

Entourage Factsheet: Sports Organisations

For NOCs, IFs and NFs



Despite the numerous well-recognised benefits of participating in sport, evidence indicates that harassment and abuse occurs in all sports and at all levels.

Article 2.18 of the Olympic Charter (2019) states that the role and mission of the IOC is...

To promote safe sport and the protection of athletes from all forms of harassment and abuse.

This factsheet highlights the important role that sports organisations play in fostering safe sporting environments for all athletes: athletic environments which are fair, equitable and free from all forms of harassment and abuse.



It is incumbent upon all stakeholders in sport both to adopt general principles for safe sport... and to implement and monitor policies and procedures for safe sport... which state that: all athletes have a right to be treated with respect, protected from non-accidental violence...

IOC Consensus Statement: Harassment and Abuse in Sport (2016)

What is Harassment and Abuse in Sport?

Harassment and abuse can be expressed in five forms which may occur in combination or in isolation. These forms of abuse are defined here as:

Psychological Abuse means any unwelcome act including confinement, isolation, verbal, assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilisation, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.

Sexual Harassment means any unwanted and unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical. Sexual harassment can take the form of sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse means any conduct of a sexual nature, whether non-contact, contact or penetrative, where consent is coerced/manipulated or is not or cannot be given.

Neglect means the failure of a coach or another person with a duty of care towards the athlete to provide a minimum level of care to the athlete, which is causing harm, allowing harm to be caused, or creating an imminent danger of harm.

Physical Abuse means any deliberate and unwelcome act that causes physical trauma or injury, including things such as inappropriate training loads, forced doping, training whilst in pain, punching, etc.



Full definitions can be found in the [IOC Consensus Statement 2016](#)



Whilst not all cases constitute a criminal offence, all are a breach of human rights and can have a multitude of severe detrimental impacts on athletes

Impacts of abuse in sport

Impact on athletes

- Physical illness or injury
- Performance loss
- Sport drop-out
- Economic loss
- Doping and other forms of cheating
- Disordered eating and eating disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Self-harm
- Social isolation
- Low self esteem
- Volatile mood states
- Depression and anxiety
- Challenging interpersonal relationships
- Suicide

Impact on organisations

- Reputational damage
- Loss of players and fans
- Loss of sponsorship
- Reduced medal tally & world performance
- Reduced public confidence
- Loss of trust
- Asset depreciation
- Reduced youth enrollment
- Staff turnover
- Economic loss
- In-fighting
- Legal entanglements

(Tuakli-Wosornu et al., 2020, Mountjoy et al., 2016)

Key principles

Policies, procedures and education to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport should:



Be athlete-centered and developed in collaboration with athletes



Consider **prevention** of harassment and abuse as well as the **response** to incidents



Clearly define what constitutes harassment and abuse in sport



Be aligned with available research



Be consistently applied, clearly communicated and accessible



Be monitored, reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis

It is paramount that we promote sporting cultures in which athletes may thrive and achieve and where we reject a “no pain/no gain” philosophy. Although everyone in a sports organisation has an important role to play, leadership must come from the top.

Adopting and implementing safeguarding policies, procedures and mechanisms

Sports organisations play an important role in ensuring that:

1. Preventative measures are in place to reduce the risk of harassment and abuse occurring
2. If an incident does occur, mechanisms are in place to ensure that the person affected:
 - Knows how and where they can report
 - Feels supported and safe to do so
 - Understands the procedure that will be followed
 - Trusts that the procedure will be fair and robust



We come from many different countries and sports with different laws, cultures and customs, however there is only one culture which should apply to athletes...and that is one of respect.



HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein
IOC PHAS Working Group Chair
and IOC Executive Board Member



Three factors contributing to increased risk of harassment and abuse



(International Olympic Committee, 2017)

We know that there is an increased risk of harassment and abuse in sport when **three factors align**.

On the next page we highlight these factors and the key steps your organisation can take to better protect athletes, your organisation and the integrity of sport.

1

High risk of a perpetrator with the inclination to harass or abuse

Prevention

Are safeguarding measures implemented in your recruitment regulations? For example :

- Does your organisation conduct criminal records checks (in accordance with applicable legislation)?
- Do you require mandatory references for all job candidates?

Is the protection of harassment and abuse in sport included in mandatory education and training for all of your stakeholders? This should include:

- Awareness on what constitutes harassment and abuse in sport
- Information on the roles and responsibilities that all those involved in sport play in creating a safe sporting environment
- Recognising the signs and indicators of harassment and abuse
- Specialised training for those working with athletes or who have a role to play in following up on a safeguarding concern

Do you have a code of conduct in place for athletes, for entourage members and for other stakeholders? These should:

- Clearly detail what behaviour is not acceptable
- Be specific to each stakeholder group
- Outline the measures and sanctions applicable for violations of the code of conduct
- Always be signed



Response

It is imperative that you have policies and processes in place to effectively and appropriately respond in the event that a concern is raised. Please see "sport protection mechanisms"

2

Low sport protection mechanisms

Prevention

- Foster an organisational culture which places athlete well-being as a priority
- Table a discussion on Safe Sport with your organisations executive bodies
- Ensure the rejection of harassment and abuse is clearly stated in your organisation's foundational frameworks
- Identify who is responsible for overseeing the development of safe sport policies and procedures and mechanisms in your organisation and ensure that they are adequately trained
- Liaise with other expert organisations on the national and international level to promote collaboration and sharing of best practice
- Develop guidance and programmes to build capacity in member organisations



Response

Conduct a self-audit of your organisation in order to determine what measures are in place and where the gaps are.

Assemble a working group of experts and organisations with different areas of expertise to help you develop your safe sport policies and procedures. It is important that this group includes athletes.

Review available research on safeguarding in sport to make sure that interventions are evidence based.

Develop a safeguarding policy, which should:

- State that all members have a right to respect, safety and protection
- State that the welfare of members is paramount
- Specify what constitutes harassment and abuse and the range of consequences for violations
- Provide details of where parties can report an incident and where they can access support
- Ensure that complaints will be investigated appropriately, confidentially and in a timely manner
- Align with other national and international safeguarding in sport agendas where applicable

3 High athlete vulnerability

Evidence demonstrates that whilst all athletes are susceptible to harassment and abuse, elite, child, disabled, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans-sexual (LGBT) athletes are at a higher risk.

It is important to recognise this and to ensure specific measures related to the protection and promotion of vulnerable groups are included within your athlete safeguarding policies and procedures.

Measures to support athletes may include:

- Educating athletes and entourage members to recognise signs of harassment and abuse
- Encouraging athletes and entourage members to talk about harassment and abuse to help reduce stigma and break taboos
- Highlighting that athletes also have a responsibility to ensure safe sporting environments – reducing the risk of peer-to-peer abuse
- Fostering strong partnerships with athletes' parents/caregivers to promote safe sport
- Working with local organisations, experts and charities to raise awareness of harassment and abuse and particular considerations for vulnerable groups

Globally, athletes with disabilities are at a 2-4 times greater risk of:

Bullying
Physical abuse
Sexual and Psychological abuse

Tuakli-Wosornu et al., 2020



Further information and guidance related to the development and implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures can be found here:

- [The IOC Athlete Safeguarding Toolkit](#)
- [The IOC Consensus Statement Harassment and Abuse in Sport \(2016\)](#)
- [International Safeguards for Children in Sport](#)
- [IOC Safe Sport Educational tools and initiatives](#)

References

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