

## **SafeSport Athlete Protection Policy**

The Skating Club of Houston strives to provide a safe environment for its members that is free of misconduct and harassment. The club will not tolerate or condone any form of harassment or misconduct of any of its members including athletes, coaches, officials, directors, employees, parents, volunteers or any other persons while they are participating in or preparing for a figure skating activity or event conducted under the auspices of The Skating Club of Houston. All forms of misconduct are unacceptable and in direct conflict with U.S. Figure Skating rules.

The U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Program, which is adopted by The Skating Club of Houston addresses the following types of misconduct:

- Sexual misconduct
- Physical misconduct
- Emotional misconduct
- Bullying, threats and harassment
- Hazing
- Willfully tolerating misconduct

The Skating Club of Houston has adopted the following specific policies and is committed to operating under the guidance of the [U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Handbook](#), the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Committee and the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#).

Questions and comments may be directed to the club SafeSport Compliance Chair, [Virginia Talbot](#).

## **Commitment to Safety**

In the event that a coach, official, director, employee, parent/guardian or volunteer observes inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations), suspected physical or sexual misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of each member to immediately report his or her observations to the club's SafeSport Compliance Officer and take the appropriate action stated in applicable U.S. Figure Skating Rules.

## **Supervision of Athletes and Participants**

This policy describes U.S. Figure Skating's plan for advising the proper supervision of members and participants during all program activities and to minimize one-on-one interactions between a coach, official, director, employee, parent/guardian or volunteer. A plan for proper supervision raises awareness about those activities that pose a high risk for misconduct, as well as ways to minimize one-on-one interactions.

### **Two-Deep Leadership**

Two-deep leadership is a preventative method to minimize one-on-one interactions between minors and adults. Two-deep leadership means that at least two individuals, preferably adults (i.e.- rule of three) are present at all times with individual minors when off the ice. For example, it could be two club volunteers, two coaches, or a coach and parent/guardian of the skater. This two-deep strategy makes it more difficult to isolate a minor and avoid detection. This policy is intended to minimize one-on-one interactions not only for the protection of the minor but also to help protect coaches and volunteers from false accusations.

### **Appropriate one-on-one interactions with athletes or participants:**

Individual meetings at the rink or during events and competitions

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete's concerns, training program, or at an event or competition. Under these circumstances, coaches, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- Any individual meeting should occur when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.
- Where possible, an individual meeting should take place in a publicly visible and open area, such as the corner of the arena.
- If an individual meeting is to take place in an office or a locker room, the door should remain unlocked and open.
- If a closed-door meeting is necessary at a test session or competition, the coach, staff member and/or volunteer should inform another coach, staff member and/or volunteer and ensure the door remains unlocked.

### **Locker Rooms and Changing Areas**

Athletes are particularly vulnerable in locker rooms/changing areas and restrooms due to various stages of dress/undress and because they are less supervised than at many other times. Athlete-to-athlete problems, misconduct, bullying, harassment and hazing may occur when a coach or other responsible adult is not in a position to observe. Adherence to a locker room/changing area policy enhances privacy and reduces the likelihood of misconduct.

If the club activity or event consists of both female and male participants, both female and male privacy rights must be given consideration and appropriate locker room and changing arrangements made. Where possible, member clubs and programs should have female and male skaters dress/undress in separate locker rooms. If separate locker rooms are not available, the skaters will take turns using the locker room to change or use the appropriate restroom within the facility.

Locker rooms used for warm-up and that are intended to be co-ed will be labeled as such and require that the door to be open at all times. In the event of a medical situation or emergency, U.S. Figure Skating officials working on behalf of the event (such as doctor, physical therapist, chief referee) or emergency medical personnel will be permitted into the locker room/changing area. The use of any recording and photographic devices inside a locker room/changing area is strictly prohibited.

Locker rooms and changing areas at U.S. Figure Skating competitive events are for athletes only, will be labeled with regard to specific use and where identified will be gender specific. An exception can be made for athletes 11 years old and younger that will allow for one parent of the same sex to assist their child immediately prior to and after their skating event(s). Synchronized and Theatre on Ice teams have separate locker room policies and should refer to the specific policies for teams on the SafeSport webpage.

Any violation of this policy will be addressed under the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Program and U.S. Figure Skating Ethics/Grievance procedures.

**Specific Policies:**

**U.S. Figure Skating Locker Rooms/Changing Areas Policy for Figure Skating Competitions**

Only athletes competing at the figure skating event are allowed in the Locker Rooms/Changing Areas. An exception may be allowed for an athlete age 11 years or younger to be accompanied by one parent of the same sex to assist their child immediately prior to and after their skating event(s), unless otherwise specified.

In the event of a medical situation or emergency, U.S. Figure Skating officials working on behalf of the event (such as doctor, physical therapist, chief referee) or emergency medical personnel will be permitted into the Locker Room/Changing Area.

All Locker Rooms/Changing Areas will be monitored. If any concerns arise, the Locker Room/Changing Area monitor must be contacted immediately. If the monitor ascertains that anyone inside the Locker Room/Changing Area has engaged in any form of sexual misconduct, that person will be removed immediately and local law enforcement will be contacted.

If there are concerns regarding this policy, an athlete should change prior to arriving at the competition.

The use of any recording and photographic devices inside a Locker Room/Changing Area is strictly prohibited.

Any violation of this policy will be addressed under the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Program and U.S. Figure Skating Ethics/Grievance procedures.

### **U.S. Figure Skating Locker Rooms/Changing Areas Policy for Synchronized Skating, Theatre on Ice and Intercollegiate team skating competitions**

The team coach, team manager, one additional team service personnel and athletes competing at the skating event are allowed in the Locker Rooms/Changing Areas.

In the event of a medical situation or emergency, U.S. Figure Skating officials working on behalf of the event (such as doctor, physical therapist, chief referee) or emergency medical personnel will be permitted into the Locker Room/Changing Area.

All Locker Room/Changing Areas will be monitored. If any concerns arise, the Locker Room/Changing Area monitor must be contacted immediately. If the monitor ascertains that anyone inside the Locker Room/Changing Area has exposed himself/herself in a sexual manner, made lewd statements or engaged in or threatened any form of sexual misconduct, that person will be removed immediately and local law enforcement will be contacted.

In the case of mixed-gender teams gathering in a Locker Room/Changing Area prior to/or after competition, the Locker Room/Changing Area must be free of any person changing clothing/costumes and the team coach and/or team manager must be present.

If there are concerns regarding this policy, an athlete should change prior to arriving at the competition.

The use of any recording and photographic devices inside a Locker Room/Changing Area is strictly prohibited.

Any violation of this policy is punishable under the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport policy and U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook.

### **Social Media, Mobile and Digital Communications Policy**

As part of U.S. Figure Skating's emphasis on participant safety, communications involving minor participants should be appropriate, productive and transparent. Effective communication concerning activities, schedules and administrative issues among coaches, members and their families, officials and volunteers is critical.

U.S. Figure Skating encourages and supports members, member clubs, programs and teams to take part in social media by posting, blogging and tweeting positive experiences in skating as a show of support of its members and for promotion of the club, its programs and events. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media and other forms of digital communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and provides potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to participants. The improper use of mobile and digital communications can result in misconduct.

All digital communication of any kind between adults and minors, including use of social media, must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about skating-related activities. Consider social media communications as public at all times. The club, program or team is required to have a signed name and likeness consent and release agreement form by the minor's parent or legal guardian before any distribution or posting of photos, videos, images, etc. No contact information for any minor shall in any case be placed on any social media site.

Coaches, skaters and club volunteers must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowable digital communication. All content between adults and minors should be readily available to share with the public or families of the minor member. If the member is under the age of 18, any email, text, social media or similar communication must also copy or include a parent or legal guardian.

### **Social Media**

U.S. Figure Skating recognizes, however, that social media, mobile and other digital communications can be concerning where minor participants are involved. Coaches are specifically prohibited from having their skaters join their personal Facebook page or any other similar social media platforms.

As a best practice to facilitate communication, an official club, program or team page may be set up and members and parents/guardians may join (i.e., "friend") the official organization or team page.

### **Email, Text Messaging and Similar Digital Communication**

Coaches, volunteers and skaters may use email and text messaging to communicate with each other about non-personal matters. All email and text message content between adults and minors must be non-personal in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about club/skating-related activities. Emails and text messages from an adult to any minor participant must copy or include a parent/guardian.

### **Request To Discontinue All Digital Communication or Imagery with Minors**

Following receipt of a written request by the parent/guardian of a minor that their child not be contacted by any form of digital communication by adults, the local club, program or team administrators shall immediately comply with such request without any repercussions for such request.

### **Misconduct**

Social media and other means of digital communication can be used to commit misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, "sexting," bullying, harassment and hazing). Such communications by a coach, official, director, employee, parent/guardian, skater or volunteer of a U.S. Figure Skating club or program will not be tolerated and will be considered violations of U.S. Figure Skating's SafeSport Program.

## **Reporting**

Infractions of U.S. Figure Skating's mobile and digital communications policy shall be reported to the appropriate person as described in Section VI of the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Handbook. A participant or parent/guardian of a participant who violates this social media, mobile and digital communications policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

## **Travel Guidelines**

Travel guidelines direct how minors shall be supervised during travel to and from practice and competitions and provide two-deep leadership which eliminates one-to-one interactions. During travel, athletes are often away from their families and support networks, and the setting – new changing areas, locker rooms, workout facilities, automobiles and hotel rooms – is less structured and less familiar. Athletes are most vulnerable to misconduct during travel, particularly overnight stays. This includes a high risk of athlete-to-athlete misconduct. Adherence to travel guidelines helps to reduce the opportunities for misconduct.

All athlete travel must follow two-deep leadership for travel to and from practice sessions and competitions and one-athlete and one-coach travel is prohibited (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, or sibling of that particular athlete). Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, or sibling of that particular athlete).

## **Team Travel (i.e. - Synchronized and Theatre On Ice teams)**

Team travel is overnight travel that occurs when the club or team sponsors, coordinates or arranges for travel so that skaters can compete locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Because of the greater distances, coaches, staff, volunteers and chaperones will often travel with the athletes. However, no coach, staff member, or volunteer will engage in team travel without the proper safety requirements in place, including valid drivers' licenses, proper insurance, well-maintained vehicles and compliance with all state laws. Team meetings or social activities may not occur in hotel rooms. Reserve a separate space for adults and athletes to socialize.

The Skating Club of Houston plans all team travel such that each skater is accompanied by a parent during travel and each family obtains lodging in a hotel identified by the team manager.

## **Chaperone or Team Manager Responsibilities**

Chaperones or Team Managers ensure that the athletes, coaches, staff, and volunteers adhere to all policy guidelines. While these include the travel policy, it also includes all other relevant policies contained in club or team's Skater Agreement. Chaperones should monitor the activities of all coaches, staff members, volunteers and athletes.

Specifically, chaperones may:

- familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before team travel;
- monitor for adherences to club policies during team travel;
- encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communication with their parents/guardians;

- monitor athletes for adherence to curfew restrictions set based on age and competition schedule as listed in travel itinerary;
- ensure athletes comply with hotel room restrictions based on gender or age requirements;
- not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing duties;
- make certain that an athlete is not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member (this includes coaches, staff and chaperones);
- Immediately report any concerns about sexual and physical abuse, misconduct or policy violations to an administrator or the club's SafeSport Compliance officer.