Proactive Polices and What They Mean for You

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Proactive Policies: Overview

Proactive Policies set guidelines, boundaries, and best practices for acceptable behavior between athletes and adults.

1. Violations to the proactive policy should first be reported to and addressed by the member club
2. Meet Directors have the authority to address all proactive policy violations during a meet
3. The proactive polices apply to all adult participants and those who have authority over an athlete, this includes athletes who reach the age of 18 and who coach other athletes.
4. USA Gymnastics Proactive Polices include all requirements set by the U.S. Center for SafeSport
Proactive Policies in the News

- “The girls said the inappropriate touching happened on team trips in hotel rooms.”
- “…a second girl said that during her eighth grade year she engaged in sexual activities around 2x per week in his car and at his home.”
- Officials said the coach also gave the girls several pieces of jewelry and other items as gifts.”
- “The arrest was made based on the actions that were reported, witness observations and the content of text messages sent to one of the victims.”
- “…teacher would take the teen off campus in his car to get ice cream and talk.
- “…coach is accused of touching the boys genitals while he drove them to practice.”
• “Coach is accused of sending inappropriate texts, pictures and videos to a student.”
• “...the tennis instructor rubbed his genitals during a massage, and would inappropriately touch him during “fat tests.”
• “...detectives said he later bought her a gift.”
• “...the coach and minor he was charged with coaching were reportedly messaging each other via Facebook and used SnapChat to talk daily.”
On team trips in hotel rooms

Content of text messages sent

Messaging each other via Facebook and used SnapChat to talk daily

While he drove them to practice

Sending inappropriate texts, pictures and videos to a student

Gave the girls several pieces of jewelry and other items as gifts

He later bought her a gift

Take the teen off campus in his car to get ice cream

Rubbed his genitals during a massage

In his car and at his home
Member Club Responsibilities

**Club Owners**

1) To ensure policies are written to follow the standards set by the U.S. Center for SafeSport and USA Gymnastics.

2) For all staff to be trained in policies upon hire and at least annually thereafter.

3) Parents afforded the opportunity to view and review all policies related to club activities.

*It's up to club owners to set the standard where the gym environment is both emotionally and physically safe.*

**Staff/Coaches**

Have a responsibility to not just report policy violations to your member club, but to work with each other to ensure a safe environment through ongoing dialog, objective observation, and weekly/monthly staff meetings.
Member Club Responsibilities

Parents
Parents should request and review copies of all club policies and at a minimum, attend annual meetings with their club owner and coaches to ensure everyone is on the same page when it comes to safety, boundaries between coaches/athletes and reporting.

Athletes
Need an environment of awareness where boundaries between coach/athlete, social media interactions, how to report a problem are openly discussed.
It’s All About Boundaries

Observable and Interruptible

Simply put, all interactions with athletes must be able to be observed and interruptible by another person and remain professional at all times.

A boundary is a personal space that you keep between yourself and others. It defines “where I end and you begin.”
Line of Site

What can you see from your physical location? What is your awareness level?

You

Other Coaches
Other Athletes
Parents
Physical Environment
Boundaries define areas of privacy and helps set standards as the coaching/athlete relationship grows stronger over time.
1:1

“One-on-one contact is defined as one unrelated adult and one minor athlete.”

• Training Sessions
• Trips
• Hotels
• Social media
• Cars
• Changing areas/Bathrooms
Travel

Each USA Gymnastics Member Club must have a travel policy that is published and provided to all adult gymnasts, parents of minor gymnasts, coaches, and other adults traveling with the team.

--The one-on-one policy always applies in all circumstances of travel and activities occurring during travel

--For daily transportation to and from regular activities, a second minor or second adult must always be present.

--Coaches and other participating adults may not share hotel rooms with an athlete

--Athletes must be permitted to make regular check-in calls to parents while travelling
Social Media and Electronic Communications

“All electronic communication, including social media contact, originating from adults to minor athletes must be professional in nature and must include a second participating adult.”

This includes:

• Maintaining a separation between private social media accounts and public club pages

• Texting by using group communication apps or texting where there is always a parent included

• Responding to texts and social media contacts by a minor athlete should include the minor’s parent or other participating adult
Photography/Videography

“Photographs or videos of athletes may only be taken in public view; if they observe generally accepted standards of decency; and are both appropriate for and in the best interest of the athlete.”

Athletes and Parents may:

• Opt for a photo to be removed from a website, display, or publication for safety reasons or other reasons that may do harm to the child.
• An athlete or parent may request that the athlete’s picture not be taken.

It is recommended that when professional photos are taken in a public space such as a meet, that parents and athletes are made aware and given the opportunity to opt out.
Locker Rooms/Changing Areas

The one-on-one rule applies to all locker rooms, bathrooms, and changing areas.

This includes:

• The prohibitive use of recording devices, cameras, or any device that records images or voice

• Locker rooms and changing areas should be regularly and randomly monitored for violation of the 1:1 policy, hidden recording devices, and other inappropriate behaviors

As a reminder: Bullying between athletes will most likely occur in places where the adults are not. Be sure to discuss proper behavior between athletes while in locker room and bathrooms.
Gifting

“To prevent grooming of athletes, personal gifts are not permitted between a coach and their athlete.”

1. Member clubs may set their own guidelines for a reward system that equally applies to all eligible athletes.

2. Gifts must serve a legitimate motivational, inspirational or educational purpose.

The grooming process often involves personal gifts to gain friendship and trust. This can include small items like a food treat such as ice cream or a hotdog while at a competition. It can also include more expensive and sophisticated items such as jewelry, clothes, or flowers. Parents should stay vigilant of new items in their child's possession that were not purchased by the parent.
Massaging/Icing/Taping

U.S. Center for SafeSport states:

“Any massage or rubdown/athletic training modality performed at a facility or a training or competition venue must be conducted in an open and interruptible location. Any massage of a minor athlete must be done with at least one other adult present.”

USA Gymnastics is revising their language to strengthen this policy and will be released with the new policy.

Member clubs may opt to forbid massaging, icing or taping in a club setting.
Stretching and Other Physical Contact

“Coaches should take care to prevent and avoid any compromising positions while stretching or closely interacting with athletes.”

Including:
• Laying or sitting on top of the athlete
• Facing an athlete in a static straddle or similar position
• Having an athlete sit on the lap of a coach or other unrelated adult
Alcohol/Drug Use

“Members of USA Gymnastics may not interact with an athlete while impaired by the use of drugs or alcohol.”

This includes:

• Prescription or non-prescription drugs that interfere with a person’s ability to spot or otherwise safely assist an athlete

• Athletes are expected to follow all state and federal laws regarding alcohol and tobacco.

Meet Directors have the authority to enforce all policies regarding alcohol and drugs for the safety of the athletes during the context of the meet.
Access to Training Sessions

“All member clubs must institute measures to allow athletes parents or guardians access to training sessions.”

Things to consider:

• Access may be granted by either creating a sitting area, closed-circuit broadcast or other similar methods.

• Member clubs may set expectations for proper viewing behavior and any person undermining those expectations may be excluded from this policy for limited periods of time.

• At no time should training sessions be limited to only athletes and coaches.
For more information:

You may contact the USA Gymnastics helpline at:

833-844-7233

Or

Swaldron@usagym.org

To make a report to USA Gymnastics:

https://usagym.org/safesport/

To make a report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport:

https://safesport.org/report-a-concern