

Sexual Abuse & Molestation Prevention Policy for the American Special Hockey Association

POLICY STATEMENT

The *American Special Hockey Association (ASHA)* strictly prohibits and does not tolerate sexual abuse of any form at any American Special Hockey Association event, sponsored or related event, practice, game or tournament, or activity. ASHA provides procedures for players, coaches, volunteers, fans, attendees, family members, board members, victims of sexual abuse or others to report such sexual abuse.

ASHA has a zero-tolerance policy for any sexual abuse committed by a member, player, coach, employee, official, volunteer, board member or third party. Following any report of potential sexual abuse, ASHA will initiate an appropriate investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, disciplinary action and penalties, including but not limited to termination of employment, contract, or volunteer agreement and criminal prosecution may ensue, if warranted.

Sexual abuse is defined, as “Includes any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or molestation, sexual injury or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism, and sexual exploitation.”

CODE OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

ASHA has educated our staff, volunteers and board of directors about child sexual abuse, and has instituted policies and practices designed to protect children from such abuse. ASHA has trained staff and volunteers about proper reporting procedures. This policy is reviewed annually with all staff/members and signed as an integral component of the ASHA annual registration process.

Designated Person

Everyone has an important role ensuring our members and children are safe. ASHA recommends each individual team have a designated individual (team manager, head coach or staff member) charged with specific confidential responsibilities for implementing above mentioned policy.

The designated person’s general terms of reference could include:

- Maintaining an up to date policy and procedures manual.
- Ensuring that relevant staff and/or volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures, including implementing safe recruitment procedures.
- Conduct and document annual training.
- Advising the management committee on safeguarding and child protection issues.
- Maintaining relationship with local Children’s Protection Services and local Police.
- If there is a concern, the designated person would: 1) Be the first point of contact for any concerns or allegations, from children or adults, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained in all cases; and 2) Decide the appropriate action to be taken, in line with the organization’s procedures and advise organization’s management leadership.

Reporting Procedures

Where appropriate or required by law, ASHA will report any incidents of potential sexual abuse to the appropriate authorities.

ASHA will report alleged sexual abuse incidents to ASHA’s insurance agent, when deemed appropriate.

Investigation and Follow Up Procedures

ASHA may use an outside third party to conduct an investigation of alleged sexual abuse. If ASHA has a trained internal investigation team, the investigation team may be used to investigate the alleged incident, occurrence or abuse. ASHA will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or other regulatory agencies. It is ASHA’s objective to conduct a fair and impartial investigation. ASHA will make every reasonable effort allegation confidential, but the safety of members or children will trump such confidentiality.

Anti-Retaliation Statement

ASHA prohibits retaliation made against any organization member, volunteer, or board member who reports a complaint of sexual abuse or who participates in any related investigation. Making false accusations of sexual abuse in bad faith can have serious consequences for those who are wrongly accused. ASHA prohibits making false and/or malicious sexual abuse allegations, as well as deliberately providing false information during an investigation. Anyone who violates this rule is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Hiring Practices and Screening

- Applications – All prospective staff members, coaches and volunteers shall complete an association application form before any player contact. This application shall include questions about criminal conviction, past work history, education. The application will include a statement that ASHA has a zero tolerance standard for abuse and

inappropriate behavior by staff members. All applications will be signed by the individual and maintained in their personnel file.

- Interviews – Prospective staff members will be interviewed by two or more staff members. All interviews must be documented on an ASHA approved interview form. During all interviews the prospective staff member will be asked to read an ASHA statement on abuse prevention and verify that they are in agreement with its purpose and that they will abide by its standards if hired or selected to volunteer.
- Criminal record checks – ASHA through a third party, Protect Youth Sports, will conduct a criminal record and background check for criminal activity. This search may be through law enforcement agencies or through entities that provide such service and may include: examining local, county, state records throughout the entire country; and searching various registered sex offender lists.
- Reference checks – ASHA may contact three or more personal references for all prospective staff. One reference must be a close family member of the applicant. The reference's responses will be documented in their personnel file.
- File documentation – All applications, reference checks, background checks, records management and interview notes will be properly maintained in a locked personnel file until three to ~~five years~~five years post-employment.

Staff Zero Tolerance Policy and Expectations:

- Reporting of suspicious behavior – ASHA staff are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse to the jurisdiction having authority. ASHA staff will report to their supervisor any indication of or warning signs concerning abuse involving a child. ASHA coaches or volunteers who identifies suspicious behavior or a violation of policy by a fellow staff person should report the event to their supervisor immediately.
- Being alone with children – At no time should ASHA staff be in a situation where they are alone with a child or children and cannot be observed by others. ASHA will make every attempt to design and structure its programs to eliminate the potential for a staff member to be in a one-on-one situation. ASHA coaches/volunteers are not to have children enter closets or storage areas to retrieve equipment.
- Hugging and touching of children – Appropriate physical contact is important in the emotional development of all children and children at different developmental levels will need differing degrees of physical contact. Therefore, ASHA coaches/volunteers should not perform frontal hugs of children – hugs should be from the side. The coaches and volunteers should get physically down to the child's physical level when possible. ASHA coaches and volunteers shall never touch any child's intimate personal body part.
- ASHA coaches and volunteers shall never pick-up school-aged children (to reduce potential for both abuse allegations and physical injury) and should not allow children to sit on their laps.
- Supervision standards – All children who are registered into programs will be supervised by ASHA coaches or volunteers at all times. This includes bathrooms, locker rooms and changing areas during a practice or day camp. At no time should one staff member have

direct care of a single child. If a staff member becomes alone with a child, s/he should promptly move to a location where s/he can be observed by other ASHA staff members.

Program Operation

- Bathroom policy – Children who are participating in ASHA programs shall not be sent to bathrooms without an ASHA staff member present. The buddy system or three children together are not acceptable practices and are not permitted at ASHA. For single stall bathrooms ASHA staff will be positioned outside of the bathroom to make sure no one else enters the restroom. At minimum, when multiple children are in the bathroom or locker room, ASHA staff members must stand in doorway to have adequate supervision of the children. Staff members can and are encouraged to be inside the facilities so they can be easily seen by the children and so they are able to immediately stop any inappropriate activity. This is best done with multiple staff members so individual staff are not subjected to unwarranted allegations. Protocols that address the variety of unusual circumstances possible during outdoor or off-site activities shall be established and made part of that program/activity's operating guidelines.
- Staff will check all bathrooms immediately prior to use by the children and will be in the restroom (if not single stall) when being used by a child.

Member Expectations Around Children

Members are expected to use decent language and always conduct their business, behaviors and act in a positive manner. Members who talk in a sexual manner, perform sexual gestures, sexual acts, or attempt inappropriate contact with a child will have their membership suspended or terminated depending on the degree of the offense. No use of cameras or cell phones is allowed by members in the locker room areas.

Photography

Publishing articles and photos in ASHA newsletters, websites, local newspapers etc. is an excellent way of recognizing young people's achievements and of promoting your organization and the sport as a whole. However it is important to minimize the risk of anyone using images of children in an inappropriate way. Digital technology makes it easy to take, store, send, manipulate and publish images.

There are two key principles to bear in mind:

Before taking photos or video, obtain written consent from their parent or legal guardian, before any images are taken and used:

- A consent form can be included with an event entry form

- Any photographer or member of the press or media attending an event must wear identification at all times and shall be fully briefed in advance on your expectations regarding his/her behavior and the issues covered by these guidelines
- A photographer shall never have unsupervised access to players at the event or to arrange photo sessions outside the event
- Care must be taken in the storage of, data management and access to images. When publishing images, make sure they are appropriate and that you do not include any information that might enable someone to contact the child
- It is preferable to use a general shot showing participants on the ice, or a group shot of the team, without identifying them by name
- If you are recognizing the achievement of an individual and wish to publish their name with their photo, DO NOT publish any other information (e.g. where they live, name of school, other hobbies and interests) that would enable someone to contact, befriend or start to 'groom' the child
- Ensure that the young people pictured are suitably dressed, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

The use of cameras or camera phones in changing areas is not permitted in any circumstances. Such use by young people should be regarded as a form of bullying.

Websites and Social Media

When promoting ASHA and encouraging your members to interact through a website or social network or media, please review these safety guidelines:

- Follow all above mentioned guidelines on the use of images of children (see Photography section above)
- Ensure that the content and language on your site or page, including contributions to blogs, forums etc., is not inappropriate for younger visitors and does not link directly to unsuitable material on other sites
- Provide a clear process for parents and others to report inappropriate content or online bullying and to request that content is removed
- Have a robust procedure for handling and assessing such a report or request and acting promptly to remove the offending content.

ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the sexual abuse policy. I understand that the American Special Hockey Association will not tolerate any employee, board member, volunteer, ASHA member, player or third party who commits any form of sexual abuse.

Disciplinary actions, if warranted, will be taken and enforced for such violation.

I understand: (1) My responsibility to abide by all rules contained in this policy, (2) How to report incidents of sexual abuse, (3) I shall not retaliate against any employee, player, family, member of ASHA or third party, exercising their rights under this policy, (4) I shall not make false and/or malicious sexual abuse allegations, or deliberately provide false information during an investigation, and (5) that violation of this policy can lead to disciplinary action by ASHA, up to and including termination of association with ASHA.

ASHA Coach/Volunteer

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of annual review: _____