INDEPENDENCE ROWING CLUB
SAFESPORT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Independence Rowing Club (IRC) is committed to creating a safe and positive environment for athletes' physical, emotional and social development and to ensuring that it promotes an environment free of misconduct. Misconduct may damage an athlete's psychological well-being; athletes who have been mistreated experience social embarrassment, emotional turmoil, psychological scars, loss of self-esteem and negative impacts on family, friends and the sport. Misconduct often hurts an athlete's competitive performance and may cause him or her to drop out of sport entirely.

Misconduct in sport includes:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct, and
- Sexual misconduct, including child sexual abuse

DEFINITIONS

PROHIBITED CONDUCT:

Child Sexual Abuse

Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

Emotional Misconduct

A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behaviors include:

a. verbal acts
b. physical acts
c. acts that deny attention or support

Physical Misconduct

(1) Contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threaten to,

cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants; or
(2) Any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault).

Sexual Misconduct

(1) Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is (a) nonconsensual or forced, (b) coerced or manipulated, or (c) perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner;
(2) Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative; or
(3) Any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape).

Bullying

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.

Harassment

A repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are 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.

Hazing

Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group's members.

APPROPRIATE CONDUCT:

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance. For example, hitting, punching, and kicking are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in swimming.

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion. For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and to push through a difficult training regimen.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IRC requires members, coaches, and volunteers to report abuse, misconduct and violations of the IRC SafeSport policy. To do so, they should have a basic understanding of sexual abusers, as well as "grooming," the most common strategy offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a victim, win the victim's trust, manipulate the victim into sexual activity, and keep the victim from disclosing abuse.

All new members will be directed to read the IRC SafeSport policy. US Rowing requires of member organizations that the following undergo annual SafeSport online training (available through the membership portal on the US Rowing website):

Adult participants who have regular contact with minor athletes.
Any adult authorized by the member organization to have regular contact with or authority over any minor athlete.
Adult staff, interns, and board members of a member organization.

APPLICANT SCREENING PROTOCOL

Applicants for positions that entail regular contact with minor athletes will be screened. Elements of our screening process include, as applicable, completion of an application, an interview and reference check. A criminal background check is required.

EDUCATION ABOUT CLUB'S PROTECTION POLICIES

As part of the application process, applicants will be:

- Informed about our policies and procedures relevant to prevention
- Asked to review and agree to our policies and procedures before proceeding with the process

- Acknowledge review of our policies and procedures

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY

Background checks will be performed every two years for all "applicable adults" as defined by US Rowing. Through this criminal background check, IRC will utilize reasonable efforts to ascertain past criminal history.

PROCESS
The Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form must be submitted and the applicant cleared before he or she may perform services for IRC. On receipt of the Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form, IRC will request that its vendor perform the criminal background check, which may include:

(1) a national search of state criminal repositories;
(2) a search of state sexual offender registries; and
(3) verification of a applicant's identification against his or her social security number or other personal identifier.

Information in the criminal background check may, at the sole discretion of the Board of Directors of IRC, disqualify the applicant from serving as a coach, staff member, or volunteer at IRC.

FULL DISCLOSURE
Each applicant has the affirmative duty to disclose his or her criminal history. Failing to disclose or intentionally misrepresenting an arrest plea or conviction history in an application or any other information provided by an applicant during the screening process is grounds disqualification. Also, any applicant who has been banned by another sport organization, as temporarily or permanently ineligible, must self-disclose this information.

ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY

In the event that any IRC member, coach, or volunteer observes inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations), suspected physical or sexual abuse, or misconduct as enumerated above, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report his or her observations to a member of the Board of Directors of IRC.

Although these policies are designed to reduce child sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. **IRC does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or**

validity of such allegations, as a condition of reporting suspicions or allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH ATHLETES

In almost all sports, coaching an athlete requires some amount and type of physical contact. Such contact may be with parts of the body that, in a non-sport context, may be inappropriate (e.g., positioning an athlete's leg or torso, or spotting an athlete to ensure they will not be injured by a fall). Physical contact is also natural and appropriate when celebrating victories and achievement or consoling athletes after a loss or injury.

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

IRC adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regards to physical contact with our athletes:

Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make them both safe and appropriate. These include:

- the physical contact takes place in public
- there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact
- the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

Safety

The safety of our athletes is paramount and in many instances we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

- positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination
- making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use
- releasing muscle cramps

Celebration
Sports are physical by definition and we recognize participants often express their joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

- greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs
- congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, "jump-arounds" and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment

Consolation
It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly:

- embracing a crying athlete
- putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down ("side hugs")

PROHIBITED PHYSICAL CONTACT
Prohibited forms of physical contact, which shall be reported immediately under our Reporting Policy include, without limitation:

- asking or having an athlete sit in the lap of a coach, member or volunteer
- lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact
- slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from an athlete
- "cuddling" or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay
- playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., tickling or "horseplay" wrestling)
- continued physical contact that makes an athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not
- any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

REPORTING POLICY

REPORTING CHILD PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE

Child Physical or Sexual Abuse
Members and/or volunteers at IRC are required to report suspicions or allegations of child sexual abuse by a colleague or co-worker, to a member of the Board of Directors, where applicable and to **appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse
Approximately 1/3 of all child sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other children and the obligation to report extends to peer-to-peer child sexual abuse. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power or intellectual capabilities. **If you have any concerns that an interaction between children may constitute sexual abuse, report it to a member of the BOD of IRC, or, where applicable, to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

How to Report
IRC will take a report in the way that is most comfortable for the person initiating a report including an anonymous, in-person, verbal or written report. Regardless of how you choose to report, it is helpful to IRC for individuals to provide, at a minimum, (1) the name of the complainant(s); (2) the type of misconduct alleged and the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct.

Reporting Form
Individuals reporting child physical or sexual abuse or other misconduct may complete an Incident Report Form. Information on this form will include:

1) the name(s) of the complainant(s)
2) the type of misconduct alleged
3) the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct
4) the approximate dates the misconduct was committed
5) the names of other individuals who might have information regarding the alleged misconduct
6) a summary statement of the reasons to believe that misconduct has occurred

A copy of the reporting form can be found at the boathouse.

To the extent permitted by law, and as appropriate, IRC will keep confidential the complainant's name on request, not make public the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator or the people who made a report of child physical and sexual abuse to the authorities.

Anonymous Reporting

CLUB recognizes it can be difficult for an athlete, teammate, friend or family member to report an allegation of misconduct and strives to remove as many barriers to reporting as possible. **Anonymous reports may be made without the formality of completing an Incident Report Form**:

- by completing the Reporting Form without including their name
- by expressing concerns verbally or by email to an IRC Board member.

However, anonymous reporting may make it difficult for CLUB to investigate or properly address allegations.

Reports of non sexual misconduct will be investigated by IRC but may be submitted to the US Center of SafeSport. As a member of US Rowing, IRC is required to submit issues of sexual misconduct to the US Center for SafeSport, which it will do, depending upon advice of counsel and applicable state and federal laws.

HOW REPORTS ARE HANDLED

An independent investigation can harm youth and/or interfere with the legal investigative process. **IRC does not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities**. As necessary, however, IRC may ask a few clarifying questions of the minor or person making the report to adequately report the suspicion or allegation to law enforcement authorities. IRC may also investigate allegations of child physical or sexual abuse that are reportable, if such investigation does not interfere with any ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution for abuse.

Reporting and Jurisdiction

As a member of US Rowing, IRC is required to report violations of sexual misconduct to the US Center for SafeSport and to appropriate authorities. The US Center for SafeSport has exclusive jurisdiction to investigate and resolve allegations of sexual misconduct, including child sexual abuse for US Rowing member organizations. Violations of a nonsexual nature will be adjudicated by the Board of Directors of IRC, but may be reported to US Rowing if not resolvable at the organization level.

Immediate Suspension or Termination

When an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse is made against an individual, IRC may immediately remove that individual from contact with any children in the program until the allegation has been investigated.

DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURE

This Policy is used to address allegations of misconduct against members, athletes, participants and/or volunteers. An investigating individual will be appointed by, and will report to, the Board of Directors. The investigation will seek input from all involved parties and the adjudication process by the BOD will be impartial.

IRC will not investigate an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse if it undermines or interferes with a pending legal investigation or criminal prosecution.

DISCIPLINARY RULES
IRC recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a youth participant who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, IRC's disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE
On receipt of an allegation, IRC will determine in its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct based on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.

IRC's disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme cases, misconduct may result in immediate summary dismissal, provided that the accused individual shall be advised of their right to a hearing. If the accused individual is a minor, IRC will contact his or her parents or guardians. Depending upon the seriousness of the allegation, IRC may suspend a member, coach, or employee pending the investigation.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION
Sanctions for violations of the SafeSport policy will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, IRC may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- If the individual is a youth, the parent or guardian will be informed.
- Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- Temporary suspension from competition
- File a formal incident report
- Issue a verbal warning
- Issue a written and/or final written warning
- Implement a limited access agreement (e.g., limiting an individual's access to certain areas or to youth)
- Provide informed supervision

- Engage in restorative practices, i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when a misunderstanding or harm has occurred
- Suspend or terminate employment or membership

APPEAL
After adjudication of the allegations, the Board of Directors or its appointed representative will notify the accused individual of the allegations and the Board findings, and the accused may request a hearing within 7 days of the notification. On appeal, the BOD will address the merits of the IRC decision *de novo*, and not the process that was utilized. A decision rendered by the BOD shall be final and binding on all parties.

MONITORING

By monitoring the interactions among staff, volunteers, athletes, and other, CLUB works to prevent, recognize and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors as set forth in our SafeSport policy, while reinforcing appropriate behaviors.

MONITORING METHODS
IRC utilizes multiple monitoring methods to observe how individuals are interacting, including without limitation (1) formal supervision, including regular evaluations; and (2) informal supervision, including regular and random observation (e.g., roving and checking interactions throughout practices), and (3) maintaining frequent contact with coaches, volunteers, and athletes who interact off-site.

RESPONDING TO INTERACTIONS
While IRC has a formal reporting policy, anyone associated with IRC should be prepared to respond immediately to inappropriate or harmful behavior, potential risk situations and potential boundary violations.