

Abuse and Harassment Policy Guidelines

Importance of a Harassment Policy

While sport and recreation associations are not required by law to put harassment policies in place, there are some compelling reasons for such organizations to establish and implement a harassment policy.

- First, the existence of such a policy is an effective deterrent to harassment. Not only does such a policy increase directors', employees' and members' awareness of the problem, it also sends a strong message to the actual would-be harassers that harassment will not be tolerated in the organization.
- Second, a harassment policy provides a means by which complaints of alleged harassment can be brought to the attention of the directors and be dealt with quickly, responsibly and effectively.
- Third, a policy is the organization's best legal defence should an employee, member, athlete or participant lodge a formal discrimination or harassment complaint.
- Fourth, a harassment policy helps an organization maintain a safe and healthy environment for its employees and members.
- Last, having and enforcing a harassment policy is a good risk management. It allows an organization to minimize liability, control insurance and legal costs, and manage its financial and human resources effectively. It also helps the sport or recreation associations to establish and maintain a good reputation in the community.

The Alberta Luge Association strives to provide programs and activities that are free of personal harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation and exploitation.

To this extent, the Alberta Luge Association has developed this policy intended to prevent any form of abuse or harassment of its members and program participants and to deal quickly and effectively with any incident that might occur.

Definitions

Harassment or abuse may be related to any of the discriminatory grounds contained in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Such behaviour may be verbal, physical, deliberate, unsolicited or unwelcome. It may be one incident or a series of incidents. While the following is not a complete list, abuse or harassment may include any of these matters if a reasonable person ought to have known the behaviour would be unwelcome or offensive:

- verbal abuse or threats
- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes or taunting
- practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment
- unwelcome invitations, requests or other activities, whether indirect or explicit that cause intimidation or fear
- condescension or paternalism which undermine self-respect
- unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching, punching
- physical assault

If the conduct is offensive or intimidating to others, it will be considered harassing whether the individual intends it or not.

Sexual Harassment:

Behaviour characterized as unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests or sexual favours and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. It is implicitly or explicitly suggested that submission to or rejection of the conduct will be a factor in participation and advancement in the Association programs and activities:
or
2. The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's participation or performance or creating an intimidating or hostile environment.

Example: Can occur between athletes, coach and athletes, staff, volunteers and officials, e.g.

- Athletes playing a practical joke while one athlete is in the shower by taking their clothes

Child Abuse

Any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care which causes physical injury or emotional damage to a child. A common characteristic of all forms of abuse against children and youth is an abuse of power or authority and/or breach of trust.

Example: When a child is subjected to any contact or inappropriately subjected activity or behaviour that would involve any of the common characteristics of all forms of abuse and harassment.

- a coach always yelling at an athlete

Emotional Abuse

A chronic attack on a child's self-esteem; it is 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's needs.

Example: Coaches are in a position of power to emotionally abuse athletes

- coach always telling an athlete that they are too fat
1. A child is emotionally injured:
 - i) if there is substantial and observable impairment of the child's mental or emotional functioning that is evidenced by a mental or behavioural delayed development, and
 - ii) if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the emotional injury is the result of:
 - i. rejection
 - ii. deprivation of affection or cognitive stimulation
 - iii. exposure to domestic violence or severe domestic disharmony
 - iv. inappropriate criticism, threats, humiliation, accusations or expectations of or towards the child

Physical Abuse

When a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or youth. This may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, throwing, shoving, grabbing, hazing or excessive exercise as a form of punishment.

Example: Coaches have the power to influence the physical force on the athlete

- Coach making an athlete do 100 push-ups for being late
1. A child is physically abused if there is substantial and observable injury to any part of the child's body as a result of the non-accidental application of force or an agent to the child's body that is evidenced by a laceration, a contusion, an abrasion, a scar, a fracture or other bony injury, a dislocation, a sprain, hemorrhaging, the rupture of viscous, a burn, a scald frostbite, the loss of alteration of consciousness or physical functioning or the loss of hair or teeth.

Sexual Abuse

When a young person is used by an older child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification.

Example: When a child is inappropriately accessed or subjected to sexual contact, activity or behaviour.

- This could happen any time two people are left alone or a group is left alone with a younger athlete

Proactive avoidance of situation:

1. Coaches never touch athletes
2. Coaches or officials are never alone with athletes
3. Older athletes are never alone with younger athletes

Neglect

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.

Example: This may occur when injuries are not adequately treated or athletes are made to slide with injuries, no-one intervenes when team members are persistently harassing another player, or road trips are not properly supervised.

Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers and Staff

Prevention guidelines for personnel including administrators, paid and unpaid staff, are vitally important in establishing safe environments. Although the ALA has established codes of conduct, the following list outlines generic standard of behaviour:

- Respect the dignity and spirit of all athletes: children, youth and adults
- Treat all athletes fairly and equitably
- Establish supportive, positive environments for the purpose of healthy competition, skill development, fun and achievement of goals
- Avoid contact or conduct that may be interpreted to have sexual connotations or which are defined as inappropriate by the organization
- Do not take part in or tolerate behaviour that frightens, embarrasses, demoralizes or negatively affects athlete's self-esteem

- Do not tolerate acts of aggression
- Work towards eliminating harassment and abuse from sport environments
- Be prepared to intervene if a child or youth under the age of majority is being abused or neglected
- Follow the appropriate Child Protection legislation
- Engage in “fair play” both during and outside of all sports organizations’ activities. “Fair Play” is defined as showing considerate regard for athletes, personnel, parents, spectators and officials; abiding by all rules of the sport; abiding by officials’ decisions

ALA Policies that Support Prevention

1. Member code of conduct
2. Hiring policy for staff and volunteers