



**Westerville Rowing Club  
Athlete Safety Manual  
(inclusive of SafeSport)**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Westerville Rowing Club (WRC), a not-for-profit Ohio corporation, is a competitive Youth/Adult rowing club comprised of Youth boys' and girls' novice and varsity rowing teams in addition to adult introductory and competitive teams. WRC is governed by its Board of Trustees and run by its program director and coaches, and supported by numerous volunteers.

WRC is committed to ensuring the safety of its athletes, coaches, employees, volunteers and independent contractors. Accordingly, in conjunction with USRowing, WRC has adopted the following policies, which are designed to meet or exceed the athlete safety program components recommended by the SafeSport campaign and US Rowing. Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, the policies in this Manual apply to all WRC activities and participants.

This document is intended to serve as a reference for participants, parents, volunteers and staff. WRC's Safesport Policy should be reviewed, revised if necessary and approved by the WRC Board on an annual basis.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all persons officially associated with WRC's various programs, specifically, but not limited to:

1. Youth athletes (A Youth athlete is defined as any person currently age 19 or under actively registered as an athlete member of WRC).
2. Adult athletes
3. Coaches (Paid or Volunteer)
4. WRC Board or other staff.
5. Any other person who WRC authorizes, approves or appoints to a position of authority over, and to whom has frequent contact with any of the above identified groups.

## **A. POLICY**

WRC policies and procedures require coaches and volunteers to report abuse, misconduct and violations of its Safesport Policy. To do so, staff members (directors, coaches), Board of Directors, and volunteers (volunteer coaches, parent chaperones, other volunteers) should have a basic understanding of sexual abusers, as well as "grooming," the most common strategy offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse.

### **1. TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Accordingly, staff members/coaches/WRC Board Members or other identified individuals must complete awareness training concerning misconduct in sport before performing services for WRC. Misconduct in sport includes: **Bullying, Harassment, Hazing, Emotional Misconduct, Physical Misconduct, and Sexual Misconduct (including child sexual abuse).**

2. In order to ensure compliance with this policy WRC shall require at a minimum the following education and training for those individuals it formally authorizes, approves or appoints (a) to a position of authority over, or (b) to have frequent contact with athletes to be the following:

#### **WRC Safesport Policy**

Annually sign (or electronically certify), and provide to the Program Director, a “Confirmation of Policy Compliance” stating that they have read and understand the SafeSport Policy. The Compliance Document is attached as Appendix A. WRC has made the SafeSport policy easily accessible by including it on its public website.

#### **SafeSport Training**

Every two (2) years, or no more than 30 day(s) before they have contact with athletes obtain, and provide to the Program Director, a “Safesport Certificate of Completion” by completing or renewing the online training course at: [SafeSport.org](https://www.safesport.org).

3. **SCREENING**

Staff Members and/or volunteers must consent to, and pass, a formal application screening process before performing services for WRC. Elements of our screening process include, as applicable; interviews, reference checks and criminal background checks.

#### Personal Interview

Appropriate staff will interview applicants whose experience and credentials are considered a fit for available positions. During this interview, WRC will ask questions to encourage discussion, clarify responses and expand on the applicants answers to questions on written applications.

#### References

At their discretion, WRC may request reference of applicants, who may be contact (either by phone or in writing) and asked specific questions regarding the applicant’s professional experiences, demeanor and appropriateness for involvement with minor athletes and participants.

#### Safesport Database

WRC will routinely review the [online Safesport disciplinary database](#) as a method of applicant screening and current participant oversight.

#### Criminal Background Check – Initial and as renewed as deemed necessary by WRC

WRC leverages the USRowing partnership with the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) to provide background checks for designated persons (currently coaches and staff). Completed background checks are required to be completed prior to being placed in a position of authority over athletes on behalf of WRC. [NCSI Background Check Link](#)

## II. ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY

### A. COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

#### Overview

In the event that any coach, staff or volunteer observes or becomes aware of inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations), suspected physical or sexual abuse, or misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of each coach and volunteer to immediately report his or her observations according to the reporting guidelines outlined within this policy.

WRC is committed to creating a safe and positive environment for athletes' physical, emotional and social development and to ensuring that it promotes an environment free of misconduct.

Coaches, staff and volunteers should not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. Instead, it is the responsibility of each person to immediately report suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse to the program administrator and/or WRC Board President. In addition to the above, it is the responsibility of the observer to report to the relevant county or municipal authorities and Child Protective Services (if applicable). Complaints and allegations will be addressed under the WRC Disciplinary Rules and Procedures outlined later in this document.

WRC recognizes that the process for training and motivating athletes will vary with each coach and athlete, but it is nevertheless important for everyone involved in sport to support the use of motivational and training methods that avoid misconduct.

#### Application

This policy applies to: Staff, WRC Board, Coaches, Volunteers, Athletes and Athlete Parents

WRC *strongly recommends* that parents and Youth Athletes (in addition to designated persons) familiarize themselves with the SafeSport Policy and complete the online training.

### B. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

#### Child Sexual Abuse

(1) Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

**Note concerning peer-to-peer child sexual abuse:** Sexual contact between minors also can be abusive. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power and/or intellectual capabilities.

(2) Any act or conduct described as child sexual abuse under federal or state law.

#### Exception

None

### **Examples**

Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive electronic or written communications, exposure or voyeurism.

### **Emotional Misconduct**

(1) A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behaviors include: (a) verbal acts, (b) physical acts, (c) acts that deny attention or support

(2) Any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect).

### **Exception**

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance which have been agreed to by the Head Coach and Program Administrator.

### **Examples**

Examples of emotional misconduct prohibited by this policy include, without limitation:

(1) **Verbal Acts.** A pattern of verbal behaviors that (a) attach an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat, or disgusting) or (b) repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular participant or participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.

(2) **Physical Acts.** A pattern of physically aggressive behaviors, such as (a) throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants; or (b) punching walls, windows or other objects.

(3) **Acts that Deny Attention and Support.** A pattern of (a) ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time or (b) routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice.

Note: Bullying, harassment, and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of emotional misconduct.

### **Physical Misconduct**

(1) Contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threaten to, cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants; or

(2) Any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault).

### **Exceptions**

Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance. For example, hitting, punching, and kicking are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in swimming.

### **Examples**

Examples of physical misconduct prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

(1) **Contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:

- (a) punching, beating, biting, striking, choking or slapping an athlete;
- (b) intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment;
- (c) providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (under U.S. law);
- (d) providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete;
- (e) encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play pre-maturely following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional;
- (f) prescribing dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of athlete.

(2) **Non-contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:

- (a) isolating an athlete in a confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space);
- (b) forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g. requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface);
- (c) withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep.

Note: Bullying, harassment and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of physical misconduct.

### ***Sexual Misconduct***

(1) Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is

- (a) nonconsensual or forced,
- (b) coerced or manipulated, or
- (c) perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner;

(2) Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative; or

(3) Any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape)

Note: An imbalance of power is always assumed between a coach and an athlete.

### **Types of Sexual Misconduct**

Types of sexual misconduct include:

- (1) sexual assault,
- (2) sexual harassment,
- (3) sexual abuse, or
- (4) any other sexual intimacies that exploit an athlete. **Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult**, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited. All Sexual interaction between minors is also prohibited on WRC premises or at WRC activities of any kind.

### **Exceptions**

None

### **Examples**

Examples of sexual misconduct prohibited under this Policy include, without limitation:

(1) **Touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:

- (a) fondling an athlete's breasts or buttocks
- (b) exchange of reward in sport (e.g., team placement, scores, feedback) for sexual favors

- (c) genital contact
- (d) sexual relations or intimacies between persons in a position of trust, authority and/or evaluative and supervisory control over athletes or other sport participants.

(2) **Non-touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:

- (a) a coach discussing his or her sex life with an athlete
- (b) a coach asking an athlete about his or her sex life
- (c) coach requesting or sending a nude or partial-dress photo to athlete
- (d) exposing athletes to pornographic material
- (e) sending athletes sexually explicit or suggestive electronic or written messages or photos (e.g. "sexting")
- (f) deliberately exposing an athlete to sexual acts
- (g) deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity (except in situations where locker rooms and changing areas are shared)
- (h) sexual harassment; specifically, the sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, and
  - a. is unwelcome, offensive or creates a hostile environment, and the offending individual knows or is told this
  - b. is sufficiently severe or intense to be harassing to a reasonable person in the context.

**Authority and Trust**

Once the unique coach-athlete relationship is established, the authority and trust on the part of the coach over the athlete shall be assumed, regardless of age. Accordingly, sexual interaction or intimacies between a coach and an athlete or other participant are prohibited, regardless of age, both during coaching and during that period following coaching.

**Imbalance of Power**

Factors relevant to determining whether there is an imbalance of power include, but are not limited to:

- (a) the nature and extent of the coach's supervisory, evaluative or other authority over the athlete being coached
- (b) the actual relationship between the parties
- (c) the parties' respective roles
- (d) the nature and duration of the sexual relations or intimacies
- (e) the age of the coach
- (f) the age of the athlete or participant
- (g) and whether the coach has engaged in a pattern of sexual interaction with other athletes or participants

**Exception**

This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

***Bullying***

- (1) An intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership
- (2) Any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law

**Exceptions**

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and to push through a difficult training regimen.

### **Examples**

Examples of bullying prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

(1) **Physical behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, or slapping an athlete; (b) throwing at, or hitting an athlete with, objects such as sporting equipment.

(2) **Verbal and emotional behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) teasing, ridiculing, intimidating; (b) spreading rumors or making false statements; or (c) using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (“cyber bullying”).

### ***Harassment***

(1) A repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, (b) offend or degrade, (c) create a hostile environment or (d) reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability; or

(2) Any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law

### **Exceptions**

None

### **Examples**

Examples of harassment prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

(1) **Physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant; (b) throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects including sporting equipment.

(2) **Non-physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete’s sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color, or ethnic traits; (b) displaying offensive materials, gestures, or symbols; (c) withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on his or her sexual orientation.

### ***Hazing***

(1) Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group’s members; or

(2) Any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law

### **Exception**

Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion by the Head Coach and Program Administrator.

### **Examples**

Examples of hazing prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) requiring, forcing or otherwise requiring the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs
- (2) tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining an athlete
- (3) sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature
- (4) sleep deprivation, otherwise unnecessary schedule disruption or the withholding of water and/or food
- (5) social actions (e.g. grossly inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule
- (6) beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault
- (7) excessive training requirements focused on individuals on a team

#### **Comment**

Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of an athlete's willingness to cooperate or participate.

### **C. Willfully Tolerating Misconduct**

It is a violation of this WRC Policy if a coach and/or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s), participant(s), coach(es), and/or volunteer(s).

### **D. Reporting**

Although these policies are designed to reduce child sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. Coaches, volunteers and participants of WRC shall follow the reporting procedures set forth in WRC's Reporting Policy outlined later in this document. **WRC does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations, as a condition of reporting suspicions or allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

### **E. Violations**

Violations of this policy shall be reported pursuant to our Reporting Policy.

## **III. MANAGING, TRAINING AND COMPETITION**

### **A. Supervision of Athletes and Participants**

During training and competition, WRC strives to create two-deep leadership and minimize one-to-one interactions to create a safe training environment and to protect athletes and participants.

#### **APPROPRIATE ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS**

##### **Individual Meetings**

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete's concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, coaches, staff members and/or volunteers are to observe the following guidelines:

- Any individual meeting should occur when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed

- Individual meeting should take place in a publicly visible and open area, such as the corner of the boathouse or the boathouse grounds
- If an individual meeting is to take place in an office, the door should remain unlocked and open
- If a closed-door meeting is necessary, the coach, staff member and/or volunteer must ask another coach, staff member and/or volunteer to participate in the meeting.

### **Individual Training Sessions**

An individual training session(s) with an athlete or participant may also be desired or necessary. Where the athlete is a minor, such sessions may only be held in a public facility with prior written parental consent, or at a WRC facility if a parent or guardian attends the training session.

### **Prohibited One-on-One Interactions**

Except as set forth above, minor athletes and participants will not be left unattended or unsupervised during WRC activities and WRC coaches and/or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual athlete or participant in any room or building.

## **B. Physical Contact with Athletes**

Appropriate physical contact between athletes and coaches, staff members, or volunteers is a productive and inevitable part of sport. Athletes are more likely to acquire advanced physical skills and enjoy their sport participation through appropriate physical contact. However, guidelines for appropriate physical contact reduce the potential for misconduct in sport.

### **APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

The WRC adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regards to physical contact with our athletes:

#### **Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact**

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make them both safe and appropriate. These include:

- the physical contact takes place in public
- there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact
- the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

### **Safety**

The safety of our athletes is paramount and, in many instances, we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

- spotting an athlete so that they will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment
- positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination
- making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use
- releasing muscle cramps

## **Celebration**

Sports are physical by definition and we recognize participants often express their joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

- greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs
- congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, “jump-arounds” and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment

## **Consolation**

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly:

- embracing a crying athlete
- putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down (“side hugs”)
- lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and “dusting them off” to encourage them to continue competition

## **PROHIBITED PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Prohibited forms of physical contact, which shall be reported immediately under our Reporting Policy include, without limitation:

- asking or having an athlete sit in the lap of a coach, administrator, staff member or volunteer
- lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact
- slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from an athlete
- “cuddling” or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay
- playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., tickling or “horseplay” wrestling)
- continued physical contact that makes an athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not
- any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

## **Violations**

Violations of this policy shall be reported pursuant to our Reporting Policy. Some forms of physical contact may constitute child physical or sexual abuse that **must be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities**.

## **C. Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy**

As part of WRC emphasis on athlete safety, all electronic communications between a coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the athlete's family. At the request of a parent or guardian, any email, electronic text, social media or similar communication will copy or include the athlete's parents or guardians.

### **Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Similar Sites**

Coaches may not have athletes of WRC join a personal social media page. Athlete members and parents can friend the official WRC page(s) and coaches can communicate to athlete members through the site. All posts, messages, text, or media of any kind between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes.

### **Email and Similar Electronic Communications**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. Where coaches are interacting with minor athletes, a parent or guardian should be copied on any communication. All email content between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **Texting and Similar Electronic Communications**

Texting is allowed between coaches and athletes only via team approved methods. Coaches and Athletes should communicate through the Remind app. In cases where a coach texts a minor athlete, they should do so in a group format where at least one other coach/staff is on the communication. All texts between coach and athlete must be professional and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **Electronic Imagery**

From time to time, digital photos, videos of practice or competition, and other publicly obtainable images of the athlete – individually or in groups – may be taken. These photos and/or videos may be submitted to local, state or national publications, used in club videos, posted on club or club associated websites. It is the default policy of WRC to allow such practices as long as the athlete or athletes are in public view and such imagery is both appropriate and in the best interest of the athlete and the club.

### **Misconduct**

Social media and electronic communications can also be used to commit misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by coaches, volunteers, parents or athletes will not be tolerated.

### **Violations**

Violations of WRC Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy shall be reported pursuant to our Reporting Policy.

## **D. Practice Facilities**

### ***Hoover Reservoir***

WRC practices on Hoover Reservoir during spring, summer, and fall under the supervision of WRC coaches and staff. All athletes must abide by all water safety rules as outlined in the WRC Safety

Manual and coach/staff's direction while in boats or on docks at Hoover. Safe behavior is paramount and unsafe practices will not be tolerated. Athletes are not permitted to be on JCC or Columbus leased WRC property at any time without a coach or staff present.

### ***Winter Erg Room***

WRC conducts its winter season in a separate facility. Athletes practice on rowing machines or "ergs" and daily practices are held for all rowers, weather permitting. Athletes are not permitted to be in the erg room alone or with a single coach/staff, and only should be onsite during regularly scheduled practice times.

### ***Locker Rooms and Changing Facilities***

WRC does not have locker rooms or changing facilities. Athletes will be expected to come dressed for practice and to change and shower at home.

### **E. Travel**

WRC does not provide transportation to any club related practice, event, or competition. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) of Youth Rowers to provide transportation to and from any such event and WRC shall have no responsibility to transport any athletes nor any liability resulting from athletes travelling to and from any event, practice, or competition of any sort whatsoever. Furthermore, it is the policy of WRC that Youth athletes are prohibited from driving to and from competitive events or regattas and further that parents are solely responsible for providing transportation for their athlete child/children, regardless of whether such athlete is licensed to drive.

In an effort to minimize one-on-one interactions, WRC staff members, coaches and/or volunteers, who are not also acting as a parent, should not drive alone with an unrelated Youth athlete and should only drive with at least two other athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the athlete's parent or guardian in advance of travel.

For team travel, hotels will be booked in advance by parents. On occasions where athletes will share rooms, 2-4 athletes may be assigned per room depending on accommodations. Meetings will not occur in hotel rooms, and when required, a separate space will be reserved.

WRC is made up of male and female athletes across various ages. Athletes will only share a room with other athletes of the same sex. Same sex partners shall not be permitted to share a room. We rely on parents to serve as chaperones for all out of town WRC events or competitions.

Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a Youth athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling or spouse of that particular athlete).

### **Coach and Staff Responsibilities**

During team travel, coaches/staff will help athletes and fellow coaches adhere to all WRC policy guidelines. Coaches and staff will:

- a. make athletes aware of all expectations;
- b. conform to, and monitor for others' adherence to, all policies during team travel;
- c. not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching duties;
- d. immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations;

and/or

e. notify parents before taking any disciplinary action against a minor athlete.

## IV. REPORTING POLICY AND DISCIPLINARY INTERVENTIONS

### A. REPORTING POLICY

**Every WRC coach and/or volunteer must report:**

- (1) violations of the WRC Athlete Safety Handbook,
- (2) misconduct as defined in WRC's Athlete Protection Policy, and
- (3) suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse.

**As a matter of policy, WRC does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

#### *Reporting Child Physical or Sexual Abuse*

##### **Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

Coaches and/or volunteers of WRC are required to immediately report suspicions or allegations of child sexual abuse by a colleague or co-worker to **appropriate law enforcement authorities**.

##### **Grooming**

Because sexual abusers "groom" children for abuse – the process used by offenders to select a child, to win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), to manipulate the child into sexual activity and to keep the child from disclosing abuse – it is possible that a coach and/or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the head coach and program administrator or the program administrator/WRC Board President (if a coach or staff is involved).

##### **Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse**

Approximately 1/3 of all child sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other children and the obligation to report extends to peer-to-peer child sexual abuse. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power or intellectual capabilities. **If you have any concerns that an interaction between children may constitute sexual abuse, report it to the appropriate law enforcement authorities, the WRC program administrator and the WRC Board president.**

##### **Reporting Procedure**

Athletes, parents, participants, staff or coaches should report any instance where they believe a violation of this or other team policies have occurred.

- a The parents or guardians of minor athletes, or adult athletes or other participants should file written reports of suspected harassment, intimidation, or bullying;
- b Coaches who witness acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying or receive student reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall report those acts immediately;
- c A person may report an incident anonymously by providing a written description of the incident by mail, text, or electronic mail;

#### *To Whom to Report:*

All incidents should be immediately reported to the head coach and program administrator. Should the member not be comfortable reporting to one of those two persons, they should directly report to either the WRC Board President/Vice President.

#### *How to Report:*

WRC will take a report in the way that is the most comfortable for the person initiating a report, including an anonymous, in-person, verbal or written report. Regardless of how the incident is reported, it is helpful for WRC for individuals to provide, at a minimum, (1) the name of the complainant(s); (2) the type of misconduct alleged and the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMOUS REPORTING AND BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS**

#### **Confidentiality**

To the extent permitted by law, and as appropriate, WRC will keep confidential the complainant's name on request, not make public the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator or the people who made a report of child physical and sexual abuse to the authorities.

#### **Anonymous Reporting**

WRC recognizes it can be difficult for an athlete, teammate, friend or family member to report an allegation of misconduct and strives to remove as many barriers to reporting as possible.

Anonymous reports may be made:

- by completing the WRC Incident Reporting Form without including their name
- by expressing concerns verbally to the WRC program administrator or a member of the WRC Board
- through email, texts or notes left for the WRC program administrator or a member of the WRC Board

However, anonymous reporting may make it difficult for the WRC to investigate or properly address allegations.

**All suspicions of child physical or sexual abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

#### **"Whistleblower" Protection**

Regardless of outcome, WRC will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. WRC will not encourage, allow or tolerate attempts from any individual to retaliate, punish, allow or in any way harm any individual(s) who reports a concern in good faith.

Such actions against a complainant will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action.

### **Bad-Faith Allegations**

A report of abuse, misconduct or policy violations that is malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith is prohibited. Such reports will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the allegation, a person making a malicious, frivolous or bad-faith report may also be subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

### ***How Reports Are Handled***

#### **Suspicious or Allegations of Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

##### **Reporting to Law Enforcement and/or Child Protective Services**

An independent investigation can harm youth and/or interfere with the legal investigative process. WRC, its staff members and/or volunteers do not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. As necessary, however, WRC may ask a few clarifying questions of the minor or person making the report to adequately report the suspicion or allegation to law enforcement authorities.

##### **Immediate Suspension or Termination**

When an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse is made against a staff member, youth and/or volunteer, WRC may immediately remove that individual from contact with any children in the program until the allegation has been investigated by an official agency. As necessary, WRC may suspend or change the assignment of a staff member and/or volunteer.

In those cases where the Ted Stevens Act may apply, the accused individual will be offered a hearing. A hearing under the Ted Stevens Act will not necessarily affect the WRC's ability to immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual from employment or performing services for organization.

A staff member, coach WRC Board Member, or volunteer's failure to report suspected or known violations of this policy is grounds for termination of a staff member/coach and/or dismissal of a volunteer/Board Member.

##### **Misconduct and Policy Violations**

WRC addresses internally alleged policy violations and misconduct – bullying, harassment, hazing, emotional, physical and sexual – that are not reportable under relevant state or federal law. Staff members, coaches and/or volunteers must report policy violations and misconduct as noted above in the "To Whom to Report" section.

##### **Investigation by WRC**

Upon receiving notification of a potential violation or incident WRC will perform an investigation and document its findings accordingly to support any follow-on actions it chooses to take. As part of the investigation, the program administrator or WRC President (whomever is leading), will notify the complainant (person making the complaint) of receipt of the report and also notify the

respondent (person named in the complaint) that an investigation is in progress. Notification to the respondent may be delayed if it is believed that said notification will impede the investigation or cause potential loss of evidence in regards to the incident being investigated. The complaint itself will be reviewed, and any witnesses or others who may information in regards to the incident will be interviewed if possible. Additionally, as noted, the respondent will also be interviewed if possible. All investigation will be done in a confidential manner where possible to protect the privacy of anyone involved. Depending on the nature of the incident, the complainant and the respondent may be brought together to discuss the incident and to try to resolve the complaint. For more serious incidents, a panel will be convened of the program administrator, the WRC Board President or VP, and another board member (often the past president) who will mutually review the case, and determine recommendations for action to be taken. For less serious incidents, the panel and/or the program administrator/WRC president may issue sanctions themselves. For more serious incidents, they will make recommendations to the full WRC Board for consideration.

WRC is required to fully investigate and adjudicate any internal non-sexual SafeSport issues prior to presenting them to USRowing for appeal. Should the respondent not agree with the decision made by WRC to resolve the incident, they have the right to appeal to USRA or SafeSport directly.

WRC may also investigate allegations of child physical or sexual abuse that are reportable, if such investigation does not interfere with any ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution for abuse. Such allegations may include:

- Emotional abuse
- Abuse reported outside the relevant statutes of limitation
- Allegations of abuse that were reported to authorities, but: (a) legal authorities did not press criminal charges; (b) criminal charges were filed, but not pursued to trial; or (c) the alleged offender was acquitted at trial

### ***Notification***

Following WRC's notice of a credible allegation that results in the removal of an employee, coach or other volunteer, the WRC may consider the circumstances in which it will notify other parents of athletes with whom the accused individual may have had contact. At the WRC's discretion, as appropriate, and after consultation with counsel, the WRC may notify its staff members, contractors, volunteers, parents, and/or athletes of any allegation of child physical or sexual abuse or other criminal behavior that (1) law enforcement authorities are actively investigating; or (2) that the WRC is investigating internally. Advising others of an allegation may lead to additional reports of child physical or sexual abuse and other misconduct.

Additionally, WRC will follow USRA's SafeSport policy in regards to escalation of incidents to either USRA directly or the Center for Safesport. WRC's actions do not preclude or negate the rights of an accuser to contact USRA or Safesport directly.

## **B. DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURE**

While WRC endeavors to provide support and guidance to participants on a day-to-day basis, it is also important for WRC to have a formal procedure for disciplinary action to address alleged violations of its policies and other inappropriate behaviors, which is consistent with the WRC Bylaws. This section is used to address the following allegations against staff members, athletes,

participants and/or volunteers: (a) Violations of the WRC policies; and/or (b) Child abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) where WRC's actions will not undermine or interfere with an ongoing legal investigation or criminal prosecution.

## **DISCIPLINARY RULES**

WRC recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a youth participant who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, WRC's disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

On receipt of an allegation, WRC will determine at its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct based on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.

WRC will address allegations against a coach, staff member, athlete and/or volunteer under its Employment Policies and Procedures, Bylaws and other team policies.

WRC's disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme cases, misconduct will result in immediate summary dismissal, provided that the accused individual shall be advised of their right to a hearing. If the accused individual is a minor, WRC shall notify both the parents or guardians of an athlete who commits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying and the parents or guardians of athletes against whom such acts were committed, and allow access to any written reports pertaining to the incident, to the extent permitted by O.R.C. §3319.321 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – p.11

## **Disciplinary Action**

Sanctions for violations of the policies within the Athlete Safety Manual will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, WRC may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- (1) Inform the individual's direct-line supervisor or in the case of a minor, the minor's parent or guardian
- (2) Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- (3) Temporary suspension from competition
- (4) File a formal incident report
- (5) Issue a verbal warning
- (6) Issue a written and/or final written warning
- (7) Implement a limited access agreement (e.g., limiting an individual's access to certain buildings and sites or to youth)
- (8) Provide informed supervision, where at least one staff member is informed of the allegation and is instructed to supervise vigilantly the accused individual in his or her interactions with the program and/or organization

(9) Engage in restorative practices (i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when misunderstanding or harm has occurred)

(10) Suspend or terminating employment, membership, or affiliation

### **Ongoing Employment and/or Participation**

On receipt of a credible and specific allegation of child abuse or other serious misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual abuse as defined in this policy), WRC may immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual to ensure participant safety.

### **Complainant Protection**

Regardless of outcome, WRC will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. WRC will not encourage or tolerate attempts from any individual to retaliate, punish or in any way harm any individual(s) who reports a concern in good faith. Such actions themselves will be grounds for disciplinary action.

## **V. APPENDIX**

# Westerville Rowing Club

## Confirmation of Policy Compliance

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the *ATHLETE SAFETY MANUAL* and included policies.

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

WRC Program Administrator

Appendix B

**WRC Athlete Safety Incident Reporting Form**

WRC Strongly encourages the reporting of misconduct. WRC appreciates your willingness to report inappropriate behavior. In lieu of this form, similar information can be sent electronically, conveyed verbally, etc. as indicated within the Safety Policy.

This section is about the individual you are reporting. Please provide as much information as possible.

1. Name of individual \_\_\_\_\_  
Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age or approximate age \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Gender \_\_\_\_\_

4. Position(s) this individual holds or held:  
\_\_\_ Head Coach \_\_\_ Assistant Coach \_\_\_ Staff/Volunteer \_\_\_ Other/Not Sure

This section asks questions about the incident or incidents you are reporting. Please provide as much specific information as you are able.

5. Type of Offense (i.e. what happened...such as "Harassment of athlete")  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where did the incident(s) take place?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Details of what happened (including...Who, What, When, Where)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This section is for information about the victim or victims. If you are the victim and wish to remain anonymous, you may do so. In that case, please enter only your age, location, club affiliation.

8. Name \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Gender M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

11. Club Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Contact phone # \_\_\_\_\_

13. Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_  
(note – if under 18, please provide parent or guardians information)

Your Information (person reporting incident, if not the victim)

14. Name \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

16. Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Club Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

18. Relation to Victim (if any):

- Self
- Parent/Guardian
- Other family member
- Friend or Acquaintance
- Club member, coach or volunteer
- Other or prefer not to say

Other Information

19. If you have any other information that you feel would be helpful to an investigation of the alleged offense you have reported, please enter it here:

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