



Tips for Protecting Child Athletes from Sexual Abuse

Every child athlete deserves a safe and fun sports experience. Use these tips to help your child have one.



Make a game plan

Ask these questions to find out if preventing child sexual abuse is a priority for your child's youth sports program.

- Are background checks performed on all staff with access to youth?
- Does staff receive training on recognizing and reporting child sexual abuse? How often?
- Is there a staff code of conduct/ethics? Does it address inappropriate behaviors?
- What is your organization's reporting procedure?



Know the plays

Every youth-sports program should have policies addressing:

BULLYING AND HAZING

There should be a zero-tolerance policy.

COACH-ATHLETE COMMUNICATIONS

Parents should be included in all communications, including those via text message, telephone or social media.

LOCKER AND RESTROOMS

These areas should be supervised by two staff of the same sex as the children using them. Staff should respect children's privacy while supervising them. Parents should have access to the facilities in order to assist young children and those with disabilities.

SUPERVISION

Children should be supervised by at least two staff while at all team activities.

TRAVEL

Staff should not stay in the same hotel rooms as youth.

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Get off the bench

Those who sexually abuse children are often very good at manipulating both the child and their parents in order to get access to the child. Help protect your child by being an active participant in his or her athletic experience.

GO TO PRACTICES AND GAMES

You'll be able to get to know the staff and monitor their treatment of children.

TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT BEING ON THE TEAM

If he or she does not like it, find out why. It may indicate a more serious problem or concern.

HELP CHILDREN SET BOUNDARIES

Teach them they have the right to be treated with respect, even by adults.

EMPOWER YOUTH TO SAY "NO"

Let them know it's OK to stand up to anyone who makes them feel confused or uncomfortable. Use role-playing scenarios to practice this skill.

SPEAK UP

Address red flag behaviors by speaking with the team's coach. If the issue remains unresolved, discuss your concerns with the organization's administration.

REPORT

Contact local law enforcement immediately. You should also contact the supervisors of the sporting program or the dedicated reporting tool for abuse – this may be a phone number or online platform.

Call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® at 1-800-THE-LOST for additional assistance.

BE A TEAM PLAYER

Not all children have someone looking out for them. Bring up red flag behaviors even if your child is not the one being affected.



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