



VOLLEYBALLBC

SAFE SPORT ACTION PLAN

Leading in safe sport
practices & fostering a
safe environment



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1. Introduction

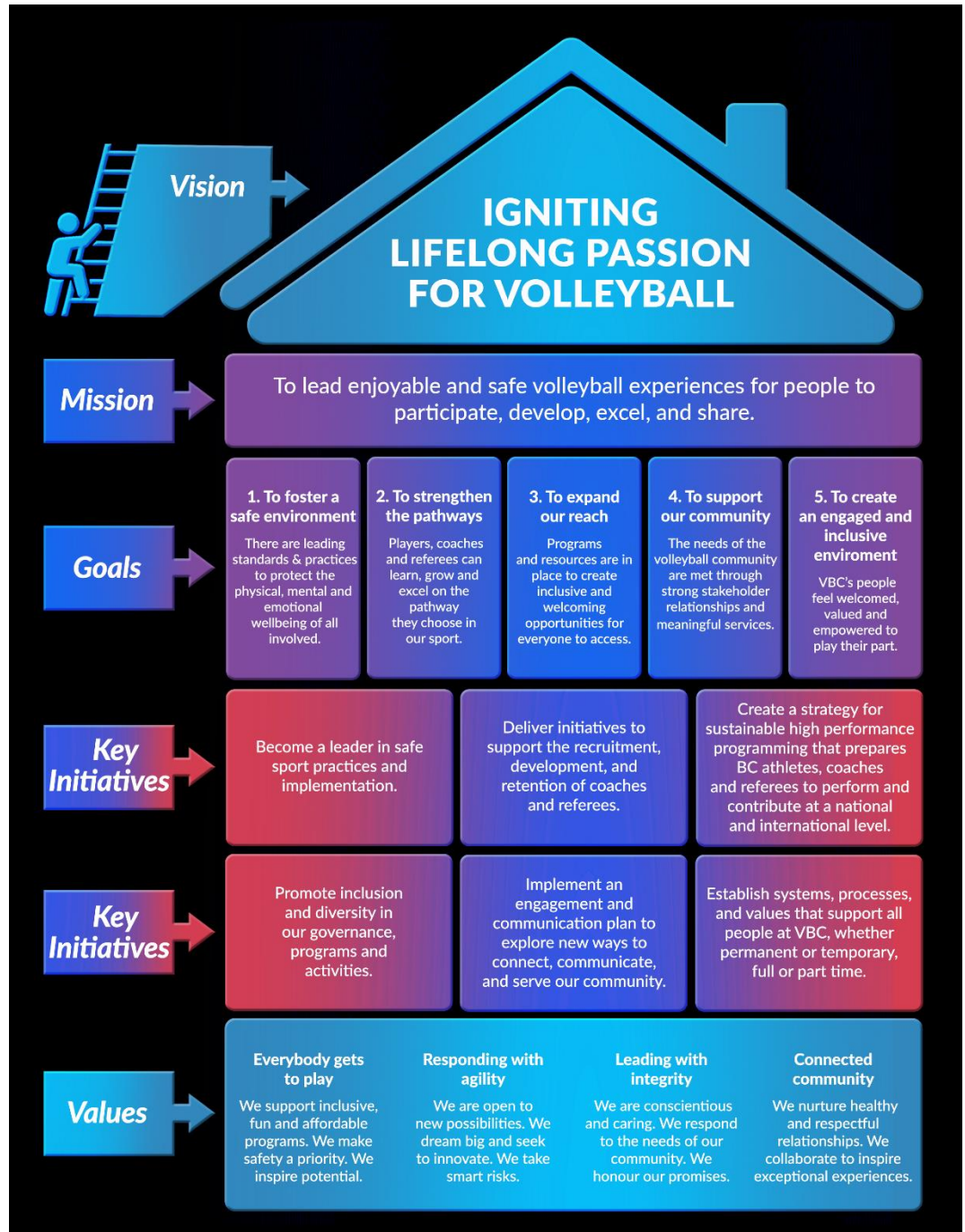
Sport has the power to positively change lives and build communities - but it can only do this when the experience places physical, social, and emotional well-being at the very core. Over the past years, it has become evident that the sport system does not always do this. The pursuit of excellence and desire to win can be at the detriment of an individual's safety and well-being with devastating and long lasting consequences.

We want to be clear that safety is of utmost importance to Volleyball BC and that we strive to ensure that all participants receive a safe and positive volleyball experience in British Columbia. Abuse, maltreatment, and unsafe practices have no place in our volleyball community.

Our dedication to safety is embedded in our **2021-2024 Strategic Plan** where our mission is to lead enjoyable and safe volleyball experiences. The importance of safety is reflected throughout our Vision, Mission, Goals, Values, and Key Initiatives.

In particular, we created the specific goal of **"Fostering a Safe Environment"** in which *"there are leading standards and practices to protect the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all involved."* A key initiative for this area is to become a leader in safe sport.

This Safe Sport Action Plan represents our commitment to this essential work over the next few years.



Volleyball BC's Strategic Plan 2021-2024

2. What is Safe Sport?

“Safe Sport” is a term that is much used in sport and in the media but what does it actually mean? The Coaching Association of Canada defines Safe Sport as *“Our collective responsibility to create, foster and preserve sport environments that ensure positive, healthy and fulfilling experiences for all individuals. A safe sport environment is one in which all sport stakeholders recognize and report acts of maltreatment and prioritize the welfare, safety and rights of every person at all times.”* (2020).

Safe Sport has been further defined to include these characteristics:

- Focuses on the prevention of physical, psychological, and social harms.
- Extends beyond prevention of harm to include the promotion of rights and values based sport – sport that is inclusive, welcoming, and fulfilling for all.
- Applies to all stakeholders: athletes, coaches, sport administration, officials etc.
- Attends to healthy, evidence-based approaches to achieving performing outcomes.

The Safe Sport movement is about optimizing the sport experience for all—athletes, coaches, sport administrators, officials, support staff, and others in the sport environment. To optimize the experience, stakeholders should be free from all forms of maltreatment, and it should be accessible, safe, welcoming, and inclusive; will contribute to well-being; be enjoyable and respectful of personal goals; and provide a sense of achievement.

(Gretchen Kerr: <https://sirc.ca/blog/next-steps-in-the-safe-sport-journey/>)

Volleyball BC endorses this definition of Safe Sport.

For the purposes of this Action Plan, we address the issues and actions needed to promote safe sport in volleyball across 4 different aspects of safety and well-being:

1. Concussion
2. Physical Injury
3. Abuse & Maltreatment
4. Mental Health



3. Developing the Plan

To develop an Action Plan that meaningfully addresses such complex issues, we undertook a series of steps to assess best practice, to identify the issues in our own sport, and to prioritise actions for change. This process is outlined below:

May 2021



Creation of Safe Sport Working Group

We established Terms of Reference and recruited representatives from coaches, referees, players and parents, and clubs. The Working Group has provided invaluable insight and input to this plan.

June 2021



Review of National and Provincial Sport Landscape and Best Practice

Our starting point was to understand the priorities for safe sport at a national and provincial level. We researched, met with sport leaders, and reviewed strategies. This step helped us to learn from organisations that have been leaders in safety and to identify areas of focus for Volleyball BC. A summary of these organisations is in Table 1 on the following page. You can find the reference information for these organisations in Appendix A.

July 2021



Safe Sport survey of our membership

We wanted to take a deeper dive into what our members mean and feel when they talk about safety in volleyball. We incorporated safety questions into our Annual Member Survey to find out:

- *Do our members feel safe when they are participating in volleyball?*
- *What are the main safety issues in volleyball in BC?*
- *Do the perceptions and issues change by the role that a member plays in the sport (eg. coach versus player versus referee) or by gender?*
- *Are our members aware of resources available?*
- *What role can Volleyball BC play in creating a safer environment?*

We received a total of 443 completed surveys which represented a response rate of approximately 7% of our members. We received a representative level of responses from all regions. The gender breakdown of respondents was almost equally male and female with a very small percentage identifying as non-binary or declining to answer.

July 2021



Focus sessions with Team BC Athletes

With a grant from SIRC, we held two focus groups with our Team BC Select athletes (age 16-18 years). The sessions were facilitated by Dr. Shaunna Taylor, a leading expert in the field of mental health in sport. The intentions behind the sessions were:

- *To encourage athletes to become self-advocates for their own safety and feel empowered to voice their own needs.*
- *To educate the athletes on the different aspects of safety in sport and to provide resources to further support if needed.*
- *To understand their priorities for safety in volleyball.*
- *To gain input from the athletes about resources, information or tools they wish they had moving through the volleyball system in BC.*

36 male athletes and 36 female athletes attended the two sessions.

Aug - Nov 2021



Analysis, assessment and priorities

We analysed the data and reviewed the findings from the survey and focus groups. From this work, we identified priorities for action across the four elements of Safe Sport: concussion, physical injury, abuse and maltreatment, and mental health.

Dec 2021-
Jan 2022

Development of the Plan

We wrote the Plan and shared it with our community.

Table A: National and Provincial Sport Landscape and Best Practice in Safety (2021)

Red Deer Declaration for the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse, and Discrimination in Sport (2019)

Pan-Canadian declaration by Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers. Commitment to a collaborative approach addressing harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport.

Volleyball Canada

Pan-Canadian set of policies for volleyball, adopted by Volleyball BC. Independent Third Party reporting for abuse and maltreatment used by Volleyball BC. Concussion and injury protocols for volleyball. Education, communication, and safety resources.

Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)

National universal code of conduct across all levels of the Canadian sport system. Adopted by Volleyball Canada and Volleyball BC.

Coaching Association of Canada

Responsible Coaching Movement - rule of two, ethics training, and screening. Making Headway and Safe Sport training modules for coaches and other persons in authority.

viaSport BC

Development of BC Universal Code of Conduct, promoted by Volleyball BC. Safety education, training and resources. Dispute resolution, complaint management and reporting. Safe Sport requirements for provincially-funded sport organisations, like Volleyball BC.

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

Commit to Kids training. Resources for sport organisations, coaches and parents.

Expandthereach.ca

Resource site for coaches to understand different types of behaviours and mental health issues.

SAFETY & WELL-BEING

BC Injury and Research Prevention Unit

Information on sport, recreation and leisure injuries. Active And Safe website to educate about common injuries, risk factors and injury prevention in sport and recreation. Includes a section on volleyball.

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport

Supports mental health and performance of athletes and coaches. Tools, services, and workshops

Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport

Funded by Govt of Canada and developed by Parachute Canada for a consistent approach to concussion management. Guideline covers 7 key areas to ensure that athletes with a suspected concussion receive care, and proper management to allow them to return to their sport.

Concussion Awareness Tool (CATT)

Series of online educational modules and resources addressing concussion recognition, diagnosis, treatment, and management. All are free of charge.

Sport for Life Canada

Long-Term Athlete Development. Physical literacy and injury prevention guides. Mental fitness resources.

Sport Information Resource Centre

Resources, tools, and information on safe sport, mental health, concussion, and physical injury

USports

Mental Health Guidelines to provide Canadian university athletics with recommendations and guidelines for supporting athlete mental health.

4. Introducing the Plan

Over the following pages, you will find the commitments to action we are making as part of our Safe Sport Action Plan. The Plan is divided into three sections:

Part A - Safety in Volleyball in British Columbia Today

This section highlights the findings that we gathered from our research, survey, and focus groups about the safety of volleyball in British Columbia today. We provide a summary of the key issues that this Action Plan seeks to address. The full findings from our research can be found in *A Study of Safety in Volleyball in BC – July 2021*.

Part B – Commitment to Action

This section includes our framework for change and our commitments to action across the 4 aspects of safety in sport – Concussion, Physical Injury, Abuse and Maltreatment, and Mental Health. You will find our actions divided into Priority and Longer Term.

Part C – Measuring Impact

This section includes the Key Indicators that we will be using to assess progress against the actions and outcomes outlined in the plan. You will also find information about our evaluation and reporting process to ensure that the Action Plan stays relevant and the BC volleyball community understands the work we undertake.



Part A. Safety in Volleyball in British Columbia Today

The good news is that our members generally feel (very) safe participating in volleyball

Across all respondent groups, there was positive agreement to the statement “I feel safe participating in volleyball” with a ranking of 4 or 5. Youth and Adult Players were most positive with 90-91% agreeing/strongly agreeing with the statement (ranking 4 or 5). This speaks very positively to the player experience. Club Directors were noticeably less positive with a larger number disagreeing/strongly disagreeing or neutral (ranking 1 to 3). This may be related to their role of authority, governance, and organisation of the sport which would bring them into contact with a larger number of safety-related issues or incidents.

“For myself, as an adult participating only in recreational volleyball, I feel safe. I also feel that I create a safe environment for my athletes to train in.”

Every sport has some risk, but volleyball is quite safe compared with others.”

“I have solid relationships with my teammates and coaches, so when I play volleyball, I feel like I am in a safe environment.”

“In my experience, coaches and players are always so supportive and encouraging. I always feel safe when playing volleyball and look forward to it”

“I think there's always a small risk while playing volleyball, because there's a chance I could get hurt. But, I rarely worry about it.”

A number of participants to our survey expressed their appreciation that we were taking the time to ask about safety in volleyball.

“Wow - thanks for surveying. It's good to know how committed VBC is to supporting participants and upholding high standards for the integrity of the sport”

During the Team BC Safe Sport sessions, athletes recognised the hard work of coaches, organisers and clubs in meeting athlete needs in areas of safety:

“Coaches and adults within the sport scene are very good.”

“I would say that the community and sportsmanship to help athletes grow has been quite successful in the sport of volleyball.”

I think overall in general coaches do a great job of covering all areas, between club school and Team BC I have learned a lot.”

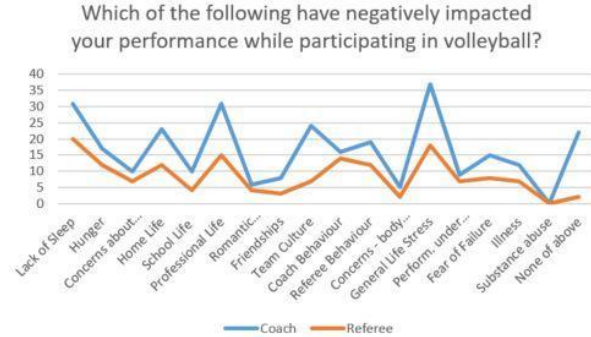
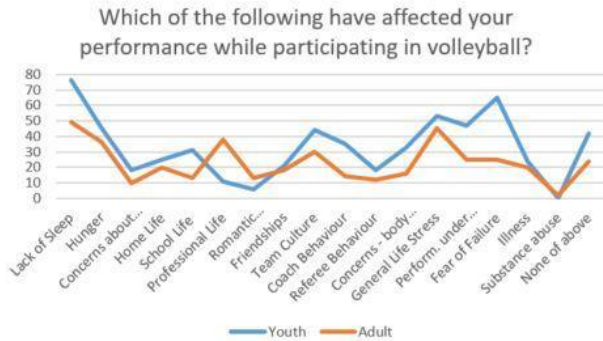
There is a strong relationship between well-being and safety that we need to protect in order to preserve what our members enjoy about playing volleyball.

Our members listed the top 3 reasons that they participate in volleyball as:

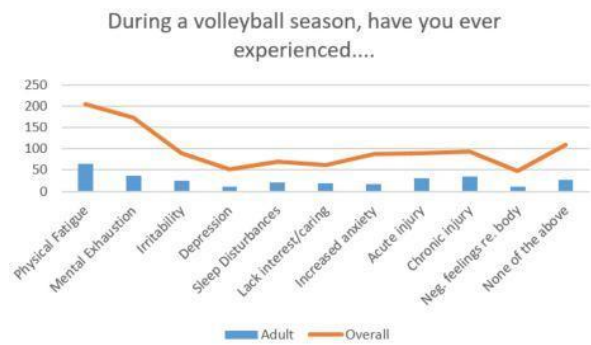
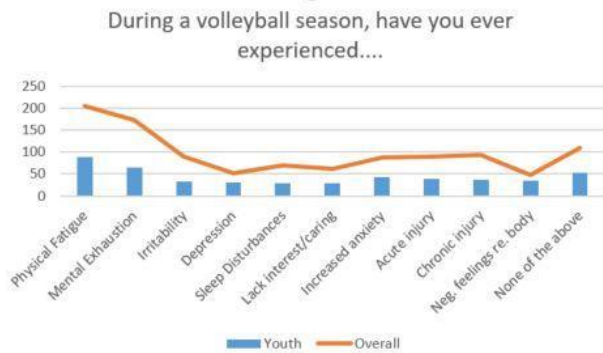
1. **Having fun**
2. **Social connection**
3. **Achieving my goals for personal development**

Our members feel energised and supported by participating in volleyball. As a result, playing, coaching and refereeing volleyball was seen by 65-80% of our respondents as of “very high” or “high” importance to both physical well-being and mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. These results confirm that the fun and social aspects are a key element that should be fostered and encouraged as part of the volleyball experience. Feeling safe is an essential factor in meeting these needs.

However, it is clear from our research that stressors for physical and mental well-being often impact our members' performance and well-being when they are participating in volleyball.



The top factors affecting Players' performances in volleyball were **lack of sleep** and **general life stress**. Youth players also highlighted **fear of failure** while Adult players were impacted by their **professional life**. Coaches and Referees also ranked **general life stress, lack of sleep** and **professional life** as the top 3 factors affecting their participation in volleyball.



In addition, over 75% of respondents said that they had experienced at least one of the well-being "stressors" that we listed in the survey. The top factors listed were **physical fatigue** and **mental exhaustion**. Youth players also listed **increased anxiety** and **negative feelings about their body**. Coaches and referees listed **mental exhaustion, physical fatigue, and irritability** as the top 3 factors that they experienced. A challenge for us, therefore, is to ask whether we can do anything to address these stressors and to ensure that the experience of playing volleyball is not contributing.



Physical injury is perceived as the biggest risk to individual safety by all members apart from referees

Over **80% Players** in the survey have experienced an injury during participation in volleyball.

The most common injuries are to the **ankle, shoulder or arm**.

Over **60% Coaches** in the survey have experienced an injury during participation in volleyball.

Although Referees were least likely to be injured, **25%** of them sustained an injury.

Concussion was also a concern, particularly among male players.

Only **4-6%** of respondents said they had received a concussion or head injury.

57% of male players identified physical injury and concussion/brain injury as the top risk which was about 10% higher than female players.

Between 32-40% injuries self-resolved or were treated by the individual themselves.

Around one-third of Players and Referees had to temporarily stop participating in volleyball after they experienced a physical injury.

Coaches were overwhelmingly most likely to have experienced an injury where they had to seek medical advice. They were also most likely to have experienced an injury that meant they had to permanently stop volleyball. This potentially reflects the transition from being a Player to a Coach.

In our Safe Sport sessions with Team BC, male and female athletes identified **physical injury prevention and recovery** as the most pressing area for youth volleyball. They also identified this topic as one they would like to learn more about in order to have the safest and most fulfilling quality sport experience.

"I wish I knew a lot about injuries because I found it was never talked about – I eventually got patella tendinopathy and I didn't know what that was and how to treat it until recently."

Positively, the Team BC athletes listed physical injury prevention as one of the sport safety areas where they feel volleyball is meeting athlete needs relatively well, even though they would still like to receive more support and education.

"I think they're meeting our needs well when it comes to athlete recovery."

"Recovery and injury prevention tips, proper warmup tools for the athletes."

Alarminglly, many respondents felt that 5 behaviours linked to Abuse and Maltreatment were an issue in volleyball.



This was the top safety problem in volleyball cited by players, coaches, referees and club directors and whether male or female.

Coaches, Referees & Club Directors were more likely to say this was an issue than with Players (76-79% v 52-58%).

Males were slightly more likely to say this was a problem than Females.

65% of club directors felt that negative focus on body weight/image was an issue, albeit a small one.

Nearly 50% of female respondents said that negative focus on body image was not a problem at all in volleyball compared with only 39% of males. This is encouraging as a predominantly female sport; however, we need further exploration of why males are more likely to see this as an issue.

Both these issues were identified by 53% of Adult Players and 43% of Youth Players.

However, this rises to 51-66% of Club Directors, Coaches and Referees who identified them both as a problem.

Referees overwhelmingly selected verbal abuse, bullying and harassment as the biggest risk to their safety in volleyball.

Male respondents were slightly more likely to say these were issues compared with females.

41-44% of Adult and Youth Players stated that physically harming behaviour is an issue. This compares with 58-59% of Coaches and Club Directors, suggesting a growing consciousness of over-training and excessive physical exercise.

Male respondents were much more likely to identify physically harming behaviour as an issue than female respondents (58% v. 40%).

“There’s a difference between belittling and motivation /encouragement – “tough love” can exist but needs to be managed.”

“A small favouring towards people who “look” like a volleyball player (tall, spandex, knee pads, good shoes, etc.)”

“Male coaches... Body shaming their athletes... simply has to stop!”

“Feeling unwanted and pushed away by peers.”

“Pressure coming from teammates that are negative on and off the court.”

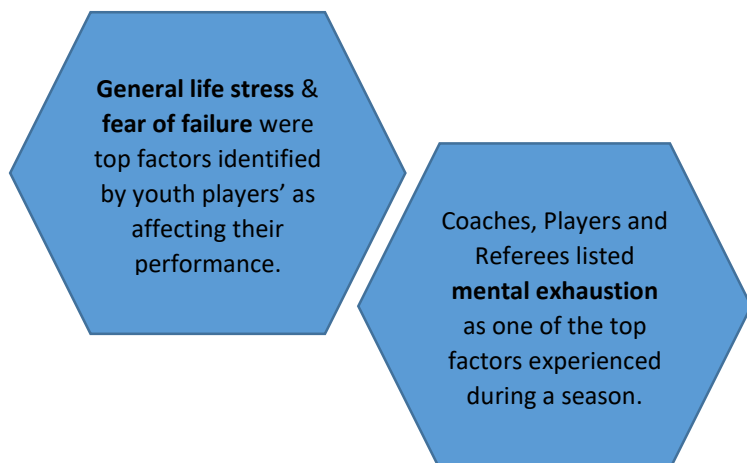
“Playing through injuries does not mean you are tough.”

“You should never feel pressure to play if you are hurt or injured.”

Respondents were also asked to identify who was responsible if they had experienced one of the 5 behaviours. Coaches and Officials were most likely to have experienced one of these behaviours from **Parents or other Coaches/Assistant Coaches**. This contrasts with Players who overwhelmingly indicated that they are most likely to have experienced it from a **Peer or Team mate**. It is clear from this that a multi-audience approach is needed to address appropriate/inappropriate behaviours.

Males ranked all 5 areas more highly of a problem than female respondents. This flips the assumption that female participants are more vulnerable to behaviour that is abuse and maltreatment. Care and support must address our male participants as much as female.

Mental health and well-being is a rising area of attention among volleyball participants



In our Safe Sport sessions with Team BC, male and female athletes identified **mental health** as the second most pressing area for youth volleyball.

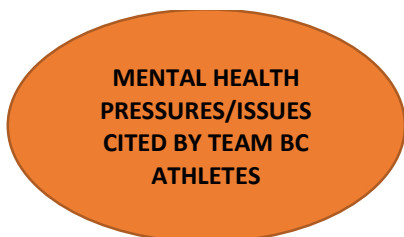
Female Team BC athletes also identified mental health as the top safety area they would like to learn more about in order to have the safest and most fulfilling quality sport experience. Male athletes listed it second to physical injury.

The complexity of mental health considerations and concerns was illustrated in the discussions taking place during the Team BC safe sport sessions:

How to focus on positive thoughts (staying positive, being positive, finishing positive)

Most athletes haven't learned much about mental health or how to weed out negative thoughts.

Confidence and self worth: you are you, and no one else is



Getting frustrated and being hard on yourself whenever you make a mistake as a youth volleyball athlete is a huge concern and is an area that needs to be dealt with since the mental component in volleyball is so huge.

Knowing what is too much for your body and mental health – understanding your limits and what is reasonable.

How to deal with the coach-athlete disagreements and team dynamics.

Feedback from Coaches, Referees and Club Directors in our survey highlight the growing awareness of mental health and of stressors that may contribute toward their own mental wellbeing.

Across all 5 behaviours linked to abuse and maltreatment, Coaches, Referees and Club Directors consistently rated the behaviours as more of a problem in volleyball than Players. This is perhaps because of the nature of their roles: Coaches, Referees, and Club Directors are increasingly required to provide support to players, and have to handle situations or behaviour where these issues arise.

This puts a different lens on the priority that has often been given publicly given to player/athlete mental health and suggests that we should also emphasise the mental health and wellbeing of those in positions of authority.

“Volleyball is a culture of high achievements. A lot of players are constantly comparing themselves with each other instead of focusing on their own goals.”

“Coaching U14-16 girls’ volleyball - there is quite a mental aspect which is often difficult to deal with.”

There are gaps in support and an inconsistent awareness of safety resources and tools among our members.

Even though Volleyball BC has a number of essential resources and mechanisms in place to protect and promote participant safety, it is clear that there is low awareness and that we are not currently meeting our members need for support.

One size does not fit all.... different positions in our sport feel under-supported in different areas of safety:

Club Directors generally feel that they have resources, support and knowledge in all 4 areas of safety - concussion and head injury, physical injury, abuse and maltreatment, and mental health. They feel most well-resourced in the areas of abuse and maltreatment and mental health.

Club Directors rank physical injury as the area where they have the least resources, support, and knowledge.

Coaches and Referees feel that they have the most amount of resources, support and knowledge around physical injury, closely followed by concussion and head injury

Coaches and Referees both indicate that mental health and abuse and maltreatment are the areas where they have the least resources, support and knowledge.



Most awareness across all members of Volleyball BC's Code of Conduct and Ethics, closely followed by our Screening Policy. Levels of awareness dip slightly for Youth and Adult Players.



Club Directors, Coaches and Referees were more likely to be aware than not of the Rule of Two and the Volleyball BC Safe Sport webpage. A significant number of Youth and Adult Players said they were not aware of these two.



Least awareness across all members of the National Sport Helpline or Independent Third Party for reporting safe sport incidences, particularly among the Adult and Youth Player groups. This has only recently been part of the resources that Volleyball BC has promoted which likely explains the low response.

AN ATHLETES PERSPECTIVE

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN?

Learning about recovery: cool down, warm up, food, sleep, active recovery, rest.

Knowing more about concussions and their symptoms as well as treatment.

The importance of fully recovering from an injury – knowing when to start and stop

It is ok to sit out and let your body recover if you are hurt.

More resources and support available to turn to – there is no talk on mental health.

Having someone else to talk to other than a coach who is confidential.

Having clear guidelines for abuse: physical mental, verbal, sexual abuse.

Speaking out if something a player says goes too far, for example I say a lot of stuff and sometimes it can get out of hand and if a player doesn't like that then sometimes its difficult especially if it's like a joke the whole team laughs at to say like hey that actually wasn't funny please don't joke about that.

Knowing what is too much for your body and mental health – understanding your limits and what is reasonable.

Understanding you can have good and bad days, not either/or.

(A selection from Team BC Safe Sport sessions)

Part B. Commitment to Action

B.1 Framework for Action

Our findings above show that there is room for improvement in safety and well-being in volleyball in BC. In our research and consultation, we also sought to establish ideas and directions for improvement as we look to the future. As many of our respondents highlighted, improving safety is complex, multi-faceted and involves cultural change and accountability within our sport:

We need to challenge norms in volleyball that uphold and accept unsafe behaviour from participants.

“Difference between belittling and motivation/encouragement – “tough love” can exist but needs to be managed.

“Definitely a lot of favoring behavior and focus on win without supporting the players (or developing them)”

Like many sports, there has been a culture of acceptance that blurs the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and actions.

“Underhanded recruiting, intimidating athletes - if you want to play a high level you can't be in that club.”

“There was no cohesive training or support to avoid shoulder and ankle injury at the high performance youth level. It was considered a “given”.

This kind of culture change is hard and takes time. There needs to be commitment and involvement of all participants. No one organisation or position can do it alone.

“Mutual respect: referees, coaches and players – recognising each others’ roles.”

“EVERYONE needs to focus on gym safety - coaches, refs, admin etc”

We need to create new norms, expectations, and standards that prioritises physical, emotional, and psychological safety. These should empower all participants to self advocate and speak up.

“The narratives need to change and the change needs to be bold”

“You should never feel pressure to play if you are hurt or injured.”

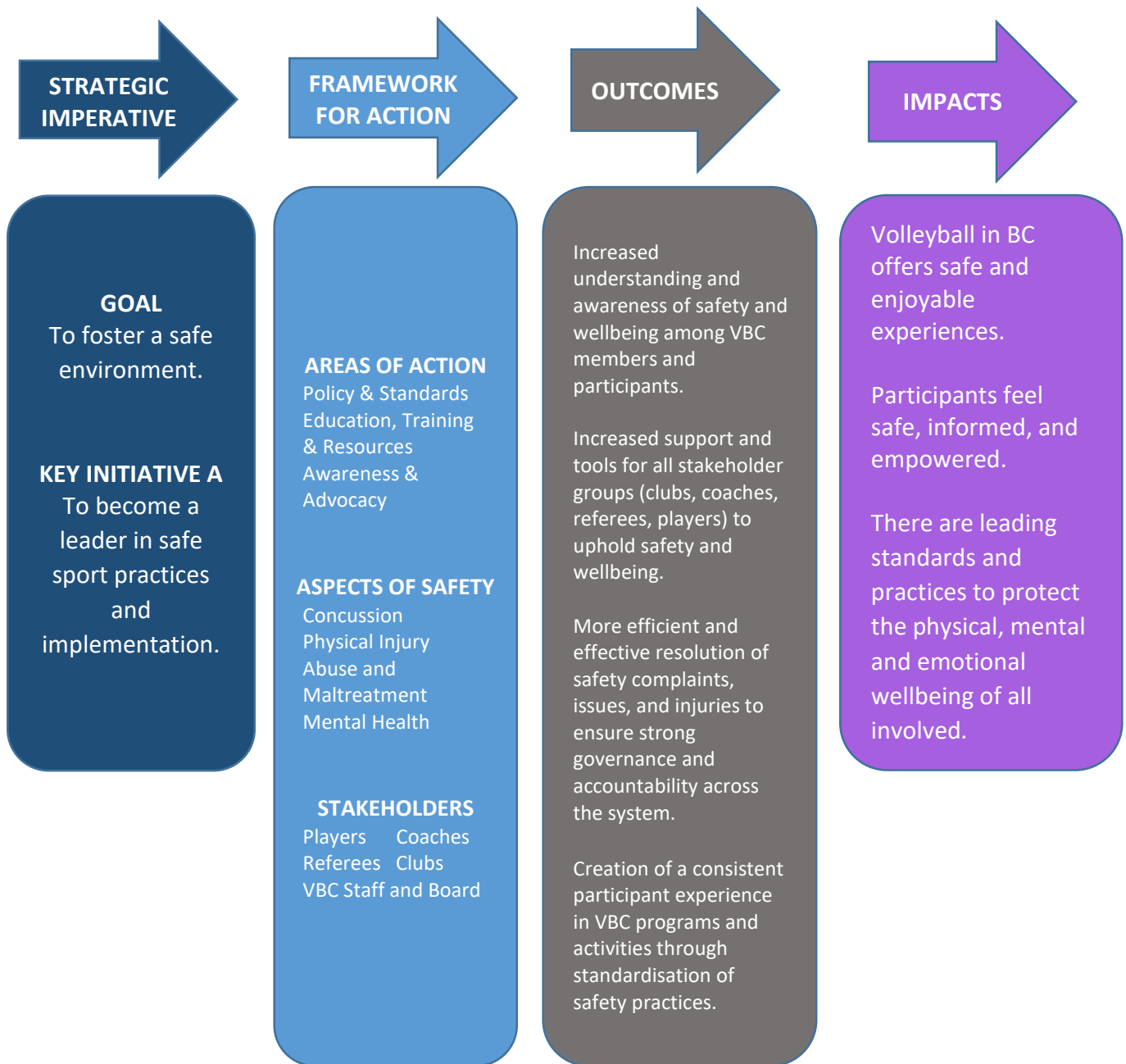
“Having open communication with your team and being able to talk about what “encourages you versus what does not.”

Effecting change and improving safety in volleyball requires all participants – players, coaches, referees, clubs – to be committed and accountable. While Volleyball BC is only one player within the system, it is clear that we can play an important role because of our unique province-wide position. To most effectively leverage our role and resources, we developed the framework for action in Table B that focuses on three key Areas of Action that Volleyball BC can lead.

Table B: Framework for Action

		AREAS OF ACTION				
		POLICY & STANDARDS	EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESOURCES	AWARENESS & ADVOCACY		
ASPECTS OF SAFETY	PHYSICAL INJURY	<p>SETTING AND UPHOLDING SAFETY STANDARDS</p> <p>Developing and communicating standards across all aspects of safety.</p>	<p>TRAINING AND EDUCATION</p> <p>Training and education that is tailored to the needs of each role and supports stakeholders where they feel they are under-resourced.</p>	<p>RAISING THE PROFILE OF SAFETY</p> <p>Promoting the importance of safety and the resources and tools in place so that all members know about them and how to identify safety issues.</p>		
	CONCUSSION	<p>CLEAR PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES</p> <p>Creating practical procedures and guidelines that can be implemented easily in all settings.</p>	<p>SUPPORTING A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Continuously reviewing our physical environment and equipment needs.</p>	<p>BEING CLEAR ABOUT BOUNDARIES</p> <p>Understanding appropriate boundaries between all the different roles in our sport.</p>		
	ABUSE & MALTREATMENT	<p>Maintaining clear reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN SAFETY IS NOT MET</p> <p>Enforcing standards and appropriate consequences when standards are not met.</p>	<p>Promoting best practice in first aid, training, and resources to prevent injury.</p> <p>EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT</p> <p>Providing a variety of tools and resources for all our members.</p> <p>Signposting to support services outside of our sport when necessary.</p>	<p>Being clear about what is acceptable and what is not.</p> <p>PROMOTING SELF-ADVOCACY</p> <p>Ensuring that all participants feel able to speak up, speak out and ask for what they need.</p>		
	MENTAL HEALTH					
		PLAYERS	COACHES	REFEREES	CLUBS & ORGANISATIONS	VOLLEYBALL BC
		STAKEHOLDERS				

It is our firm belief that actions are required across the whole framework in order to effect meaningful change to participant safety and well-being:



Using the framework for change, our commitments to action are outlined in the following sections with their timing, deliverables, and outcomes.

B.2 Concussion

what we learned....

- Between 4-6% of our respondents said they had received a concussion or head injury while participating in volleyball which was relatively low compared with injury types.
- Coaches and Referees felt that they had the most amount of resources, support and knowledge about physical injury and concussion and head injury.
- **Concussion incidence and mechanism among youth volleyball players (May 2017)** - 57.1% of all concussions involved ball-to-head contact. Player-to-player contact and head-to-floor contact were less prevalent at 20.2% and 15.5%, respectively. In total, 61.6% of concussions occurred outside of competitive game play, in a more structured environment of practice or warm-up.
- **Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program (2011-2017)** - This program used hospital injury reporting to monitor the number and frequency of concussions in sport among children and youth. 8-11% of total volleyball injuries were Traumatic Brain Injuries of which 85-97% were concussions. (Note: The most common sports activity with concussions were hockey and rugby for males and ringette for females).



POLICY & STANDARDS			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Promote the standard shared definition of concussion with supplemental information regarding symptoms.	√		A. Promote the recognised definition of concussion. B. Develop clear information regarding symptoms and signs to monitor in self and in others.
2. Develop VBC Concussion Statement and Protocols	√		A. Create a clear and consistent statement and protocols for concussion identification, management and return to play. B. Produce pre-season concussion education sheet. C. Develop clear procedures in the event of a suspected concussion at a VBC event.
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities for recognizing and reporting concussion symptoms during volleyball activities.	√		A. Clarity of roles (coaches, referees, teammates, parents, volunteers, event staff). B. Outline responsibilities for each role. C. Develop clear procedures to follow when a concussion is suspected. D. Include roles, responsibilities and guidance about return to play
4. Integrate concussion policies, procedures and practices into all VBC programs and activities.		√	Operational policies and procedures in place for all VBC programs. Staff are clearly informed/trained and aware of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures are consistently applied across all programs, regardless of region or program type.
EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESOURCES			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Embed concussion protocol into training of all VBC coaches	√		A. Create training materials for VBC coaches. B. Implement and monitor training of VBC coaches on concussion protocol. C. Provide annual refresher of protocols.
2. Develop a Club Guide to policies, procedures and best practice.	√		A. Develop a policy template for clubs to utilize. B. Create a simple visual (flow-chart) which depicts procedures. C. Outline best practices in the event of a suspected concussion for application at a club-level. Include pre-season education (eg. at team orientation meetings).
Annual Review of Canadian Harmonized Sport Concussion Protocol Checklist		√	Coordinate an annual training and review for clubs. Utilize the Canadian Harmonized Sport Concussion Protocol Checklist to ensure clubs are utilizing current best practices.
Develop tailored Concussion Guides and Education for specific member groups.		√	Create: A. Parents & Caregivers Guide B. Coaches & Trainers Guide C. Athletes Guide
Promote and further develop the Volleyball Canada Return to Sport Strategy		√	Research best practice and develop return to sport strategy. Create a template for clubs to utilize (checklist and confirmation of medical clearance). Include information on regression and consequences of returning too soon.

Identify opportunities and promote "training" and education for our players and parents (eg. BC Injury Research & Prevention Unit)		√	Research training opportunities for parents and players. Promote and coordinate training and education opportunities. Empower membership to recognize signs and symptoms in themselves and others.
AWARENESS & ADVOCACY			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Promote definition of concussion and the importance of the early detection of symptom.	√		A. Organize Concussion Awareness Week. B. Develop infographics for distribution. C. Develop communication plan and social media strategy to promote awareness
2. Creating an designated area on VBC website which features concussion education, awareness and resources	√		A. Launch webpage featuring concussion awareness. B. Link to external resources or where individuals can seek specialised care. C. Upload relevant materials. D. Promote web page and direct traffic to increase awareness. Encourage clubs to link to the web page.
3. Promote 7 steps of Concussion Management	√		A. Display printed materials at VBC events, including signage for spectators and referees B. Target information to coaches, athletes, and parents via email. C. Share on social media
Build a resource bank of all current concussion resources		√	Collect resources for easy access on designated web page by all participants.
Ensure consistent signage and visuals in place at all VBC events		√	Create standard documents to be displayed at all VBC events. Ensure they are easy to read and easy to understand Items to be placed in highly visual locations at events.



B.3 Physical Injury

what we learned....

- Physical injury was listed as the top risk perceived to individual safety by Players, Coaches, and Club Directors.
- Over 80% of respondents had experienced an injury during participation in volleyball. Most had experienced an ankle, shoulder or arm injury. Referees were the least likely to be injured.
- Coaches and Referees felt that they had the most amount of resources, support and knowledge about physical injury and concussion and head injury.
- In our Focus Groups, both Female and Male athletes identified physical injury prevention and recovery as the most pressing area for athlete safety. However, they also said that they felt that volleyball is meeting athlete needs well in this area.
- **Information from Active and Safe website (BCIRPU):**
 - Injury rates for volleyball are 1-10 injuries for every 1000 hours of play.
 - Sprains and strain are the most common injuries in volleyball.
 - Most common mechanism for injury is contact with another, most often when a player lands on another player's foot.
 - Risk factors for injury: previous injury, match v training, higher duration and intensity of training, male.



POLICY & STANDARDS			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Establish clear explanations of physical injury in volleyball	√		A. Information on common injuries (acute versus chronic, overuse) B. Gender differences C. Age considerations D. Provide supplemental information regarding common injuries in the sport
2. Complete further analysis of physical safety in volleyball using recommended assessment tools.	√		A. Complete Haddon Matrix to assess injury risk and further identify area B. Complete the Three E's assessment to identify injury strategies (Education, Engineering, Enforcement)
3. Identify and implement ways to more rigorously capture data on physical injury at VBC activities.	√		A. Mechanisms identified. B. Implementation of monitoring during VBC club season. C. Analysis and review of data.
4. Develop VBC policies, protocols and procedures for physical injury prevention and management		√	Policies, procedures and checklists from assessments and best practices. Integrate checklist into VBC coach training and utilize for VBC programs.
EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESOURCES			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Embed physical injury protocols and procedures into onboarding of VBC coaches.	√		A. Training materials for VBC coaches. B. Integrate physical injury education into onboarding of VBC coaches
2. Support clubs in establishing protocols for injury prevention and management	√		A. Policy and procedure templates for club use. B. Useful resources and practices (eg. tallying frequency of injuries during practice) C. Explore adding another spot to team rosters if they are trained/medical support.
3. Develop tailored Physical Injury Guides for specific members	√		A. Develop targeted injury guides for: 1. Parents 2. Club Directors 3. Athletes
Develop pre-season preparedness guide for participants		√	Develop a digital document that outlines information on season preparation. Include information regarding prevention and recovery. Link to important resources, including online pre-season training for smaller clubs to use with their members.
Develop the final two tailored Physical Injury Guides		√	Develop a targeted injury guide for Coaches and Referees

Facilitate access to additional training courses for our members		√	Research courses (taping, sport first aid, SportSmart Injury Prevention and Performance Workshop) Subsidize training opportunities for coaches and clubs. Provide accessible training opportunities for the entire province
Identify appropriate training for VBC staff		√	Ensure that staff and contractors complete training - implemented by 2023

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Develop a communications plan to promote physical injury awareness, prevention and management	√		Promote a well-rounded definition of physical injury that includes: A. Common overuse injuries B. Acute injuries C. Importance of prevention and recovery
2. Create a designated area on website which features physical injury awareness	√		A. Launch webpage featuring physical injury awareness. B. Link to external resources. C. Collate a resource bank of all current concussion resources D. Promote web page and direct traffic to increase awareness.
3. Place visual reminders at all VBC events	√		A. Develop large scale infographics and visuals that are simple and easy to absorb at the 2022 Provincials. B. Create awareness by providing accessible information at events: coaches, athletes, and parents. C. Ensure every VBC event in 2023 has a visual on display
Develop and share specific injury information for different ages / stages to all participant groups and gender variances		√	Develop specific and relevant materials that are age appropriate. Ensure all materials are easy to read and understand. Create awareness by sharing materials with members and VBC program participants.



B.4 Abuse and Maltreatment

what we learned....

- 63% of respondents said that psychologically/emotionally harming behaviours are a problem in volleyball.
50% of respondents said that a negative focus on body image and weight is a problem in volleyball.
41-44% of Adult and Youth Players stated that behaviour that is physically harming is an issue compared with 58-59% of Coaches and Club Directors.
49% of respondents felt that bullying was a problem.
44% of all respondents felt that discriminatory remarks or behaviour are an issue in our sport.
- Male respondents were slightly more likely to say all 5 behaviours associated with Abuse and Maltreatment are an issue in our sport.
- Coaches, Club Directors, and Referees rated all 5 behaviours as more of a significant issue than Adult and Youth Players.
- Referees overwhelmingly selected verbal abuse, bullying and harassment as the biggest safety risk to their individual safety.
- Coaches and Referees indicated that mental health and abuse and maltreatment are the areas where they have the least resources, support and knowledge.

POLICY & STANDARDS			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Establish meaningful and clear definitions of abuse, maltreatment and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour in volleyball	√		A. Clear definitions of the different types /what constitutes abuse and maltreatment. B. Positive statements of physical, mental, and emotional well-being in volleyball.
2. Define and communicate the roles, responsibilities and support of all volleyball participants in eliminating abuse and maltreatment.	√		A. Clarity of responsibility for recognising, responding to and reporting instances of abuse and maltreatment, including legal obligations. B. Support for each participant to fulfil their responsibilities and roles, including scenarios of appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour. C. Tailored resources for athletes, including peer-to-peer incidents.

3. Increase awareness and understanding of the Volleyball BC Code of Conduct and Ethics	√		A. "Plain English" version with appropriate behaviours specific to different roles. B. Increased understanding of process and consequence for non-compliance.
4. Develop and promote policies and procedures to encourage a shared understanding of appropriate behaviours and issue resolution.	√		A. Operational policies and procedures in place in VBC for key areas of participant safety, including social media, travel and accommodation. B. Policy templates for clubs to adapt and implement. C. Specific policies and procedures addressing behaviour and treatment of referees. D. Clear steps for handling different abuse and maltreatment issues.
5. Maintain clear, effective, and confidential reporting and resolution mechanisms.	√		A. Independent Third Party for all abuse and maltreatment processes. B. Well-resourced and effective Discipline and Complaints process, including training where necessary. C. Compliance with national and provincial reporting requirements. D. Development of a whistleblower policy.
Review the governance, relationships, and structures within the volleyball system to identify risks and opportunities.		√	Clear and strong relationships with the referee system and high school sport with commitment to collaborate and eliminate abuse and maltreatment.
Create additional and tailored standards, policies, and resources for different members within the volleyball system		√	Operational policies and procedures specific for needs of each member group, including Coaches, Referees, Players. Tailored resources for each member group. Templates available for application.
Educate and promote holistic development and standards for each age and stage in volleyball		√	Application of LTAD 3.0 (launched 2022) Appropriate training expectations at each stage. Information about mental/emotional / social / physical development

EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESOURCES

ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Embed safe sport training and education into all Volleyball BC programs and activities	√		A. Training identified and implemented across all appropriate staff. B. Policies and screening compliance in VBC workforce. C. Creation of Coach, Referee, and Player/Parent agreements. D. Safe Sport Checklists in place for all VBC programs and events. E. Completion of Responsible Coaching Movement requirements.
2. Develop and launch a Safe Sport Handbook for volleyball	√		A. Handbook in an online and pdf version B. Tailored version for youth/players
3. Support and monitor completion of safe sport requirements by all Positions In Authority.	√		A. Defined requirements across all Positions In Authority. B. Secure integration of SportLomo, My Backcheck, and the CAC Locker. C. Compliance by all Positions in Authority.

Promote and support positive and appropriate coaching standards and behaviour.		√	A. Definition of positive coaching in volleyball. B. Central resources on best practices, techniques, and coaching plans for positive discipline and motivation. C. Training and education provided to coaches.
Educate and promote holistic development and standards for each age and stage in volleyball		√	Application of LTAD 3.0 (launched 2022) Appropriate training expectations at each stage. Information about mental/emotional / social / physical development
Identify specific training and resources for referees to recognise and address abuse and maltreatment.		√	Assessment of current training requirements. Targeted educational and awareness resources for referees.
Create specific resources for parents in volleyball to support their understanding and role in promoting safe sport		√	Materials to promote responsibilities of parents (eg. choosing a safe organisation, understanding rights and responsibilities). Education and informational opportunities.
Develop club-specific toolkit to support implementation of safe sport practices.		√	Toolkit developed. Supportive resources produced (webinars / templates / training).

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Develop and implement a communications plan to increase awareness of safe sport and resources.	√		A. Communications plan with deliverables. B. Infographics and promotional materials on key concepts eg "Rule of Two" C. Participation in national and provincial awareness days and initiatives (eg. #erasesbullying) D. Signage and materials at key VBC events and activities.
2. Create an online resource hub with information, support and resources on abuse and maltreatment	√		A. Dedicated web page with resources. B. Signposting/support for individuals reporting abuse and maltreatment C. Drive traffic to the web page.
3. Deliver a youth-focused campaign for awareness and education around abuse and maltreatment	√		A. Youth-focused communication tools including role models, social media and webinars.
Create tailored campaigns to target specific behaviours and/or groups in volleyball		√	Materials and awareness-raising activities for specific groups (eg. spectator signage, referees, coaches, role of parents)
Promote holistic development and standards for each age and stage in volleyball		√	Promotion of LTAD 3.0 (launched 2022) Appropriate training expectations at each stage. Communication materials for coaches, clubs, and athletes about appropriate expectations

B.5 Mental Health

what we learned....

- Fear of Failure and General Life Stress negatively impact Youth and Adult Players, Coaches and Referees, Males and Females.
- Concerns about Body Appearance was rated significantly higher by female than by male participants.
- Mental Exhaustion was the top factor listed by all respondents as being experienced during a volleyball season.
- Coaches and Referees indicated that mental health and abuse and maltreatment are the areas where they have the least resources, support and knowledge.
- In our Athlete Focus Groups, female athletes said they would like to learn more about Mental Health and Wellbeing. This area was also mentioned most frequently as the area in which athletes felt volleyball is not meeting athlete needs or needs improvements.
- Mental Health is a broad and complex term which was highlighted by the multiple different aspects that participants talked about. Further work is needed to better understand how we can better support and resource this area.



POLICY & STANDARDS			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Establish a position statement with meaningful and clear definitions of mental health and well-being in volleyball	√		A. Position statement or policy for mental health and well-being. B. Positive statements of physical, mental, and emotional well-being in volleyball. C. Clear explanation of mental preparedness v. mental health v. mental illness.
2. Research further the mental health and well-being issues and needs of volleyball participants, particularly for males.	√		A. Relationships formed with leaders in the field. B. Further consultation with youth players at VBC events and activities. C. Focus groups with youth players, especially male. D. Clear picture of mental health issues and needs informed by research and consultation.
3. Develop and promote policies and procedures to encourage a shared understanding of mental well-being and support for individuals.	√		A. Operational policies and procedures in place in VBC for key areas of mental health including management and support for individuals with mental illness and dealing with emergency situations. B. Policy templates for clubs to adapt and implement. C. Clear outlines of roles and responsibilities
Create tailored standards, policies, and resources for different members within the volleyball system		√	Operational policies and procedures specific for needs of each member group. Templates available for application.
Educate and communicate appropriate mental / emotional / social development for each age and stage in volleyball.		√	Application of LTAD 3.0 (launched 2022) Appropriate training expectations at each stage. Information about mental/emotional / social / physical development
EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESOURCES			
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Produce a Guide to Mental Health and Well-being in volleyball	√		A. Handbook in an online and pdf version (content to include pressure to be the "ideal" player/coach/referee, importance of self-advocacy and being able to articulate/communicate). B. Tailored version for youth/players
2. Acknowledge and provide support for the top 5 issues impacting well-being in volleyball	√		A. Top 5 issues identified from Annual Survey. B. Central resources on best practices and techniques. C. Training and education provided to coaches if necessary.
3. Support coaches to champion mental health and well-being in their players, teams and themselves.	√		A. Central resource on best practices and techniques for supporting mental health in athletes and teams. B. Coaches symposium or series of themed webinars around mental health, emotional intelligence etc.
Embed awareness and resources about mental health and well-being into all Volleyball BC programs and activities		√	Training identified and implemented across all appropriate staff. Mental health checklist for staff

			Policies and procedures provided to appropriate staff. Mental well-being/health practices integrated into delivery of VBC programs.
Create and deliver a targeted campaign for positive body image and acceptance		√	Action Plan developed. Clear guidelines for uniforms Diversity of promotional images Signposting to resources and support.
Identify specific training and resources for referees to recognise and address mental health and well-being.		√	Focused research and consultation with the referee community. Targeted educational and awareness resources for referees. Assessment of current training requirements..
Create specific resources for parents in volleyball to support their understanding and role in promoting positive mental health and well-being		√	Materials to promote responsibilities of parents (eg. signs to watch for, info on their role). Education and informational opportunities.
Develop club-specific toolkit to support positive mental health		√	Toolkit developed. Supportive resources produced (webinars / templates / training). Resources and learnings from Team BC program.

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

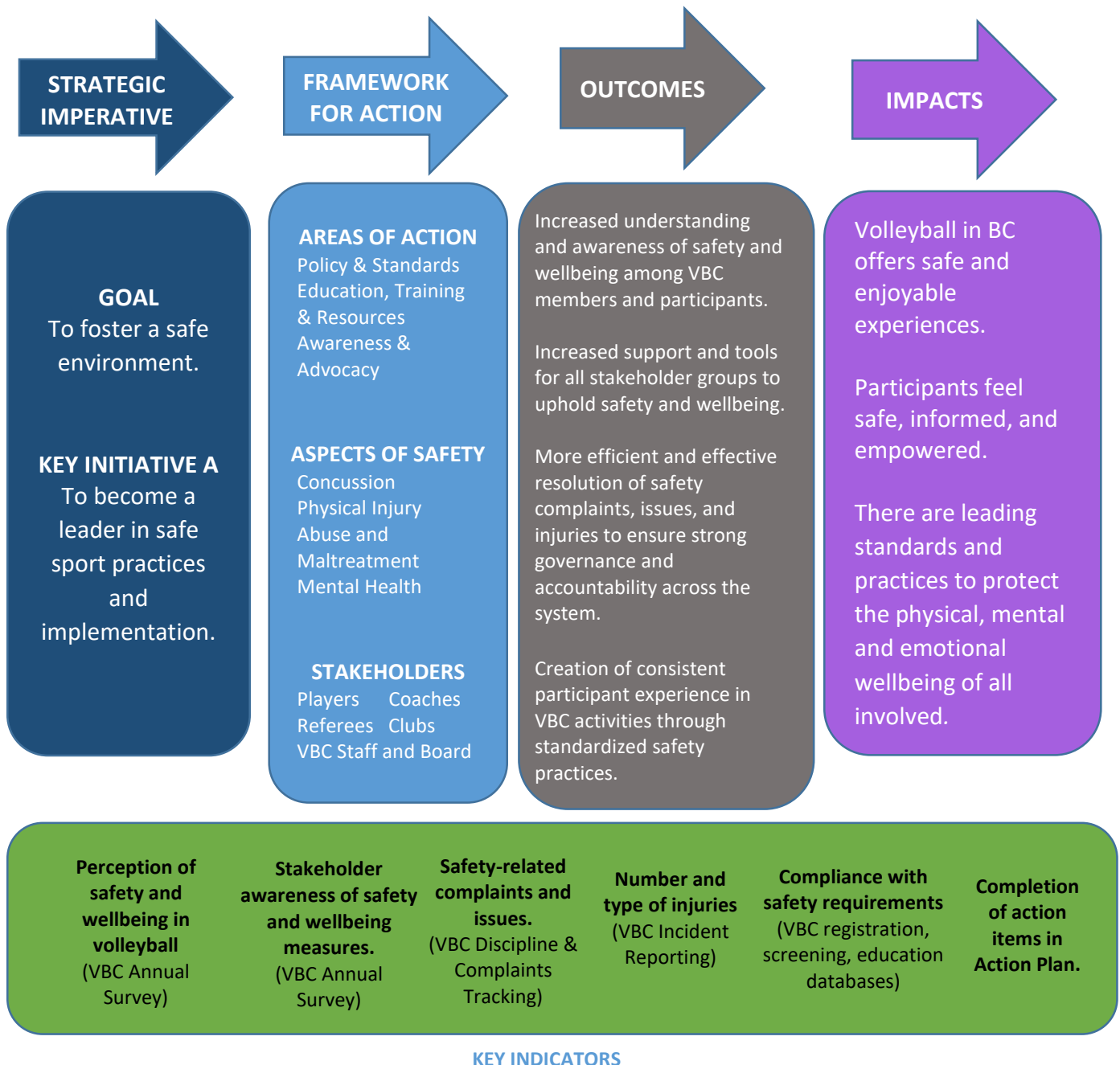
ACTION	TIMING		DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES
	PRIORITY	LONGER-TERM	
1. Develop and implement an annual communications plan to increase awareness of mental health and sport	√		A. Communications plan with deliverables. B. Key messages and definitions of positive mental health and well-being. C. Participation in national and provincial awareness days and initiatives (eg. Bell Let's Talk, Buddycheck)
2. Create an online resource hub with information, support and resources on mental health and well-being	√		A. Dedicated web page with resources. B. Signposting/support for individuals experiencing mental health concerns. C. Promote and drive traffic to the online resource.
3. Deliver a youth-focused campaign on mental health and well-being in volleyball	√		A. Youth-focused communication tools including role models, social media and webinars. B. Normalisation and destigmatisation of mental health concerns. C. Role and importance of being a good teammate
Create tailored campaigns to target specific mental health concerns and/or groups in volleyball		√	Materials and awareness-raising activities for specific groups (eg. referees, coaches, role of parents)
Promote mental, social and emotional development at each age and stage in volleyball		√	A. Promotion of LTAD 3.0 (launched 2022) B. Mental / Social / emotional development at each stage. C. Communication materials for coaches, clubs, and athletes about appropriate expectations

Part C. Measuring Impact

This Safe Sport Action Plan outlines some ambitious initiatives. How will we measure the impact of this work and know whether we have been successful in achieving the changes we want to see?

C.1 Key Indicators

Safety and well-being are complex and difficult to measure. Individual experience and perception is personal and variable which means positive change might not be linear. Despite this, there are some measures that we can use to get a sense of progress towards our goals. Outlined below are key indicators that we will be measuring and reporting. Our research and consultation in Summer 2021 provides us with benchmark information in each of these areas from which we can assess our progress.



In addition, we are committed to working with our partners - such as the clubs and referee associations - to share and listen to feedback. Having an open door and to listening to the stories and experiences within our community will provide us with an essential “pulse check” on participant safety and well-being to complement the quantitative measures listed above.

C.2 Evaluation and Reporting

We are in a time of flux and change which means that our Safe Sport Action Plan must be flexible. We will establish the following mechanisms to regularly evaluate the areas of action and our progress, and to share this work with our members:

- Staff will evaluate delivery of the areas of action on a quarterly basis.
- The Safe Sport Working Group will continue to provide leadership and oversight of the Plan, meeting as required.
- The Board will receive regular staff reports to ensure that we are on track.
- A full scale review of the Action Plan will be conducted annually using information from the Key Indicators above.
- Volleyball BC will share our progress annually with our members and the wider volleyball community.

Safety and well-being in volleyball is a journey and not a destination. We will continually strive to ensure that every participant has an experience that is positive for their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. This Action Plan marks the start of a new phase of our journey. We look forward to working with all our stakeholders towards the delivery of safe and enjoyable volleyball in British Columbia.

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- Thank you to the Sport Information Resource Centre for the Safe Sport Community Activation Grant that allowed us to carry out research into our community. Our appreciation to Dr. Shaunna Taylor who skilfully facilitated focus groups with Team BC Select athletes as part of this.
- We gratefully acknowledge the support and leadership of our Board in committing to making our sport safe.
- Finally, thank you to all the athletes, coaches, referees, club directors, and parents who took the time to complete our survey and provide your input into this Action Plan. We hope that you see in here the changes that you wish for in our sport.

Staff Support: Emma Gibbons & Rosalynn Campbell
January 2022

Appendix A.