

Open letter regarding SafeSport

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An Open Letter to Curling Clubs:

As you are undoubtedly aware, incidents of sexual abuse in Olympic sports have been the subject of much media attention over the past year. In order to help prevent future abuse of minor athletes, the United States Congress passed a law earlier this year to increase protections for youth athletes involved in sports. This law officially designates the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) as the sole entity (outside of law enforcement) to investigate cases of alleged sexual abuse or misconduct in Olympic sports. In addition to investigating and resolving allegations of abuse, the Center was authorized to develop policy regarding training and one-on-one interactions with minors. The resulting policy not only impacts national governing bodies of Olympic Sports, such as USA Curling, it impacts all local, state, and regional sport organizations. This communication is to provide curlers with more information on the first of a series of steps that clubs need to take in order to be in compliance with these laws and policies if minors participate in club programs. All presidents of U.S. Curling Association member clubs have already been emailed this information, along with supporting documents.

All adults (18 and over) who are members of your club, volunteer at your club, or are hired to work at your club and have regular contact with or authority over amateur athletes (participants) who are minors are now required to complete child abuse prevention training. This includes, but is not limited to, coaches and instructors who work regularly with youth leagues, youth training organizers, youth bonspiel chairs or organizers, anyone transporting youth in addition to their own children to practice or events, and the like. This does not mean that all adults curling in a league with players who are minors need to complete child abuse prevention training; however, an adult managing a league in which youth are participating should complete the training.

In addition, all staff and board members in clubs, states, and regions (whether or not they have regular contact with or are in positions of authority over minors) are required to complete child abuse prevention training on an annual basis. This should include positions such as a club manager, whether or not that person is paid staff. For the sake of clarity, adults who are required to complete child abuse prevention training as referenced above will be referred to as “participating adults” throughout the remainder of this communication.

It should be noted that the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport

Authorization Act of 2017 applies to all amateur sports organizations in the United States. All such organizations must abide by this law, whether they are members of a national governing body or not. Through your club’s membership in the U.S. Curling Association, and the USCA’s support of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, you have access to FREE online child abuse prevention training developed by the U.S. Center for SafeSport. The training can be found on the Center’s website at <https://safesport.org> (<https://safesport.org>). Specific directions for completing the training, including USA Curling’s access code, have been provided to club presidents. Please note that training other than that provided by the Center does not satisfy this requirement.

Participating Adults must complete the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s online training no later than January 1, 2019. People who do not currently fall under the definition of participating adults at the present time, but may in the future, must complete the training:

- Before regular contact with an amateur athlete who is a minor begins, or,

- Within the first 45 days upon beginning a new role subjecting the participating adult to this policy if there is no direct contact with minors involved in the role.

The required training consists of three sections:

- Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education
- Emotional and Physical Misconduct
- Mandatory Reporting

All three sections must be completed with passing scores on the final test for the training requirement to be met. These sessions do not, however, need to be completed in a single sitting. Please note that the Center's website provides proof of completion that can be forwarded to the club president or other club representative. In addition, USA Curling staff can check on completion at the request of club presidents or other designated individuals.

Training must be completed each and every year an individual falls under the definition of a participating adult. In future seasons, all participating adults who have completed the three training modules listed above can take the abbreviated refresher course offered by the Center in order to meet the annual training requirement.

In addition to requiring training for participating adults, a mandatory reporting requirement was added to the federal protections for youth in sports. Participating adults who learn of information that gives reason to suspect that a child has suffered an incident of child abuse, including sexual abuse, MUST make a report to law enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport within 24 hours. Individuals who choose not to report information about which they have become aware face a potential fine and imprisonment of up to one year. Thus, if participating adults hear a rumor that a minor participant may be the victim of physical or sexual abuse within the sport, they must report it immediately. It is up to the professionals to investigate, not the club.

While not currently required by Federal law or the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USA Curling also recommends that clubs screen all participating adults. Club presidents have been provided information about the background screening provider used by USA Curling. The national organization's group rate is available to member clubs. In addition, please check to determine whether participating adults in your organization are banned from participating in Olympic sports. The Center's website includes a Disciplinary Records search, which includes this information: <https://safesport.org/userviolations/search> (<https://safesport.org/userviolations/search>).

In the coming weeks, the curling community will receive more information about the second half of the requirements, which will focus on one-on-one interactions between youth and participating adults. USA Curling is currently working through the implications of the law and waiting for clarification from the U.S. Center for SafeSport on a number of points.

For questions about this communication, please contact Kim Nawyn, USCA Director of Growth & Development, at kim.nawyn@usacurl.org (mailto:kim.nawyn@usacurl.org). Answers to frequently asked questions can also be found in the FAQs Regarding Abuse Prevention Requirements document linked here. (/-/media/USA_Curling/Documents/SafeSport/FAQs-Regarding-Abuse-Prevention-Requirements-111518.pdf?la=en&hash=AD6AD25241BDD1C79DCFED5BBFDAE12267D86E47)

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