



## **Athlete Safety Policy**

It is the purpose of the Wichita Rowing Association to promote the benefits of rowing in our community. Therefore this policy is established to aid in the assurance of a safe environment for athletes participating in supervised activities. This policy pertains to those hired / volunteers in supervision of activities, in particular those associated with instruction of minors. Though this policy is for afore mentioned individuals, it is recommended that all board members shall be familiar with the contents of this policy and encouraged that members should as well. Though this policy may not pertain to all members, it is members who will most likely observe athlete interactions.

Those individuals in supervision of activities whether volunteer or paid shall have:

- 1) Read this policy and acknowledge that they understand and will abide by the policy.
- 2) Completed training in the form of the Safe Sport training as can be found on the USRowing website and provided documentation to the board of their completion.
- 3) Passed a background check with a green light.

Individuals who have not completed these tasks are not permitted to supervise activities.

Exceptions:

- a) Volunteers may aid in the supervision of activities provided an individual who has completed said tasks is present. (example: parent / member aids for junior rowers; learn to row assistants)
- b) Members who will act as substitutes for a limited time only and have established themselves with the WRA and with the individual(s) for whom they are substituting.
- c) Positions that due to need have not had adequate time for completion of the background check will be allowed to function only after background application has been completed, and will be in a probationary position until completion of background check.

The following are the policies of the Wichita Rowing Association pertaining to Athlete Safety as recommended by the United States Olympic Committee.

### **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Our policies and procedures require hired and/or volunteers to report abuse, misconduct and violations of this policy. To do so, members and/or volunteers (volunteer coaches, parent chaperones, referees, other volunteers) should have a basic understanding of sexual abusers, as well as "grooming," the most common

strategy offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse.

Accordingly, members and/or volunteers complete an awareness training concerning misconduct in sport before performing services for Wichita Rowing Association. Misconduct in sport includes:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct
- Sexual misconduct, including child sexual abuse

Members and/or volunteers must successfully complete the training and the quiz after the test.

Those staff members and/or volunteers who are required to take awareness training will take athlete awareness training every two (2) years, and prior before they have contact with athletes.

## **APPLICANT SCREENING**

Members, contractors and/or volunteers in supervision of athletes must consent to, and pass, a formal applicant screening process before performing services for Wichita Rowing Association.

Elements of our screening process include, as applicable, successful completion of an application, interview, reference check and criminal background check.

## **EDUCATION ABOUT WRA'S PROTECTION POLICIES**

To deter applicants who may be at risk of abusing athletes or participants from applying for positions, Wichita Rowing Association educates its applicants about its protection policies and offers applicants an early opt-out by:

- Requiring awareness training before placement and/or before working with athletes and participants
- Informing applicants about our policies and procedures relevant to prevention
- Asking applicants to review and agree to our policies and procedures before proceeding with the process
- Requiring applicants to sign a document acknowledging review of our policies and procedures

## **PERSONAL INTERVIEW**

Appropriate staff will interview applicants whose experience and credentials are considered a fit for available positions. During this interview, WRA will ask questions to encourage discussion, clarify responses

and expand on the applicant's answers to questions from the written application.

## **REFERENCES**

References of applicants will be contacted (either by phone or in writing) and asked specific questions regarding the applicant's professional experiences, demeanor and appropriateness for involvement with minor athletes and participants.

## **RELEASE**

Each applicant will also provide a signed release, consistent with federal, state and local laws regulating employment practices, that allows references to speak freely about the applicant's qualifications without fear of reprisal and authorizing WRA to obtain information concerning an applicant's past employment, volunteer experience and information provided by the applicant during the screening process (i.e., written application and personal interview).

## **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY**

All applicants will be asked to undergo a criminal background check that complies with the Fair Credit Reporting Act **before** providing services for WRA. Through this criminal background check, WRA will utilize reasonable efforts to ascertain past criminal history of an applicant.

## **PROCESS**

The Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form must be submitted and the applicant cleared before he or she may perform services for WRA. (See Exceptions page 1)

On receipt of the Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form, the club will request that its vendor perform the criminal background check. As part of its criminal background check, WRA will, at a minimum and without limitation,

- (1) perform a national search of state criminal repositories;
- (2) perform a search of state sexual offender registries; and
- (3) verify a person's identification against his or her social security number or other personal identifier.

## POTENTIALLY DISQUALIFYING FACTORS

### Criminal History

WRA will use a criminal background check to gather information about an applicant's prior criminal history. The information revealed by the criminal background check may disqualify an applicant from serving as a staff member, contractor and/or volunteer.

Information that could disqualify an applicant includes, but is not limited to, arrests, pleas of no contest and criminal convictions—especially if the underlying criminal behavior involved sex or violence.

### Pending Court Cases

No decision will be made on an individual's eligibility for work as a new staff member, contractor and/or volunteer if they have a pending court case for any of the potentially disqualifying offenses until the pending case concludes. If, however, during the case's pendency, the organization undertakes an independent investigation and conducts a hearing, any determination may be used to disqualify the individual.

### Full Disclosure

Each applicant has the affirmative duty to disclose his or her criminal history. Failing to disclose or intentionally misrepresenting an arrest plea or conviction history in an application or any other information provided by an applicant during the screening process is grounds for employment, volunteer and/or membership revocation or restriction, regardless of when the offense is discovered.

- If an applicant (1) is arrested, (2) pleas or (3) is convicted of a crime other than a traffic offense during the screening process, the applicant is required to disclose such information immediately to his or her supervisor or WRA board.
- In the event a person is serving as a staff member, contractor or volunteer and (1) is arrested, (2) pleas or (3) is convicted after the completion of the screening process, he or she has an affirmative duty to disclose such information immediately to his or her supervisor or WRA board.
- **Any applicant who has been banned by another sport organization, as temporarily or permanently ineligible, must self-disclose this information. A failure to disclose is a basis for disqualification for potential applicants.**

## FINDINGS

Notice of findings will be provided to:

- (1) [DESIGNATED AUTHORITY/WRA, WHERE RELEVANT];
- (2) [OTHER DESIGNATED INDIVIDUALS, WHERE NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE SAFETY OF MINORS]

USRowing's criminal background check report will return a "red light" or "green light" score. A green light score means that the background check vendor located no records that would disqualify the applicant. A green light score, however, is not a certification of safety or permission to bypass/ignore other screening efforts. Other disqualifying factors may exist, and can be revealed through an interview, reference checks and a completed application.

A **red light** finding means the criminal background check revealed criminal records which suggest the applicant “does not meet the criteria” and is not suitable for organization employment or volunteer assignment.

Individuals automatically disqualified are excluded from participation in any WRA sanctioned events and/or activities.

Individuals who are subject to disqualification under a “red light” finding may challenge the accuracy of the reported information reported by the criminal background check vendor.

### **OPTION ONE: Appeal to Organization**

#### **APPEAL TO ORGANIZATION**

If an individual receives a red light finding and wants to contest the WRA’s decision not to accept his or her application based on the red light finding, the individual may request a hearing before WRA’S Review Panel. The Review Panel will consist of: WRA President; WRA Secretary; WRA Treasurer; and two board members.

The Review Panel will communicate its finding to the individual and the board. If the individual disagrees with the finding of the Review Panel, he or she may request an appeal with remainder of the board. A decision rendered by the board shall be final and binding on all parties.

#### **DISCRETION**

If any discretion is exercised in the application of this policy, it shall be exercised in a uniform manner so that substantially similar convictions and circumstances result in substantially similar treatment of applicants.

**--END OPTION ONE--**

### **OPTION TWO: Appeal to Criminal Background Check Vendor**

#### **APPEAL TO CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK VENDOR**

Any disqualified individual has the right to dispute the findings of the criminal background check directly with the WRA’s approved Criminal Background Check Vendor.

Individuals automatically disqualified are excluded from participation in any WRA sanctioned events and/or activities.

**--END OPTION TWO--**

#### **FREQUENCY OF CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Criminal background checks will be refreshed every 5 years or as otherwise required by law, for staff members and/or volunteers who are 18 years of age or older and perform services for WRA.

### **AFFIRMATIVE DUTY TO DISCLOSE**

If, during the course of employment or participation in WRA's program, a staff member or volunteer is accused, arrested, indicted or convicted of a criminal offense against a child, it is the duty and responsibility of the staff member or volunteer to notify an immediate supervisor, a WRA administrator or a member of the club's Participant Safety Committee.

### **OTHER POTENTIALLY DISQUALIFYING FACTORS**

Even if an applicant passes a criminal background check, other factors may disqualify an applicant. An individual may be disqualified and prohibited from providing services for WRA if the individual has:

- Been held liable for civil penalties or damages involving sexual or physical abuse of a minor
- Been subject to any court order involving any sexual or physical abuse of a minor, including but not limited to domestic order or protection
- A history with another organization (employment, volunteer, etc.) of complaints of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- Resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position - paid or unpaid - due to complaint(s) of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- A history of other behavior that indicates they may be a danger to participants in WRA; or
- Not met the job requirements

### **REVIEW OF DISQUALIFIERS**

WRA will review its disqualifiers every two years or as otherwise required or modified by law.

### **RECORDS**

Records are secured onsite for a period indicated by applicable law or until the applicant is no longer affiliated with WRA, whichever date is later.

## **ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY**

### **COMMITMENT TO SAFETY**

#### **Overview**

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations), suspected physical or sexual abuse, or misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of each staff member and volunteer to immediately report his or her observations to a board member or a member of WRA's Safety Committee.

WRA is committed to creating a safe and positive environment for athletes' physical, emotional and social development and to ensuring that it promotes an environment free of misconduct.

**Staff members and volunteers should not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.** Instead, it is the responsibility of each staff member and volunteer to immediately report suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse to an immediate supervisor, or a member of WRA'S Participant Safety Committee. Complaints and allegations will be addressed under Wichita Rowing Association's Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

WRA recognizes that the process for training and motivating athletes will vary with each coach and athlete, but it is nevertheless important for everyone involved in sport to support the use of motivational and training methods that avoid misconduct.

#### **Application**

This Policy applies to

- Members and volunteers (parent as chaperone? Booster?)
- WRA'S athletes and participants

Staff members, volunteers, athletes and participants shall refrain from all forms of misconduct, which include:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct
- Sexual misconduct, including child sexual abuse.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

- (1) Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

**Note concerning peer-to-peer child sexual abuse:** Sexual contact between minors also can be abusive. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power and/or intellectual capabilities.

- (2) Any act or conduct described as child sexual abuse under federal or state law.

### ***Exception***

None

### ***Examples***

Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive electronic or written communications, exposure or voyeurism.

### **Emotional Misconduct**

- (1) A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behaviors include:
  - a. verbal acts
  - b. physical acts
  - c. acts that deny attention or support
- (2) Any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect).

### ***Exception***

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.



### **Examples**

Examples of emotional misconduct prohibited by this policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Verbal Acts.** A pattern of verbal behaviors that (a) attack an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting) or (b) repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular participant or participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
- (2) **Physical Acts.** A pattern of physically aggressive behaviors, such as (a) throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants; or (b) punching walls, windows or other objects.
- (3) **Acts that Deny Attention and Support.** A pattern of (a) ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time or (b) routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice.

**Note: Bullying, harassment, and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of emotional misconduct.**

### **Physical Misconduct**

- (1) Contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threaten to, cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants; or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault).

### **Exceptions**

Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance. For example, hitting, punching, and kicking are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in swimming.

### **Examples**

Examples of physical misconduct prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) punching, beating, biting, striking, choking or slapping an athlete;
  - (b) intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment;
  - (c) providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (under U.S. law);
  - (d) providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete;
  - (e) encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play pre-maturely following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional;

(f) prescribing dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of athlete.

(2) **Non-contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:

(a) isolating an athlete in a confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space);

(b) forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g. requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface);

(c) withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep.

**Note: Bullying, harassment and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of physical misconduct.**

### **Sexual Misconduct**

(1) Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is (a) nonconsensual or forced, (b) coerced or manipulated, or (c) perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner;

(2) Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative; or

(3) Any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape)

**Note: An imbalance of power is always assumed between a coach and an athlete.**

### **Types of Sexual Misconduct**

Types of sexual misconduct include:

(1) sexual assault,

(2) sexual harassment,

(3) sexual abuse, or

(4) any other sexual intimacies that exploit an athlete. **Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult**, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited.

### **Exceptions**

None

## **Examples**

Examples of sexual misconduct prohibited under this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) fondling an athlete's breasts or buttocks
  - (b) exchange of reward in sport (e.g., team placement, scores, feedback) for sexual favors
  - (c) genital contact
  - (d) sexual relations or intimacies between persons in a position of trust, authority and/or evaluative and supervisory control over athletes or other sport participants.
  
- (2) **Non-touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) a coach discussing his or her sex life with an athlete
  - (b) a coach asking an athlete about his or her sex life
  - (c) coach requesting or sending a nude or partial-dress photo to athlete
  - (d) exposing athletes to pornographic material
  - (e) sending athletes sexually explicit or suggestive electronic or written messages or photos (e.g. "sexting")
  - (f) deliberately exposing an athlete to sexual acts
  - (g) deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity (except in situations where locker rooms and changing areas are shared)
  - (h) sexual harassment; specifically, the sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, and
    - a. is unwelcome, offensive or creates a hostile environment, and the offending individual knows or is told this
    - b. is sufficiently severe or intense to be harassing to a reasonable person in the context.

## **Bullying**

- (1) An intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership
- (2) Any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law

## **Exceptions**

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and to push through a difficult training regimen.

### **Examples**

Examples of bullying prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Physical behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, or slapping an athlete; (b) throwing at, or hitting an athlete with, objects such as sporting equipment.
- (2) **Verbal and emotional behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) teasing, ridiculing, intimidating; (b) spreading rumors or making false statements; or (c) using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (“cyber bullying”).

### **Harassment**

- (1) A repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, (b) offend or degrade, (c) create a hostile environment or (d) reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability; or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law

### **Exceptions**

None

### **Examples**

Examples of harassment prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant; (b) throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects including sporting equipment.
- (2) **Non-physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete’s sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color, or ethnic traits; (b) displaying offensive materials, gestures, or symbols; (c) withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on his or her sexual orientation.

### **Hazing**

- (1) Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group’s members;  
or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law

### ***Exception***

Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

### ***Examples***

Examples of hazing prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) requiring, forcing or otherwise requiring the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs
- (2) tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining an athlete
- (3) sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature
- (4) sleep deprivation, otherwise unnecessary schedule disruption or the withholding of water and/or food
- (5) social actions (e.g. grossly inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule
- (6) beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault
- (7) excessive training requirements focused on individuals on a team

### **WILLFULLY TOLERATING MISCONDUCT**

It is a violation of this Athlete Protection Policy if a staff member and/or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s), participant(s), staff member, and/or volunteer.

### **REPORTING**

Although these policies are designed to reduce child sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. Staff members, volunteers and participants of WRA shall follow the reporting procedures set forth in WRA'S Reporting Policy. **WRA does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations, as a condition of reporting suspicions or allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

### **VIOLATIONS**

Violations of the Athlete Protection Policy shall be reported pursuant to our Reporting Policy and will be addressed under our Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

### **SUPERVISION OF ATHLETES AND PARTICIPANTS**

During training and competition, WRA strives to create two-deep leadership and minimize one-to-one interactions to create a safe training environment and to protect athletes and participants.

### **APPROPRIATE ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS**

### **Individual Meetings**

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete's concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, coaches, staff members and/or volunteers are to 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 a gym or pool deck
- If an individual meeting is to take place in an office, the door should remain unlocked and open
- If a closed-door meeting is necessary, the coach, staff member and/or volunteer must inform another coach, staff member and/or volunteer and ensure the door remains unlocked

### **Individual Training Sessions**

An individual training session(s) with an athlete or participant may also be desired or necessary. Under these circumstances, written permission of a minor athlete's parents or guardians is required in advance of the individual training session(s), and WRA encourages parents and guardians to attend the training session.

### **PROHIBITED ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS**

Except as set forth above, minor athletes and participants will not be left unattended or unsupervised during WRA activities and WRA coaches, staff members and/or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual athlete or participant in any room or building.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH ATHLETES**

Appropriate physical contact between athletes and coaches, staff members, contractors or volunteers is a productive and inevitable part of sport. Athletes are more likely to acquire advanced physical skills and enjoy their sport participation through appropriate physical contact. However, guidelines for appropriate physical contact reduce the potential for misconduct in sport.

### **APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

WRA adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regards to physical contact with our athletes:

#### **Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact**

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make them both safe and appropriate. These include:

- the physical contact takes place in public
- there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact
- the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

#### **Safety**

The safety of our athletes is paramount and in many instances we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

- spotting an athlete so that they will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment
- positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination
- making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use
- releasing muscle cramps

#### **Celebration**

Sports are physical by definition and we recognize participants often express their joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

- greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs
- congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, "jump-arounds" and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment

## Consolation

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly:

- embracing a crying athlete
- putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down (“side hugs”)
- lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and “dusting them off” to encourage them to continue competition

## PROHIBITED PHYSICAL CONTACT

Prohibited forms of physical contact, which shall be reported immediately under our Reporting Policy include, without limitation:

- asking or having an athlete sit in the lap of a coach, administrator, staff member or volunteer
- lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact
- slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from an athlete
- “cuddling” or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay
- playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., tickling or “horseplay” wrestling)
- continued physical contact that makes an athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not
- any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

## VIOLATIONS

Violations of this policy must be reported to a supervisor, WRA administrator, or member of the Participant Safety Committee and violations will be addressed under our Disciplinary Rules and Procedure. Some forms of physical contact may constitute child physical or sexual abuse that **must be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**



## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

As part of WRA's emphasis on athlete safety, all electronic communications between a coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

**As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the athlete's family. At the request of a parent or guardian, any email, electronic text, social media or similar communication will copy or include the athlete's parents or guardians.**

### **FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS AND SIMILAR SITES**

Coaches may not have athletes of WRA's Team join a personal social media page. Athlete members and parents can friend the official WRA's Team page and coaches can communicate to athlete members through the site. All posts, messages, text, or media of any kind between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes.

### **TWITTER, INSTANT MESSAGING AND SIMILAR MEDIA**

Coaches and athletes may "follow" each other. Coaches cannot "re-tweet" athlete message posts. All posts between coach and athlete must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **EMAIL AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. All email content between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **TEXTING AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. All texts between coach and athlete must be professional and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **ELECTRONIC IMAGERY**

From time to time, digital photos, videos of practice or competition, and other publicly obtainable images of the athlete – individually or in groups – may be taken. These photos and/or videos may be submitted to local, state or national publications, used in club videos, posted on club or club associated websites, or offered to the club families seasonally on disc or other electronic form. It is the default policy of WRA to allow such practices as long as the athlete or athletes are in public view and such imagery is both appropriate and in the best interest of the athlete and the club. Imagery must not be contrary to any rules as outlined in WRA's Participant Safety Handbook.

### **REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS OR IMAGERY**

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by any form of electronic communication by coaches (photography or videography).

### **MISCONDUCT**

Social media and electronic communications can also be used to commit misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual,

bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by coaches, staff, volunteers, administrators, officials, parents or athletes will not be tolerated and are considered violations of our Participant Safety Handbook.

### **VIOLATIONS**

Violations of WRA's Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy should be reported to a WRA administrator or a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee for evaluation. Complaints and allegations will be addressed under WRA's Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

## **LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS**

The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

### **FACILITIES**

WRA does not have changing facilities at its boat shelter. It is expected of athletes to come dressed to practice in appropriate attire. It is also expected that athletes come dressed for practice at other training facilities used when WRA facilities are not available. If facilities do have locker rooms athletes can use if the coach believes they are appropriate and are circumstantially needed.

### **TRAVEL**

Travel will be a standard aspect of our competitive season. Parents and/or athletes are responsible for their own travel both locally and abroad. Parents / Guardians can arrange travel with other athletes / parents at their own discretion. Coaches are expected to follow all guidelines in the event that they have been requested to transport athletes.

### **TRAVEL NOTIFICATION**

When possible, WRA coaches will provide reasonable advance notice before team travel. Notice will include the dates, location and duration of competition.

### **COACH AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

During team travel, coaches and staff members will help athletes, fellow coaches and staff members adhere to policy guidelines

When not practicing, training, competing, or preparing for competition, coaches and staff will monitor the activities of athletes, fellow coaches and staff during team travel. Coaches and staff will:

- a. prepare athletes for team travel and make athletes aware of all expectations. Supplemental information will be given to parents/guardians of athletes who are considered inexperienced travelers, new or relatively new to team travel, or who are under the age of 14
- b. familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before the initiation of team travel
- c. conform to, and monitor for others' adherence, the Athlete Protection Policy and all policies during team travel
- d. help athletes be on time for all team commitments (as possible)
- e. assist with team travel logistical needs (as possible)
- f. not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching duties
- g. immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations

- h. notify parents before taking any disciplinary action against a minor athlete if the athlete is traveling without his or her parents.

## **REPORTING POLICY**

Every WRA member and/or volunteer must report:

- (1) violations of the Participant Safety Handbook,
- (2) misconduct as defined in WRA's Athlete Protection Policy, and
- (3) suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse.

**As a matter of policy, WRA does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

### **Reporting Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

#### ***Child Physical or Sexual Abuse***

Volunteers at WRA are required to report suspicions or allegations of child sexual abuse by a colleague or co-worker, to:

- (1) a supervisor,
- (2) a WRA administrator,
- (3) a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee and,
- (4) where applicable, **appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

### ***Grooming***

Because sexual abusers "groom" children for abuse – the process used by offenders to select a child, to win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), to manipulate the child into sexual activity and to keep the child from disclosing abuse – it is possible that a staff member and/or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor, a WRA administrator or a member of the WRA Participant Safety Committee.

### ***Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse***

Approximately 1/3 of all child sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other children and the obligation to report extends to peer-to-peer child sexual abuse. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power or intellectual capabilities. **If you have any concerns that an interaction between children may constitute sexual abuse, report it to the appropriate**

**law enforcement authorities and a WRA supervisor, a WRA administrator or a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee immediately.**

### **Reporting Misconduct and Policy Violations**

If any staff member and/or volunteer receives an allegation or observes misconduct or other inappropriate behavior, such as grooming, that is not reportable to the appropriate law enforcement authorities, it is the responsibility of each staff member and/or volunteer to report their observations to:

- (1) their immediate supervisor,
- (2) a WRA administrator or
- (3) a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee.

WRA also encourages member parents, athletes and other sport participants to communicate violations of WRA's Participant Safety Handbook and/or allegations and suspicions of child physical and sexual abuse to a WRA administrator or member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee. Where applicable, parents may also report to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

### **To Whom to Report**

Members and volunteers may report to any board member or WRA administrator with whom they are comfortable sharing their concerns. You may also report to any member of its Participant Safety Committee.

A member and/or volunteer may, and in many cases must, report any allegation of child physical or sexual abuse to relevant law enforcement authorities.

### **How to Report**

WRA will take a report in the way that is most comfortable for the person initiating a report including an anonymous, in-person, verbal or written report. Regardless of how you choose to report, it is helpful to WRA for individuals to provide, at a minimum, (1) the name of the complainant(s); (2) the type of misconduct alleged and the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMOUS REPORTING AND BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS**

### **Confidentiality**

To the extent permitted by law, and as appropriate, WRA will keep confidential the complainant's name on request, not make public the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator or the people who made a report of child physical and sexual abuse to the authorities.

## **Anonymous Reporting**

WRA recognizes it can be difficult for an athlete, teammate, friend or family member to report an allegation of misconduct and strives to remove as many barriers to reporting as possible. **Anonymous reports may be made without the formality of completing an Incident Report Form:**

- by completing the Reporting Form without including their name
- by expressing concerns verbally to a WRA administrator or a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee
- through email, texts or notes left for a WRA administrator or a member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee.

**However, anonymous reporting may make it difficult for WRA to investigate or properly address allegations.**

All suspicions of child physical or sexual abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

## **"Whistleblower" Protection**

Regardless of outcome, WRA will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. WRA will not encourage, allow or tolerate attempts from any individual to retaliate, punish, allow or in any way harm any individual(s) who reports a concern in good faith. Such actions against a complainant will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action.

## **Bad-Faith Allegations**

A report of abuse, misconduct or policy violations that is malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith is prohibited. Such reports will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the allegation, a person making a malicious, frivolous or bad-faith report may also be subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

## **HOW REPORTS ARE HANDLED**

### **Suspicious or Allegations of Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

#### ***Reporting to Law Enforcement and/or Child Protective Services***

An independent investigation can harm youth and/or interfere with the legal investigative process. WRA, its staff members and/or volunteers **do not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.** As necessary, however, WRA may ask a few clarifying questions of the minor or person making the report to adequately report the suspicion or allegation to law enforcement authorities.

For mandatory reporting laws, visit [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov).

### ***Immediate Suspension or Termination***

When an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse is made against a staff member, youth and/or volunteer, WRA may immediately remove that individual from contact with any children in the program until the allegation has been investigated by an official agency. As necessary, WRA may suspend or change the assignment of a staff member and/or volunteer.

A staff member or volunteer's failure to report to a supervisor, a WRA administrator or member of the Participant Safety Committee is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of a staff member and/or dismissal of a volunteer.

### **Misconduct and Policy Violations**

WRA addresses internally alleged policy violations and misconduct – bullying, harassment, hazing, emotional, physical and sexual – that are not reportable under relevant state or federal law. Staff members and/or volunteer must report policy violations and misconduct to an immediate supervisor, WRA administrator or member of WRA's Participant Safety Committee.

### **NOTIFICATION**

Following WRA's notice of a credible allegation that results in the removal of an employee, coach or other volunteer, WRA may consider the circumstances in which it will notify other parents of athletes with whom the accused individual may have had contact. In WRA's discretion, as appropriate, and after consultation with counsel, WRA may notify its staff members, contractors, volunteers, parents, and/or athletes of any allegation of child physical or sexual abuse or other criminal behavior that (1) law enforcement authorities are actively investigating; or (2) that WRA is investigating internally. Advising others of an allegation may lead to additional reports of child physical or sexual abuse and other misconduct.

## **DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURE**

While WRA endeavors to provide support and guidance to participants on a day-to-day basis, it is also important for WRA to have a formal procedure for disciplinary action to address alleged violations of its policies and other inappropriate behaviors, which is consistent with WRA's Bylaws and Constitution.

### **APPLICATION**

This Policy is used to address the following allegations against members, athletes, participants and/or volunteers:

- Violations of WRA's policies; and/or
- Child abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) that does not involve an ongoing legal investigation or criminal prosecution.

**WRA will not investigate an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse if it undermines or interferes with a pending legal investigation or criminal prosecution.**

### **DISCIPLINARY RULES**

WRA recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a youth participant who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, WRA's disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

On receipt of an allegation, WRA will determine in its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct based on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.

WRA will address allegations against a staff member and/or volunteer under its Employment Policies and Procedures, Bylaws and Constitution.

WRA's disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme cases, misconduct will result in immediate summary dismissal, provided that the accused individual shall be advised of their right to a hearing. If the accused individual is a minor, WRA will contact his or her parents or guardians.



## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Sanctions for violations of the Participant Safety Handbook will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, the WRA may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- Inform the board or, in the case of a youth participant, the youth's parent or guardian
- Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- Temporary suspension from competition
- Issue a verbal warning
- Issue a written and/or final written warning
- Implement a limited access agreement (e.g., limiting an individual's access to certain buildings or to youth)
- Engage in restorative practices, i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when a misunderstanding or harm has occurred
- Suspend or terminate employment or membership

## **ONGOING EMPLOYMENT AND/OR PARTICIPATION**

On receipt of a credible and specific allegation of child abuse or other serious misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual abuse as defined in our Athlete Protection Policy), WRA may immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual to ensure participant safety.

## **COMPLAINANT PROTECTION**

Regardless of outcome, WRA will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. WRA will not encourage or tolerate attempts to retaliate, punish or in any way harm any individual(s) who report(s) a concern in good faith. Such actions will be grounds for disciplinary action.

## **BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS**

Any individual who alleges misconduct under the Participant Safety Handbook that, upon review, is determined to be malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith will be a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook. Bad-faith allegations may also be subject to criminal or civil proceedings.

## **MONITORING YOUR STRATEGY**

By monitoring the interactions among staff, volunteers, athletes, and other, WRA works to prevent, recognize and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors as set forth in our Participant Safety Handbook, while reinforcing appropriate behaviors.

## **MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

WRA monitors for compliance with its policies and procedures, including without limitation its Awareness Training, Travel, and Physical Contact Policies.

## **MONITORING METHODS**

WRA monitors those in supervisory roles by observing how individuals are interacting by maintaining frequent contact with members, volunteers and athletes.

## **RESPONDING TO INTERACTIONS**

Members and volunteers should be prepared to respond immediately to inappropriate or harmful behavior, potential risk situations and potential boundary violations.

Members and volunteers will redirect inappropriate behaviors to promote positive behaviors, confront inappropriate or harmful behaviors, and report behaviors if necessary.

## **REPORTING**

Members and volunteers are required to report policy violations, misconduct and physical and sexual abuse consistent with WRA's Reporting Policy. **WRA does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

