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition, to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sports organization facility or at any event sanctioned by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or such an amateur sports organization." Please see the section entitled, "Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement" on page 9 for more details.

### d. Minor:

Any participant, whether athlete, referee, or otherwise, under the lesser of (1) the age of 18; or (2) the age of majority in the applicable state. *For the avoidance of doubt, for purposes of the Safe Soccer Framework, "minor" expressly includes referees under the lesser of (1) the age of 18; or (2) the age of majority in the applicable state.*

### e. Local Affiliated Organization:

A regional, state or local club or organization that is directly affiliated with an NGB or that is affiliated with an NGB by its direct affiliation with a regional or state affiliate of said NGB.

### f. National Governing Body (NGB):

A U.S. Olympic National Governing Body, Pan American Sport Organization, or Paralympic Sport Organization recognized by the United States Olympic Committee pursuant to the *Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act*, 36 U.S.C. §§ 220501-220529. U.S. Soccer is a National Governing Body.



### **g. National Member Organization:**

A national organization that is directly affiliated with an NGB, over which the NGB has jurisdiction (without respect to whether the NGB has disciplinary authority over individual members of that national organization), **and** is (a) an Amateur Sports Organization requesting sanction from an NGB, or (b) an Applicable Amateur Sports Organization under the Safe Sport Act.

### **h. Participating Adult:**

Adults authorized by an NGB or the USOC to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor and employees/staff and board members of a Covered Organization. For the avoidance of doubt, all Covered Personnel to whom this Handbook applies are Participating Adults.

### **i. Regular contact with minors:**

Recurring, repeated or periodic contact between an adult and minors or a person with supervisory or decision-making authority over an adult who has recurring, repeated or periodic contact with minors. Examples include but are not limited to adult members within National Governing Bodies (NGB), Paralympic Sport Organizations, and United States Olympic Committee (USOC) employees, volunteers, board members, medical staff, event staff (including contractors), officials, contractors and vendors who have regular contact with minors.

### **j. Refresher Training:**

The Center's online training courses or the Center's in person PPT approved training designated as "refresher" courses.

### **k. The Safe Sport Act:**

Public Law 115-126, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017.

### **l. USOC:**

The United States Olympic Committee.

## VIII. APPENDIX – MEMBER TOOLKIT:

### Template Policies for U.S. Soccer Members and Local Affiliated Organizations

The majority of child sexual abuse is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between children and adults, you reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. However, one-on-one time with trusted adults is also healthy and valuable for a child. Policies concerning one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relationships.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has created a series of template policies for use by all NGB members, National Member Organizations and Local Affiliated Organizations who are required to comply with the SafeSport Act (collectively, “**Covered Organizations**”). We encourage all U.S. Soccer Members and their Local Affiliated Organizations to review the attached template policies alongside U.S. Soccer’s Policies, conduct their own assessment of their respective practices, and implement the policies and practices that will best meet the needs of their individual organization.

If you have questions on any aspect of the Safe Soccer Framework, we encourage you to attend one of the upcoming webinars or reach out to Member Services and/or the U.S. Soccer Legal Affairs department.

## A. ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

The majority of child sexual abuse is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between children and adults, you reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. However, one-on-one time with trusted adults is also healthy and valuable for a child. Policies concerning one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relationships.

*The following is a model one-on-one policy, provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a policy for one-on-ones, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default policy for appropriate one-on-ones for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory Components**

Covered Organization policies must include components a through e.

#### a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adults at a facility under the jurisdiction of a Covered Organization
- 2) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 3) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 4) Staff and board members of a Covered Organization

(collectively, Adults).

#### b. Observable and interruptible

- One-on-one interactions between minors and an Adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) at our facility are permitted, if they occur at an observable and interruptible distance by another adult.
- Isolated, one-on-one interactions between minors and an Adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) at our facility are prohibited, except under emergency circumstances.

#### c. Meetings

- Meetings between Adults and minors at our facilities may only occur if another adult is present, except under emergency circumstances.

Such meetings must occur where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.

- If a one-on-one meeting takes place in an office, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it will occur in an office that (if available) has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.

d. Meetings with mental health care professionals

If a mental health care professional meets with minors at our facilities, a closed-door meeting may be permitted to protect patient privacy – provided that (1) the door remains unlocked, (2) another adult is present at the facility, (3) the other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring, and (4) written legal guardian consent is obtained by the mental health care professional, with a copy provided to our organization.

e. Individual training sessions

Individual training sessions between Adults and minors are permitted at our facility if the training session is observable and interruptible by another adult. The Adult must obtain the written permission of the minor’s legal guardian in advance of the individual training session. Parents, guardians, and other caretakers must be allowed to observe the training session. Permission for individual training sessions must be obtained at least every six months.

## **Recommended Components**

f. Monitoring

When one-on-one interactions between Adults and minors occur at our facility, adults will monitor these interactions. Monitoring includes: knowing that the one-on-one interaction is occurring, the approximate planned duration of the interaction, and randomly dropping in on the one-on-one.

g. Out-of-program contacts

Adults are prohibited from interacting one-on-one with unrelated minor athletes in settings outside of the program (including, but not limited to, one’s home, restaurants, and individual transportation), unless parent/legal guardian consent is provided for each out-of-program contact. Such arrangements are nonetheless strongly discouraged.

## **B. MESSAGES AND RUBDOWNS**

*The following is a model messages and rubdowns policy, provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a messages and rubdowns policy, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default policy for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory components**

Covered Organizations must include components a through b.

a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adults at a facility under the jurisdiction of a Covered Organization
- 2) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 3) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 4) Staff and board members of a Covered Organization

(collectively, Adults).

b. Licensed, certified professional

- Any massage or rubdown performed by an Adult on a minor athlete at our facilities or a training or competition venue is prohibited unless such Adult is a licensed massage therapist.
- Any massage or rubdown performed at our facilities or a training or competition venue by a licensed professional must be conducted in open and interruptible locations. Any massage of a minor athlete must be done with at least one other adult present and must never be done with only the minor athlete and licensed massage therapist in the room.
- Even if a coach is a licensed massage therapist, the coach shall not perform a rubdown or massage of an athlete under any circumstances.

### **Recommended components**

c. Written consent

Written consent by a legal guardian shall be provided before providing each massage or rubdown on a minor athlete. Parents must be permitted to be in the room as an observer.

## C. LOCKER ROOMS, REST ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS

*The following is a model locker room, rest room, and changing area policy provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas policy, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default policy for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory Components**

Covered Organizations must include components a through f.

a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adults at a facility under the jurisdiction of a Covered Organization
- 2) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 3) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 4) Staff and board members of a Covered Organization

(collectively, Adults).

b. Use of recording devices

Use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras, and video cameras in locker rooms, rest rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces at a facility under our organization's jurisdiction is prohibited. Exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, provided that such exceptions are approved by the Covered Organization and two or more adults are present.

c. Undress

- Under no circumstances shall an unrelated Adult at a facility under our organization's jurisdiction be undressed (disrobed or partial or full nudity where private body parts are exposed) in front of minor athletes.

d. Isolated one-on-one interactions

- At no time are unrelated Adults permitted to be alone with a minor in a locker room, rest room, or changing area when at a

facility under our jurisdiction, except under emergency circumstances.

- If our organization is using a facility that has access to a single set of such facilities, we will designate times for use by Adults, if any.

e. Monitoring

Our organization regularly and randomly monitors the use of locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas at facilities under our jurisdiction to ensure compliance with these policies.

f. Non-exclusive facility

If our organization uses a facility not under its jurisdiction (for, e.g., training or competition or similar events) and the facility is used by multiple constituents, Adults in categories 2 through 4 are nonetheless required to adhere to the rules set forth here.

## **Recommended Components**

- g. To minimize the risk of bullying and hazing, our organization uses locker room monitors to ensure that minors are not left unattended in locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas.
- h. Adults make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.
- i. We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let a coach or administrator know about this in advance.



## D. SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

*The following is a model social media & electronic communications policy, provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a social media & electronic communications policy, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default policy for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory components**

Covered Organizations must include components a through e.

a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 2) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 3) Staff and board members at a Covered Organization

(collectively, Participating Adults).

b. Content

All electronic communication originating from Participating Adults to amateur athletes who are minors must be professional in nature.

c. Open and transparent

- If a Participating Adult needs to communicate directly with an amateur athlete who is a minor via electronic communications, another Participating Adult or the minor's legal guardian will be copied.
- If a minor athlete communicates to the Participating Adult privately first, the Participating Adult should respond to the minor athlete with a copy to another Participating Adult or the minor's legal guardian.
- A Participating Adult communicating electronically to the entire team will copy another Participating Adult.
- Amateur athletes who are minors may "friend" the organization's official page.

d. Prohibited electronic communications

- Participating Adults are not permitted to communicate privately via electronic communications with amateur athletes who are minors, except under emergency circumstances.
- Participating Adults are not permitted to “private message,” “instant message,” “direct message”, or send photos via Snapchat or Instagram to a minor athlete privately.
- Participating Adults are not permitted to maintain social media connections with minors; such adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from amateur athletes who are minors and existing social media connections with amateur athletes who are minors shall be discontinued

e. Requests to discontinue

Legal guardians may request in writing that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by the organization or by the organization’s Participating Adults. The organization will abide by any such request that their child not be contacted via electronic communication, absent emergency circumstances.

**Recommended components**

f. Hours

Electronic communications will only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

g. Monitoring

- The organization monitors its social media pages and removes any posts that violate the organization’s policies and practices for appropriate behavior.
- The organization will inform the legal guardian of a minor athlete of any prohibited posts, as well as the organization’s administrator.

## E. LOCAL TRAVEL

*The following is a model local travel policy, provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a local travel policy, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default local travel policy for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory Components**

Covered Organizations must include components a through b. Local travel consists of travel to training, practice, and competition that occurs locally and does not include coordinated overnight stay(s).

#### a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 2) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 3) Staff and board members at a Covered Organization

(collectively, Participating Adults).

#### b. Transportation

- The organization does not arrange for local travel.
- Participating Adults who are not also acting as a legal guardian, shall not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated athlete who is a minor, absent emergency circumstances, and may only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian in advance of each local travel.

### **Recommended Components**

#### c. Shared or Carpool Travel Arrangement

We encourage parents/legal guardians to pick up their minor athlete first and drop off their minor athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement.

- d. Parents/legal guardians receive education concerning child abuse prevention before providing consent for their minor to travel alone with a Participating Adult.

## F. TEAM TRAVEL

*The following is a model team travel policy, provided to assist Covered Organizations in developing their own policies. Any policy developed by a Covered Organization must include the Mandatory Components. If a Covered Organization does not create a team travel policy, the Mandatory Components and Recommended Components will become the default team travel policy for that organization.*

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### **Mandatory Components**

Covered Organizations must include components a through d. Team travel is travel to a competition or other team activity that the organization plans and supervises.

#### a. Application

This policy shall apply to:

- 1) Adult members who have regular contact with amateur athletes who are minors
- 2) An adult authorized by a Covered Organization to have regular contact with or authority over an amateur athlete who is a minor
- 3) Staff and board members at a Covered Organization

(collectively, Participating Adults).

#### b. Team/competition travel

- When only one Participating Adult and one minor athlete travel to a competition, the minor athlete must have his/her legal guardian's written permission in advance and for each competition to travel alone with the Participating Adult.

#### c. Hotel rooms

- Participating Adults shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete (unless the Participating Adult is the legal guardian, sibling, or is otherwise related to the minor athlete).

#### d. Meetings

- Meetings shall be conducted consistent with the organization's policy for one-on-one interactions – i.e., any such meeting shall be observable and interruptible.
- Meetings shall not be conducted in a hotel room.

## **Recommended Components**

- e. Team travel policies must be signed and agreed to by all minor athletes, parents, and Participating Adults traveling with the organization.
- f. Participating Adults who travel with the organization must successfully pass a criminal background check and other screening requirements consistent with the organization's policies.
- g. During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership and observable and interruptible environments should be maintained.
- h. Parents/legal guardians receive education concerning child abuse prevention before providing consent for their minor to travel alone with a Participating Adult.