



BULLYING

How to Recognize, Reduce and Respond to Bullying

What you need to know to protect athletes

One of the greatest lessons athletes take away from sport is the experience of being on a team where coaches and individuals support one another. Actions that demean or intimidate athletes, either physically or emotionally, can affect performance and team cohesion. Since bullying often occurs among peers, coaches can set an example with a zero-tolerance policy and emphasize teamwork and mutual support. Giving athletes a way to report behavior without fear of reprisal is also important.

Definition

Bullying is an intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behavior that is intended, or has 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. It includes any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.

Exceptions

Bullying does not include group or team behavior designed to establish normative team behavior or promote team cohesion. For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and push through a difficult training regimen.

Examples of Bullying

Physical behavior

- Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete
- Throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects such as sporting equipment

Verbal and emotional behavior

- Teasing, ridiculing, intimidating
- Spreading rumors or making false statements
- Using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (“cyber bullying”)