

Special Commission on Athlete Safeguards Recommendations



**USA Volleyball
September, 2010**

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USA Volleyball Vision

USA Volleyball (USAV) is the National Governing Body (NGB) for the sport of volleyball in the United States and is recognized as such by the Federation International de Volleyball (FIVB) and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). The vision of USA Volleyball is to be acknowledged as the world leader in volleyball. In order to accomplish this mission, the following goals are to be achieved:

- **Competitive Success:** To win gold medals in every international competition;
- **Sport Growth:** To achieve full participation in volleyball at all levels and in all geographical areas;
- **Sport Enhancement:** To improve support services necessary for the quality and conduct of programs to ensure recognition as the authority and expert for volleyball;
- **International Representation:** To have influential positions on all international boards and commissions;
- **Recognition:** To receive consistent recognition of volleyball coaches and athletes as top world performers;
- **Administration:** To develop and maintain a structure which will effectively and efficiently assist in achieving the vision and mission of the Corporation; and
- **Finances:** To develop, implement and maintain a financial plan to achieve the vision and mission of the Corporation.

USA Volleyball is committed to and works toward opportunity for all to participate. It is an advocate for all Americans-endeavoring to assure universal access to opportunities at all levels of the game.

Thus USA Volleyball will diligently:

- Work toward provision of ample opportunity, quality opportunity and equality of access for every resident of this diverse nation.
- Act to expand opportunity for under-represented groups and aggressively recruit participation from those groups.
- Make its daily decisions concerning resources, players, coaches, officials, administrators, and employees on the basis of individual merit and excellence of performance regardless of age, class, ancestry, color, national origin, race, religious creed, disability or handicap, gender, or sexual orientation.
- Exercise its corporate will to encourage constituent organizations to act in accordance with the foregoing principles.

USA Volleyball believes that volleyball has so many positive things to offer those who participate. First, and most importantly, whether one is a gifted athlete or a recreational player, volleyball is FUN! It is a lifetime sport enjoyed by players from 8 to 80. Participation in volleyball is not only good exercise, but also involves team cooperation and spirit. We are committed to introducing our sport to all of America.

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

Over 10 years ago USA Volleyball recognized the importance of instituting safe conduct practices for its sanctioned events, activities and most importantly its youth membership. USAV embarked on a mission to develop a background screening process that would be mandatory for ALL members that have contact with junior participants. This program is now recognized as one of the top background screening programs for amateur sports organizations. In a continuing effort to set the standard for the protection of its members and athletes, USAV has established a new commission for athlete safeguards.

This commission was established to provide recommendations to USA Volleyball on Athlete Safeguards. These recommendations are intended to give USA Volleyball as well as the Regions, Clubs & Leadership additional tools which should help to protect their athletes and coaches. The Commission recommends USA Volleyball consider adding a statement in their vision and goals to reflect their commitment to the safety of their members. The recommendations include a responsible hiring process for coaches, continual age appropriate education for athletes as well as coaches dealing with a variety of issues which impact participants, reporting of unacceptable behavior by those involved with USAV sponsored activities as well as encouraging everyone to be vigilant about protecting USAV members. Information should be posted on the USA Volleyball, Region and Club websites. Additional links can be provided for more information and additional resources (i.e., hiring a new coach, educational material for athletes, stepping up to help others, etc.) This educational effort should be an ongoing process by USA Volleyball through various forms of communication with the membership.

1. SCREENING & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Conduct responsible hiring procedures
 - i. Define/write positions descriptions including functions & qualification (provide template as an example if needed)
 - ii. Obtain written application with signature of completion which includes a request for employment history and 3 reference sources
 - iii. Conduct face-to-face interviews where applicable for potential employees and volunteers working with junior members (see Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child Abuse publication for questions – link below p. 11 / 6)
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/preventingchildsexualabuse.pdf>
- b. Review USAV sexual abuse and sexual harassment policy by the club director with potential applicant in the pre-employment interview.

- c. Conduct periodic background screenings (including criminal & sex offender registry) as required by the USAV background screening policy or as mandated by each state for anyone associated with a junior team.
- d. Require IMPACT certification prior to beginning the season or as early as possible (online course & exam)
- e. All staff and volunteers associated with USA Volleyball should sign a statement agreeing not to engage in any physical, psychological or sexual abuse or harassment **AND** to accept responsibility to report any suspicion of violations of other personnel (Include this statement in the USA Volleyball membership application form, employee handbook & coaches code of conduct.)

2. EDUCATION & AWARENESS

- a. Continually provide educational materials (via USA publications, electronic newsletters & websites) for administrators, coaches, staff, athletes and parents regarding inappropriate behavior, alcohol and drug abuse, proper athlete conduct including dating/relationship rules, hazing, bullying and other topics of importance in protecting the youth in our organization. (See STEP UP! Program link in resources.)
- b. Provide administrators, coaches, athletes and other personnel with continuing education about how power, dependence, “love” and sexual attraction can influence coach-athlete relationships.
- c. Provide a educational toolkit for administrators, staff, coaches and volunteers on how to respond when an athlete discloses abuse as well as the correct procedure for filing a complaint.
- d. Distribute & discuss age appropriate educational material for all athletes and their parents at the beginning of the season.
 - i. Public service video (use high profile individuals such as current/past national team members or coaches)
 - ii. Power Point presentations on USA Volleyball/Region/Club websites
 - iii. Written material, brochures, etc.
 - iv. Include touching policy guidelines (p. 48, *Risk Management Guide*)
 - v. How to say “no” comfortably (p. 49, *Risk Management Guide*)
- e. Develop and distribute clear rules to coaches, officials and athletes that prohibit coach-athlete dating and/or sexual relationships.
- f. Review resources provided and educate coaches and parents on emotional development of young females and how coach’s actions and behaviors can affect young women both positively & negatively.

3. **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

- a. Formulate a written policy that details inappropriate behavior.
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/preventingchildsexualabuse.pdf> (p. 15/10)
 - i. The policy should clearly define sexual abuse and harassment and explain the sanctions for sexual harassment including reporting procedures.
 - ii. The policy should include rules that prohibit coach-athlete dating and/or sexual relationships. Specify the length of time that should pass after the cessation of a coach-athlete relationship.
 - iii. Require “two deep” adult involvement in all activities with athletes. This calls for at least two screened adults to be present with athletes and discourage individual contact with athletes such as rides home from practice or competition, practices, meetings held in private rooms, etc. Private lessons may be conducted if a parent is present or another screened adult. This is meant to protect the coach or administrator as well as the athlete.
 - iv. Include disciplinary action and consequences associated with inappropriate behavior.

4. **REPORT OF COMPLAINTS**

- a. Develop a procedure for reporting sexual harassment or abuse allegations.
 - i. Offer athletes, parents, coaches and other personnel multiple avenues to report cases
 - ii. Designate point person(s) for reporting (neutral person outside the team setting), club directors, regional commissioners, or USA Volleyball National Office. Be aware of Child Protective Services mandates in your specific state.
 - iii. Confirm confidentiality & privacy protection of all parties including complainant, witnesses, or those confirming evidence.
 - iv. Explain how informal/formal complaint procedures work
 1. Consider resolution or alternatives to formal hearings and investigations
 - v. Suggest personal counseling (not a substitute for complaint process)
 - vi. Establish time frames for reporting and for complaint procedure
 1. Take immediate action
 2. Timely notifications, advisement, investigation, resolution
 - vii. Assign investigators (outside consultants or law enforcement officials) & provide training with guidelines to ensure proper procedures for a fair and effective investigation.
 - viii. Confirm protection against retaliation

- ix. Refer to legal counsel as necessary (if a claim is made with the insurance company is established, an attorney may be assigned)
 - 1. Involved local authorizes when obligated

5. PRIVACY PROTECTION AND LEGAL RIGHTS

- a. Ensure that procedures for reporting sexual harassment or abuse protect the privacy of all parties involved as much as possible until litigation or administrative hearings have been completed.
 - i. Informal procedures may involve initial discussion of alleged incidents with athletes, clarification of circumstances and perceptions, counseling and resolution accepted by the harassed person without formal hearings and investigations. (This point strengthens the position to have a written reporting procedure which reports directly to the national office and to train ONE individual on how to handle reports with may include law enforcement intervention. Another alternative would be to hire an independent counseling firm to handle reported claims & ESIX would favor this approach)
 - ii. Procedures must protect against retaliation before, during and after a hearing or appeals process. (USAV's policy requires a coach to be made "inactive" until the allegation has been reconciled. ESIX would not suggest the inclusion of an appeal committee, but rather follow the current USAV/SSCI appeal process.)
- b. Coaches or athletes cannot be denied their right to pursue legal redress in a court of law. There are federal and state statutes of limitations involving these rights that might apply.
- c. Keep all information confidential, secure and unbiased.
- d. Refer to legal counsel when necessary

References

- *The Season of Hope – A Risk Management Guide for Youth-Serving Nonprofits* (2004). Patterson, John B. & Oliver, Barbara B.; Nonprofit Risk Management Center, Washington, D.C.
- Preventing Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/preventingchildsexualabuse.pdf>
- Staff Screening Tool Kit: Building a Strong Foundation Through Careful Staffing http://nationalserviceresources.org/files/legacy/filemanager/download/ProgramMgmt/Staff_Screen_tool.pdf
- Little League Baseball Child Protection Program <http://www.littleleague.org/learn/programs/childprotection.htm>

Educational Links

- STEP UP! <http://www.stepupprogram.org/>
- Respect in Sport <http://www.respectinsport.com>
- Safe2Tell <http://www.safe2tell.org>
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) <http://www.rainn.org>
- Mom's Team <http://www.momsteam.com/team-of-experts/parents-can-protect-their-children-against-sexual-abuse-in-sports>
- Women's Sports Foundation <http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Content/Articles/Issues/Coaching/S/Sexual-Harassment--Sexual-Harassment-and-Sexual-Relationships-Between-Coaches-Other-Athletic-Personn.aspx>
- WomenSport International http://www.sportsbiz.bz/womensportinternational/taskforces/harassment_brochure.htm