

USA Gymnastics

SAFETY & RESPONSE FAQ

June 2023





SAFETY AND RESPONSE BASICS

What is the difference between the U.S. Center for SafeSport and USA Gymnastics Safety and Response?

[The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safety and Response Authorization Act](#) of 2017 codified the U.S. Center for SafeSport, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, as the nation's Safety and Response organization. It gave them the scope and authority to resolve abuse and misconduct reports for more than 11 million individuals throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement—from whom are fully independent.

The Act also charges the Center with developing and enforcing policies, procedures, and training to prevent abuse and misconduct. The [Center's SafeSport Code](#) governs all participants in the Movement, and our oversight authority helps us ensure all Olympic & Paralympic national governing bodies (NGBs) adhere to Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP) that support athlete safety.

USA Gymnastics Safety and Response is the organization's department that handles all Safety and Response related matters such as:

- Reports of misconduct;
- Policy violations;
- Education related to policy; or
- Education for the prevention of abuse.

USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Department is made up of 4 specific focus areas: Policy, Education and Community Relations, Auditing and Compliance, and Response and Resolution.

If I have a specific Safety and Response question, who can I reach out to?

If you have a question regarding policy, misconduct, or a specific case, you can contact the USA Gymnastics helpline at 833-844-SAFE (7233) or response.resolution@usagym.org. The helpline and email account are monitored during regular business hours and will be replied to as soon as possible.

What is the difference between the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response department and the USA Gymnastics Member Services department?

The USA Gymnastics Safety and Response department manages all Safety and Response matters to include policy, reporting, investigation, and resolution.

The USA Gymnastics Member Services department manages all matters related to individual membership, club membership, sanctioned events, and educational events or courses. To contact the Member Services department, please contact 800.345.4719 or membership@usagym.org from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST Monday–Friday.

I have a question about “U110: SafeSport Core Course.” Who should I reach out to?

The USA Gymnastics Member Services department manages all matters related to the U110: SafeSport Core Course. Please contact them at membership@usagym.org.

MAKING A REPORT

When should I make a report of sexual misconduct?

Any adult within the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics must report suspected child abuse and sexual abuse of a minor to both the local authorities and the U.S. Center for SafeSport immediately. You do not need to be certain that abuse has occurred to make a report.

Where should I make a report of sexual misconduct?

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has exclusive jurisdiction over all situations related to sexual misconduct. If you suspect sexual misconduct, please contact your local authorities and the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#). All other misconduct should be reported to USA Gymnastics through our [online portal](#).

When should I make a report unrelated to sexual abuse, such as emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying or harassment?

If you are aware or have been made aware that a person under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics has committed misconduct as described in the SafeSport Code or USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy, it's important to make a report as soon as you are made aware of such actions or behaviors.

If you suspect sexual misconduct, please contact your local authorities and the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)

What should I do if I suspect emotional misconduct?

If you are aware, or have been made aware, that a person under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics is belittling, degrading, or humiliating an athlete, or you have knowledge or reasonable suspicion that a child is suffering emotional damage or is at substantial risk of suffering serious emotional damage, evidenced by states of being or behavior, including but not limited to, severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward self or others, it is important to make a report. All suspected emotional misconduct should be reported to USA Gymnastics through our [online portal](#).

It is also important to alert club management if you suspect possible emotional misconduct by a staff member, so the management may determine an immediate course of action. Member Clubs are encouraged to take immediate action consistent with their own policies.

Questions to consider if you suspect emotional misconduct:

1. Has this instance occurred more than once?
2. Are there repeated examples of humiliation, degradation, body shaming or discriminatory actions?
3. Have there been repeated instances of name-calling, screaming, or offhanded jokes directed at the athlete(s)?
4. Are basic needs such as water, bathroom breaks, or medical care ignored or denied as a means of punishment?
5. Have there been times when items have been thrown at or in the presence of others, that would cause a reasonable person to be fearful?
6. Do the athletes, other staff members, or parents express a sense of "walking on eggshells" while they are around the person in question?
7. Has this situation been brought to the attention of the management of the gym?

I'm not sure my concern should be reported.

What should I do?

If you are unsure if your concern is reportable under the SafeSport Code or the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy, it is best to make the report anyway and allow either the U.S. Center for SafeSport or USA Gymnastics to determine the next course of action. If you have questions, you can reach out to the Safety and Response department at response.resolution@usagym.org to set up a time to discuss your concern.

What can USA Gymnastics disclose in reference to reports?

USA Gymnastics may be required to disclose information contained in a report or learned during an investigation. Reasons for disclosure include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Relevant state and/or federal law;
2. Mandatory reporting related to child abuse and sexual misconduct;
3. The Center's jurisdiction; or
4. USA Gymnastics' right, as allowed by the Code, to publicly correct any misrepresentation related to the Process.

MAKING A REPORT

Documents or evidence related to the response and resolution process must remain confidential, in that they may not be disclosed outside of the proceedings, except as may be required by law or authorized by USA Gymnastics.

Unless required by law, USA Gymnastics will respect requests for privacy when reports are submitted. However, an anonymous report may limit the response and resolution process because of the inability to confirm the reported information.

USA Gymnastics may disclose the outcome of the matter to those persons or organizations with a need to know so that the outcome can be properly effectuated or understood.

To ensure athlete safety, USA Gymnastics provides notice of measures or sanctions issued by USA Gymnastics or the Center to individuals on a need to know basis. We notify the owner of the club or organization for which the respondent is employed or was employed at the time of the allegations, USA Gymnastics Chief Programs Officer, USA Gymnastics program leadership, as well as the respondent's regional and state chair. USA Gymnastics reserves the right to copy or notify any parent, administrator, professional member, or adult in the respondent's club should we deem it necessary to ensure athlete safety for reasons including, but not limited to, administrative inaccuracies or ongoing matters with USA Gymnastics or the Center.

Can I find out if a report has been made on my child's gym or coach?

USA Gymnastics maintains a publicly available *List of Suspended and Restricted Persons* and a list of individuals who are restricted, ineligible or permanently ineligible from participating.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport maintains a Centralized Disciplinary Database.

Other than the information listed on these sites, USA Gymnastics will not release information from a report and will not confirm or deny that a report has been received.

What happens after USAG refers my report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport?

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has exclusive jurisdiction over all matters related to sexual misconduct and child abuse. The Center will make all decisions related to the

investigation and resolution of matters reported to the Center.

When the Center for SafeSport takes exclusives or discretionary jurisdiction, USA Gymnastics will receive a notice that jurisdiction has been exercised. The Center also notifies USA Gymnastics of any temporary measures or sanctions issued, which will be published on the USA Gymnastics website. At the conclusion of a matter, USA Gymnastics receives notice that the matter is closed, or a final decision has been reached.

Federal law prohibits USA Gymnastics from discussing any details of matters under the Center's jurisdiction. All questions should be directed to the Center's Resource & Process Advisor at either [Resource. Advisor@safesport.org](mailto:Advisor@safesport.org) or 720.531.9024.

What happens after I make a report to USA Gymnastics?

Once a report is received, USA Gymnastics will review to determine if the allegations or circumstances:

1. Mandate reporting to law enforcement or child protective services.
2. Mandate reporting to the Center.
3. Are governed by the Code, the Policy, or the U.S. Center for SafeSport Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies.
4. Require imposition of restrictive measures.

USA Gymnastics uses a [5-Tier System](#) to assess each report to identify reports that need immediate attention. Based on the tier assigned, a report may be referred to the club for follow-up, assigned to a USA Gymnastics Investigator, or submitted to law enforcement and the Center.

When USA Gymnastics determines the report falls under its jurisdiction, the claimant or reporting party will be notified.

The [USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Investigation and Resolution Procedures](#) explain the response and resolution process in further detail.

My concern is not covered under the Safety and Response Policy. Can I still make a report?

USA Gymnastics jurisdiction does not extend to employment matters between a club and its employees, misunderstandings associated with fees, gym cleanliness, equipment issues, matters under the jurisdiction of the local Health Department or disagreements related to team selection, competitive

WHEN USA GYMNASTICS RECEIVES A REPORT

progression, or scores. Parents and club personnel are encouraged to work together to solve problems before they escalate.

To report violations not governed by the Policy:

- The USA Gymnastics Opportunity to Participate Grievance Procedures can be found [here](#).
- The USA Gymnastics Administrative & Ethical Grievance Procedures can be found [here](#).
- The USA Gymnastics Speak Up Policy can be found [here](#).

What if I receive a report second-hand and am not sure what really happened?

If you are made aware of misconduct, regardless of how the information was received, it is important to evaluate the information based on its content and make the report to either the U.S. Center for SafeSport, local authorities, or USA Gymnastics. You do not need to witness misconduct to make the report.

May I file an anonymous report?

Yes, however if additional information is needed and cannot be obtained due to the anonymity of the reporter, the report might be administratively closed with no further action taken.

When USA Gymnastics Receives a Report

USA Gymnastics Safety and Response uses a [5-Tier System](#) to assess each report to identify those reports that need immediate attention, allocate investigative resources, and determine an appropriate resolution. It is important to review Safety and Response Intake Process and [Safety and Response Investigation & Resolution Procedures](#) for information related to reports.

Respondent

When will I be made aware that a report has been made about me?

Once a matter moves to investigation, a Notice of Allegations which summarizes the alleged misconduct, is provided to the respondent before the respondent is contacted by an investigator.

Following the notice to respondent, a Notice of USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Report is provided to the club in which respondent is employed or was employed at the time of alleged misconduct.

I heard that I had a Safety and Response report on me but haven't been formally notified. What comes next? What can I do?

Should you hear that a report has been made and USA Gymnastics is inquiring into the matter, it is important that you reach out directly to USA Gymnastics. Attempting to find out who made the report or investigate the matter may constitute an Abuse of Process which is a separate violation of the Code and the Policy. You may contact USA Gymnastics at response.resolution@usagym.org. If the matter was reported or referred to the Center, please contact the Center directly at either Resource.Advisor@safesport.org or 720.531.9024.

Who receives information when a report is made about me?

The USA Gymnastics Bylaws, the Policy, and the Code provide some protections for confidentiality during the response and resolution process. They do not, and cannot, guarantee absolute confidentiality.

Documents or evidence related to the response and resolution process must remain confidential, in that they may not be disclosed outside of the proceedings, except as may be required by law or authorized by USA Gymnastics.

USA Gymnastics may disclose the outcome of the matter to those persons or organizations with a need to know so that the outcome can be properly effectuated or understood.

Once a matter moves to investigation and a Notice of Allegations has been sent to the respondent, a Notice of USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Report is provided to the club in which the respondent is employed or was employed at the time of alleged misconduct.

To ensure athlete safety, USA Gymnastics provides notice of measures or sanctions issued by USA Gymnastics or the U.S. Center for SafeSport to individuals on a need-to-know basis. We notify the owner of the club or organization for which the respondent is employed and/or was employed at the time of the allegations, USA Gymnastics Chief Programs Officer, USA Gymnastics program leadership, as well as the respondent's regional and state chair. USA Gymnastics reserves the right to copy or notify any parent, administrator, professional member, or adult in the respondent's club should we deem it necessary to ensure athlete safety for reasons including, but not limited to, administrative inaccuracies or ongoing matters with USA Gymnastics Safety and Response or the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

WHEN USA GYMNASTICS RECEIVES A REPORT

What rights do I have during the investigation process?

Respondent has the right to:

1. Receive a written Notice of Allegations
2. Consult with an advisor or an attorney
3. Have an opportunity to be heard during the investigation
4. Challenge a temporary measure of suspension and be heard by a USA Gymnastics Restrictive Measures Panel
5. Be heard by a USA Gymnastics Resolution Panel before being declared ineligible to participate in amateur athletic competition
6. Upon issuance of a decision, a respondent has ten (10) business days to request a hearing before an arbitrator with the American Arbitration Association

A respondent is not required to participate in the investigation or any form of the resolution. However, full cooperation and participation in the investigative process is important to ensure that all relevant information and evidence are presented to determine whether a Code or Policy violation occurred. If a respondent declines to participate in the process, USA Gymnastics will make its decision based on the available evidence.

USA Gymnastics is committed to protecting the privacy of all parties in a matter. We make reasonable efforts to protect the privacy of individuals while balancing the need to investigate the matter thoroughly and taking any necessary steps to protect athlete safety. Information will be shared as necessary with USA Gymnastics, the Center, counsel, and any party in the matter.

USA Gymnastics reserves the right to notify parents or guardians of claimants regarding any health or safety risk. Attempting to find out who made the report or investigate the matter may constitute an Abuse of Process which is a separate violation of the Code and Policy.

What should I do if the allegations made against me are false?

It is a violation of both the SafeSport Code and the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy to knowingly file a false report. A report is false if the events reported did not occur and the individual made the report knowing the reported events did not occur. A "false report" is not a report where supporting evidence is insufficient to determine if the reported events are true or false. Absent demonstrable misconduct, an

unsubstantiated report alone is not grounds for a SafeSport Code or Policy violation.

Please see the USA Gymnastics [Safety and Response Policy](#) and the [SafeSport Code](#) for a detailed explanation of misconduct related to reporting.

Club Owner

Will I be notified if one of my employees receives a Safety and Response complaint?

Once a matter moves to investigation, a Notice of Allegations, which summarizes the alleged misconduct, is provided to the respondent before the respondent is contacted by an investigator.

Following the notice to respondent, a Notice of USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Report is provided to the club in which respondent is employed or was employed at the time of alleged misconduct.

To ensure athlete safety, we provide notice of restrictive measures issued by USA Gymnastics or the U.S. Center for SafeSport to club owners. On interim measure notices, we copy the owner of the club or organization for which the respondent is employed and/or was employed at the time of the allegations, USA Gymnastics Chief Programs Officer, USA Gymnastics program leadership, as well as the appropriate regional and state chair. USA Gymnastics reserves the right to copy or notify any parent, administrator, professional member, or adult in the club should we deem it necessary to ensure athlete safety for reasons including, but not limited to, administrative inaccuracies or ongoing matters with USA Gymnastics Safety and Response or the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

Can I find out if a prospective employee has a Safety and Response history?

Yes. As a club owner, you can request membership, club affiliation, educational and USA Gymnastics Safety and Response history. You can find the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response history request form [here](#).

What is my responsibility as a club owner after I'm made aware that one of my employees is under a Safety and Response investigation?

Do not attempt to investigate or interfere in any way with a Safety and Response matter as it may slow the process or impede the investigation. Any attempt to interfere with the process may constitute an Abuse of Process which is a separate violation of the Code and Policy.

WHEN USA GYMNASTICS RECEIVES A REPORT

A club owner has the right to place their own limits on an employee under investigation such as temporary suspension from club activities, no unsupervised interactions with athletes or parents or dismissal. You are encouraged to consult your attorney for advice on the correct decision.

If you receive notice that USA Gymnastics or the Center has imposed a restrictive measure or a sanction on a participant at your club it is important to comply with the terms of the measure or sanction.

Should I speak with the parents of my club when I'm made aware of a Safety and Response investigation under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics or the U.S. Center for SafeSport?

If a restrictive measure or sanction has been imposed by either the Center or USA Gymnastics, the gym owner is expected to comply with the measure or sanction and exclude or limit the participant's interaction with athletes as required by the restrictive measure or sanction. If no restrictive measure or sanction has been imposed, the gym owner may determine whether or not they wish to limit the participant's access to minor athletes while the investigation is ongoing. This decision is a business decision made by the club owner in the best interests of the club and the athletes.

A club owner may also wish to speak with an attorney to receive advice on the most appropriate decision. If the gym owner makes the decision to implement limits on a participant's access when no restrictive measure or sanction has been issued, they should not discuss the reasons with athletes, parents or any person who is not the respondent.

Parent

I've heard my child's coach is under investigation for a Safety and Response matter. What information am I allowed to have?

USA Gymnastics maintains a publicly available List of Suspended and Restricted Persons and a list of Permanently Ineligible and Ineligible Members and Participants of individuals who are restricted, ineligible or permanently ineligible from participating.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport maintains a Centralized Disciplinary Database.

Other than the information listed on these sites, USA Gymnastics will not release information from a report and will not confirm or deny that a report has been received.

Parents are encouraged to speak with the management of their club and let them work with USA Gymnastics on necessary steps.

Parents are encouraged to not attempt to investigate any matter on their own or interfere in any Safety and Response matter as it could cause a delay in the resolution of the case or jeopardize the investigation.

I've made a report on an employee at my child's gym, what happens next?

Once a misconduct report is received, USA Gymnastics will review to determine if the allegations or circumstances:

1. Mandate reporting to law enforcement or child protective services.
2. Mandate reporting to the Center.
3. Are governed by the Code, the Policy, or the U.S. Center for SafeSport Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies.
4. Require imposition of restrictive measures.

When USA Gymnastics determines the report falls under its jurisdiction, the reporting party will be notified. If the matter is referred to the Center, the reporting party will also be notified.

If the matter is assigned to a USA Gymnastics investigator, the reporting party will be contacted to provide a statement or interview. You may also be asked to testify at a resolution panel hearing if one occurs.

The [USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Investigation and Resolution Procedures](#) explain the response and resolution process in further detail.

I was contacted as a witness for a Safety and Response matter, what information will I receive on the case?

A witness will be contacted by an investigator to make a statement based on the facts of the case. Witnesses will only be told necessary information for the purposes of the interview. You may be asked to testify at a resolution panel hearing if one occurs. Most witnesses will not be told the outcome of the investigation or resolution.

MEMBER CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES

What are the possible outcomes of a report of misconduct?

USA Gymnastics may resolve a misconduct report by:

1. Dismissing matters not governed by the Policy or the Code.
2. Administratively closing matters governed by the Policy or the Code for which there is insufficient information to determine that a violation occurred.
3. Issuing an admonishment letter.
4. Reaching an agree decision with the respondent.
5. Presenting the matter to a USA Gymnastics Resolution Panel.

Member Club Responsibilities

What policies am I required to reference in my staff handbook?

Member Clubs are required to adopt the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response policy in full. To do that, Member Clubs will need to include all prevention policies in their club handbooks. This includes:

- One-on-one contact
- Transportation
- Lodging
- Gifting
- Medical Modalities, Athletic Training, Massages, and Medical Orders
- Electronic communications and Social Media
- Locker Rooms/Changing Areas
- Parental access to Practice at Member Clubs

Additionally, staff handbooks or policy must include a staff member's duty to report misconduct.

What requirements must I follow to be fully compliant with Safety and Response Policy?

Member Clubs are required to adopt the [USA Gymnastics Safety and Response policy](#) in full, which requires:

- Written policies consistent with USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy;
- Duty to Report misconduct;
- [USA Gymnastics](#) and [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#) reporting portals posted on the website or other public forum (Facebook, signage, newsletters, etc.)
- Include the U.S. Center for SafeSport link to ["Parents Guide to Misconduct in Sport"](#);

- Designate a Safety Champion;
- Adhere to all restrictions placed on an employee by USA Gymnastics or the U.S. Center for SafeSport;
- Abide by the list of persons declared permanently ineligible for membership in USA Gymnastics; and
- Ensure that all staff who have regular contact or authority over Minor Athletes have passed a background check consistent with USA Gymnastics background check policy and completed [U110: SafeSport Core Course](#).

Where does the reporting portals for the U.S. Center for SafeSport/USA Gymnastics and "Parents Guide to Misconduct" have to be located on my website?

The links to the reporting portals must be visible to guests visiting the website, but there are no requirements as to its prominence or a specific location. It is recommended to also post the best way to report a concern to club management so incidents can be managed as quickly as possible.

The "Parents Guide to Misconduct" can be found with the link attached entitled, "Athlete Safety." The U.S. Center for SafeSport combines all of their parent and athlete trainings under one link. By posting the link, the club will be in compliance.

- usagym.org/pages/education/safesport
- uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern
- safesporttrained.org/#/public-dashboard

Who is required to pass a background check and take U110: SafeSport Core Course to work in my club?

Any staff considered to have "Regular Contact or Authority Over" Minor Athletes must pass a background check consistent with USA Gymnastics Background Check Policy and take U110: SafeSport Core Course. Staff identified by USA Gymnastics to have "Regular Contact and Authority" over include:

- Club owners and staff
- Competitive coaches
- Non-competitive gymnastics instructors
- Instructors who coach Minor Athletes regardless of discipline, sport or employment status (i.e. contractor, 3rd party)
- Meet Directors
- Judges

SAFETY CHAMPION

- USA Gymnastics staff, interns, Board Members, and Committee Members
- Medical Staff
- Volunteers
- Club board members, if applicable
- Adult Athletes attending USOPC training venues and events

All Adult Participants are required by the U.S. Center for Safety and Response to maintain yearly compliance with SafeSport Core Training. This requirement also applies to athlete members 18 years of age or older.

What if I have a staff member who took the Safety and Response course with another organization? Do they have to take it again?

If a staff member completed the U.S. Center for SafeSport Core course with another organization, direct them to send their certificate of completion to membership@usagym.org. The appropriate certification will be uploaded to their membership profile.

How can I meet the new requirements for the locker rooms/changing areas policy?

The Locker Rooms/Changing Areas policy maintains the one-on-one policy at all times with the exception of Personal Care Assistants, those with approved Dual Relationships and athletes who meet the Close-in-Age exemption.

Private or semi-private places must be made available for Minor Athletes to change clothes. A semi-private area is an area that is not separate from where other individuals are changing but offers the Minor Athlete some privacy to change. For example, a bathroom stall with a door would meet this requirement. A semi-private area can also be created by a partition or drapery.

A private area is an area separated completely from anyone else changing. This area would be fully enclosed with a door, and no other individual would be able to enter without the Minor Athlete's permission. This could be a single restroom or family restroom, where the Minor Athlete can change alone and lock the door.

Locker rooms or changing areas must be monitored with random sweeps at any facility in a USA Gymnastics sanctioned event or Member Club.

Safety Champion

What is a Safety Champion?

A Safety Champion is a person who champions a safe, club atmosphere and serves as a liaison between USA Gymnastics and the club on matters related to safety that include:

- Upcoming educational initiatives
- Policy clarification
- Delivering safety messages to club staff, parents, and athletes



Why does my club need a Safety Champion?

A Safety Champion is a person who works with the club's management to set a good example, and to encourage and inspire staff, parents, and athletes to make positive changes that help create and maintain a safe club atmosphere. The activities of a Safety Champion can have a very positive effect on the safety culture in the club. They can be the link between management and club staff and a key component of successful safety programs.

The perks that come with having a dependable Safety Champion for your club include:

- A positive and organic culture of safety
- Encouraging your employees to independently improve their personal safety practices
- Improved communication between the management, staff, parents and athletes about safe practices.
- A more proactive staff, with a far more nuanced level of safety awareness.
- A reduced number of accidents
- Employees who are pushing for positive changes and higher safety standards

What are the requirements to become a Safety Champion?

A Safety Champion must be a member of the club, preferably a staff member who is not the club owner, who is passionate about club safety and takes an active role in providing a club culture of safety. The Safety Champion must take U110: SafeSport Core and participate in a virtual Safety Champion training annually.

POLICY

Safety Champions may:

- Speak to club staff, parents, or athletes about safety, Safety and Response, or health and wellness initiatives;
- Talk to other staff or parents about club policy;
- Talk to athletes about safety, sportsmanship, and anti-bullying initiatives
- Invite guest speakers to talk with staff and parents

Champions should be committed to health and safety, energetic and able to motivate and influence others. They always look for new methods to improve general safety and they recognize that there is always room for improvement.

How do I become a Safety Champion?

Talk to your club owner and ask them to list you as the Safety Champion on their club membership with USA Gymnastics.

Will the Safety Champion be asked to take reports or conduct Safety and Response investigations?

No. At no time will the Safety Champion be asked to conduct an investigation or become involved in a Safety and Response matter unless they are considered a witness. It is not advisable to take reports or change the reporting procedures of the club. All reports should continue to go directly to the club, USA Gymnastics, or the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

Policy

USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy was developed for compliance with the [2022 Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies](#) and approved by the U.S. Center for SafeSport. The USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy reflects the athlete safety policies of USA Gymnastics, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, and the United States Olympic Committee. It mandates reporting, defines misconduct, and sets standards that address one-on-one interactions between a person in a position of power and a Minor Athlete. You may find the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy, [here](#).

Is a Member Club required to implement the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy?

Yes. USA Gymnastics Member Clubs must adopt the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy as a condition of membership. A Member Club may create their own policies that exceed the requirements of the USA Gymnastics Policy, but may not fall below the standards of the policy.

What information will I find in the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy?

The USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy is split into eight sections that address the following:

1. Adult Participant and Educational Requirements
2. Member Club Requirements
3. Authority and Governance
4. Child Abuse/USA Gymnastics Reporting Policy
5. Summary of Misconduct
6. Misconduct Related to the Safety and Response Process
7. Prevention Policies
8. Standards of Care

What are Prevention Policies?

Prevention policies address the limiting of one-on-one interactions between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes and define gymnastics-specific Prohibited Conduct. A violation of a USA Gymnastics Prevention Policy is a violation of the SafeSport Code, and must be reported to USA Gymnastics. USA Gymnastics recognizes the following prevention policies:

- One-on-one Interactions
- Parental Access to Practice at Member Clubs
- Transportation
- Lodging
- Electronic Communication and Social Media
- Virtual Training
- Photography and Videography
- Locker Rooms and Changing Areas
- Gifting
- Medical Modalities, Athletic Training, Massages, and Medical Orders

I've noticed that my child's club is not following Safety and Response Prevention Policies such as Parental Access to Practice or the Electronic Communication Policy. What should I do?

If you feel that an employee or a Member Club is not following Safety and Response Policy, please reach out to the management of the club first for clarification or to resolve the matter. If no resolution can be found or if you feel you have been retaliated against because of your concern, please [file a report](#) with USA Gymnastics.

POLICY

One-on-one Policy

USA Gymnastics realizes that not all circumstances involving one-on-one interactions can be accounted for in this FAQ. To supplement the one-on-one interactions policy, we have also created a document that specifically addresses one-on-one interactions that can be found [here](#). If you have additional questions or would like to talk through a specific scenario, please contact us as response.resolution@usagym.org.

What does one-on-one mean?

Promoting a safe environment for athletes begins when all adult/athlete interactions are professional in nature and one-on-one interaction between an Adult Participant and Minor Athlete is limited. The One-on-one Policy applies to the following situations:

- Training
- Medical and athletic training treatments
- Office meetings
- Communications
- Social media
- Locker rooms/restrooms
- Transportation
- Lodging

It is important to review the specific Prevention Policy you are inquiring about for a fuller understanding of all requirements. The USA Gymnastics Prevention Policies may be found [here](#).

I can't always take my child to practice or a meet. Can my child travel one-on-one with their coach?

A Member Club or sponsoring organization may allow for deviation from the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy for the limited purpose of airline travel or local travel with parental consent. The organization exercising this option must:

1. Indemnify USA Gymnastics from all liability, and must execute the [Indemnification Form](#).
2. Member Club must obtain advanced written consent from a parent/guardian on an annual basis indicating the nature of the travel and Adult Participant involved.
3. Itinerary presented and approved by parent or guardian for each trip considered "overnight" or "out of town."
4. Parents involved must take the [U.S. Center's course "Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport."](#) The course only needs to be taken one time.

5. Submit all forms to response.resolution@usagym.org where it will be filed with their club membership agreement.

USA Gymnastics will not grant or deny permission to travel in violation of the one-on-one policy. The receipt by USA Gymnastics of parental consent forms, trip itineraries or indemnification documents does NOT imply or indicate permission by USAG for the travel to occur.

1. Club approves travel
2. Club signs indemnification
3. Parents signs consent annually before first occurrence of travel
4. Parent approves travel itinerary
5. Parent completes "Parent's Guide to Misconduct" by the U.S. Center for SafeSport (1x)
6. Athlete completes age appropriate SafeSport course for athletes (1x per age group)
7. Indemnification, Parental Consent, and Course certificates submitted to safesportpolicy@usagym.org

Can an Adult Participant transport two Minor Athletes alone in a vehicle?

Yes. As long as the Adult Participant has at least two minors or another Adult Participant, they can transport Minor Athletes without violating the One-on-One Policy. If an Adult Participant transports two athletes or two coaches transport one athlete, then the one-on-one policy is not in violation as the "rule of three" would apply in that circumstance.

If the club is sponsoring the travel, then the coach is required to sign the club's transportation policy annually and parent sign consent on an [annual basis](#) allowing the coach to transport minor athletes.

I want my child to take private lessons with their coach, is that allowed?

A coach may offer private lessons to Minor Athletes however, all interactions must be in a location that is observable and interruptible by either the parent or another Adult Participant at all times. Parents/Guardians must be allowed to observe all individual training sessions.

All parents seeking private lessons or individual training sessions must give written consent at least [annually](#), which can be withdrawn at any time. The consent form can be found [here](#).

POLICY

My child has a personal aide or interpreter that helps out with their needs during practice and competition. What steps need to be taken to ensure compliance with the one-on-one policy?

A parent who authorizes a personal aide, interpreter or personal care assistant (PCA) to have access to their child at a facility under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics, must provide written consent for the interaction annually.

If the PCA has Regular Contact with additional Minor Athlete(s) besides the Minor Athlete for whom they provide care, or hired by an Organization, the following requirements must be met before a PCA will be granted access under these circumstances:

1. The Minor Athlete's parent/guardian must provide written consent to the Organization for the PCA to provide care/work with their Minor Athlete.
2. The PCA must complete U110: SafeSport Core Course.

I am an adult athlete, what steps must I take to ensure compliance with the One-on-one Safety and Response Policy?

USA Gymnastics athlete members 18 years of age are required to complete the U110: SafeSport Core Course. This requirement includes those athletes who turn 18 during the membership season. Therefore, upon turning 18 years of age an athlete is required to complete the U110: SafeSport Core Course. Parents/Guardians of 17-Year-Old Members can grant permission for their child to complete the U110: SafeSport Core Course prior to turning 18.

Athletes who are no more than four years older than the Minor Athlete and do not have authority over the Minor Athlete are granted an exception to the One-on-One policies. It is important to review the specific Prevention Policy you are inquiring about for a fuller understanding and for possible other requirements.

What if my child's coach is related? Are they allowed to be one-on-one?

A *Familial Dual Relationship* is a relationship between family members where the person in position of authority over a Minor Athlete is considered immediate family such as parent, grandparent, sibling, in-law or related by blood such as an uncle or aunt. These relationships are acceptable under USA Gymnastics Policy. It is important to review the specific Prevention Policy you are inquiring about for a fuller understanding and for other possible requirements. You may find the consent form for Dual Relationships [here](#).

Could you clarify the One-on-One policy for Adult Participants who have a previous relationship with a Minor Athlete before they became the coach of the Minor Athlete?

We understand that there are times when relationships were created before the coach entered into a coach/athlete relationship. Those relationships are considered Dual Relationships under the Safety and Response Policy. Examples of a Dual Relationship could include:

- Family relationships such as an uncle/niece
- Close family friend who has been around the athlete before the coach/athlete relationship existed
- Pre-existing relationship between the parent and coach

A Member Club has the right to set their own policies related to Dual Relationships and can deny such relationships in the club setting. It is important to review the specific Prevention Policy you are inquiring about for a fuller understanding and for possible other requirements. You may find the consent form for dual relationships [here](#).

USA Gymnastics understands there are numerous situations between families and coaches that we can't account for in a policy. For clarification of this policy and situations that may cause confusion, please contact the USA Gymnastics at response.resolution@usagym.org.

I have minors who work in my club and I sometimes need to communicate work schedules or other club matters with them via text.

If the employee is also a Minor Athlete, then the one-on-one policy remains in effect.

MEDICAL POLICY

Medical Orders

I forgot to ask the doctor for written medical orders. Can I just tell the coach what the doctor said?

For the safety of your child, we highly recommend that you obtain written medical orders. For risk management reasons, coaches and club owners should not accept verbal instructions from the parent as official physician orders. Often parents misunderstand the physician's orders or miss key parts of their instructions. Until written orders are obtained, coaches should always follow the most restrictive interpretation of what the parent tells them.

It doesn't seem like the coach is following the doctor's orders. What should I do?

Start by talking to the coach or club owner (follow the club's policy for communication) to see if their interpretation of the orders is different than yours and discuss a plan for going forward. If you still disagree with the coach's interpretation, ask the physician or other medical professional caring for your child to provide more detailed instructions for the coach. If you provide a written release for the medical professional to speak to the coach about your child, this can also be helpful to clarify any orders.

I don't understand the medical orders. What should I do?

Always use the most conservative interpretation of the medical orders until you can get clarification. Write down your questions and ask the athlete's parent to follow up with the medical professional requesting written answers to your questions.

What should I do if I disagree with the doctor's restrictions?

Ask the athlete's parents to provide permission to speak with the medical professional. Ask the medical professional to explain why the restrictions are in place and ask any questions that you have. If the medical professional agrees to loosen or change some restrictions, ask for those changes in writing and don't change the restrictions until you get them in writing. Never ask the athlete to do anything that the medical professional has not approved.

Injury Protocol

How do I know if I should stop practice for an athlete or ask that the parent take their child to see a physician?

Signs and symptoms that generally indicate that practice should be stopped for the day include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty bearing weight/limping
- Moderate to severe pain (pain rating of 5 or higher on a scale of 1-10 is a good rule of thumb)
- Numbness or tingling
- Deformity of a body part indicating a likely joint dislocation or fracture
- Bleeding that doesn't stop within a few minutes
- Deep or large cut
- Swelling
- Large area of bruising
- Loss of motion in a joint (can't fully bend or straighten the joint)
- Change in level of consciousness (confusion, disorientation, irritability, irrational behavior, fainting, unresponsive)
- Vomiting
- Fever (Temp > 100.4)
- Dizziness, light-headedness
- Chest pain, shortness of breath

A suspected concussion event would also be a reason to stop a gymnast from practicing. Please refer to USA Gymnastics [Sports Concussion Guidelines](#) for more information regarding concussions.

Use your best judgement. Coaches should always err on the side of athlete safety. When in doubt, sit them out. Our goal is to keep athletes safe first and foremost.

Parents should be notified immediately if any of these things occur.

I saw an athlete hit their head when they fell but I'm not sure if they have a concussion. What should I do?

Unless you are a qualified medical professional who can perform a full "sideline" concussion assessment, you should always err on the side of caution and immediately stop practice for any athlete who is suspected of having a concussion. The athlete's parent should be notified immediately, and the athlete should be monitored until a parent arrives.

MEDICAL POLICY

I've been coaching a long time and know a lot about gymnastics injuries and how to progress an athlete back from an injury. Do I need to rely on written medical orders?

Every injury and every child are different and best practices in medicine are constantly changing with the research. What was recommended 5 years ago may now be known to be harmful. As a coach, you **MUST** rely on written medical orders to safely progress an athlete back from injury until the physician clears them for full participation. Once they have been cleared, your experience is key in progressing them back slowly and safely.

It is against Safety and Response policy for a coach to ignore written orders from a physician or other medical practitioner.

An athlete on my team always seems to be "injured" and I'm pretty sure they're faking it. How should this be handled?

Regardless of what you suspect, you should **ALWAYS** honor the athlete's voice and never assume they are faking it. Children's brains (and even adult brains) often translate emotional distress into physical pain as physical pain is something that even infants understand whereas children and teens often don't have the vocabulary to express emotional distress. In other words, the pain may be **REAL** to them, despite the lack of any physical injury.

An athlete may also report that they are injured if they are afraid of a skill or mentally or physically exhausted and don't feel they can safely continue. Always meet the athlete where they are in that moment and do not force or cajole them into doing something they don't want to do. No amount of pressure from a coach will make an athlete feel more supported or more connected to their coach. Providing an athlete support for where they are in that moment of time is the main goal.

Any injury that lasts more than 1-2 weeks or seems to come and go repeatedly should be assessed by a medical professional. If a medical professional does not feel that there is a physical injury, counseling with a mental health professional may help the athlete understand their feelings and help them be able to find words to express what they are feeling which can make physical pain that is a result of emotional distress or trauma go away.

What is my role as a coach when an athlete is injured and can't train like the rest of the team?

Your biggest job during this time is to help the athlete continue to feel like a part of the team and not feel more isolated than they already feel due to being injured. If the athlete is able to participate in some training, make sure they do as much as they can with the rest of their team. Provide the athlete with a small amount of beneficial conditioning that is within doctor's orders (or let them do their PT exercises) and then let the athlete come back to join their team and help out in any way they can. This is a great opportunity as a coach to connect further with the athlete and teach the injured athlete how to help coach or "judge". Maybe the athlete can help move mats or set equipment with supervision.

If the athlete cannot be at practice at all, make sure to maintain communication with them until they can return. Have the team send cards or videos, schedule a 5 minute team video chat once a week just to say hi and let the athlete know you miss them, make sure they are included in team emails or ask teammates to go check in on them regularly either in person or virtually. When a gymnast loses their "team", their sport and often their social circle due to an injury, it is very isolating and keeping those connections is crucial for the athlete's mental health.

Massages

I'm a coach and a licensed massage therapist, can I offer massages in the gym to athletes?

As a coach, you are in a position of power and authority over your athlete. As such, the athlete may not be willing to tell you when care you are providing is uncomfortable or painful. As a licensed healthcare provider, this is never a position that you want to be in. It is against Safety and Response policy for a coach to offer massage services to their athletes either in or outside of the gym.

SAFETY AND RESPONSE FOR EVENT DIRECTORS

For the most up to date protocol for sanctioned events, please see the “Safety and Response Protocol for Sanctioned and Premier Events” document found, [here](#).

Which event personnel must take U110: SafeSport Core Course and pass a background check?

USA Gymnastics personnel at sanctioned events who have been recognized as having “Regular Contact or Authority Over Minor Athletes” must take U110: SafeSport Core Course and pass a background check before contact with minor athletes is granted.

When making a decision as to whether an event worker or volunteer is required to take U110: SafeSport Core Course and pass a background check, please consider the following:

- Meet Director;
- Event official with direct responsibility to manage athlete movements;
- Medical staff who offer massages and icing (this does not include emergency staff such as paramedics);
- Third-Party security personnel (this does not include venue staff)
- Photographers not associated with a third-party photography company; or
- A person with a specific duty assigned to monitor locker rooms and bathrooms.

When making a decision as to whether an event worker or volunteer is required to take U110: SafeSport Core Course and pass a background check, please consider the following:

- Has this person been granted authority over minor athletes?
- Will this person be assigned to give instructions or direct the movements of athletes on the competition floor?
- Will this person be monitoring changing areas?
- Will this person have access to personal information of minor athletes?
- Will this person have access to images of minor athletes taken at the meet?
- Will this person have a responsibility that involves possible physical contact of a minor athlete such as spotter or medical staff?

For a complete list of personnel considered to have regular contact and authority over minor athletes or those considered to only have incidental contact and not required to complete Safety and Response requirements, please visit Appendix A in the USA Gymnastics Safety and Response Policy that can be found [here](#).

What are my responsibilities to the USA Gymnastics Permanently Ineligible and Suspended Persons Lists?

Event Directors must assure that people with regular contact and/or authority over minors do not appear on the [USAG Permanently Ineligible List, Suspended From All Contact List](#) and will not be associated with the event in any capacity.

Photography and Medical Staff at an Event

I want to hire a photographer for my meet. What are the necessary requirements?

USA Gymnastics has created a document that outlines the qualifications for independent and third-party photographers and can be found in [Appendix D](#) of the policy.

I want to hire an athletic trainer or medical specialist for my meet, what are the necessary requirements?

USA Gymnastics has created a document that outlines the qualifications for independent medical providers and third-party medical providers. That document can be found in [Appendix D](#) of the Safety and Response policy.

Event Safety and Response Protocol

What signage is required at an event?

- Events sanctioned by USA Gymnastics require signage that indicates how to make a report of misconduct to both USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Center for SafeSport.
- Events sanctioned by USA Gymnastics require signage that indicates designated bathrooms and changing areas for minor athletes.

Templates for how to make a report will be available to Event Directors in both their sanction packet and on the USA Gymnastics website.

SAFETY AND RESPONSE FOR EVENT DIRECTORS

Signage must be visible and placed in a prominent place such as:

- Participant check-in,
- Inside the restrooms and changing areas,
- Parent viewing area, and
- Concession stand.

What are the bathroom and changing area requirements for minors at a meet?

Private or semi-private places must be made available for Minor Athletes to change clothes or undress at competitions or facilities.

- A semi-private area is an area that is not separate from where other individuals are changing but offers the Minor Athlete some privacy to change. For example, a bathroom stall with a door would meet this requirement. A semi-private area can also be created by a partition or drapery.
- A private area is an area separated completely from anyone else changing. This area would be fully enclosed with a door, and no other individual would be able to enter without the Minor Athlete's permission. This could be a single restroom or family restroom, where the Minor Athlete can change alone and lock the door.

Sign templates for bathroom and changing areas can be found [here](#).

What are the requirements for monitoring of the bathroom and changing areas at an event?

Designated bathrooms and changing areas for minors must be monitored with random sweeps at any facility in a USA Gymnastics sanctioned event to ensure compliance with policy. Event Directors must assign a person or volunteer to monitor the changing areas and bathrooms, with documentation that random sweeps occurred and there were no reported incidents.

I'm hosting a meet with limited bathrooms and changing areas. What should I do to meet this requirement?

Event Directors may communicate to attendees that the changing areas are limited and may request they come to the event dressed for the competition. However, there still must be a designated area such as a public restroom with a locked stall in the event of an emergency. USA Gymnastics encourages random sweeps of all bathrooms and changing areas for the safety of the athletes.

I'm hosting a meet in an arena or conference center with restroom facilities shared by the general public. How do I meet the new Safety and Response requirements?

Event Directors may choose a designated bathroom that is accessed by minors only if one is available. When a separate bathroom is not available, a stall inside a public restroom will meet this requirement.

Assigned changing areas must be monitored on a regular and random basis.

What should I do if I witness or made aware of misconduct at a meet?

USA Gymnastics understands there are times in a competitive environment when necessary safety measures are implemented for the protection of the competitors, coaches and other attendees.

A Meet Director has the authority to manage all Safety and Response issues that arise during a meet for the safety of the athletes and attendees. All Safety and Response matters must be reported to USA Gymnastics immediately following the meet. The following examples are actions that can be taken in response to a violation of policy or misconduct:

- Verbal warning
- Asking a person to maintain distance from a specific athlete, coach, or team
- Removal from the competitive floor or space
- Removal from the facility
- Police intervention

What if I'm made aware that someone is suspended from all contact and is attending the meet in an unofficial capacity such as a spectator?

If you have been made aware that someone who has been suspended from all contact is attending a meet as a spectator, it's important to first check the USA Gymnastics website [List of Suspended and Restricted Members](#) for confirmation and/or is a parent or legal guardian of a competing athlete. If it is determined that the person is in fact not allowed to be at the meet, the Event Director must ask them to leave and then report the incident directly to USA Gymnastics.

Does "Parental Access to Practice" apply to competitions?

Event Directors are allowed to set guidelines during meet activities that are in the best interest of the athlete. This can include closing warm-up activities to the public. However, the One-on-One Policy always applies.

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 usagym.org • usagym.org/safety

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CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS

 response.resolution@usagym.org

 Member Services: 800.345.4719

 Safety & Response Helpline: 833.844.7233

