

## Person In Authority Guidelines

The Organization is Ontario Cycling Association.

### Definitions

The following terms have these meanings in this Guideline:

- a) *“Vulnerable Individuals”*: Includes Children / Youth (people under the age of 18 years old) and Vulnerable Adults (people who, because of age, disability, or other circumstance, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at greater risk than the general population of being harmed by people in positions of trust or authority).
- b) *“Individuals”*: All categories of membership defined in the Organization’s By-laws, as well as all individuals employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities with the Organization including, but not limited to, volunteers, coaches, ride leaders, managers, administrators, officials, chaperones, committee members, Board Directors and Officers.
- c) *“Person in Authority”*: 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, staff members, board members, contractors, chaperones, volunteers, and any Individual who has influence over athlete selection, discipline, training environment, funding, competition opportunities, or advancement.
- d) *“Abuse”*: Child/Youth Abuse or Vulnerable Adult Abuse as described in this Guideline.
- e) *“Power Imbalance”*: A situation in which one Individual holds authority, influence, decision-making power, or control over another Individual’s participation, safety, advancement, funding, or well-being. A power imbalance may exist even where the Individuals appear to be peers or where a relationship appears consensual.

### Purpose

The Organization is committed to a sport environment free from abuse, maltreatment, discrimination, and exploitation.

This Guideline outlines the heightened responsibilities of Persons in Authority due to the inherent power imbalance that exists between them and Vulnerable Individuals.

This Guideline must be read in conjunction with the Organization’s:

- Athlete Protection Guidelines
- Code of Conduct & Ethics
- Screening Policy
- Discipline & Complaints Policy

In the event of any inconsistency, the higher standard of protection for athletes and Vulnerable Individuals shall apply.

### **Zero Tolerance Statement**

The Organization has zero tolerance for any type of abuse or maltreatment. Persons in Authority are held to a heightened standard of conduct due to their position of trust and influence.

All Individuals are required to report instances of abuse or suspected abuse to the appropriate authority. Failure to report suspected abuse, boundary violations, or grooming behaviours may itself constitute a breach of this Guideline.

### **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 constitutes a breach of this Guideline regardless of whether the underlying complaint is ultimately substantiated. Persons in Authority who engage in or condone retaliatory behaviour are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Organization's *Discipline & Complaints Policy*.

### **Power Imbalance & Boundary Expectations**

Persons in Authority must recognize and actively manage the inherent power imbalance that exists between themselves and athletes or Vulnerable Individuals.

Persons in Authority must:

- Avoid any behaviour that exploits a power imbalance
- Always maintain professional boundaries
- Avoid favoritism, dependency-building, or exclusive relationships
- Avoid placing personal emotional, financial, or social needs above the needs of athletes
- Refrain from engaging in intimate or sexual relationships with athletes over whom they hold authority, regardless of perceived consent
- Avoid behaviour that may create the perception of grooming, preferential treatment, or secrecy

Intent does not negate impact. Behaviour that undermines trust, psychological safety, or athlete well-being may constitute a breach even if no abuse was intended.

### **Education – What is Abuse**

a) Vulnerable Individuals can be abused in different forms.

- b) The following description of Child / Youth Abuse has been modified and adapted from Ecclesiastical's *Guidelines for Developing a Safety & Protection Policy for Children / Youth / Vulnerable Adults*:
- c) *Child / Youth Abuse*
- i) "Child abuse" refers to the violence, mistreatment, or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they depend on or trust. There are many different forms of abuse, and a child may be subjected to more than one form:
    - (1) **Physical abuse** involves single or repeated instances of deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking, or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.
    - (2) **Sexual abuse** and exploitation involve using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.
    - (3) **Neglect** is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological, or emotional development and well-being. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a dependent child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care, or protection from harm.
    - (4) **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self-worth. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include aggressive verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes exposing the child to violence.
  - ii) An abuser may use several different tactics to gain access to children, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. The abuse may happen once, or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.
  - iii) Abuse of children or youth in sport can include emotional maltreatment, neglect, and physical maltreatment.

- (1) **Emotional Maltreatment** – A coach’s failure to provide a developmentally-appropriate and supportive environment. Emotional abuse is at the foundation of all other forms of maltreatment (sexual, physical and neglect). In sports, this conduct has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete when it is persistent, pervasive, or patterned acts (i.e., yelling at an athlete once does not constitute maltreatment). Examples of emotional maltreatment include, but are not limited to:
- (a) Refusal to recognize an athlete’s worth or the legitimacy of an athlete’s needs (including complaints of injury/pain, thirst or feeling unwell)
  - (b) Creating a culture of fear, or threatening, bullying, or frightening an athlete
  - (c) Frequent name-calling or sarcasm that continually “beats down” an athlete’s self-esteem
  - (d) Negative or disparaging comments about an athlete’s disability, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or gender identity
  - (e) Embarrassing or humiliating an athlete in front of peers
  - (f) Excluding or isolating an athlete from the group
  - (g) Withholding attention
  - (h) Encouraging an athlete to engage in destructive and antisocial behaviour, reinforcing deviance, or impairing an athlete’s ability to behave in socially appropriate ways
  - (i) Over-pressuring: whereby the coach imposes extreme pressure upon the athlete to behave and achieve in ways that are far beyond the athlete’s capabilities
  - (j) Verbally attacking an athlete personally (e.g., belittling them or calling them worthless, lazy, useless, fat or disgusting).
  - (k) Routinely or arbitrarily excluding athletes from practice
  - (l) Throwing sports equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, athletes
- (2) **Neglect** - acts of omission (i.e., the coach should act to protect health/well-being of an athlete but does not). Examples of neglect include, but are not limited to:
- (a) Isolating an athlete in a confined space or stranded on equipment, with no supervision, for an extended period
  - (b) Withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep
  - (c) Ignoring an injury
  - (d) Knowing about sexual abuse of an athlete but failing to report it
- (3) **Physical Maltreatment** - involves contact or non-contact behaviour that can cause physical harm to an athlete. It also includes any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct (e.g., child abuse, child neglect and assault). Almost all sport involves strenuous physical activity. Athletes regularly push

themselves to the point of exhaustion. However, any activity that physically harms an athlete, such as extreme disciplinary actions or punishment, is unacceptable. Physical maltreatment can extend to seemingly unrelated areas including inadequate recovery times for injuries and restricted diet. Examples of physical maltreatment include, but are not limited to:

- (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
- (d) Providing illegal drugs, extracurricular or non-prescribed medications to any athlete
- (e) Encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play prematurely or without the clearance of a medical professional, following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion)
- (f) Prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of an athlete
- (g) Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose, or excessive repetition of a skill to the point of injury
- (h) Using excessive exercise as punishment (e.g., stretching to the point of causing the athlete to cry, endurance conditioning until the athlete vomits)

(4) **Grooming** - Grooming often involves incremental boundary violations that may appear benign in isolation but collectively establish secrecy, dependency, and control. Early boundary violations must be addressed proactively to prevent escalation. The process allows for inappropriate conduct to become normalized. It is often preceded by building confidence and comfort that an individual can be trusted with the care of the athlete.

Examples of grooming include but are not limited to:

- (a) Nudity or exposure of genitals in the presence of an athlete.
- (b) Sexually oriented conversation or discussions about personal sexual activities.
- (c) Excessive discussions about a coach's personal life outside of coaching (i.e., family, work, medical challenges)
- (d) Spending time with an individual athlete and/or their family outside of team activities.
- (e) Excessive gift-giving to an individual athlete.
- (f) Socially isolating an athlete.
- (g) Restricting an athlete's privacy.
- (h) Providing extracurricular/illegal drugs, alcohol or tobacco to an athlete.
- (i) Becoming overly involved in an athlete's personal life.
- (j) Making sexual or discriminatory jokes or comments to an athlete.
- (k) Displaying material of a sexual nature in the presence of an athlete.
- (l) Mocking or threatening an athlete
- (m) Putting coach's needs above needs of athlete and/or going to athlete to have coach's needs met
- (n) Creating "special" access privileges

- (o) Encouraging secrecy or private communication
  - (p) Isolating an athlete from teammates
  - (q) Providing exclusive opportunities not available to others
  - (r) Undermining parental involvement
- iv) Importantly, emotional and physical maltreatment does not include professionally accepted coaching methods (per the NCCP) of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline, or improving athletic performance.
- v) Potential warning signs of abuse of children or youth can include, but is not limited to:
- (1) Recurrent unexplained injuries
  - (2) Alert behavior: child seems to always be expecting something bad to happen
  - (3) Often wears clothing that covers up their skin, even in warm weather
  - (4) Child startles easily, shies away from touch or shows other skittish behavior
  - (5) Constantly seems fearful or anxious about doing something wrong
  - (6) Withdrawn from peers and adults
  - (7) Behavior fluctuates between extremes (e.g., extremely cooperative or extremely demanding)
  - (8) Acting either inappropriately beyond their age (like an adult; taking care of other children) or inappropriately younger than their age (like an infant; throwing tantrums)
  - (9) Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects
  - (10) New adult words for body parts and no obvious source
  - (11) Self-harm (e.g., cutting, burning or other harmful activities)
  - (12) Not wanting to be alone with a particular child or young person
- d) *Vulnerable Adult Abuse*
- i) Although individuals may be abused at virtually any life stage – childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, or old age – the nature and consequences of abuse may differ depending on an individual’s situation, disability, or circumstance.
  - ii) The following description of Vulnerable Adult Abuse has been modified and adapted from Ecclesiastical’s *Guidelines for Developing a Safety & Protection Policy for Children / Youth / Vulnerable Adults*.
  - iii) Abuse of vulnerable adults is often described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust. Abusers may use several different tactics to exert power and control over their victims. Abuse may happen once, or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over months or years. The abuse may take many different forms, which may change over time:

- (1) **Psychological abuse** includes attempts to dehumanize or intimidate vulnerable adults. Any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces their sense of self-worth or dignity and threatens their psychological and emotional integrity is abuse. This type of abuse may include, but is not limited to:
  - (a) Threatening to use violence
  - (b) Threatening to abandon them
  - (c) Intentionally frightening them
  - (d) Making them fear that they will not receive the food or care they need
  - (e) Lying to them
  - (f) Failing to check allegations of abuse against them
  
- (2) **Financial abuse** encompasses financial manipulation or exploitation, including theft, fraud, forgery, or extortion. It includes using a vulnerable adult's money or property in a dishonest manner or failing to use a vulnerable adult's assets for their welfare. Abuse occurs any time someone acts without consent in a way that financially or personally benefits one person at the expense of another. This type of abuse against a vulnerable adult may include, but is not limited to:
  - (a) Stealing their money, disability cheques, or other possessions
  - (b) Wrongfully using a Power of Attorney
  - (c) Failing to pay back borrowed money when asked
  
- (3) **Physical abuse** includes any act of violence – whether it results in physical injury or not. Intentionally inflicting pain or injury that results in either bodily harm or mental distress is abuse. Physical abuse may include, but is not limited to:
  - (a) Beating
  - (b) Burning or scalding
  - (c) Pushing or shoving
  - (d) Hitting or slapping
  - (e) Rough handling
  - (f) Tripping
  - (g) Spitting
  
- (4) All forms of sexual abuse are also applicable to Vulnerable Adults
  
- (5) Potential warning signs of abuse of vulnerable adults may include:
  - (a) Depression, fear, anxiety, passivity
  - (b) Unexplained physical injuries
  - (c) Dehydration, malnutrition, or lack of food
  - (d) Poor hygiene, rashes, pressure sores
  - (e) Over-sedation
  
- e) Abuse and maltreatment may also include psychological harm, coercive control, and conduct that creates a culture of fear, intimidation, humiliation, or silence.

- f) In sport environments, particular risk factors may include:
- Weight or body composition commentary
  - Pressure to train or compete while injured
  - Concussion minimization
    - The Organization’s obligations under Rowan’s Law (Concussion Safety), 2018 require all Persons in Authority to: review Ontario’s Concussion Awareness Resources annually; follow the Organization’s Concussion Code of Conduct; and apply the Removal-from-Sport and Return-to-Sport protocols without exception. Concussion minimization, including pressuring an athlete to return to play without medical clearance or dismissing reported symptoms, constitutes physical maltreatment under this Guideline and may be a violation of Ontario law.
  - Social isolation within team environments
  - Travel-related vulnerability
  - Digital or social media communications
- g) Persons in Authority must ensure that performance objectives never override athlete health, safety, or dignity.

### **Preventing Abuse**

- a) The Organization will enact measures aimed at preventing abuse. These measures include screening, orientation, training, practice, and monitoring.
- b) *Screening*
- i) Individuals who coach, volunteer, officiate, deliver developmental programs, are affiliated with clubs, cycling teams, Provincial cycling programming, accompany athletes to an event or competition, are paid staff, or otherwise engage with Vulnerable Individuals involved with the Organization, its clubs, cycling teams and individual athletes will be screened according to the organization’s *Screening Policy*.
- ii) The Organization, its clubs, and cycling teams, will use the *Screening Policy* to determine the level of trust, authority, and access that each Individual has with Vulnerable Individuals. Each level of risk will be accompanied by increased screening procedures which may include the following, singularly or in combination:
- (1) Completing an Application Form for the position sought (which includes alerting Individuals that they must agree to adhere with the organization’s policies and procedures
  - (2) Completing a Screening Declaration Form
  - (3) Providing letters of reference
  - (4) Providing a Police/Criminal Record Check (“PRC/CRC”) and/or Vulnerable Sector Check (“VSC”)
  - (5) Providing a driver’s abstract (for Individuals who transport Vulnerable Individuals)

(6) Other screening procedures, as required

- iii) An Individual's failure to participate in the screening process or pass the screening requirements as determined by the Organization, will result in the Individual's ineligibility for the position sought.
- iv) Screening shall align with the Organization's *Screening Policy* and applicable national safe sport requirements, including adherence to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS), where applicable.

**c) Orientation & Training**

- i) The Organization will provide access to orientation and training for those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals. The orientation and training will be based on the level of risk, as described in the *Screening Policy*.
- ii) Orientation may include, but is not limited to introductory presentations, facility tours, equipment demonstrations, parent/athlete meetings, meetings with colleagues and supervisors, orientation manuals, orientation sessions, and increased supervision during initial tasks or period of engagement.
- iii) Training may include, but is not limited to certification courses, online learning, mentoring, workshop sessions, webinars, on-site demonstrations, and peer feedback.
- iv) At the conclusion of the orientation and training, Individuals will be required to acknowledge, in written form, that they have received and completed the training.
- v) Persons in Authority must complete safe sport training as required by the Organization and acknowledge, in writing, their understanding of power imbalance, boundary management, reporting obligations, and Rule of Two requirements. The required training is as follows, based on role and level of involvement:
  - Coaches, officials, and Persons in Authority operating at the competition or certification level: NCCP Safe Sport Training module (available free via The Locker at [coach.ca](http://coach.ca)).
  - Volunteers, community coaches, administrators, and other Persons in Authority not required to hold NCCP certification: Coaches Association of Ontario Safe Sport 101 Playbook eLearning Series (available free at [safesport101.coachesontario.ca](http://safesport101.coachesontario.ca)).

- The Organization reserves the right to require both courses where a Person in Authority's role warrants additional training.
- 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.

vi) Annual reaffirmation of compliance may be required.

### **c) Practice**

- i) When Individuals interact with Vulnerable Individuals, they are required to enact certain practical approaches to these interactions. These include, but are not limited to:
  - ii) All physical contact must take place in public and is limited to physical interactions which are non-threatening or non-sexual touching (e.g., high-fives, pats on the back or shoulder, handshakes, specific skill instruction, etc.) which do not make the athlete uncomfortable whether expressed or not. Any physical contact that an athlete has specifically requested not to occur is strictly prohibited.
  - iii) Ensuring that Vulnerable Individuals are always supervised by more than one adult (Rule of Two)
  - iv) Including parents/guardians in all communication (e.g., electronic, telephonic) with Vulnerable Individuals (Group Messages, group emails or team pages are examples of appropriate communication methods)
  - v) The content of all electronic communication with athletes must be professional in tone and for the purpose of communicating information related to cycling issues or activities
  - vi) Personal texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individual athletes when necessary and only for the purpose of communicating information related to cycling issues and activities. Individuals are aware that such communication is subject to the Organization's *Code of Conduct & Ethics* and *Athlete Protection Guidelines*.
  - vii) No communication concerning extracurricular drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is permitted with athletes
  - viii) When traveling with Vulnerable Individuals, the Individual will not transport Vulnerable Individuals without another adult present and will not stay in the same overnight accommodation location without additional adult supervision
  - ix) Digital Communication Expectations:
    - No disappearing or encrypted messaging applications when communicating with Vulnerable Individuals
    - No private social media connections with minor athletes
    - No personal texting outside of sport-related communication
    - All communications must remain professional in tone and content
    - Parents/guardians must be included in communications with minors

- x) Travel & Accommodation Expectations:
  - Rule of Two must be respected during travel
  - No single-adult / single-athlete overnight rooming
  - Transportation of Vulnerable Individuals must include more than one adult present or documented parental consent
  - Exceptions must be documented and approved in advance

### **Monitoring & Accountability**

- i) The Organization will regularly monitor, through their clubs, cycling teams and members, those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals. The monitoring will be based on the level of risk, as described in the *Screening Policy*.
- ii) Monitoring may include, but is not limited to regular status reports, logs, supervisor meetings, supervisor on-site check-ins, feedback provided directly to the organization (from peers and parents/athletes), and regular evaluations.
- iii) Breaches of boundary expectations may result in corrective action, even where abuse has not occurred.

### **Reporting Abuse**

- a) Reports of abuse that are shared confidentially with an Individual by a Vulnerable Individual may require the Individual to report the incident to parents/guardians, the Organization or police. Individuals must respond to such reports in a non-judgemental, supportive, and comforting manner but must also explain that the report may need to be escalated to the proper authority or to the Vulnerable Individual's parent/guardian.
- b) Complaints or reports that describe an element of **abuse** will be addressed by the process(es) described in the organization's *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
- c) Nothing in this Guideline replaces an Individual's duty to report suspected child abuse under Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.
- d) The Organization has retained Sport Dispute Management as its Independent Third Party (ITP) to receive, manage, and process safe sport complaints independently of the Organization. Complaints may be submitted directly to Sport Dispute Management at any time via the complaint intake form available on the Organization's website. The ITP operates independently and confidentially. The Organization is not a signatory to the Canadian Safe Sport Program (CSSP); accordingly, Sport Integrity Canada has jurisdiction over complaints involving national sport organization participants, not PSO members. Where an individual believes a matter falls under Sport Integrity Canada's jurisdiction, they may contact Sport Integrity Canada directly.

- e) Internal processes do not replace mandatory reporting obligations to child protection authorities or law enforcement.