

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse is a serious concern that has existed for centuries. It crosses all cultural, economic and community boundaries. The heightened awareness of abuse in sport has resulted from a number of courageous disclosures by athletes who have experienced emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. This has led to a new drive within the sport community to protect children, youth and adults to whom sport has become an important part of life.

To provide safety for their young athletes, sport organizations need to first provide a framework of policies and procedures. These guidelines should give direction on a number of issues; definitions of abuse and neglect; definition of a child; response to disclosures; dealing with alleged offenders; role of personnel; response to the Child Protection Acts; and prevention education required.

The Child Protection Acts that exist in every province and territory are one vehicle through which Canadian citizens are required to take responsibility for the protection of Canada's young people. These Acts define the reportable types of abuse and neglect and outline the response process (see Appendix: Child Protection Acts). Together with education, the legislation acknowledges the vulnerability of children and youth and identifies the safety net needed.

DEFINITIONS

Child/Youth: Determined by the age of majority in each province or territory. Across Canada a person is considered a child up to the age of 16 to 19 years depending on provincial or territorial legislation.

Child/Youth Abuse: Child/youth abuse is any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care which causes physical injury or emotional damage to a young person. A common characteristic of all forms of abuse against children and youth is an abuse of power or authority and/or breach of trust.

TYPE OF ABUSE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES IN SPORT
Emotional Abuse	A chronic attack on a child/youth's self-esteem; psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing or ignoring the child/youth's needs.	
Emotional abuse can be categorized into six different areas:		
1. Rejecting	To refuse to acknowledge, believe, hear, or support the child/youth's worth or legitimacy of his/her needs.	■ chronic humiliation, excessive criticism, use of labels, scapegoating, use of negative names.

TYPE OF ABUSE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES IN SPORT
<i>Emotional Abuse continued</i>		
2. Isolating	To separate from others; to cut child/youth off from normal social experiences which results in extreme aloneness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ prohibiting interaction with others, withdrawing or preventing athletes from participating in school or regular activities, preventing interaction/contact with family/friends
3. Terrorizing	To coerce by intimidation, causing a state or instance of extreme fear, violent dread, fright; child/youth can be terrorized through observing or being threatened by violence in their homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ teasing, scaring, verbal threats of harm, rages, inconsistent demands, changing rules, ridiculing, forcing athletes to try an unsafe activity, witnessing violent behaviour
4. Corrupting	To render anti-social or malsocialized; to change from good to bad; to encourage destructive, anti-social behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rewarding socially unacceptable behaviour, endorsing athlete's violent behaviour/attitude, encouraging substance use/abuse (e.g. alcohol, illicit drugs, steroids), reinforcing racial or hatred-based biases, reinforcing bizarre rituals/habits
5. Ignoring	To fail to provide sensitive, responsive caregiving; to deprive child/youth of essential stimulation and responsiveness; to interact only when necessary; to be psychologically unavailable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ostracizing individuals, failing to intervene when help is needed
6. Exploiting/ Adultifying	To make use of someone for one's own advantage or profit; to make excessive age-inappropriate demands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ using the athlete to meet adult needs, treating an athlete as "property"
Physical Abuse	When a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ threatening to use unreasonable physical force as a punishment, response or dynamic of your relationship ■ use of physical force, such as hitting, slapping, punching, pinching, kicking, hair pulling, hitting with an object, shaking, pushing, burning, biting, tying up, restraining, etc. ■ using excessive exercise as a punishment ■ forcing an athlete to work out until they vomit or pass out from exhaustion ■ throwing equipment at an athlete, such as pucks, helmets, balls, clipboards, etc. ■ pushing/throwing athletes against the walls, boards, net

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TYPE OF ABUSE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES IN SPORT
<i>Physical Abuse continued</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ having/allowing team members to physically assault another athlete
Physical Neglect	<p>Chronic inattention to the basic necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, nutritious diets, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise and fresh air.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ injuries are not adequately treated ■ players are made to play with injuries ■ equipment is inadequate or unsafe ■ no-one intervenes when team members are persistently harassing another player ■ road trips are not properly supervised
Sexual Abuse	<p>When a young person is used by an older child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual gratification. There are two categories of sexual abuse: contact and non-contact (Fairholm, 1997, p. 8.6).</p>	<p>1. Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ kissing or holding an athlete in a sexual manner ■ touching an athlete's sexual body parts or forcing an athlete to touch your sexual parts ■ penetrating an athlete anally or vaginally with an object ■ having vaginal, anal or oral intercourse with an athlete ■ sexually oriented hazing <p>2. Non-contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ watching an athlete change or shower (voyeurism) ■ speaking or communicating sexually/seductively towards an athlete ■ showing pornography (films, magazines, photos) to athletes or having them participate (knowingly or unknowingly) in the creation of pornographic media ■ forcing an athlete to watch a sexual act performed by others ■ objectifying or ridiculing an athlete's sexual body parts ■ flashing or exposing your sexual body parts to an athlete ■ sending an athlete sexually explicit e-mails

Sexual parts of the body: Buttocks, anus, genital area — vulva, vagina, penis, scrotum — breasts and mouth.

IMPACT OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

TYPE OF ABUSE	PHYSICAL INDICATORS	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS
Emotional Abuse (including witnessing family violence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ poor appetite ■ speech disorders ■ limited emotional responses ■ muscle twitches ■ headaches, pains, nausea ■ excessive nail biting ■ lying, stealing ■ use of drugs/alcohol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ low self-esteem ■ depression ■ withdrawal ■ aggressive behaviours ■ self-inflicted injuries (cuts/burns) ■ prostitution ■ suicide attempts ■ acting significantly younger or older than is appropriate for age
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ unexplained bruises on face, lower back, thighs and upper arms ■ bruises of different colours ■ welts or red marks in the shape of a belt, hair brush or other object ■ unexplained fractures to skull/limbs ■ burns; scalding, cigarette burns, pattern burns, rope burns ■ cut and wounds ■ adult size bite marks ■ swollen, red ears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ fearful of any touching and may "cringe" or be startled easily ■ wariness of adults/caregivers ■ extreme watchfulness ■ comes to school/practice early and stays late (afraid to go home) ■ exaggerated politeness with adults ■ wearing clothes inappropriate to the weather or activity (attempts to hide bruising) ■ thrill seeking behaviour ■ sneaky behaviour (lying, snooping, stealing) ■ extremes of behaviour — passive or aggressive ■ expressing abuse in art work/music
Physical Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ persistent hunger ■ dirtiness ■ constant fatigue and listlessness ■ ragged, unclean, ill-fitting clothes ■ dressed inappropriately for the weather ■ left alone without supervision or care ■ failure to develop in a normal manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ nervous habits and immature behaviours for the child's/youth's age ■ withdrawn/unassertive /depressed ■ demands attention yet can be shy or clingy ■ falls asleep in school

Child maltreatment... is not just about brutality; it is also about subtle but protracted and piercing pain, about feeling lonely, abandoned, betrayal, rejected and unworthy. Maltreatment is about trust betrayed, love warped, and opportunities lost; it is about stealing happiness and depriving joy; it is about exploiting power and denigrating others. Abuse is about a vicious cycle that affects victims, their offspring and society at large.

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