

**Diocese of Trenton
Office of Child and Youth Protection**

ATHLETIC STAFF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PURPOSE

The Diocese of Trenton affirms its commitment to creating safe environments for student athletes in our parish and Catholic school athletic programs and to providing volunteer and employee athletic program staff members with the guidance and training needed to protect these athletes from abuse.

POLICY

All volunteer, employee and independent contractor coaches, assistant coaches, athletic directors and other coaching staff members ("Athletic Staff") who participate in interscholastic and youth sports involving children and youth within the Diocese of Trenton must recognize the intensely personal relationships which are often created between an Athletic Staff member and an athlete because of the large amount of time spent with the athletes and the nature and purpose of the coach-athlete relationship. Each Athletic Staff member is responsible for conducting him/herself in a professional manner when dealing with athletes and to avoid any interaction with an athlete which creates an appearance of impropriety or constitutes abuse as defined by this policy and/or by law and to engage in conduct which respects the athlete and is in conformity with Catholic teachings.

The Diocese of Trenton will not tolerate any violation of the provisions of this policy, including the failure to report suspected or witnessed misconduct. Any violation will subject the Athletic Staff member to disciplinary action, including termination of employment or dismissal from the volunteer assignment. In addition, in compliance with the diocesan memorandum of understanding with the NJ Division of Criminal Justice, all allegations of sexual offenses will be reported to law enforcement.

OBLIGATION TO REPORT: This Policy requires that in the event any Athletic Staff member observes inappropriate behavior or suspected inappropriate behavior or misconduct proscribed by this policy involving a student athlete and an Athletic Staff member, another student athlete or any other person, he/she must **immediately report** the observations to the Safe Environment Coordinator, the school principal and/or the pastor. Any suspected or observed sexual abuse involving a student athlete and an Athletic Staff member, another student athlete or any other person should be reported **immediately** and directly to the Abuse Hotline, 1-888-296-2965 or abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org.

Prohibited Conduct

MINORS CANNOT CONSENT TO SEXUAL ACTIVITY OF ANY KIND WITH AN ADULT. ALL SEXUAL INTERACTION BETWEEN AN ADULT AND A MINOR IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED BY LAW AND BY THIS POLICY.

General

1. Examples of prohibited conduct:
 - Touching an athlete's breast or buttocks; full frontal hugs or embraces
 - Exchange of reward in sport for sexual favors
 - Genital contact
 - Sexual relations or intimacies
 - Exposing an athlete to pornographic material
 - Sending an athlete sexually explicit or suggestive electronic or written messages or photos ("sexting")
 - Exposing an athlete to sexual acts
 - Deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity
 - Sexual solicitation, physical advances or verbal or non-verbal conduct that is sexual in nature
 - Discussing your sex life with an athlete
 - Asking an athlete about his or her sex life
 - Requesting or sending a nude or partial-dress photo
2. Athletic Staff members are prohibited from being alone with a non-related individual athlete in any room, building or automobile.
3. Electronic Communications and Social Media
 - a. Any e-mail, electronic text, social media or similar communication between an Athletic Staff member and an athlete or a group of athletes must be related to the administration of the team such as scheduling, attendance or other individual or team performance issues and must include the athlete's or athletes' parent(s) or guardian(s) in the distribution of the communication.
 - b. Athletic Staff members may not permit or invite athletes to join his/her personal social media page and are prohibited from joining the social media page of a student athlete.

Emotional Misconduct

1. Emotional misconduct is defined as a pattern of intentional, non-physical behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. This includes verbal or physical acts of retaliation against the athlete and any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law.
2. Exception: Emotional misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

Physical Misconduct

1. Physical misconduct is any action that results in or reasonably threatens to cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants or any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under law.
2. Exception: Physical misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

Bullying a student athlete

1. Bullying is defined as 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; or any act or conduct described as bullying under the law. Bullying includes but is not limited to: threatening physical harm, verbal abuse, intimidation and cyber bullying.
2. Bullying does not include group conduct that is intended to establish normal team behaviors or promote team cohesion such as to encourage an athlete to train harder and persevere through a tough practice.

Harassment

1. A pattern of behavior that (a) is 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 any conduct described as harassment under the law.

Hazing

1. Defined: coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members; or any conduct described as hazing under law.

REPORTING

How to Report

1. If suspected or observed violation of this policy: Safe Environment Coordinator, school principal or pastor.
2. If suspected or observed sexual abuse: Abuse Hotline, 1-888-296-2965 or abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org.

What should be reported and who should report

It is the obligation of each and every Athletic Staff member, whether volunteer or employee, to report any known or suspected misconduct by another Athletic Staff member, any other employee or volunteer or any student athlete in order to protect any student athlete.

When

Misconduct must be reported as soon as it is witnessed or suspected.

IMPLEMENTATION

VIRTUS TRAINING

All Athletic Staff members must complete the VIRTUS training course **within 90 days** of their employment or engagement.

BACKGROUND CHECK/ FINGERPRINTING

All Athletic Staff members, which includes anyone paid by or receiving a stipend from the school and volunteers, must complete a criminal background check **within 30 days** of hire or engagement in accordance with the Diocese of Trenton Criminal Background Check protocol

SIGNED ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF THIS POLICY

All Athletic Staff personnel shall be provided a copy of this policy and required to sign an acknowledgement of receipt. The Safe Environment Coordinator for each location is responsible for both the distribution of the policy and the collection of signed acknowledgement forms for each volunteer and employee Athletic Staff member within 10 days of the adoption of this policy and within 10 days following the commencement of employment of volunteerism for any new Athletic Staff member retrained after this policy's effective date.

QUESTIONS

Any and all questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of Child and Youth Protection, Diocese of Trenton.



Diocese of Trenton Athletic Staff Child Protection Policy

Acknowledgment

I have received, read and acknowledge the Athletic Staff Child Protection policy.

Please print clearly

Name: _____

Position: _____

Parish/Program/School: _____

Town: _____

Signature _____

Date _____