



COMMIT TO [®] KIDS

Sport Edition

FOR SPORT LEADERS

A guide to protect children in sport organizations

Commit to Kids is a program of



CANADIAN CENTRE *for* CHILD PROTECTION[®]

Helping families. Protecting children.



The Toronto Blue Jays are proud supporters of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection’s Commit to Kids program. With the support of starting pitcher, R.A. Dickey, and through Jays Care Foundation, we have partnered with the Centre to bring you the Commit to Kids program – Sport Edition for Sport Leaders which helps to create safe environments for children engaged in organized sport. The kit provides strategies, policies, and a step by step plan for reducing the risk of child sexual abuse. The Toronto Blue Jays encourage all sport organizations to take preventative steps to ensure safe and nurturing sporting environments for children.

The Commit to Kids – Sport Edition for Sport Leaders guide forms part of the Commit to Kids – Sport Edition program. The program is intended to provide assistance to sport organizations that provide services to children, to help make sport organizations safer for children and to assist sport organizations in meeting their obligations to protect children in their care. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO PROVIDE LEGAL ADVICE, and users should not rely on the content for that purpose. The program is provided for informational and reference purposes only and cannot take account of the particular legal obligations which may apply. Seek legal advice before taking action which may create liability.

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The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (protectchildren.ca) is a national charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public.

What is Commit to Kids?

Commit to Kids is a program to help organizations create safe environments for children. Organizations learn how to define and identify appropriate boundaries between adults and children and create safe, healthy and respectful environments. It provides policies, strategies, and a step-by-step plan to help reduce the risk of sexual abuse, encouraging organizations to take an active, participatory role in protecting children in their care.

What is the Commit to Kids Sport Edition Kit?

The Commit to Kids Sport Edition Kit is based on the original Commit to Kids program but with tailored information for sport organizations that serve children. The full kit includes separate guides for sport organizations, sport leaders, and families, as well as a training CD. The kit is easy to use, and can be adapted to meet the needs of either large or small organized sport programs.

Sport is entrenched in our society and touches the lives of many families and children. In an effort to ensure that children thrive and succeed in any type and level of sport, the Commit to Kids Sport Edition version addresses the unique nature by which organizations, sport leaders, families and children interact within the sporting community.

Guide for Sport Leaders

As a sport leader, you have received this guide because the organization that you are working/volunteering within has made a commitment to ensuring that the highest standards of practice are adhered to when working with children. The Guide for Sport Leaders is designed to inspire all adults interacting with children in sport to take all the necessary steps to provide safe and nurturing environments for the children in their care.

DEFINITIONS

When used within this Guide:

Child: means any child under 18 who is participating in organized sport at any level.

Leader: means any individual within the organization who is or may be perceived as a leader by a child, such as a coach, trainer, manager, team staff, official, and any person who directly facilitates the development of athletes in organized sport.

A. Sport Leaders Keeping Kids Safe in Sport

Involving children in sport activities helps them develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually. When appropriate boundaries are established and fostered between sport leaders and children, sport can help children thrive and feel a tremendous sense of achievement – all while building critical skills such as leadership, problem-solving, teamwork and communications skills.

Sport is in the best position to offer safe, quality experiences for children, when issues which may take away from that experience are acknowledged and addressed. Sport leaders are in a privileged position of trust and authority in relation to the child participants. There is an inherent power imbalance that exists between the leader and the child. Children rely upon the guidance and judgement of the adults involved to keep them safe and can fully enjoy all that sporting has to offer when adults establish and maintain standards designed to protect them from harm.



At all levels of sport, children have an increased vulnerability to harm or victimization. Some reasons can include:

- The amount of time commitment to training and competition, resulting in a lack of control over many aspects of their life and to diminished contact with family and friends not associated with sport
- A self-image that may be increasingly linked to sport success
- A greater dependency and reliance on the coach/trainer for direction and guidance during times of travel
- Reliance on the coach/trainer to attain progress/goals within the sport

By instituting and maintaining appropriate boundaries/behaviour with children, you are increasing their level of security, decreasing their vulnerability to harm and helping guide them on what healthy relationships look like between adults and children. Individuals who present a risk to children usually begin by breaking boundaries. Modelling appropriate boundaries and behaviour increases the personal safety of children and reduces the chances that they will be harmed within sport by someone with negative intentions (i.e. an offender).

Over the last number of years, sport has demonstrated an ability to tackle tough issues such as hazing and racism. This same energy and effort should also be directed to ending child sexual abuse in sport. Numerous high profile cases in the media point to the need for this issue to be taken seriously and addressed.

The first step to addressing child sexual abuse is our willingness as adults to talk about it, to learn how it can happen, and to put systems in place to prevent it from happening. Child protection is a community responsibility and as a sport leader, you play a central role in creating safe, positive and fulfilling experiences for children.

B. Importance of Understanding Child Sexual Abuse

Individuals who meet their needs in unhealthy ways through children may seek out sport organizations to gain access to them. In order to protect children from sexual abuse, it is important to learn what child sexual abuse is and ways that it can be recognized. Understanding this issue is the first step toward preventing it.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse includes a range of behaviours from obvious contact offences, such as sexual touching to the less obvious non-contact offences, such as those listed below. It is important to note that children can experience sexual abuse and trauma without a contact offence occurring.

Examples of non-contact sexual abuse:

- Asking sexually intrusive questions or making sexually explicit comments to a child
- Deliberately walking in on a child while changing
- Voyeurism (i.e. secretly watching or recording a child's private activities)
- Communicating with a child online to facilitate committing a sexual offence against the child
- Inviting a child to sexually touch her/himself or another person (online and/or offline)
- Exposing a child to pornography or sexually explicit acts
- "Flashing" or exposing genitals to a child

The Scope of Child Sexual Abuse in Canada:

- Sexual offences are among the most underreported crimes in Canada.
- In 2009, 58% of all victims reporting sexual abuse to police were under the age of 17.
- In 89% of the child sexual abuse cases reported to police in 2011, the child victim knew the offender.
- Both girls and boys (children and youth) are vulnerable to sexual abuse.
- The rate of victimization for female child victims generally increases with age, with an increase in the number of female victims reporting abuse between the ages of 12 and 15. The rate of victimization for male victims remains relatively stable across the ages.

Source: Department of Justice Canada, "Backgrounder – Sexual Offending Against Children and Youth" based on statistics related to police-reported crimes, February 2013 (accessed online December 4, 2013)

Offenders and the Grooming Process

Grooming is a method used by sexual offenders to gain sexual access to children. It is often a slow, gradual and escalating process of building trust and comfort with a child, and the adults around the child. It is essential to pay attention to behaviours and situations that present risk to children rather than focusing on an individual's character.

Children are vulnerable to grooming for reasons that include:

- They are still developing socially and emotionally, and can therefore be easy to coerce.
- They are taught to respect and listen to adults such as sport leaders.
- They do not have a developed understanding of sexuality.
- They do not interpret or identify with an adult's intentions.

The purpose of grooming is:

- To manipulate the perceptions of people so they believe the person is safe to be with the child.
- To increase the compliance of the child.
- To reduce the likelihood of a disclosure.
- To reduce the likelihood of child being believed if s/he discloses.

The GROOMING PROCESS includes:



Adapted from SafeSport – 2013 – SafeSport | 1 Olympic Plaza | Colorado Springs, CO 80909 | safesport@usoc.org

Did you Know: Age of Protection / Age of Consent?

In Canada, the age of protection (sometimes called the “age of consent”) refers to the age that a young person can legally consent to sexual activity. In Canada, a child 12 years or younger can never consent to sexual activity. The age of consent for sexual activity among peers is generally 16 years. The age of consent raises to 18 if the sexual activity occurs in the context of one of the following relationships:

- **Trust or Authority:** A relationship where one person is in the position of trust or authority over the other (for example, a teacher or a coach of a child is typically considered to be in a position of trust or authority); or
- **Exploitative:** A relationship that is “exploitative” of the young person includes relationships where prostitution or child pornography is involved, and may extend to a relationship that was initiated in a context of an authority or trust relationship; or that involves a notable age difference between the parties; or that is characterized by the older individual having influence or control over the child; or
- **Dependency:** A relationship of dependency where the child is dependent upon the older individual in some way (e.g. a person the child depends upon for food or shelter).

Luring

Luring involves communicating electronically with a person under 18 years old (e.g. online, text message, email), where the purpose of communication is to make it easier to commit a sexual offence against that child, or to abduct the child. The sexual offence or abduction does not actually have to be committed, nor does there have to be any in-person meeting between the two; communicating electronically for a sexual purpose is enough.



C. Importance of Appropriate Boundaries between Sport Leaders and Children

Healthy relationships between leaders and children are key to the child's healthy experience in sport. It is always the responsibility of adults to establish and maintain boundaries with children and to re-establish boundaries if they are broken. Children should be encouraged to tell a safe adult about any inappropriate, uncomfortable or unsafe interactions they experience with adults.



Teaching a child appropriate boundaries reduces her/his risk of sexual exploitation and the likelihood that s/he will be groomed. Equally important is respecting a child's personal boundaries which teaches her/him how s/he should expect to be treated by others.



The following provides a framework of what constitutes healthy behaviour and identifies areas that warrant concern:

1

Relationship Building:

It is important for sport leaders to treat children equally, and avoid singling out certain children as favourites. Time spent with children should be directly related to the coaching, or sport-related duties, and should be authorized (for example, if a child is kept late to work on skill development, s/he should have parental permission, be in a public location, and this should not become a regular occurrence without knowledge and support of the family and the organization).

All children seek belonging and acceptance. Sport leaders should avoid using attention (giving or withdrawing) as a method to reward, control or punish children. Rather, it is important for sport leaders to be kind and attuned to the children, maintaining emotional boundaries and treating them with respect.

All communication with children should be appropriate and consistent with the position of the sport leader as a role model and an authority figure. Communication with children should never have a sexual nuance.

Concerning Behaviour:

Showing “special” attention to certain children and spending extra time with them not related to sport performance.

Intentional withdrawal of attention and/or support to reward, control or punish the child.

Socially isolating the child or not allowing him or her to have any privacy.

Demeaning comments (whether before others or not) break emotional boundaries and create insecurity in children. It is important to maintain boundaries and be purposeful in communication with children to build their confidence and motivation within the sport.

In effort to motivate children to perform and achieve success and results, it is important to avoid using fear tactics. Rather, build their confidence and their skills so they know how to perform better.

Being intimidating or threatening acts of aggression (e.g. throwing equipment against a wall).

Using sexual overtones, or flirtation (e.g. “you smell so sweet,” “I like the way you move your body”).

2

Rewards and Incentives:

If it is decided that children will receive gifts or rewards as incentives or for special occasions from sport leaders, then the opportunity should be available to all children and the process should be transparent (e.g. awards handed out publicly at the end of the season).

Concerning Behaviour:

Giving personalized gifts or rewards to “certain” children.

Gifts or rewards that involve “special time” on a one-on-one or small group basis as part of singling out certain children for preferred treatment.

3

Emotional Involvement:

The nature of the relationship between the sport leader and the child is based on building the child’s skill development. If a sport leader is concerned about a child’s well-being or feels the child requires more emotional support, then the sport leader should inform the child’s parents/caretakers about the concerns. If you are worried the parents/ caretakers are not taking the concerns seriously, there may be a need to involve child welfare services who are charged with the responsibility of supporting children potentially in need of protection.

Concerning Behaviour:

Getting overly involved in a child's personal life.

Reversing appropriate roles (e.g. sharing worries, problems and/or sexual feelings with a child).

4

Physical Contact:

A relationship exists between the sport leader and the child to help her/him have a positive experience in sport. Physical interaction should be purposeful and intentional to help with skill development. Sport leaders should avoid “horseplay” or other informal physical interactions that are more appropriate for their personal relationships with children outside of their work duties, such as their own children or other family members or friends.

All activities and expected participation in activities related to the sport must be safe and respectful. Sport leaders need to model standards of excellence for athletes. Team captains, for example, should be selected based on their leadership abilities and with that comes the responsibility to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries within team building rituals.

Concerning Behaviour:

Wrestling, massages, tickling, giving piggybacks or shoulder rides.

“With increased physical contact, it becomes less clear for children about what kind of touch is okay and what kind of touch isn’t, and so that boundary slowly gets blurred.”

[Dr. Lawrence Ellerby, Forensic Psychologist]

5

Roles and Responsibilities:

All contact with children gained through the sport organization should be formalized and organized as per job duties assigned by the sport organization.

The role of the sport leader is to be a role model for the children and to establish and maintain the standards of behaviour for the sport organization.

When children break boundaries it is up to the sport leader to re-establish the boundaries and communicate the expectations.

Concerning Behaviour:

Self-appointing new job duties that extend contact with children without authorization (such as if the coach self-appointed herself/himself to take on personal trainer duties with certain children without being asked by the sport organization to extend her/his duties to include personal training).

Treating a minor like an adult, as if they're "buddies," and let them break rules that others are expected to follow.

Permitting or overlooking any form of hazing such as any potentially humiliating, degrading, abusive or dangerous activity.

6

Healthy Boundaries with regard to Electronic Communication:

Professional boundaries need to be in all forms of communication, including electronic and social media. Any communication outside of formalized sporting activities should be tied to the sport activities and should only occur with knowledge of the sport organization and the parents/caregivers of the child.

Concerning Behaviour:

Sending personal texts or emails that are not tied to the sporting activity or that involve subject matters that are intimate in nature.

Communicating electronically with the child at inappropriate times such as late at night, after consuming alcohol, on holidays, etc.

Proactively “friending” a child on social media and then engaging in communications with other children on the child’s contact list not involved in the sporting activity.

Professional boundaries need to be adhered to in all forms of communication, including electronic and social media.



Leaders and other adults are responsible for correcting any inappropriate behaviour they notice by other sport leaders. It is their responsibility to question the behaviour and, when necessary, to report it to the organization following their reporting procedures.

Did you Know?

- Addressing inappropriate behaviour/misconduct will establish healthy climates.
- Many sport leaders who break boundaries with children are not seeking sexual access – they have made an error in judgment.
- If someone is intentionally seeking inappropriate access to a child, you will disrupt the process and reduce the chances of harm to the child by addressing it.
- Boundary violations occur when the sport leader places her/his needs above the well-being of the child and gains personally or professionally at the child’s expense.

D. Disclosure of Sexual Abuse

One of the reasons personal safety is taught to children is to promote disclosure of current or past abuse. Most personal safety programs instruct children to tell a safe adult if anyone touches them inappropriately. However, disclosure is not always obvious, and can be missed by adults. It is important to know how to recognize the signs of a disclosure of sexual abuse.

Did You Know?

A child may disclose to another safe adult before telling his/her parents. In some cases, a child will disclose to a teacher or another safe adult before speaking to his/her parent, especially if the offender is someone the parent knows or trusts.

MYTH: If a child is sexually abused s/he will immediately tell a safe adult in her/his life.

FACT: Disclosure of sexual abuse is often delayed; research indicates that only 30% of children disclose during childhood (Hon. Sydney Robins, 2000). Children who experience sexual abuse often avoid telling because they are either afraid of a negative reaction from others and/or the abuser. As such, they often delay disclosure until adulthood.

MYTH: Children are more likely to disclose if directly questioned by their parent or an adult authority figure who can help.

FACT: Children often blame themselves for what has happened and feel enormous shame and embarrassment so they do not want people to know about it.

MYTH: Disclosure is always a one-time event.

FACT: Disclosures often unfold gradually, and may be presented in a series of hints, over an extended period of time. This process may span hours, weeks, months, or even years. If the process is interrupted, discouraged, or shut down, the sexual abuse may not be fully revealed until adulthood – if at all.



“Rather than focusing on why children often do not tell, imagine how difficult sharing something like [sexual abuse] might be”

[Dr. Ellerby, 2008]

How to Support a Child During a Disclosure

Listen

What a child needs when disclosing is for you to listen. S/he fears an adult's reaction as well as not being believed. It takes incredible courage to share such an experience. Listen attentively and avoid sharing your own stories or experiences.

Control Your Reaction

Do not over- or underreact. If the child believes s/he is being judged by you or that you do not believe them, s/he is likely to shut down and stop the disclosure.

Take it Seriously

Let the child know that what s/he is telling you is very important to you. Explain to the child that you are going to listen very carefully to what s/he has to share with you.

Praise a Child for Telling

It takes tremendous courage to disclose sexual abuse and a child will often assume responsibility for the abuse. Assure the child that it is not her/his fault, and that s/he did the right thing by disclosing.

Protect the Child and Other Children from Overexposure

Respect the child's need for privacy and confidentiality, and make sure that no other children are around to hear the child's disclosure. Only adults who will be directly involved in taking action should be present.

Show Warmth and Caring

Use a calm voice and get down to the child's level in order to make eye contact with the child. A child who discloses needs appropriate support and understanding.



E. Reporting Child Sexual Abuse and Misconduct: Take Action

1

What to do when you have concerns about possible child sexual abuse?

When a person becomes aware that a child may be, or has been sexually abused, there is a legal and ethical responsibility to take action. While this can be very difficult, adults have the legal obligation to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse. This means that individuals who have any knowledge or information that a child is or might be at risk must report it (e.g. to a child welfare agency, the child's parent or police).

Individuals are responsible for reporting concerns, not proving abuse, and allowing the appropriate authorities to determine whether or not it is necessary to investigate the allegations. The purpose of the legislation is to remove any personal or professional dilemma in reporting and to protect children. In some instances, a parent may be told of previous or historic sexual abuse against a child, and it is important to report such information to the authorities. Such efforts may disrupt or prevent existing or future sexual abuse from occurring against other children. It is not uncommon for an adult to minimize or deny what a child tells them during a disclosure. Concerns often revolve around worrying about being wrong and causing problems. Remember, you can reduce child sexual abuse by taking action to protect your child or a child who is disclosing to you or who you suspect is being abused. You have a legal obligation to report your suspicions.

2

What about reporting misconduct/ concerning behaviour?

While overt acts of sexual abuse are easier to identify and address, situations and behaviour that do not meet the threshold of abuse still need to be acted upon. If you observe or hear about concerning behaviour or an inappropriate/questionable situation between an adult and your child or another child, report your concerns to the organization. If you have contact with the child outside the organization, report your concerns to the parents and/or the appropriate authorities. Flagging the concerning behaviour to the sport organization will trigger a review of the activities in an effort to correct and stop the misconduct. It will also allow an organization to address any behaviour which are not consistent with its policies and procedures.

Sport Leaders Commitment to Keeping Children Safe

The Guide for Sport Leaders is designed to assist you in creating healthy relationships with children in your care. Children deserve to participate in safe sporting experiences, and as such, it is important to remember the following:

1. The first step towards preventing child sexual abuse is understanding what it is and ways that it can be recognized. Visit commit2kids.ca/sport for additional information not contained within this guide.
2. Healthy interactions between adults and children are critical in creating safe and quality experiences in sport. Knowing what healthy boundaries look like, recognizing interactions that are inappropriate, and understanding that adults are always responsible for establishing and maintaining boundaries all result in children being better protected in sport.
3. Take action and respond to inappropriate behaviour and misconduct by reporting your concerns to the sport organization. Over and above the legal obligation to report any allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse, you will significantly increase the protection of children by reporting concerning interactions between an adult and a child.

Thank you for your commitment to child protection and for ensuring that your sport organization is child-safe. We encourage you to visit our website at commit2kids.ca/sport to learn more.

Together, we are building safer communities!

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. (Canadian Centre) is a national charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. The Canadian Centre offers a number of programs, services and resources for Canadians to help them protect children and reduce their risk of victimization. This includes:

cybertip!ca

Cybertip.ca is Canada's tipline for reporting online child sexual abuse and exploitation. Cybertip.ca also provides the public with information and other resources, as well as support and referral services, to help Canadians keep themselves and their families safe while using the Internet.

cybertip.ca

missingkids.ca

MissingKids.ca is Canada's missing children resource centre. MissingKids.ca offers families support in the search for their missing child and provides educational resources to help prevent children from going missing.

missingkids.ca

kids in the know

Kids in the Know (KIK) is a national safety education program for children from kindergarten to high school. The program engages students with interactive activities to help build skills that increase their personal safety and reduce their risk of victimization online and offline.

kidsintheknow.ca

COMMIT TO KIDS

Commit to Kids (C2K) is a program that helps child-serving organizations reduce the risk of sexual abuse and create safer environments for children in their care. It provides organizations with information on the issue of child sexual abuse which forms the basis for educated policies and procedures — from hiring and screening to reporting and staff training.

commit2kids.ca



Learn more: www.protectchildren.ca



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