

## Athlete Protection Guidelines

### Purpose and Commitment

Ontario Cycling Association (“the Organization”) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, athlete-centered sport environment that prioritizes the physical and psychological safety of all participants.

These Athlete Protection Guidelines form part of the Organization’s broader Safe Sport framework and operate in conjunction with:

- The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)
- The Organization’s Discipline & Complaints Policy
- The Organization’s Screening Policy
- The Organization’s Person in Authority Guidelines
- All applicable independent safe sport mechanisms, including the Organization’s retained Independent Third Party, **Sport Dispute Management**. Complaints may be submitted directly to Sport Dispute Management via the complaint form available on the Organization’s website. The Organization is not a signatory to the Canadian Safe Sport Program (CSSP); the CSSP and Sport Integrity Canada (formerly CCES) have jurisdiction only over national sport organizations. Where a matter falls within Sport Integrity Canada’s jurisdiction (e.g., a national-level participant), individuals may report directly to Sport Integrity Canada in addition to or instead of the Organization’s ITP.

The Organization recognizes that Persons in Authority hold inherent power over athletes. This power imbalance requires heightened professional boundaries, transparency, and vigilance at all times.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy:

- “*Organization*” means Ontario Cycling Association.
- “*Person in Authority*” means any Individual who holds a position of trust, authority, supervision, influence, or decision-making power over a participant. This includes, but is not limited to, coaches, assistant coaches, ride leaders, instructors, officials, team managers, medical personnel, support personnel, staff members, Board Directors and Officers, contractors, chaperones, volunteers, and any Individual who has influence over athlete selection, discipline, training environment, funding, competition opportunities, or advancement. A power imbalance may exist even where individuals appear to be peers or where a relationship appears consensual.
- “*Minor*” means any individual under the age of 18.

## **Application and Compliance**

These Guidelines must be followed by any Person in Authority as a condition of their role within the Organization.

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension, removal from duties, termination of employment or contract, and/or referral to the appropriate independent safe sport authority.

## **Screening and Training Requirements**

All Persons in Authority must:

- Complete screening in accordance with the Organization's *Screening Policy*
- As part of screening, the Organization will conduct a check against the Sport Integrity Canada Public Registry to confirm that the individual does not hold a current eligibility restriction or sanction in sport.
- Complete required Safe Sport training as follows, based on role and level of involvement:
  - Coaches, officials, and Persons in Authority operating at the competition or certification level must complete the NCCP Safe Sport Training module (available free of charge through The Locker at coach.ca).
  - Volunteers, community coaches, administrators, and other Persons in Authority not required to hold NCCP certification must complete the Coaches Association of Ontario Safe Sport 101 Playbook eLearning Series (available free of charge at safesport101.coachesontario.ca).
  - The Organization reserves the right to require both courses where a Person in Authority's role warrants additional training.
- Acknowledge and agree to comply with these guidelines annually.

## **Duty to Report**

All Persons in Authority have a duty to report any suspected or actual maltreatment, boundary violation, grooming behaviour, or breach of this Policy in accordance with the Organization's reporting procedures. Reports must be made as soon as reasonably possible and, where practicable, within 48 hours of the Person in Authority becoming aware of the concern. Delay in reporting may itself constitute a breach of this Policy.

Where a Minor may need protection, individuals have a legal obligation under Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act to report directly to child protection authorities.

Nothing in this Policy prevents an individual from reporting directly to law enforcement, to Sport Dispute Management (OC's Independent Third Party, accessible via the complaint form on the Ontario Cycling website), or to Sport Integrity Canada, where applicable.

## **Prohibition on Retaliation**

The Organization strictly prohibits retaliation of any kind against any individual who, in good faith, makes a report, raises a concern, participates in an investigation, or provides information in connection with a safe sport matter. Retaliation includes any adverse action, exclusion, intimidation, threat, or negative treatment directed at a reporter, witness, complainant, or respondent in connection with a safe sport disclosure or process. Any Person in Authority who engages in, facilitates, or condones retaliation is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or permanent removal from the Organization. This protection applies regardless of the outcome of any complaint or investigation.

## **Rule of Two & Observable and Interruptible Environments**

The Organization adopts the Rule of Two and requires that:

- A Person in Authority must not be alone and out of sight with a Minor athlete.
- Interactions must be observable and interruptible wherever possible.
- Training environments must be open to observation.
- A participant must not ride in a coach's vehicle without another screened adult present.
- The gender identity and comfort of participants must be considered when selecting supervising adults.

One-on-one interactions must be avoided unless unavoidable due to emergency or safety circumstances and must be documented where appropriate.

Virtual training environments (e.g., video sessions, online meetings, performance review calls) must also respect Rule of Two principles.

## **Electronic Communications**

Electronic communication must be professional, transparent, and directly related to sport. Persons in Authority must:

- Use group messaging, team platforms, or communications that include parents/guardians (for Minors) whenever possible.
- Only send direct messages to individual athletes when necessary for legitimate sport-related matters.
- Communicate between 6:00 a.m. and midnight unless extenuating circumstances exist.
- Always maintain professional tone.

Persons in Authority must not:

- Use disappearing message applications or encrypted private messaging platforms with Minor athletes.
- Engage with Minor athletes on personal social media accounts in a manner unrelated to sport.

- Send sexually explicit language, imagery, or content.
- Discuss extracurricular drug or alcohol use (except regarding prohibition).
- Ask athletes to keep secrets.
- Become overly involved in an athlete's personal life.

All electronic communications may be subject to review in the event of a complaint.

### **Travel and Transportation**

When traveling with athletes:

- A Person in Authority must not be alone in a vehicle with an individual athlete unless the athlete is their child or legal dependent.
- A Person in Authority must not share a room with an athlete unless the athlete is their child or legal dependent.
- Room or bed checks must be conducted by two Persons in Authority.
- Athletes sharing rooms must be age-appropriate (within two years) and of compatible gender identity.
- Ride-share services (e.g., Uber, Lyft) must not be used to transport a Minor athlete alone with a Person in Authority.
- Billeting arrangements must be pre-approved by the Organization and follow documented supervision and screening standards.

### **Locker Rooms, Changing Areas, and Meeting Spaces**

- Persons in Authority must not engage in one-on-one interactions with an athlete in any space where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.
- A second Person in Authority must be present for any necessary interaction in such spaces.
- If not permitted inside, Persons in Authority must remain immediately accessible outside.
- The use of recording devices in spaces where privacy is expected is strictly prohibited.

### **Photography and Video**

- Parent/guardian consent (for Minors) or athlete consent (for adults) must be obtained prior to capturing or distributing images.
- Images must be taken in public view and adhere to standards of decency.
- Recording devices are strictly prohibited in private spaces.

Images must be edited or deleted if they include:

- Misplaced apparel or visible undergarments
- Suggestive or provocative poses
- Embarrassing or exploitative content

Consent may be withdrawn at any time.

## **Physical Contact**

Physical contact must be appropriate, intentional, and necessary for legitimate coaching purposes.

A Person in Authority must:

- Clearly explain why physical contact is necessary and obtain consent.
- Ensure contact is appropriate to the situation.
- Limit contact to what is reasonably required.

A Person in Authority must not:

- Initiate hugging, cuddling, horseplay, or unnecessary physical contact.
- Engage in any contact that could reasonably be perceived as sexual or exploitative.

The Organization recognizes grooming behaviours as prohibited conduct. Grooming includes behaviours such as gift-giving, isolating an athlete, providing special privileges, developing emotional dependency, or gradually crossing boundaries.

## **Sport-Specific Operational Safeguards**

- Persons in Authority must not be alone with an athlete before or after practice.
- Parents should remain until appropriate supervision is present.
- Individual skill instruction must occur within eyesight and earshot of another adult.

## **Psychological Safety and Culture**

The Organization is committed not only to preventing harm but to proactively fostering psychologically safe environments where athletes feel respected, valued, and empowered to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

Safe sport is a shared responsibility requiring vigilance, transparency, and accountability at all levels of the Organization.

## **Concussion Safety — Rowan's Law Compliance**

The Organization is subject to Ontario's Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018, and all Persons in Authority must comply with its requirements. Specifically:

- All coaches, team trainers, and officials must annually review Ontario's government-approved Concussion Awareness Resources and confirm that review with the Organization prior to serving in their role each season.
- All coaches, team trainers, and officials must annually review and acknowledge the Organization's *Concussion Code of Conduct*.
- Any athlete who sustains or is suspected of having sustained a concussion must be immediately removed from training, practice, or competition. The athlete may not return to full participation until cleared in accordance with the Organization's Return-to-Sport protocol, which requires confirmation of a diagnosis and medical clearance from a physician or nurse practitioner.

- Persons in Authority must not minimize, dismiss, or disregard a reported or suspected concussion. Encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to activity before medical clearance is a form of physical maltreatment and a breach of this Policy.
- The Organization's *Concussion Code of Conduct*, Removal-from-Sport Protocol, and Return-to-Sport Protocol are available on the Ontario Cycling website and form part of the Organization's Safe Sport framework.

### **Enforcement**

Breaches of these Guidelines may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Organization's *Discipline & Complaints Policy* and/or referral to Sport Dispute Management (OC's Independent Third Party) or, where applicable, to Sport Integrity Canada.