



COMBA Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Last reviewed: April 2024

COMBA Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Children have the right to participate in sport in a safe and enjoyable environment. COMBA values both the physical and emotional well being of children who are participating in all levels of offered programming.

Ministry of Child and Family Development	Kelowna RCMP
1-800-663-9122 If a child or youth is in immediate danger, call police (call 9-1-1 or your local police) to intervene and then call a child protection worker. The B.C Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect	If an emergency, call: 911 250-762-3300

The Canadian Sport Helpline	Safe Sport
1-888-837-7678 – info@abuse-free-sport.ca Website The helpline will provide you with advice, guidance and resources on how to proceed/intervene appropriately in the circumstances.	Safe Sport concerns or complaints may be made to Executive Director David Laing (604-586-3312 or davidlaing@baseball.bc.ca). For further details or alternative reporting options, please see our Safe Sport reporting policy .

Guidelines Adult Interacting with Children in Sport

Engaging in sport provides children with memorable experiences and chances for growth. These encounters play a crucial role in community bonding and fostering the development of children. The positive aspects are closely connected to the quality of relationships between athletes and coaches, as well as the creation of safe and secure environments that maintain well-defined boundaries between adults and children. Consequently, the aim of these guidelines is to create a shared understanding of the expectations for adults interacting with children in sport and promotes a sense of safety for individuals who may need to report any instances of misconduct towards children.

For the purpose of this document “a coach or adult” refers to any person working, volunteering or otherwise interacting with children in sport. “Children” refers to anyone under 18 years old.

This document does not cover every scenario, nor does it aim to be a comprehensive list of acceptable or unacceptable behavior. Rather, its purpose is to establish a framework within the sports context and expects individuals to employ common sense and exercise good judgment when interacting with children.

The Coach and Athlete Relationship

Typically, coaches occupy a position of trust, and it is through the observance of professional boundaries that this foundation of trust between coaches and athletes is established. The coach-athlete dynamic is characterized by an inherent power imbalance favoring the coach. Athletes are instructed to show respect and heed their coaches' guidance, relying on the coach's expertise and training for the enhancement of their skills.

Both trust and power, if misused, can undermine the coach-athlete relationship, often manifesting through boundary violations. Such violations occur when the adult prioritizes their own needs over those of the child, gaining personal or professional advantages at the child's expense. The responsibility to establish and uphold appropriate boundaries with children always rests with the adult in the coaching role.

Age of Protection in Canada

The age of protection (also called the age of consent) is the age at which a young person can legally consent to sexual activity. The age of protection in Canada is generally 16 years old, but the Criminal Code increases that age to 18 in the context of certain relationships. If the child is:

1. Under 12 years old, no person can engage in sexual activity with the child under any circumstance.
2. 12 or 13 years old, the age difference must be LESS THAN 2 years AND the relative positions of the parties must be such that a child is able to give consent.*
3. 14 or 15 years old, the age difference must be LESS THAN 5 years AND the relative positions of the parties must be such that a child is able to give consent.*

4. 16 or 17 years old, the relative positions of the parties must be such that a child is able to give consent.*

*For all children aged 12-17: If the other person is in a position of trust or authority over the child (e.g., a coach, teacher, etc.), the child is dependent on the other person or the relationship is exploitative of the child, the child is NOT able to give consent, making sexual activity in the context of such relationships illegal.

In these situations, only a person aged 18 or older is capable of consent. The increased age takes into account the inherent vulnerability of the child and is meant to protect the child in situations that involve a power or other imbalance.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior

Those involved in COMBA, whether through employment or volunteering, are anticipated to maintain elevated standards and exemplify behavior that fosters public confidence and nurtures positive relationships with children and families.

Examples of Appropriate Behavior	Examples of Inappropriate Behavior
<p>Clear Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should communicate openly and transparently with players, providing clear instructions, feedback, and expectations. <p>Respectful Treatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches must treat players with respect, recognizing their individuality and valuing their opinions, efforts, and contributions. <p>Safe Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating a safe and inclusive environment is crucial. Coaches should ensure that training and competition settings are free from physical or emotional harm. <p>Fair and Equal Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should provide fair and equal opportunities for all players, irrespective of their background, skill level, or personal characteristics. <p>Personal Boundaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should maintain appropriate personal boundaries, refraining from behaviors that could be perceived as intrusive or inappropriate. <p>Constructive Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback should be constructive and 	<p>Invasion of Personal Space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should avoid unnecessary physical contact or invading the personal space of players, ensuring that interactions remain respectful and professional. <p>Verbal Abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harsh language, insults, or derogatory comments have no place in coaching. Coaches should refrain from any form of verbal abuse towards players. <p>Favoritism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treating certain players preferentially creates a divisive and unfair environment. Coaches should provide equal opportunities and recognition to all team members. <p>Exploitation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should never exploit their position of power for personal gain, whether it be financial, emotional, or otherwise, at the expense of the player's well-being. <p>Inappropriate Touching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any form of inappropriate physical contact is unacceptable. Coaches must maintain professional boundaries and avoid touching

<p>aimed at player development. Coaches should focus on improvement rather than criticism.</p> <p>Positive Reinforcement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognizing and praising players for their achievements, effort, and sportsmanship contributes to a positive and motivating coaching approach. <p>Emotional Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should be available to provide emotional support when needed, understanding the challenges players may face both on and off the field. <p>Fair Discipline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If disciplinary action is necessary, coaches should apply fair and consistent measures, ensuring they are appropriate for the situation and focused on the player's growth. <p>Role Modeling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should exemplify good sportsmanship, ethical behavior, and a strong work ethic, serving as positive role models for players to emulate. 	<p>players inappropriately.</p> <p>Failure to Address Bullying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches have a responsibility to address and prevent bullying among players. Ignoring or condoning such behavior is inappropriate. <p>Lack of Sensitivity to Individual Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should be aware of and sensitive to the diverse needs of players, avoiding actions or comments that may be discriminatory or offensive. <p>Unfair Punishment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disciplinary actions should be fair, proportionate, and focused on improvement. Unjust or excessive punishment is inappropriate and counterproductive. <p>Negative Public Criticism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publicly criticizing or humiliating players in front of teammates, parents, or others is inappropriate. Feedback should be given privately and constructively. <p>Failure to Address Safety Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches should promptly address safety concerns and ensure that the well-being of players is prioritized, neglecting these responsibilities is inappropriate and potentially harmful.
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Parents and Coaches Play a Role

Addressing a coach and athlete relationship that seems inappropriate can be challenging. Reporting such behavior establishes accountability, enabling appropriate actions to be taken and expectations to be reaffirmed. Parents or coaches with concerns should communicate with the Board of Directors of the implicated coach.

Additionally, it is crucial for parents and coaches to engage in age-appropriate conversations with children about personal safety and behavior that crosses boundaries. These discussions should cover aspects such as the characteristics of healthy relationships, the significance of personal boundaries, and how to seek assistance or where to express concerns.

Rule of Two

The rule of two is designed to ensure the safety and well being of athletes by requiring that at least two adults are present during any activity that involve athletes, this includes practices, games, tournaments, or other activities that are required as team events. This rule applies to one-on-one interactions between coaches and athletes.

At times, it is important for coaches to have conversations with athletes in spaces where other athletes are not present. In these cases, it is important for coaches to pull the athlete aside, but in view of other adults. For example, conversations could happen further down the foul line, behind the dugout etc, as long as it is in the view of other adults.

Procedures for Reporting Suspicions and Incidents

Please note: The provided steps for reporting are intended as reference for use in a sporting environment and is not meant to be exhaustive or to replace legal advice. It is important to consult with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), local RCMP and potentially legal counsel if child abuse is alleged or suspected.

Steps to Reporting Inappropriate Conduct

1. Child discloses information or information is discovered indicating that a coach or volunteer may have acted inappropriately.
2. Coach or volunteer who receives the report notifies the COMBA Board President.
3. The Board President will then consult the Executive to decide if the concern is warranted.
4. If warranted, the executive will meet with the accused coach or volunteer to discuss the allegations and concerns. The individual is told about the complaint without disclosing the source and is asked to respond to the allegation.
5. If the President determines that the nature of the conduct is not sufficiently serious to warrant formal action, the organization may choose to clarify expectations with the coach or volunteer as outlined in the [COMBA Coaches Code of Conduct](#).
6. If the President determines that the nature of the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant action, internal follow up is started.
 - a. Inappropriate conduct is not substantiated:
COMBA will follow internal conflict resolution policies. No further action is necessary but COMBA may choose to take the opportunity to remind all coaches/volunteers of the Parent/Coach/Player Code of Conducts.
 - b. Inappropriate conduct is substantiated:
Next steps will depend on severity of the conduct, the nature of the information gathered during internal follow-up, and other relevant circumstances (such as past inappropriate conduct of a similar nature). Varying levels of disciplinary

action may be appropriate. For example, it may be prudent for an organization to report concerns to child welfare or law enforcement.

- c. Inconclusive:
Next steps will need to be carefully considered and depend on the nature of the information gathered during the internal follow-up. Work through options, assess risk and consult professionals as needed.
7. Supervision and monitoring of the coach or volunteer will occur following any complaint of this nature.

Steps to Reporting Child Abuse

When a person is made aware of a child who may have or is being abused, there is a legal and ethical responsibility to take action. The Ministry of Child and Family Development requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker. This is true for all forms of abuse.

It is your responsibility to report concerns, it is not your responsibility to prove abuse.

1. Child discloses abuse or abuse is discovered with the adult involved in the abuse is a coach or volunteer.
2. Coach or volunteer receives the disclosure, he/she immediately:
 - a. Notifies MCFD and/or RCMP about the incident.
 - b. Notifies the COMBA Board President about the incident.
3. The President of the COMBA Board immediately suspends the coach or volunteer who is suspected of abuse (without pay) until the case is resolved.
4. MCFD and/or RCMP carry out the investigation. COMBA will conduct an internal follow-up in consultation with MCFD and RCMP and adjust internal policies if needed.
 - a. If substantiated/guilty the coach or volunteer is immediately dismissed from his/her position.
 - b. If inconclusive/not guilty, legal counsel will be sought and dismissal will be considered. Criminal processes can be complex and lengthy. A finding of not guilty may not necessarily mean that the abuse did not occur.
5. COMBA will document the outcome of the investigation and the internal follow up.

Please note, that if a child discloses abuse by someone outside of the organization, or a peer discloses on behalf of another child or any adult suspects a child is abused, you have a duty to report.

Calling Ministry of Child and Family Development

When making a report to a child protection worker, it is helpful to include your name, your phone number and your relationship to the child or youth, however you can make an anonymous call if you prefer. The child protection worker will ask:

1. The child's or youth's name and location;
2. Whether there are any immediate concerns about the child's or youth's safety;
3. Why you believe the child or youth is at risk;
4. Any statements or disclosures made by the child or youth;
5. The child's or youth's age and vulnerability;
6. Information about the family, parents and alleged offender;
7. Information about siblings or other children or youth who may be at risk;
8. Whether you know of any previous incidents involving, or concerns about the child or youth;
9. Information about other persons or agencies closely involved with the child, youth and/or family;
10. Information about other persons who may be witnesses or may have information about the child or youth;
11. Information about the nature of the child's or youth's disabilities, his or her mode of communication, and the name of a key support person; and
12. Any other relevant information concerning the child, youth and/or family, such as language or culture.

You do not need all this information to make a report. Just tell the child protection worker what you do know. Time is of the essence in responding, so if you have concerns, do not delay.

Support Available for Parties Involved

- [B.C. Helpline for Children](#) – a confidential toll-free phone line for children and youth wanting to talk to someone – is 310-1234 (no area code required).
 - [VictimLinkBC](#) is a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone and online service available across B.C. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week which provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.
 - [Resilience BC](#): Anti-Racism Network provides information about how to report incidences of racism and hate crimes if you are a victim or witness such incidences.
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Procedures for Communicating Messaging

(about keeping kids safe)

How do we communicate to the membership about our procedures and messaging?

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders are surveyed both at an organization level (yearly) and at a team level (when seasons finish) to gather feedback and information. Members are encouraged to respond with truth and accuracy to the questions presented.

Additionally, if any COMBA member has concerns or would like portions of this policy clarified they should reach out to a member of the Board of Directors.

Lastly, no one will be frowned upon for bringing forward a concern around child safety. All members should feel comfortable to approach any member of the Board of Directors should they have a concern about child safety or welfare, at any time.

Coach and Volunteer Requirements

Coaches

COMBA coaches are required to complete a BC ministry criminal record check before stepping on to any field with any children. These are required at registration. Results are sent to the board President and Secretary who keeps record of all current CRCs for the association. CRCs are valid for 5 years. If issues arise through the process, the President will notify the coach that they not proceed as a volunteer within our organization.

All coaches, regardless of certification levels, must complete the SafeSport training which creates a culture where everyone can thrive is a shared responsibility. "Safe Sport Training was developed to help anyone involved in sport to promote physical, psychological, and social health, in line with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport." (SafeSport, <https://safesport.coach.ca/participants-training>, February 4, 2024)

Additionally, coaches must be National Coaching Certificate Program (NCCP) certified to the different levels required by BC Minor Baseball.

Division	All Coaches
11U (all)	11U Trained
13U A	One coach 13U Trained all other coaches 13U in training, including but not limited to Coach Initiation in Sport & Coach Initiation in Baseball (Fundamentals) online modules

13U AA	One coach 13U Certified all other coaches 13U Trained
13U AAA	Two coaches 13U Certified all other coaches 13U Trained
15U A	One coach 15U Trained all other coaches 13U in training, including but not limited to Coach Initiation in Sport & Coach Initiation in Baseball (Fundamentals) online modules
15U AA	One coach 15U Certified all other coaches 15U Trained
15U AAA	Two coaches 15U Certified all other coaches 15U Trained
18U AA	One Coach 16+ Certified all other coaches 16+ Trained
18U AAA	Two coaches 16+ Certified all other coaches 16+ Trained
18U College Prep	Two coaches 16+ Certified all other coaches 16+ Trained

Coaches are expected to follow the NCCP Code of Ethics which has three main principles and ethics of behavior:



Each of these can be defined further, and encompass the safe sport opportunities for children:



1 Leadership and professionalism

This principle considers the inherent power and authority that a coach holds.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Understand the authority that comes with your position and make decisions that are in the best interest of all participants
- ▶ Share your knowledge and experience openly
- ▶ Maintain the athlete-centered approach to coaching so that every participant's well being is a priority
- ▶ Be a positive role model
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality and privacy of participants' personal information



2 Health and safety

This principle considers the mental, emotional, physical health and safety of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Recognize and minimize vulnerable situations to ensure the safety of participants
- ▶ Prioritize a holistic approach when planning and delivering training and competition
- ▶ Advocate for, and ensure appropriate supervision of participants, including the Rule of Two
- ▶ Participate in education and training to stay current on practices to ensure the continued safety of your participants
- ▶ Understand the scope of your role and skills and call upon others with specialized skills when needed to support your participants



3 Respect and integrity

This principle considers respect and integrity, which are the rights of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Provide equitable opportunity and access for all
- ▶ Establish a respectful and inclusive sport environment where all participants can raise questions or concerns
- ▶ Obey the rules and participate honestly and respectfully
- ▶ Be open, transparent and accountable for your actions
- ▶ Maintain objectivity when interacting with all participants

Volunteers

COMBA Board of Directors, concession operator, and team parents are required to have valid, completed criminal record checks, similar to coaches. The same process occurs where the President and Secretary are notified of a completed CRC, the secretary tracks and records CRCs and if issues arise, the President communicates to the volunteer their ability to volunteer within the association.

In addition, the Board of Directors is required to complete SafeSport training. It is important that healthy culture and a safe atmosphere is present for everyone with a significant role to play in the development of sport, which includes the Board of Directors.

Timelines for Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the COMBA board in August, of even numbered calendar years.

Sources:

“Commit to Kids: Helping Organizations Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.” *Commit2kids.Ca*, www.commit2kids.ca/en/#keeping-kids-safe-in-sport. Accessed 5 Feb. 2024.

NCCP Code of Ethics - Coaching Association of Canada, [coach.ca/sites/default/files/2020-02/NCCP Code of Ethics_V6.1_2020_ENG.pdf](http://coach.ca/sites/default/files/2020-02/NCCP%20Code%20of%20Ethics_V6.1_2020_ENG.pdf). Accessed 6 Feb. 2024.

“NCCP Info / Certification Path.” *Baseball BC | NCCP Info / Certification Path*, www.baseball.bc.ca/coaching. Accessed 5 Feb. 2024.

“Child Protection and Safeguarding.” *Sportanddev*, www.sportanddev.org/research-learning/guiding-toolkits/child-protection-and-safeguarding. Accessed 5 Feb. 2024.