

U.S. FIGURE SKATING PARENT AND GUARDIAN GUIDE TO ATHLETE SAFETY

A comprehensive guide to promoting athlete safety in U.S. Figure Skating



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Letter from the SkateSafe® Team	2
Abuse Prevention Education	3
<i>U.S. Center for SafeSport Training Opportunities</i>	3
<i>U.S. Figure Skating Education and Training Opportunities</i>	4
SkateSafe® Policies and Resources for Parents and Guardians	5
<i>Two-Deep Leadership</i>	5
<i>Electronic Communications</i>	6
<i>Travel, Lodging and Transportation</i>	6
<i>Locker Rooms</i>	7
<i>Compliance Requirements</i>	8
Boundaries: Set, Relay, Enforce	9
The Grooming Process	10
Tough Versus Abusive Coaching	13
Bullying Prevention and Addressing Concerns	14
The Autonomy of Athletes and Parents	16
Respond and Report	17
Available Resources	19
References Used	20

Please be aware that this handbook contains themes of sexual abuse and child abuse, and the content may be triggering for some.

Letter From the SkateSafe® Team

Hello and welcome,

We're honored that you're taking the time to review this important handbook. We recognize that parent and guardian involvement is crucial to success in all aspects of a young person's life, especially when it comes to prioritizing safe spaces for kids to be kids. While U.S. Figure Skating strives to provide an environment for its members that is free of misconduct and abuse, the data shows that this is not something that can be entirely eliminated, and we need your help to mitigate the risk of misconduct and abuse within U.S. Figure Skating.

It's imperative that all members of the U.S. Figure Skating community, especially parents and guardians of athletes, are knowledgeable of U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® Program and have the tools needed to promote and enforce safe, supportive and healthy skating environments for all. Parental vigilance and adherence to SkateSafe® policies are vital in the prevention of misconduct and abuse against children.

A key priority for our SkateSafe® team at U.S. Figure Skating is to have parents and guardians of athletes feel empowered to use the information contained within to promote safe spaces and hold others accountable. It is vital that all parents and guardians of athletes participating in U.S. Figure Skating and Learn to Skate USA® activities are familiar with the applicable SkateSafe® policies, the U.S. Center for SafeSport's Code and the various educational opportunities available to parents, guardians and athletes of all ages.

Our team is here to support you, your clubs and your programs to provide resources, education and information related to promoting safe spaces in and out of sport. The information you learn here and through other available educational opportunities can be used in all facets of your child's life to prevent misconduct and abuse.

Sincerely,

The U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® Team

Abuse Prevention Education

Education is crucial in preventing abuse as it creates a framework of awareness, respect and accountability that is essential to fostering safe, supportive and healthy environments for all who are present. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to take advantage of these educational opportunities.

U.S. Figure Skating, the U.S. Center for SafeSport ("the Center"), and many third-party organizations offer parent and athlete education through e-learning platforms, recordings or informational flyers. Below is a breakdown of the education readily available for members of our skating community.

U.S. Center for SafeSport Training Opportunities

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has free courses available for various groups, including athletes and parents, with a goal of furthering their mission of preventing, recognizing and responding to misconduct in sport.

- SafeSport® Trained Core Course, Refresher 1, Refresher 2 and Refresher 3
 - A comprehensive series of courses in which one course is annually required to be taken by adult participants in figure skating who have regular contact with or authority over minor athletes. This series of courses covers sexual misconduct awareness and education, mandatory reporting, and physical and emotional misconduct. While required for certain groups, this course is free for anyone with a U.S. Figure Skating online profile.
- Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport
 - A course highlighting the voices and perspectives of experts and advocates to help parents and guardians increase their awareness of the risks of harm in sports and provides helpful tactics to minimize these risks. This course is *free* to anyone with a U.S. Figure Skating online profile.
- SafeSport™ for Kids
 - A brief course for young athletes ages 5-12 that, with parental consent, educates young athletes about the difference between discipline and abuse, trusted adults, the importance of being a good teammate, positive sportsmanship and having a healthy sport environment focused on fun and safety. We recommend that prior to giving parental consent to access the course, the parent or guardian independently completes the course first to ensure they deem the content appropriate for their minor. Having this prior knowledge of the course contents also helps to promote conversations at home about abuse prevention as the

parent can pull themes and lessons learned to use as conversation starters. This course is *free* for anyone with a U.S. Figure Skating online profile.

➤ SafeSport™ for Youth Athletes

- Intended for ages 13-17 with parental consent, this course highlights topics such as consent, supporting friends who have experienced misconduct and resources for reporting. We recommend that prior to giving parental consent to access the course, the parent or guardian independently completes the course first to ensure they deem the content appropriate for their minor. Having this prior knowledge of the course contents also helps to promote conversations at home about abuse prevention as the parent can pull themes and lessons learned to use as conversation starters. This course is *free* to anyone with a U.S. Figure Skating online profile.

These courses and more are accessible via U.S. Figure Skating's [Members Only](#) platform or directly through the [Center's website](#). Please note, there is a fee associated for the training when accessed outside of U.S. Figure Skating's Members Only platform. Non-member parents and guardians may create a volunteer profile through U.S. Figure Skating's Members Only platform to access the courses for free. Questions regarding access to these courses may be directed to skatesafe@usfigureskating.org.

U.S. Figure Skating Education and Training Opportunities

U.S. Figure Skating has a section of the website dedicated to education, policies and information surrounding the SkateSafe® Program. This includes education about various policies, compliance, and the response and resolution process used when reports of misconduct are received. These resources can be found at www.usfigureskating.org/skatesafe.

The educational content on this page continues to evolve based on frequently asked questions and input from our members.

In addition to the educational content on the web page, the SkateSafe® team also offers personalized education to clubs and programs for free. This targeted education can be for any member group such as a club board, athletes, coaches or parents, depending on the specific needs.

SkateSafe® Policies and Resources for Parents and Guardians

One of the best ways to stay informed and be an advocate for safe sport environments is to be familiar with U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® Handbook. You can read the SkateSafe® Handbook in full [here](#), and it can also be accessed at www.usfigureskating.org/skatesafe. Below is a brief description of some key policies that are the pillars of the SkateSafe® Program, along with some examples of the policies in action. Note that you can find any referenced defined terms in the SkateSafe® Handbook.

Two-Deep Leadership

Two-Deep Leadership is a **mandatory** policy that requires at least one other person to always be present when an adult U.S. Figure Skating member (or volunteer) and an unrelated Minor Athlete are interacting (in person or virtually) where their interactions are not observable or interruptible. Note that unless a specific policy exception in the SkateSafe® Handbook applies, there are no waivers to the policies. U.S. Figure Skating does not accept parental consent alone to bypass the required policies. If in doubt, contact the SkateSafe® team at skatesafe@usfigureskating.org for guidance and clarification to ensure compliance with all policies.

Below are examples of the Two-Deep Leadership policy being followed as well as the policy being violated:

- ✓ An adult U.S. Figure Skating coach has a closed-door meeting with a Minor Athlete. The Minor Athlete's parent or guardian is present in the room for the duration of the meeting.
- ✗ To address conduct concerns, an adult club board member has a closed-door meeting with ONLY the Minor Athlete present. There is no applicable policy exception as outlined in the SkateSafe® Handbook. The parent has knowledge of and consented to the meeting, but the parent does not attend.
- ✓ An adult U.S. Figure Skating coach drives an unrelated 12-year-old Minor Athlete to and from the rink with permission of the athlete's parent or guardian. The coach ensures there is always a third person in the vehicle, such as their 14-year-old child who also skates. The unrelated minor is always dropped off first and is never alone in the vehicle with the coach.
- ✗ An adult U.S. Figure Skating athlete drives an unrelated 11-year-old Minor Athlete to and from the rink with no one else in the car. The minor's parent or guardian has consented

to this, but there is no applicable policy exception as outlined in the SkateSafe® Handbook.

Electronic Communications

All electronic communications between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be professional and must follow the Two-Deep Leadership requirement by including at least one other Adult Participant (preferably the Minor Athlete's parent or guardian) in the electronic communication. The U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® policies regarding electronic interactions (including social media, texting, email, and communication through other electronic means) can be reviewed in detail in the SkateSafe® Handbook.

Examples of this policy in action include:

- ✓ A U.S. Figure Skating coach creates a group message that includes their adult co-coach and one Minor Athlete.
- ✗ An Adult Participant texts a Minor Athlete individually to discuss their skating schedule.
- ✓ A club runs Instagram and Facebook accounts, and they allow Minor Athletes to follow the account. Multiple board members have access to the account and any private messages received from Minor Athletes are responded to by copying their parent or guardian.
- ✗ An Adult Participant requests to be "friends" with a Minor Athlete on Snapchat – a private social media platform in which messages/photos may be deleted immediately after opening them.

Travel, Lodging and Transportation

Per the U.S. Figure Skating Two-Deep Leadership policies, an Adult Participant may not transport an unrelated Minor Athlete one-on-one, and a second Participant (no younger than 8 years of age) must be present to comply with the policy. Additionally, Adult Participants are prohibited from sharing any type of sleeping arrangements with unrelated Minor Athletes, unless an exception applies and written consent from the parent/guardian is provided.

Examples of this policy in action include:

- ✓ While traveling for a team event, Minor Athletes are paired in groups and share a hotel room with other Minor Athletes of the same sex and a similar age. No one over the age

of 18 (unless a policy exception applies) is assigned to share a hotel room with a Minor Athlete.

- ✖ While traveling for an event, an unrelated coach stays in the same hotel room as their student – a Minor Athlete who they are not related to. A policy exception as outlined in the SkateSafe® Handbook does not apply.
- ✓ While traveling for an event, a synchronized skating team shares a bus to get to the rink. Present on the bus are multiple Minor Athletes and Adult Participants.
- ✖ An Adult Participant drives an unrelated Minor Athlete to an event without anyone else present in the car, and no policy exception applies.
- ✓ A coach and a 16-year-old Minor Athlete travel together to a competition as the athlete's parents aren't able to attend. The coach and athlete meet up at the airport in their hometown, sit near each other on the airplane and take a rideshare service (i.e., Uber or Lyft) together from the airport to their hotel. They stay in separate rooms and use public transportation to get to/from the rink.

Locker Rooms

U.S. Figure Skating's Locker Room Policy prohibits unauthorized adults from entering a locker room designated for Minor Athletes to change, which includes parents/guardians as well as coaches and other adults. An exception applies for athletes who are under the age of 11 and need assistance from a parent/guardian.

Many competitions will use "Ready Rooms" to provide a space for athletes who come dressed and ready for the competition to store gear and tie their skates. These spaces are intended to be co-ed and for members and volunteers of all ages.

When locker rooms are being provided for athletes to change, a Locker Room Monitor must be assigned. This may be a coach or a club leader who is present at club activities, or it may be a volunteer who's completed a U.S. Figure Skating Background Check and the online SafeSport™ Training. You can learn more about the role of a Locker Room Monitor by reviewing the Locker Room Monitor Job Description at www.usfigureskating.org/skatesafe.

While U.S. Figure Skating does allow phones and other electronic devices in the locker room in case of an emergency, use of the camera and other recording capabilities on electronic devices in a locker room is strictly prohibited.

Examples of this policy in action include:

- ✓ A 9-year-old Minor Athlete needs assistance in the locker room at an upcoming ice show, and the parent/guardian communicated this to the event organizer in advance. The parent/guardian and ice show organizer were able to come up with a plan to allow the parent/guardian to assist their child.
- ✗ An adult coach enters a locker room while Minor Athletes are in a state of undress, and no policy exception applies.
- ✓ A Minor Athlete takes their phone into the locker room to ensure they're able to monitor their glucose levels via an app that connects to their medical device. The athlete does not use any of the recording capabilities of the phone to take photos or videos.
- ✗ A Minor Athlete takes their phone into the locker room and is taking selfies with some of the other athletes even though others present are in a state of undress preparing for their performance.

Take a look at our video series where we cover some common examples of locker room misconduct and how we are working to best prevent this:

- [Locker Room Overview](#)
- [Locker Room Monitor Scenarios](#)

Compliance Requirements

U.S. Figure Skating requires that all adult participants who have regular contact with, or authority over, athletes complete the U.S. Center for SafeSport's SafeSport™ Training at least once annually. This includes coaches and instructors, club and program leaders, officials, staff, adult athletes on a team with minor athletes, and volunteers such as locker room monitors.

In addition to this required education, there are other compliance requirements that are role specific that include items such as a U.S. Figure Skating Background Check, liability insurance, and signing off annually on the U.S. Figure Skating Code of Conduct and applicable Standards of Professionalism. The most common compliance requirements parents and guardians should be cognizant of are the [Coach Compliance Requirements](#) and [Learn to Skate USA® Instructor Compliance Requirements](#).

You can check the compliance status of any U.S. Figure Skating or Learn to Skate USA® member by accessing the Compliance Report Tool on [Members Only](#). Details on how to use this tool can be found [here](#).

In addition to the required training, there are various other educational opportunities presented to member groups from the U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® team that cover various topics related to athlete and member safety, including grooming.

Boundaries: Set, Relay, Enforce

Athletes are not one-size fits all when it comes to coaching and learning styles. Some athletes may be more receptive to tough coaching, while others may be sensitive to that coaching style.

To advocate for your athlete, we recommend working with your athlete's coach(es) at the beginning of each season, and regularly throughout the season, to map out goals and discuss communication styles that work most effectively with your athlete. At the end of the day, you and your athlete's coach want your athlete to be as successful as they can be! Having proactive conversations about expectations you have for the coach-athlete relationship can help determine if a coach is a good fit for your athlete.

An athlete's boundaries are important and must be communicated and respected. This includes their boundaries related to physical space and touch, emotional needs, privacy, and rules or limits.

Having clear boundaries that are respected may assist a child with a sense of security and stability. Additionally, boundaries teach children to respect the wishes and needs of others while also encouraging the development of self-esteem. When a child has clear boundaries and knows how to communicate them, they may feel more confident addressing their own boundary related concerns with others.

A child's boundaries may shift with age, mood, comfort level or even life experiences – boundaries of an athlete are never one-size-fits-all and it's the adult's responsibility to understand and respect varying boundaries they may encounter. As the parent or guardian of a Minor Athlete, it's imperative that you advocate for your child's boundaries to be respected by having frequent communication with the adults your child interacts with regarding any sensitivities they have, and what you as a parent or guardian will and will not tolerate.

U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® Policies require that all interactions between adults within U.S. Figure Skating and unrelated Minor Athletes occur in a location that is observable and interruptible. Coaches, officials, medical providers, club or program leaders, or other adults, both in and out of sport, may begin to erode boundaries when professional lines are crossed.

Examples of professional boundaries being tested or crossed may include adults and minors having private social media connections, sharing personal phone numbers when it may not be age appropriate, having conversations about personal matters that don't relate to the athlete's growth and development in the sport (i.e., an adult sharing details of their dating life), spending time together outside of the context of sport and sharing personal gifts unrelated to the sport without the parent or guardian's consent or knowledge.

These relationships an athlete may develop in the context of sport, regardless of the athlete's age, are not equal in terms of power and authority, and an adult is not an athlete's friend by default due to their proximity to the athlete.

If you suspect that a coach, official, medical provider, club or program leader, or any other person within U.S. Figure Skating is violating their professional boundaries with a minor athlete, you're strongly encouraged to confront, report and document the situation.

Reports regarding boundaries and professionalism can be directed to your club or to U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® team.

The Grooming Process

Sexual grooming is a range of behaviors exhibited by a person to select a victim with the goal of ultimately exploiting them. Trust is built in this process and is used to maintain control, isolate and abuse a victim emotionally, physically and sexually.

Parents are in the best position to monitor interactions between their children and other adults and to diffuse potential grooming behavior. As previously referenced, U.S. Figure Skating has policies in place to prevent one-on-one interactions with unrelated adults and minors in the sport. These policies, when followed, are intended to circumvent potential abuse or misconduct. Further, many of the examples outlined below in the grooming process would be a violation of U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® policies and/or the U.S. Center for SafeSport's Code.

There are typically six steps in the grooming process:

1. Victim Selection: A perpetrator may be strategic in their selection and may focus on vulnerabilities or specific needs of a child. For perpetrators of sexual grooming, a strategy used may be observing a child for a period of time. A perpetrator may choose to target a potential victim who is socially isolated or who doesn't always have an adult caregiver around.
2. Gaining Trust and Access: A perpetrator may try to become close with a child by being charming and friendly – this could lower the child's guard causing them to be less alert to red flag behaviors. A perpetrator will likely attempt to create situations where they're able to offer special attention to the child, such as offering rides or providing special gifts or treats. This helps them build trust not only with the child, but with their family and the community as well.
3. Filling a Need: A perpetrator may begin to exploit the child's vulnerabilities by stepping in to fill any unmet needs. For example, a perpetrator may offer rides for the child if the family is struggling to get them to or from the rink, school, etc. Another example of filling a need may be providing gifts such as ice time, new skates or other expensive and targeted gifts that aren't being given to the child's peers.
4. Isolating a Child: By this point, the perpetrator likely put in the work to gain the trust of the child and the child's community to where their relationship with child is normalized and may not raise questions. The perpetrator may now work to create one-on-one time with the child, either electronically or in person. They may secretly get the child's phone number or social media account to begin private messaging them, or they may offer one-on-one rides or meetings with the child to create opportunities of isolation.
5. Sexualizing the Relationship: The perpetrator may work to desensitize a child by talking to them about sexualized topics, or by creating sexualized situations between them by touching or through the use of pornography or other sexualized imagery. There is usually enough trust now between the perpetrator and the child that this may feel like a normal progression of the relationship for the child.
6. Maintaining Control: This phase of the grooming process may be used by the perpetrator to ensure the child's continued participation and silence. A perpetrator is likely to use secrecy and blame as well as other tactics to assist with maintaining control and continuing their abuse of the child. A child may continue enduring the abuse silently out of fear of shame or fear.

The sexual grooming process may not always be linear, and there may be other steps taken by a perpetrator to facilitate their abuse.

Below are various behaviors and factors that may require attention, intervention, or reporting:

- Repeatedly telling an unrelated child they're "special"
- Giving a child compliments often (both in and out of the context of sport)
- An unrelated adult engaging in childlike activities with a child without family involvement, knowledge, or permission
- An adult getting close to a child's family for the purpose of gaining unsupervised access to the child with parental consent
- An adult separating or isolating a child from their peers and/or family
- Engaging in acts that may desensitize a child to physical touch, such as frequent or prolonged hugs
- Telling an unrelated child they "love" them or are "in love" with them
- An adult discreetly or secretly contacting a child privately (i.e., texting or social media messaging one-on-one)*
- An adult using sexual language around a child, including sexualized references or jokes*
- An adult engaging in acts that may desensitize a child to comments or acts that are sexual in nature*
- Providing a minor with alcohol or drugs*
- An adult exposing a minor to pornographic imagery*
- An adult talking to a child about their own or the child's sexual experiences or relationships*
- An adult assuming the role of teaching a child sexual education without a formal role to do so*
- Frequent touching of private areas that are explained as "accidental" or using distractions while touching a child's private areas*
- Increasingly sexualized touching of a child over time*
- An adult undressing or being nude in front of a child or watching a child undress*

The factors and behaviors identified above with an asterisk, when considered on their own, indicate a U.S. Figure Skating policy violation and/or illegal behavior. As previously mentioned, the sexual grooming process may not be linear and may include multiple behaviors or factors outlined above, as well as others that are not specifically referenced here.

Mandatory reporters, as outlined in U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe® Handbook, are required to report concerns of grooming behavior to local law enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport. Any person who is not a mandatory reporter within U.S. Figure Skating or local law is still strongly encouraged to report concerns related to grooming.

Tough Versus Abusive Coaching

Identifying and understanding the distinction between tough and abusive coaching is critical. While both may involve high expectations, the methods, tone, impact and intent of tough and abusive coaching differ greatly.

Tough Coaching

Tough coaching is demanding, but fair. It challenges athletes to reach their potential through discipline, structure and accountability. Below are some key traits of tough coaching:

- ✓ **High Standards:** expecting the athlete to be disciplined, within reason, while showing effort and resilience
- ✓ **Consistency:** there are no surprises regarding what the coach expects from the athletes they work with – this may look slightly different for each athlete as drive and goals vary, but each athlete has a clear understanding of rules, expectations and consequences
- ✓ **Respectful Communication:** the coach's tone may be firm, but it's not demeaning
- ✓ **Constructive Feedback:** feedback isn't solely to criticize and is aimed at improvement and growth
- ✓ **Supportive Intentions:** the goal of the coach is always the athlete's growth and development

Example: a tough coach might say, "We have to work on your footwork – it's really holding you back. Let's drill it until you're more confident and it becomes automatic."

Abusive Coaching

Abusive coaching crosses a line into harm – emotionally, verbally or even physically. It often involves control, fear or humiliation, rather than motivation or teaching. Below are some key traits of abusive coaching:

- ✗ **Verbal Abuse:** consistently using insults and name-calling for short-term results
- ✗ **Humiliation:** calling out an athlete publicly in a demeaning or shameful way
- ✗ **Emotional Manipulation:** purposely showing favoritism (especially in a team setting), using threats as motivation
- ✗ **Physical Aggression:** implementing physical punishments when mistakes are made that have no athletic benefit, using unsafe practices to instill fear to obtain compliance

- ✱ **Damaging Self-Esteem:** consistently picking at issues rather than working toward productively identifying areas of improvement

Example: an abusive coach might say, "You're pathetic and a waste of my time – why are you even here?"

The Impact

The impact a coach has on an athlete can be extremely formative in a young person's life. Tough coaching has the ability to encourage growth while maintaining boundaries. It can also build resilience in an athlete while simultaneously enhancing motivation.

On the other hand, abusive coaching has the ability to erode an athlete's confidence by creating an environment where self-doubt is prevalent. Abusive coaching tactics may also violate an athlete's trust by continuously crossing boundaries. Abusive coaching tactics may lead to an athlete feeling burned out.

Summary

While tough coaching can push people to do their best, it may not be the right fit for all athletes depending on their individual needs. It's the coach's responsibility to understand the needs of the athletes they work with and to morph their coaching style to best meet those needs for the development of the athlete. Great coaches push their athletes by building them up, not tearing them down.

If you're ever unsure about a coaching style, you can ask yourself: *"Is this helping an athlete grow or is it making them feel small?"*

Bullying Prevention and Addressing Concerns

Bullying is defined in the SkateSafe® Handbook as an intentional, persistent or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate another person emotionally, physically or sexually.

Bullying is differentiated from mean or rude behavior, which while not ideal, would not rise to the level of misconduct. This behavior can include intentionally, or even unintentionally, saying or doing something to hurt someone infrequently.

Examples of Bullying Behavior	Examples of Mean or Rude Behavior
A skater on a synchro team is continuously and intentionally targeted by their teammates for the way their body looks.	A skater on a synchro team is sometimes not invited to out-of-program activities that other teammates host.
A solo skater is continuously and intentionally ridiculed by their coach for being unable to land a jump.	A coach tells a skater a joke that the skater is offended by.
A skater is continuously and intentionally targeted on social media by another skater, who often posts pictures of the skater with a caption that includes name calling, etc.	A skater tells another skater that they don't like their costume for a performance.
	A skater leaves a comment on another skater's social media that the skater finds offensive.

The key distinction between misconduct and rude or mean behavior is the intention and frequency. If someone is mean or rude to your child, the best course of action is to raise these concerns with your club's SkateSafe® chair or rink management to address the behavior through their conflict resolution procedures right away, before the situation escalates into bullying.

We encourage all parents and guardians to do their own research on bullying and how to best be an advocate for your child. Some great resources include:

- [StopBullying](#): An official website of the U.S. government providing information on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.
- [U.S. Center for SafeSport's Bullying 101](#): A webpage from the Center including a toolkit, downloadable flyers and more resources for caregivers navigating this challenge with young people.
- [Mental Health America's Bullying Tips for Parents](#): A resource for caregivers who may be navigating the impact of bullying on their child's mental health.

The Autonomy of Athletes and Parents

While U.S. Figure Skating provides a regulatory framework for coaching, the day-to-day training of skaters takes place in private clubs and commercial rinks under the guidance of independent coaches. The success of U.S. Figure Skating's athlete and member safety programming largely depends on the extent to which the skating community implements the requirements and holds one another accountable – something which parents and guardians must play a key role in.

A U.S. Figure Skating certified coach is a person who has met all the applicable compliance requirements as outlined at www.usfigureskating.org/coach. Being a certified coach with U.S. Figure Skating does not constitute or imply employment, endorsement, recommendation or favoring by U.S. Figure Skating, its directors or employees.

U.S. Figure Skating expects coaches to be honest and clear about the scope and content of coaching services they are qualified to provide; understand the limits of their own knowledge and capacity; comply with all U.S. Figure Skating rules, policies and requirements, including the SkateSafe® policies; and not accept coaching responsibilities that they are insufficiently prepared or trained for. All coaches have attested to providing truthful and correct information. Misrepresentation on the part of the coach is a violation of U.S. Figure Skating's Coaching Standards of Professionalism.

Sexual, emotional and physical abuse are issues in all facets of society where adults are in a position of authority over others, particularly over minors. This certification is meant to provide guidance to athletes (or their parent or guardian, if a minor) in selecting a coach that best meets the athlete's sport-related needs. An athlete (or their parent or guardian if a minor) must not rely on the certification in selecting a coach that fits the emotional and developmental needs of the athlete. This certification does not certify that abuse or misconduct will not happen in the sport of figure skating, during In-Program or Out-of-Program Contact as defined in the SkateSafe® Handbook. U.S. Figure Skating does not certify a coach's character and demeanor. It is the responsibility of the athlete (or their parent or guardian if a minor) and any other person who observes abusive conduct to report. All allegations of sexual abuse and child abuse must be immediately reported to the U.S. Center for SafeSport and local law enforcement (uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/). All other allegations of

abuse or misconduct as defined in the SkateSafe® Handbook must be reported to U.S. Figure Skating.

Athletes within U.S. Figure Skating – minor athletes by way of their parent or guardian – have full autonomy throughout their skating journey to choose a coach that's the best match for them.

Certain coaches may work better with certain athletes due to a number of factors, including the athlete's individual needs, their personalities and the athlete's individual learning style. Some athletes may thrive with a coach who is more nurturing, while others may thrive with a coach who is stricter and more demanding. It's important for parents and guardians to have continuous conversations with young athletes about whether their coach-athlete relationship is working.

The same goes for partnered disciplines within U.S. Figure Skating – certain partners may not have aligned goals, personalities or athletic needs which has the potential to cause tension in the team.

Ultimately, the best coach-athlete and ice dance or pairs partner relationship is one where all parties' personalities, goals and values align in a way that creates a safe and welcoming space for all. Athletes who feel understood, supported and challenged in ways that work for them are more likely to thrive, which is why it's so important to an athlete's development to find the right fit in a coach and in a skating partner.

Respond and Report

We've outlined some of the key areas of risk and U.S. Figure Skating's key policies, but a question now may be: "What do I do if a policy is being violated or misconduct is occurring?" Below is an outline of reporting avenues within your local skating community and U.S. Figure Skating.

As a reminder, all Adult Participants (adult members and volunteers) of U.S. Figure Skating are mandatory reporters per U.S. Figure Skating's rules. Specifically, Adult Participants are required to report child abuse and sexual misconduct to the U.S. Center for SafeSport and local law enforcement as applicable. Outside of U.S. Figure Skating, there may be state or local laws that require reporting as well.

Your Club or Program

Your club can assist with issues pertaining to bullying, parent conduct concerns, or violations of club rules or policies (such as ice etiquette concerns).

To learn more about how to report concerns to your local club or program, please inquire with your club's president, SkateSafe® Compliance chair or with the Learn to Skate USA® program director.

In addition, you may be able to report concerns to your rink's management team or skating director as well.

U.S. Figure Skating

U.S. Figure Skating addresses concerns related to criminal charges, physical and emotional misconduct as defined in the SkateSafe® Handbook, U.S. Figure Skating Code of Conduct or Standards of Professionalism issues, and any other rule or policy violation.

To file a report with U.S. Figure Skating, use the reporting link found [here](#). You may also email skatesafe@usfigureskating.org to inquire about how to report and the response and resolution process.

U.S. Center for SafeSport

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has exclusive jurisdiction over allegations related to sexual misconduct and child abuse. This includes sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact or intercourse, sexual exploitation, exposing a minor to sexual content or imagery, sexual bullying behavior, sexual hazing or other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature – all as defined by the [U.S. Center for SafeSport's Code](#).

You can file a report with the U.S. Center for SafeSport [here](#) or by calling 833-587-7233.

When in doubt, the U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® team is here as a resource. If you're unsure whether something rises to the level of misconduct or a mandatory reporting situation, you may reach out to us at skatesafe@usfigureskating.org to talk through the conduct and the most appropriate path to report.

Available Resources

While this handbook will provide you with a good overview of SkateSafe® and our mission to prevent misconduct in figure skating, the work shouldn't end here. Together, we can strive to provide your athletes with a safe avenue to achieving their figure skating goals.

SkateSafe® Resources: [The U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® website](#) contains information regarding what our SkateSafe® program addresses, how to file a report with SkateSafe® and the U.S. Center for SafeSport, all things compliance and other general resources and educational videos.

Mental Health Resources: This [link](#) will bring you to U.S. Figure Skating's Mental Health Resources, which includes a collection of resources compiled by the SkateSafe® team, High Performance Sports Science and Medicine team, and DEI team to utilize if they/someone they know is in need of mental health support.

Additional Support and Learning Opportunities

- [RAINN](#) (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN specifically has resources available to provide care givers with resources and education around the prevention of sexual abuse.
- [NCAC](#) (National Children's Advocacy Center) focuses on collaboration and education through training and dedicated advocacy to prevent child abuse, empower survivors, and educate communities.
- [StopBullying](#) is an official website of the U.S. government providing information on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.
- [The U.S. Center For SafeSport](#) is an organization authorized by Congress to help abuse prevention, education and accountability take root in every sport. They have specific resources for caregivers to address all levels of misconduct.
- [Concussion Guidebook](#), a resource from a company called [Players Health](#), was created to shed light on the severity of concussions while educating on the signs and symptoms, recovery and return to play. Additionally, they created a [State Law Guidebook](#) to assist with state specific education in a concise manner.
- [www.Know2Protect.gov](#) is a Department of Homeland Security national public awareness campaign to educate and empower children, teens, trusted adults and policy makers to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA).

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