



Gymnastics is a safe sport that helps teach young people

valuable skills including teamwork, fitness, self-discipline, and other important ideals which sustain a healthy and successful approach to life. As the national governing body, USA Gymnastics works to build awareness of gymnastics throughout the country and promote participation in the sport. I enjoy any opportunity to talk to the media about the many great benefits of gymnastics. Unfortunately, a few recent media reports have focused on some of the challenges that can arise.

USA Gymnastics and the gymnastics community have recently been confronted with news coverage related to safety and misconduct issues within our sport. Serious injuries and child abuse are rare occurrences, but tend to draw a high degree of public scrutiny. USA Gymnastics employs programs that address these issues and we intend to continue our diligent efforts to safeguard the athletes.

USA Gymnastics has been a leader among national sports governing bodies for its proactive efforts in the areas of safety certification and other educational initiatives. Safety certification, which was first introduced in 1985, has been mandatory for professional members since 1998. The current Safety/Risk Management Certification course covers a great deal of information on injury prevention as well as responsibilities of gymnastics professionals. Our education initiatives continue to grow, and we are proud of the developments within USA Gymnastics University. A variety of educational opportunities are available at the national and regional levels as well as online.

Background screening is now a mandatory requirement for professional membership as well. In the near future, we will roll out the background check service to member clubs allowing them to use the National Center of Safety Initiatives' (NCSI) background check service at a reduced rate for all employees in their club.

USA Gymnastics continues to develop and encourage best practices in all areas of the sport. We leverage many resources and industry professionals in our policy development to ensure we are compliant with legal requirements and consistent with industry standards.

With all that we are doing, there are still some limitations in the way we can deal with these challenges. USA Gymnastics is a membership-driven organization governed by the Amateur Sports Act. We have no jurisdiction over the business affairs of gymnastics clubs, including employment. Termination of membership, the public listing of terminated members and a lifetime ban on participation in sanctioned events are the most serious actions USA Gymnastics can take. Additionally, USA Gymnastics can require minimum education and certification standards for certain membership classes, but does not regulate all coaches and instructors involved in the sport.

It takes everyone working together — athletes, their families, coaches, judges, club owners, volunteers, and others to focus on the best practices for our sport. We encourage club owners to review their own policies, including such things as background screening of all employees, awareness of USA Gymnastics' list of terminated members, and coaching education and certification requirements. We all share the ultimate goal of providing a safe and fun environment for all gymnastics participants.

USA Gymnastics, along with our members and clubs, strives to provide a positive and healthy environment for all of the athletes. Let's continue to work together to help young people excel and grow in the sport we all love.

See you in the gym.

Steve Penny
President of USA Gymnastics

Call for
Nominations

USA Gymnastics Board of Directors

USA Gymnastics is seeking nominations for Program representatives to the Board of Directors. Nominations will be accepted from May 1 until June 15. Elections, which will be announced online and in *Technique* magazine, will commence beginning September 1. Criteria for program representatives can be found in the "Member Updates" section of each program page on www.usa-gymnastics.org.