

Safeguarding Athletes from Sexual Harassment/Abuse in Sport: The role of the Coach

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3 Questions to explore

- Q1 What is safeguarding in sport?
- Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and Abuse?
- Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

First..... Agreements

We all love Sport,

and

participating in sport bring major benefits to everyone.

Agreements

But Sport is part of society

SO

we cannot avoid meeting some of these social problems

Agreements

Sexual Harassment and Abuse are examples of these problems

so

we need to have good athlete protection (safeguarding)
systems in place

Q1. What is safeguarding ?

- Safeguarding athletes in sport means
- Having mechanisms that reduce the risk of social problems such as sexual harassment and abuse leaking into our sports environment

Q1. What is safeguarding ?

- Preventing non-accidental harm to athletes under our training programmes needs two levels of responsibility
 - **Organizational responsibility** to provide education, policies, guidelines and reporting procedures to empower individuals

And

- **Individual responsibility** to act according to the policy/guidelines etc

Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and abuse?

- It is important to understand the psychological impact of abuse .
- When we understand the psychological impact, we can then understand why young athletes who are being abused do not say anything about it (for many years).
- There is immediate psychological impact and long term psychological impact
- And these can be very serious especially where the perpetrator is a person in a role of trust, guardianship or authority (eg., coach, doctor, etc)

Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and abuse?

- Immediate impact
 - Fear
 - feeling too scared to tell anyone
- “I remember being so scared before going there (to meet the coach in the hotel room after the competition). I was crossing my fingers and praying to God that he would not do it.”
- “My mum could see something was wrong and she asked me but I was too scared to tell her” (Female athlete)

Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and abuse?

- Confusion and feeling Trapped

- “I just didn’t really know what was going on. My mind just couldn’t understand it . I kept thinking what has this got to do with my training?” (male athlete)
- “I didn’t realize there was another way out or that there was an option for me like telling someone”. (female athlete)

Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and abuse?

Long Term impact on

- **Self perception** (e.g. negative self concept, self hatred)
- **Emotional development** (e.g. very difficult to control emotions)
- **Relationships** (e.g. very difficult to trust and develop a normal healthy relationship)
- **Behavior** (e.g. Self-harming, substance abuse)
- **Physical Health**
- **Sports career**

Q2 What is the Psychological Impact on athletes of sexual harassment and abuse?

- **The Bystander effect**

- Can make things worse

Or

- Can make things much better

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

Individual responsibility :

The Coach is the athletes' most trusted mentor

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

1. Ask your organisation to provide you with the following:
 - or if your are the organizational/club leader you can consider providing the following :
 1. codes of ethics
 2. recruitment processes which minimize risk (screening questions; do relevant sexual conviction record check)
 3. Regular education/awareness raising for staff and volunteers (eg EOC, Against Child Abuse Foundation, Plan International HK and other NGO's provide excellent training and assistance)
 4. clear Sexual Harassment and Child Safeguarding /Protection policy and procedures (two different documents)

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

- If You need help developing your Club policy and procedures and education for your staff and volunteers go to
- Equal Opportunities Commission 平等機會委員會
- 國際培幼會(香港) Plan International Hong Kong ;
<https://www.plan.org.hk/en/home/>

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

2. Eliminate risky (not necessarily ‘wrong’) behaviors/practices

Everyone agrees Sexual Harassment and Abuse is not OK but sometimes we are unaware of high risk behaviors which may be misinterpreted or misunderstood or overlooked

Risky Practice: unnecessarily spending a lot of time of time alone with an athlete away from others

Good Practice: Working in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets

Risky Practice: taking an athlete to your home where he/she will be alone with you

Good Practice: Always have group/team activities with athletes not individual activities.

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

3. Be a role model and require your coaches to be role models of open, fair, respectful, communication to each other and to athletes

- Do not allow or encourage coaches and/or athletes to make comments/jokes about anyone's gender, sexuality, race, disability
- Encourage open discussion about safeguarding in your club/organisation

Q3 What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

3. What to do if I see or hear about a suspected case

Everyone is worried about what to do if they see or hear about a suspected case but remember

- It is not your role to investigate or judge if Sexual harassment or abuse has occurred (you are not the police)
- All you have to do has to do is report to the designated person in your organisation (this should be contained in the organisation policy and procedures)
- If your organisation has no policy then use the community services in your area to get advice

Q3. What can Coaches do to safeguard/protect athletes?

- If you are not sure what to do you can get help and advice from the specialist services provided by
- [ACA \(Against Child Abuse\) 防止虐待兒童會主頁](#)

hotline2755 1122

ACA a non-government organisation(NGO) specialising in child protection programmes.

- [Social Welfare Department 社會福利署](#)

hotline.....2343 2255

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region SWD provides specialist services through the Family and Child Protective Services Unit.

- [風雨蘭 - 性暴力受害人支援服務 - rainlily.org.hk](#)

hotline.....2375 5322

An NGO supporting women and children victim-survivors of sexual violence and their supporters

Plan InternationalL hk

- [國際培幼會\(香港\) Plan International Hong Kong \(3405 5305\)](#)

Q3 What if my athlete tells me he/she is being abused by someone?

• Do

- Stay calm
- Listen
- be supportive,
- Say, “Telling me is the right thing to do” and
- “It is not your fault”
- Only ask questions to make sure you have understood what the athlete has said
- Be honest and let a child athlete know that others may have to be told to get the help needed.
- Report immediately (to your Organisation, or community expert NGO or SWD)

• Do Not

- challenge the athlete
- say “are you sure?”
- say “ don’t cry”
- ask questions about details
- contact the alleged perpetrator
- promise that everything will be ok

Summary

1. Sexual harassment and abuse is a complex issue.

Whenever there is a case there are **multiple needs**, eg (to care of the athlete, the alleged perpetrator may be a staff/volunteer member so HR issues), Organisational, media, legal issues to be dealt with.

2. We cannot do it in isolation - Use the experts!

We have to effectively engage in cross-sectoral stakeholder networks if we are to be successful in maintaining the integrity of our sport programmes and systems.

3. Let's be clear - sport is not the problem. Sexual harassment and Abuse is a social problem

5. But If we in sport do not do our part at organisation and individual levels, then we become the problem .

Other resources



IOC Safe Sport initiatives

<https://www.olympic.org/safesport/>

- **Olympic And Youth Olympic Games-related**
- The Frameworks in place at the Olympic and Youth Olympic Games through which any reports during Games time can be reported and will be investigated.
- **Education and awareness-raising**
- Specially developed educational tools and awareness-raising materials, which are free to take and share
- **Assistance for the Olympic Movement (IOC Athlete Safeguarding Toolkit)**
- Tools and initiatives to assist National Olympic Committees and International Federations to develop and implement athlete safeguarding policies and procedures
- **IOC Athlete Safeguarding Webinar Series**
- The Webinar Series for International Federations, consisting of 10 two-hour webinars, has been developed to support these organisations with the implementation of policy and athlete safeguarding measures

Olympic Agenda 2020 : Sport Integrity

- The IOC is committed to strengthening the integrity of sports organisations and protecting clean athletes. The fight against **doping** and any other forms of **cheating** in sport on the one hand, and the strengthening of **ethics** with improvements in **transparency**, good **governance** and **accountability of sports organisations** on the other, have been top priorities for the IOC.
- Integrity entails credibility, and the credibility of competitions and sports organisations is one of the three pillars of [Olympic Agenda 2020](#). If the credibility of sports competitions suffers, then sooner or later the credibility of sports organisations will suffer. The same is true the other way around.

- **Integrity at competitions**
- Find out about how the IOC works to ensure a level playing field and to protect clean athletes, based on fairness and respect:
- [Fight against doping](#)
- [Prevention of competition manipulation](#)
- [Prevention of harassment and abuse in sport](#)

International Safeguards for Children in Sport

- <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/toolkit/child-protection-and-safeguarding/international-safeguards-children-sport>

Thank You!