

PRAESIDIUM



CODE OF CONDUCT RESOURCE

Establishing Safe Boundaries in
Youth Sports

www.PraesidiumInc.com

Indemnity Statement

Praesidium provides Sample Policies and Procedures to assist in the prevention of organizational abuse. However, it must be noted that no system can guarantee prevention of abuse. This information is not legal advice, either expressed or implied. Consultation with qualified legal counsel is recommended.

When all recommendations are implemented and maintained, a risk for abuse continues to exist, as the problem of abuse is pervasive and no system to date can assure complete safety.

Accordingly, **PRAESIDIUM MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND MERCHANTABILITY, REGARDING THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE PRAESIDIUM SAMPLE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PREVENTING OR REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF ABUSE**

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INTRODUCTION

Youth sports programs provide children with invaluable opportunities to grow, build teamwork, and develop essential skills that can last a lifetime. These programs not only nurture athletic ability but also instill qualities like discipline, resilience, and cooperation. However, the foundation of these benefits lies in ensuring a safe and secure environment where athletes can flourish without fear of harm or misconduct. Achieving this requires a robust framework of policies and practices that prioritize the well-being of all participants.

Coaches, as trusted mentors and role models, play a pivotal role in creating this safe space. Their actions, both on and off the field, set the tone for the program and significantly influence the athletes' experiences. Adhering to a **comprehensive Code of Conduct** is essential, as it ensures accountability, respect, and transparency across all interactions. This guide provides detailed safety measures to address key areas of concern, including guidelines for one-on-one interactions, private lessons, physical and verbal behaviors, gift-giving, electronic communication, regular monitoring, and travel. Each of these components is carefully designed to protect athletes while fostering trust and open communication among coaches, parents, and the organization.

By implementing and enforcing these measures, organizations can mitigate risks and create a culture of safety and integrity. Policies around interactions and communication set clear boundaries that help prevent misconduct, while travel and monitoring guidelines ensure athletes' well-being during trips and events. Additionally, fostering transparency through regular parental involvement and feedback helps build trust and strengthens the relationship between the program and the community it serves.

Ultimately, prioritizing athlete safety is not just about reducing risks; it's about creating an environment where young athletes can focus on learning, growing, and achieving their full potential. With the right policies in place, youth sports programs can serve as a powerful platform for development, empowering children to succeed both on and off the field.

For more information on risk factors for abuse in youth sports, check out our blog at: <https://www.praesidiuminc.com/safeguarding-youth-in-sports/>



ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

- Abuse is a private event. Most abuse occurs when one adult sequesters one youth in a secure or isolated area. Therefore, circumstances when one employee or high-access volunteer is with one youth should be extremely limited.
- The organization should have a policy for managing the risk when one employee or volunteer must be alone with one youth.

OUTSIDE CONTACT AND PRIVATE LESSONS

- Organizational abuse often occurs off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Allowing contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put employees, volunteers, and athletes at increased risk.
- Prohibit or limit outside contact, and include guidelines around private lessons, such as encouraging parents to attend or observe them. This not only ensures transparency but also helps parents stay engaged in their child's development.
- Always conduct private lessons in visible and open areas.

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE PHYSICAL AND VERBAL INTERACTIONS

- Unlike many youth programs where physical contact would be limited to side hugs, fist bumps, or high-fives with school age youth, sports programs may require additional physical instruction. Your program should identify what is necessary and appropriate for your sport and the age group you are serving and clearly outline what physical contact is and is not acceptable.
- These guidelines should include communication requirements for parents and youth about what to expect, what is in and out of bounds, and how volunteers and staff will ask for consent from player participants related to physical interactions.
- We know that grooming and sexual abuse do not only occur physically. Verbal interactions should be positive, non-sexual, and age appropriate.

GIFT GIVING

- Offenders routinely groom youth by giving them gifts to endear themselves. Sometimes they instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret. For this reason, employees and volunteers should only give gifts to youth when administration is made aware of and approve the gift and guardians should be notified.
- To avoid misperceptions of boundary-crossing behavior or false allegations, employees and volunteers should accept gifts from youth with caution, notify their supervisor, and document the exchange.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

- If your organization permits electronic communication like texting, messaging, or email between coaches and athletes, there should be explicit rules surrounding it, including the acceptable means of communication (email, Remind101, other apps, etc.), who should be included in the communication, and the times it is allowed to happen.

REGULAR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Ensure that sports programs are regularly monitored by parents or other adult staff in order to mitigate opportunities for the privacy required for abuse to occur.
- Regular monitoring should also include watching for and interrupting any observed bullying or more extreme youth-to-youth problematic sexual behaviors.
- While regular monitoring of all programs is essential, increased monitoring during travel is crucial while your program takes place in new and less controlled environments.

TRAVEL AND OVERNIGHT GUIDELINES

- Your organization should maintain written policies around travel for games, competitions, or other athletic events.
- Athletes should not travel alone with a non-parental adult.
- Detailed travel plans should be provided to parents before overnight travel.
- Always have multiple chaperones who are trained and screened properly, including both male and female adults, for travel and overnight trips. This helps provide a balanced supervision environment.
- For overnight travel that requires stays in a hotel or dorm (or similar), assign rooms to athletes based on age and gender, and ensure that no coach or adult shares a room with an athlete unless they are the athlete's parent or guardian.
- Ensure each athlete has their own bed, and that they are only to go in their assigned rooms.
- To the extent possible, create a community space for athletes to hang out together, separate from their rooms, that is supervised.
- Establish clear curfews and regular check-in times.
- Chaperones should conduct room checks in pairs to ensure athletes are safe and accounted for.

Whether you're just starting to address safety concerns or looking to enhance your current practices, Praesidium is here to guide you. Our commitment is to empower you to create an environment where every individual feels safe, valued, and protected.

Take the first step toward a safer future with Praesidium—your trusted partner in preventing sexual abuse and fostering secure environments.

For more information visit: www.PraesidiumInc.com or email us at: Info@PraesidiumInc.com