



It was wonderful to see so many leaders and professionals from the USA Gymnastics community at the Visa Championships and USA Gymnastics National Congress and Trade Show in Dallas. I continue to be encouraged by the fortitude demonstrated by everyone in this sport, and the sense of optimism that prevails throughout the country.

Providing a fun and safe environment for our athletes is one of the top priorities for USA Gymnastics, its professional members and clubs. Similar to other sports organizations, USA Gymnastics maintains policies and procedures to address the possibility of member misconduct through its By-laws and Code of Ethics. USA Gymnastics has had a safety certification program since the 1980's, required its professional members to pass safety certification since 1994 and mandatory background screening beginning in 2007. Recently, USA Gymnastics has added one more aspect to this critical effort, the adoption of a Participant Welfare Policy.

The Participant Welfare Policy outlines what USA Gymnastics is doing to promote a safe environment for all of its participants, especially minors, in partnership with our member clubs, parents, athletes and the gymnastics community. The policy, which complements the existing Code of Ethics, was approved by the USA Gymnastics Board of Directors in June 2009 and brought forward at the 2009 USA Gymnastics National Congress and Trade Show. Beginning with the 2009-10 membership year, all members, as well as staff and the Board of Directors, must acknowledge they have read, understand and agree to abide by the Participant Welfare Policy.

The Participant Welfare Policy outlines the scope and breadth of USA Gymnastics' commitment to providing a safe environment, as well as the requirements and expectations of its members. The topics covered in the policy include: definitions used by USA Gymnastics for both physical and sexual abuse; reporting procedures and requirements for suspected abuse; misconduct/grievance procedures; member obligations and recommendations, as well as staff; standards of behavior; and education and communication about the policy to members and the general public.

In many cases, issues of this type are addressed through local law enforcement. Each state addresses mandatory reporting of abuse in a different manner, somewhat complicating legal consistency on a national basis. The Participant Welfare Policy has been designed to help guide USA Gymnastics and its members through this sensitive and important area of protecting our youth. The first step in all instances will be to determine and follow the law.

The success of the Participant Welfare Policy requires that everyone in the gymnastics community be involved. To make it easy for everyone, information about the Participant Welfare Policy will be communicated to members via our Web site (www.usa-gymnastics.org/welfare) and publications; at state, regional and national meetings; and through membership mailings. This is an important step for USA Gymnastics, and we look forward to working with our members and the gymnastics community to implement this policy.

See you in the gym.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Penny". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Steve Penny
President/CEO