

Communication No. 2479

ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy

The ISU Council has considered and adopted the following ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy.

Tubbergen,
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Lausanne,

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ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy

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INTRODUCTION

The International Skating Union (ISU) believes that all athletes have the right to participate and develop in sport in a safe, inclusive and respectful environment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation. For children and young people (U18s), these rights are paramount (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Everyone involved in the ISU sports has a role to play in making sure they actively safeguard athletes from abuse, harassment and exploitation. The ISU is committed to ensuring that everyone within the jurisdiction of the ISU understands their responsibility to attempt to safeguard athletes and participants while they are participating in ISU Events and activities by abiding by the ISU Code of Ethics and by reporting any concerns about their welfare through the procedures established in the ISU Code of Ethics, Article 7. The ISU Code of Ethics is the governing authority with respect to reporting concerns and complaints and the ISU's handling of reported concerns and complaints involving alleged abuse and harassment and athlete/child protection issues within the jurisdiction of the ISU. The ISU Code of Ethics can be found on the ISU website, www.isu.org.

The aim of the ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy is to raise awareness of the existence of abuse and harassment in sport and to promote good practice of providing athletes of all ages with appropriate safety and protection while participating in ISU Events and activities, and further, to raise awareness that abuse and harassment are prohibited by the ISU Code of Ethics and there are reporting and handling procedures in place in the Code of Ethics for reported incidents of abuse and harassment to the ISU. For incidents reported to the ISU, the ISU will ensure appropriate action is taken upon determination that an individual violated the ISU Code of Ethics.

It is a further aim of this Athlete Safeguarding Policy to encourage all ISU Members to adopt their own Athlete Safeguarding Policy.

ISU Members

The ISU strongly encourages all ISU Members to accept and adopt the general principles of safeguarding and develop their own Athlete Safeguarding Policies, modifying them as necessary to fit with their own national and local legal framework. The ISU recommends that ISU Members use the [IOC Safeguarding Toolkit](#) as a starting point to draw up athlete safeguarding policies and procedures for their federations.

The ISU will assist ISU Members who have not yet adopted their own written Athlete Safeguarding Policy and procedures in developing a safeguarding policy and procedures for their federation.

Athletes Commission

The ISU believes that athletes have a right to be involved in shaping safeguarding policy and practice, and is pleased to acknowledge considerable input from the ISU Athletes Commission in the development of the ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy.

Athletes may at all times contact a member of the ISU Athletes Commission for guidance and support in matters related to the ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy.

Ethical Standards - background

Embraced by the ISU, Article 1.4 of the [IOC Code of Ethics](#) (version dated 2020) states:

“Respect for international conventions on protecting human rights insofar as they apply to the Olympic Games’ activities and which ensure in particular:

- respect for human dignity;
- rejection of discrimination of any kind on whatever grounds, be it race, color, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;
- rejection of all forms of harassment and abuse, be it physical, professional or sexual, and any physical or mental injuries.”

ISU Code of Ethics

The fundamental principles which govern all ISU activities, decisions, processes and regulations are set forth in the ISU Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics can be found on the ISU website www.isu.org.

Who does the ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy apply to?

The ISU Athlete Safeguarding Policy applies to all persons who involve themselves with the ISU in any capacity, claiming or seeking standing as current or prospective participants in any ISU Event or activity, in particular, but not limited to all ISU Office Holders, ISU Officials, ISU Members (and their members while they are participating in an ISU Event or activity), ISU employees and consultants, Organizing Committees for ISU Events and activities and their officials, volunteers, staff, athletes, coaches, doctors, team leaders, and other members of their entourage as well as any other persons while they are participating in an ISU Event or activity.

This Athlete Safeguarding Policy does not apply to national, internal ISU Member matters which do not occur on-site during an ISU Event or activity, i.e. during the period from the arrival at the ISU Event/activity location until departure from the location.

Safeguarding Athletes and Participants at ISU Events and Activities

The ISU is committed to creating an atmosphere in which all athletes and other persons who participate in ISU Events and activities may have a safe, rewarding and positive experience. All athletes and participants taking part in ISU Events and activities should feel safe and supported, and have their rights, wishes and feelings respected without fear of discrimination or degrading treatment. Their needs and welfare are paramount.

The ISU ‘In-Competition’ policy and procedures to safeguard athletes and participants while they participate in ISU Events and activities are set forth in Articles 6 and 7 of the ISU Code of Ethics. If requested, the ISU will also offer support to ISU Members which organize ISU Events to assist them in developing policies and procedures to safeguard athletes and participants against harassment and abuse while at the ISU Event, and to set up procedures for prompt reporting of an incident of harassment and abuse that occurs during an ISU Event or activity.

International Safeguards – Background

Working with more than 50 organizations, the International Safeguarding Children in Sport Founders Group has developed the [International Safeguards for Children in Sport](#). These safeguards set out the actions that all organizations working in sport should have in place to ensure children (and all athletes) are safe from harm. The eight safeguards are:

1. Developing your safeguarding policy
2. Procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns
3. Advice and support
4. Minimizing risks to children/athletes
5. Guidelines for behavior
6. Recruiting, training and communicating
7. Working with partners
8. Monitoring and evaluating

These eight pillars of safeguarding equally apply to athletes of all ages.

The following resources are also available:

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
[International Safeguarding Children in Sport Working Group Safesport – Where your game plan starts](#)

Defining Harassment and Abuse

In the Code of Ethics, the ISU has adopted the definitions of the various forms of harassment and abuse as set out in the [IOC Consensus Statement](#) (2016).

Harassment and abuse can be expressed in (but not necessarily limited to) five categories which may occur in combination or in isolation. These five categories are i) sexual harassment, ii) sexual abuse, iii) physical abuse, iv) psychological abuse, and v) neglect or negligence.

The five categories of harassment and abuse are defined in the ISU Code of Ethics, Article 6 as:

- **Sexual harassment** means unwanted and unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can take the form of sexual abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** means any conduct of a sexual nature, whether non-contact, contact or penetrative, where consent is manipulated or is not or cannot be given, where consent is coerced, manipulated, obtained based on a relationship of dependency or cannot be given with any legal validity.
- **Physical abuse** means any deliberate, non-accidental trauma or unwelcome act caused, for example, by punching, beating, kicking, biting, or burning or otherwise physically harming an athlete. Such act can also consist of forced or inappropriate physical activity (e.g. age- or physique-inappropriate training loads when injured or in pain), forced alcohol consumption, or forced or systemic doping practices.
- **Psychological abuse** means a pattern of deliberate, prolonged, repeated non-contact behaviors within a power differentiated relationship. “Psychological abuse” can consist of any unwelcome act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity and self-worth. This form of abuse is at the core of all other forms of abuse.

- **Neglect or negligence** means the failure of a Coach or another person with a duty of care towards an athlete to provide a minimum level of care, thereby causing harm, allowing harm to be caused or creating an immediate danger of harm. “Neglect or negligence” can consist of acts of omission regarding athlete safety. For example, “neglect or negligence” can include depriving an athlete of food and/or drink; insufficient rest and recovery; failure to provide a safe physical training environment; or developmental age-inappropriate or physique-inappropriate training methods. This definition applies to coaches and athlete entourages.

All ages and types of athletes are susceptible to the various forms of harassment and abuse. Studies have confirmed that elite, disabled, child and lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans-sexual/transgender, queer/and or questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQ+) athletes are at highest risk, that psychological abuse is at the core of all other forms and that fellow athletes can also be perpetrators. There are particular risks in dealing with young people, and children; and evidence also suggests that girls are at greater risk of sexual violence, harassment and exploitation.

Research has shown that no sport is exempt from the incidence of harassment and abuse, and no country is exempt.

Impact on Athletes

The impacts of all forms of harassment and abuse on the athlete are often extensive and may be long term. They may persist long after the athlete has left the sport and may lead to damage within family or other relationships.

The impact of the various forms of harassment and abuse on the athlete may include any or all of the following:

- Physical - e.g. illnesses and injuries, loss of performance, disordered eating/eating disorders, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sexually transmitted infections
- Cognitive - e.g. low self esteem
- Emotional - e.g. volatile mood states
- Behavioral - e.g. drop out, more likely to cheat
- Mental health - e.g. anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicide
- Effect on relationships - e.g. social exclusion/marginality
- Economic losses

Psychological abuse is at the core of all forms of abuse, and occurs when there is a ‘power differential’ or imbalance of power between the athlete and the perpetrator.

Neglect can result in preventable accidents, recurrent injuries, malnutrition, disordered eating, eating disorders, dehydration, the effects of exposure to adverse atmospheric conditions (for example, excessive heat or excessive cold), long term illness, self-harm behaviors, mental health problems, disability and even death.

Young athletes (U18)

The physical and mental impacts of all forms of harassment and abuse on athletes under the age of 18 are likely to be greater on developing young athletes who have unique physical, cognitive and psychological vulnerabilities. Particular care must therefore be taken to protect them from any form of harassment or abuse.

Recognition

All those involved in the ISU sports have a responsibility to learn how to recognize and respond to signs of harassment and abuse. It is also incumbent upon all those involved to act on and report concerns that harassment and abuse of an athlete may be taking place. There may be times when abuse is reported from outside the sporting arena.

Anyone who has a concern should make a report using the procedures set forth in Article 7 of the ISU Code of Ethics.

Whistle Blowing

The ISU will support 'whistle blowers' by providing a confidential reporting system. The ISU believes it is important for anyone who has concerns to speak up ("if you see something, say something"), in the confidence that wherever possible the organization will provide anonymity. The ISU encourages anyone who has such concerns to make a report promptly, to try to prevent continuing harm and damage to an athlete or participant.

ISU ATHLETE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. General

1.1. Safeguarding

The ISU acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of athletes and participants while they are participating in ISU Events and activities and is committed to ensuring that its safeguarding policy and provisions of the ISU Code of Ethics comply with best practice.

The ISU will:

- Designate an ISU Ombudsperson for Harassment and Abuse.
- Communicate that there is an established person/persons and procedure for reporting incidents of harassment and abuse in the ISU Code of Ethics.
- Develop education and training for ISU Office Holders, Officials, employees and ISU Member federation leaders regarding athlete safeguarding.
- Ensure all reported cases of misconduct that may constitute abuse and harassment are dealt with properly and referred to law enforcement and child protection agencies if appropriate.
- Provide support as reasonably as possible to concerned persons.
- Refer reported complaints to the ISU Disciplinary Commission when appropriate.
- Address allegations and render decisions in accordance with the ISU Disciplinary Commission rules and procedures as set forth in the [ISU Constitution and General Regulations](#) and in Communication No. 2001 (and all updates of this Communication).
- Maintain on the [ISU website](#) a public register of persons who are suspended or disqualified permanently from participation in ISU Events and activities.

The ISU encourages all incidents of harassment and abuse (or suspected harassment and abuse) that occur at an ISU Event or activity to be reported, regardless of who the offender may be.

The ISU will not investigate or attempt to resolve a reported incident of harassment and abuse when a charge of a criminal offence is pending against the accused involving the same alleged incident(s) of harassment and abuse. Information received by the ISU relating to such reported incidents will be provided by the ISU to the relevant public authorities.

1.2. ISU Commitment

The ISU is committed to ensuring that:

- All reports of concerns and allegations of abuse and harassment are taken seriously and responded to appropriately in accordance with the ISU Code of Ethics and as promptly as reasonably possible.
- All those in a position of responsibility within the ISU recognize it is not their responsibility to investigate and determine if abuse has occurred, but it is their responsibility to act and report promptly any concerns they have.
- The ISU will provide the responding party with a fair process in accordance with the applicable provisions of the ISU Code of Ethics, the ISU Constitution and General Regulations and any other applicable rules or regulations; notice will be provided to the individual/individuals concerned, and they will be given the right to respond before any decision is taken or sanction is imposed by the ISU.

The ISU Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years or whenever there is a major change in the organization or in relevant legislation.

The ISU will ensure that the ISU Code of Ethics and the ISU Safeguarding Policy and all subsequent updates are communicated effectively to all the various ISU Office Holders, ISU Officials, ISU Technical Committees, ISU Commissions, ISU employees, and ISU Members. The ISU will encourage all Technical Committees and Commission Chairs to list athlete safeguarding as a regular agenda item and record discussions in the minutes.

2. Confidentiality

Reports of abuse and harassment often contain extremely sensitive information, and athletes may fear coming forward with information.

The ISU reassures those who are concerned about a possible alleged incident of harassment and abuse that personal information will not be disclosed, except, for example, if the concerned person gives his/her prior consent, if disclosure is necessary to protect someone from harm, or if a potential criminal act comes to the attention of the ISU. The ISU maintains secure storage of records.

3. In-Competition Safeguarding Policy at ISU Events

Having a reporting framework in place at ISU Events as set forth in Article 7 of the ISU Code of Ethics underlies the commitment of the ISU to ensure that athletes are aware that their safety and welfare are of paramount importance. The ISU strongly believes that these measures are essential to ensure safe sport for all participants at ISU Events.

4. ISU Members

All ISU Members providing services, events or activities for athletes should have a written safeguarding policy that is accessible to and easily understood by all, and actively promoted within the ISU Member's federation. The safeguarding policy should be approved and endorsed by the relevant governance body of the ISU Member and reviewed appropriately.

ISU Members should first research what their legal obligations are in their country with respect to mandatory reporting to public authorities or duty to warn within their country/region.

In developing their safeguarding policies, ISU Members should include clear and easily understood standards and procedures relating to:

1. Expected standards of behavior towards athletes, participants and volunteers (including a code of conduct, an explanation of discrimination and abusive behavior, how to deal with unacceptable behavior by or towards athletes, the use of sanctions/discipline and positive ways of managing the behavior of athletes that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment, and are age and gender appropriate).
2. Identifying signs of abuse, harassment, bullying, hazing, psychological stress, burnout and dropout (including appropriate definitions and/or indicators of such behavior).
3. Taking athletes (especially young athletes) away on trips, tours or to competitions (including in relation to transport and lodging arrangements, insurance cover, venue safety and possible chaperons of young athletes aged under 18).
4. The use of mobile equipment, information technology (such as email and the internet) and social media platforms.

5. The actions that should be taken on a step-by-step basis in the event of any incident, report or grounds for concern about abuse (including any relevant contact details for local police, social services departments etc.).
6. Identifying applicable laws regarding disclosure of information – mandatory reporting of suspicions of abuse is a legal requirement in some countries.
7. Procedures for reporting and addressing complaints about abuse by individual(s) including clear timelines and incorporating any disciplinary procedures (where appropriate) as well as appeal procedures.
8. Providing appropriate support to the individual(s) who raise, report or disclose concerns or incidents of abuse (on an anonymous basis or otherwise).
9. Ensuring the appointment of a Safeguarding Officer (or similar title) responsible for the implementation and subsequent management and review of the safeguarding policies and procedures; also ensuring that every group and individual member is aware who this person is and how to contact them.
10. Assessing the suitability of all individuals who have contact with athletes through self-declarations, references and background checks where possible.
11. Ensuring that all individuals acting for and on behalf of and/or with ISU Members (whether as an employee, official, coach, volunteer, parent volunteer, contractor, agent or otherwise) and their members themselves understand their role and responsibilities in regard to safeguarding and any code of conduct or code of ethics and are provided with appropriate training opportunities regarding the safeguarding policy, the code of conduct and how to recognize, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to athletes.
12. Ensuring that staff and volunteers with special responsibilities in relation to safeguarding athletes receive appropriate training on recruitment practice, reporting of complaints and disciplinary processes and update their knowledge and understanding generally.
13. The secure storing of confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns.
14. Ensuring that all safeguarding arrangements (including training), procedures and policies are monitored, reviewed and updated as appropriate including when there is a major change in any relevant law or customs, guidance, experience or needs.
15. Amending, as necessary, its constitution or bylaws to reflect its responsibility for overseeing the adoption and implementation of athlete safeguarding measures.

5. Who is Responsible and When?

5.1. ISU – matters related to incidents that occur during the period of ISU Events and Activities

The procedures for reporting a concern or complaint that relates to an incident of observed or suspected abuse or harassment that occurs during an ISU Event or activity are set forth in the ISU Code of Ethics, Article 7.

5.2. ISU Members - national related matters

ISU Members are responsible for handling reported safeguarding concerns and complaints involving abuse and harassment that are raised in relation to persons and associations that fall within the ISU Member's jurisdiction, which jurisdiction includes the ISU Member's regional bodies and clubs, athletes, coaches, officials, staff, volunteers.

6. Education and References

The IOC has developed a number of on-line educational tools related to athlete safeguarding. They are free and accessible for all athletes and entourage members. The ISU encourages all athletes and entourage members to work through the following module:

Athlete Learning Gateway – bite-sized course delivered by Dr Margo Mountjoy and Sheldon Kennedy (former athlete / survivor):

<https://olympics.com/athlete365/courses/safeguarding/>

ISU Members are advised to read and utilize the IOC Toolkit 'Safeguarding Athletes from Harassment and Abuse in Sport' as a starting point when drafting their policies and procedures:

https://d2g8uwgn11fzhj.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/18105952/IOC_Safeguarding_Toolkit_ENG_Screen_Full1.pdf

SafeSport website:

(www.olympics.com/athlete365/what-we-do/integrity/safe-sport)

CONFIDENTIAL – ISU Incident Report Form

Remarks: This Incident Report Form may be used to make a report to the ISU under Article 7 of the ISU Code of Ethics, but the Form is not required to make a report. You may always use the reporting channel you feel most comfortable with, such as this Form, a phone call, an email or other means. If you use this form to make a report, you do not need to fully complete it for the ISU to open an investigation. However, the more information you provide, the easier it is for the ISU to investigate and pursue the incident.

You should return this Form to the ISU Ombudsperson for Harassment and Abuse at (ombudsperson@isu.ch).

Your name	
Your email address	
Your phone number	
Your relationship to person(s) involved in the integrity incident (if not personally involved)	

Nature of Integrity Incident (check all that may apply)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Doping	<input type="checkbox"/> Competition Manipulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse/ Harassment	<input type="checkbox"/> Corruption (anything outside of Doping, Competition Manipulation or Abuse/Harassment)

Subject of Incident
Name(s) of any person(s) alleged to have been involved with the concern, include contact details if possible (e.g. phone number, email address, etc.) ¹
<i>Please give as many details as possible about the person(s) or organization involved in the Incident (e.g. job title, federation, role, etc.)</i>

¹ For example, for a concern of Abuse/Harassment, provide the name/contact details of the victim(s) (if not person reporting) and the name of the person(s) involved in the abuse or harassment of the victim.

Description of Incident
<i>Please give as many details as possible about what happened/what you observed or were told/what your concerns are about the athlete's welfare, etc.</i>
Additional material/evidence
<i>If available, please add any document, picture or video which may support your report.</i>

Action taken
<i>What has already been done about the Incident? Who has already been contacted (police; medical help; other local authorities; people close to the victim, etc.)? Please also include contact details of contacted parties.</i>
<i>Other relevant comments</i>

To be completed by the ISU	
Confirm and specify the action that has been taken to respond to the report	
Name of person to receive the report including signature	
Date of case closing	