



VOLLEYBALLBC

SAFE SPORT SERIES

OPEN AND OBSERVABLE ENVIRONMENTS



Volleyball BC is committed to a sport environment that is safe for all participants. There are many different situations that arise in volleyball including tryouts, practices, competitions, travel, and communication. An important part of creating a safe environment is setting shared expectations about how individuals should behave in these situations.

This document outlines the principles and recommendations that should be applied to ensure that everyone has a safe and welcoming experience.

Who is a Person In Authority?

A Person In Authority is anyone who holds a position of trust or authority because of the role that they have. Persons in Authority (PIA) may include coaches, managers, trainers, referee allocators or mentors, staff, and administrators. Because of their position, Persons In Authority have inherent power over participants and so must be careful not to abuse this, consciously or unconsciously. An example of this is the Coach-Athlete relationship where Coaches are in a powerful position to influence and direct Athletes.

KEY CONCEPT:

OPEN & OBSERVABLE ENVIRONMENTS

Open and observable interactions and communications are strongly recommended to foster safety, enhance protection, and help reduce vulnerability of both an athlete and Person In Authority. The Coaching Association of Canada's Rule of Two states that there will always be two screened and safety-trained adults with a participant, especially a minor athlete, when in a potentially vulnerable situation.

Volleyball BC follows "[Open and Observable Environments](#)" which is Volleyball Canada's version of the Rule of Two. This involves making all efforts to avoid situations where a Person In Authority might be alone with a vulnerable person. The name refers to the fact that interactions between an individual and an individual who is in a position of trust/authority should be in an environment or space that is both "open" and "observable" to others.

OPEN ENVIRONMENT

An open environment is an environment that is not closed or concealed from others. Interactions should not take place behind closed doors or in secluded locations. Others should be aware the interaction is taking place

OBSERVABLE ENVIRONMENT

An observable environment is a space where others can see or take note of the interaction. This applies to both a physical space and a virtual/ electronic space.

When should Open and

Observable Environments apply?

- All training and competitions, especially without a second Person In Authority present
- Meetings
- Medical treatments
- Travel to and from trainings, competitions, events, or activities
- Electronic communications

Before interacting with someone

ask yourself:

- Is this an open interaction?
- Are we in a closed or secluded place?
- Who knows this meeting/interaction is taking place?
- Does the athlete -or individual in a position of lesser power- have an easy and accessible exit path?
- Is this interaction observable?
- Is anyone else with us?
- Can anyone see us?
- Can anyone hear us?

What does Open and Observable Environments look like in practice?

There are many different types of interactions and situations in volleyball. Here are some recommendations and best practice for applying the principle of Open and Observable Environments in different volleyball scenarios:

IN VOLLEYBALL TRAINING AND COMPETITIONS

- All training and competition environments must be open to observation. Look at all situations during training, competitions or other volleyball activities that may put yourself or others in a vulnerable position and consider ways to avoid or alter the environment to promote safety.
- Ensure that two PIA are always be present with someone, especially a minor, when in a potentially vulnerable situation such as in a locker room or meeting room.
- All one-on-one interactions between a PIA and an individual must take place within earshot and in view of a second PIA except for medical emergencies. One of the PIA should also be of the same gender identity as the athlete.
- Ask a screened volunteer, parent, or adult to step in and help if a second PIA is not available,
- For private conversations, use an open and observable environment such as in the corner of the gymnasium, in a café, in a glass-walled office, or outside the gymnasium in an open location. If the topic is sensitive in nature, you should include another coach, support staff member or parent in the meeting. A closed-door meeting can take place if a second PIA is present at all times.
- Interactions between a PIA and an individual should not occur in any room where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as the change room, meeting room, restroom, or changing area. Ensure that a second PIA is present for any necessary interaction that might be needed.
- Ensure that PIA are available outside a changing area, within earshot and able to enter the room or area if required, if they are not allowed to be in there.
- PIA must not change or shower in front of participants.
- PIA should only accompany a minor to the washroom if there is more than one. If the group has minors of mixed genders, there should be at least one PIA of each gender supervising the washroom visit.
- A PIA should never be alone with someone prior to or following a volleyball activity, unless the PIA is the individual's parent or guardian. If the athlete is the first athlete to arrive, the athlete's parent should remain until another athlete or PIA arrives. Similarly, if an athlete would potentially be alone with a PIA following a competition or practice, the PIA should ask another PIA (or a parent/guardian of another athlete) to stay until all the athletes have been picked up. If an adult is not available, then another athlete should be present to avoid the PIA being alone with a single athlete.
- Parents, guardians, and other caretakers should always be allowed to observe training sessions or practices
- Involve more than one PIA in selection decisions to limit the consolidation of power onto one individual.
- PIA must ensure a safe environment by selecting activities and establishing controls that are suitable for the age, experience, ability, and fitness level of the involved athletes. If you are giving instructions, demonstrating skills, or facilitating drills or lessons to an individual, it should always be doing so within earshot and eyesight of another Person in Authority.

IN COMMUNICATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

- Establish, monitor, and reinforce clear, appropriate, and consistent communication boundaries.
- Eliminate one-to-one electronic messaging. For example, a good practice is to pre-establish a message group with coaches and support staff already included and provide this to athletes for sending communications to coaches. Group messages, group emails or team pages should be used as the regular method of communication.
- Only electronic platforms that allow open and transparent communication should be used. Direct Messaging on social platforms should not be used between a PIA and participant.
- If an individual sends a PIA a message directly, the PIA should include another individual in the response. The parent or guardian of minors should be included in any individual communications from PIA.
- PIA may only send individual texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individuals when necessary and only for the purpose of communicating information related to volleyball activity (e.g., non-personal information).
- Parents and guardians can request that their child not be contacted by PIA using any form of electronic communication and/or to request that certain information about their child is not distributed in any form of electronic communications.
- Ensure that the content of all electronic communication from PIA is professional in tone. There should be no communication about drugs or alcohol use or sexually-oriented conversation. needed.
- PIA are not permitted to ask individuals to keep a secret for them.
- A PIA should not become overly involved in an individual's personal life
- As part of the registration process or otherwise, participants - or parents/guardians for a minor - should sign a photo release form that describes how an athlete's image may be used.
- Photographs and video may only be taken in public view, must observe generally accepted standards of decency, and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the participants.
- Examples of photos that should be edited or deleted include:
Images with misplaced apparel or underwear
Suggestive or provocative poses
Embarrassing images
- The use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras in locker rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces at a facility should be prohibited.
- A participant may not be photographed or filmed or have their image posted publicly or privately unless they have given their consent (or the parent/guardian's consent for a minor). If consent is given, it may be revoked at any time.



DURING TRAVEL FOR VOLLEYBALL

- Conduct Guidelines should be developed, reviewed, and signed by all individuals involved in team or group travel. This sets expectations and standards. If a participant breaches the Guidelines, the PIA is then able to put in place measures to safeguard and manage the situation.
- A PIA may not be alone in a car with a minor unless PIA is the minor's parent or guardian or there are at least two minors and written consent is obtained by parents/guardians. If a minor travelling alone with a PIA is absolutely necessary, written permission should be obtained from the parent/guardian, all relevant people should be told the expected departure/arrival times and the minor should travel in the back of the car.
- Mixed gender groups should be accompanied by at least one male and one female PIA. The profile of the travel will determine how many individuals are needed and their differing responsibilities.
- A PIA should not share a room or be alone in a hotel room with a participant they are coaching or supervising unless they are their parent or guardian.
- Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two PIA. One of the PIA must also be of the same gender identity as the participants.
- For overnight travel when participants share a hotel room, roommates will be age-appropriate (e.g., within 2 years of age or both adults) and of the same gender identity.
- Participants may only share a hotel bed if they are of the same gender identity and with the explicit consent of the parent or guardian if they are minors.
- If participants are minors, they should only leave a travel group if there is a minimum of two individuals together and with the permission of the PIA leading the program.
- If homestays are being used, organisers should ensure that:
 - All adult members of the host family are screened.
 - Minors are placed with families where there is a minor of a similar age and, where possible, of the same sex. If there is more than one minor and they are different genders, both genders must be in the household
 - Visiting minors have their own bedroom, although it is acceptable for them to share a bedroom with another person of similar age and of the same gender.
 - Information about all practical aspects of the hosting arrangements are agreed and shared in advance with parents and guardians.

DURING PHYSICAL CONTACT

Some physical contact between PIA and participants may be necessary for various reasons including teaching a skill or tending to an injury. The following considerations should be taken:

- All physical interaction should be limited to non-threatening or non-sexual touching (e.g., high-fives, pats on the back or shoulder, handshakes, specific skill instruction, etc.)
- A PIA should always clarify with a participant where and why any touch will occur. Verbal cues and explanations are encouraged to help educate participants on the difference between appropriate and inappropriate contact. The PIA must make clear that he/she is requesting to touch the athlete and not requiring the physical contact.
- Infrequent, non-intentional physical contact, particularly contact that arises out of an error or a misjudgment on the part of the participants during a training session, is permitted.
- Hugging, cuddling, physical horseplay, and physical contact initiated by the PIA is not permitted. Some younger athletes may initiate hugging or other physical contact with a PIA for various reasons (e.g., such as crying after a poor performance) but this physical contact should always be limited.
- While there are circumstances where one on one medical treatment may be necessary due to the injury or treatment type, medical staff should have their interactions take place in open and observable spaces when at all possible. A closed-door meeting should only be permitted to protect patient privacy provided that the door remains unlocked, another PIA is present at the facility and is aware that a closed-door meeting is occurring, and written legal guardian consent is obtained in advance by the mental health care professional and/or care provider.

How should these recommendations be applied?

VOLLEYBALL CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS

- Develop and adopt written policies and procedures that outline expectations of how Open and Observable Environments should be maintained.
- Develop an Athlete Safety Policy that coaches, managers, and athletes sign to agree on shared standards of behaviour and conduct.
- Incorporate knowledge and training on upholding Open and Observable Environments as part of the onboarding of staff and volunteers.
- Take appropriate action in all situations where an Open and Observable Environment was not maintained to improve and enforce standards.

PERSONS IN AUTHORITY

- Understand the concept of Open and Observable Environments and how to apply this in practice.
- Anticipate situations where Open and Observable Environments may need some planning ahead of time to implement and maintain.
- Set clear and appropriate boundaries that are clearly communicated with all participants (and parents/guardians in the case of minors).
- Be prepared to address and correct any unknowing breaches of an Open and Observable Environment by participants. For example, if an athlete sends a personal email to a coach, the coach should respond by copying in another PIA or the parents/guardians.
- Proactively report and address any situation where an Open and Observable Environment is not maintained, identifying actions to take to ensure that this is not replicated in the future. For example, if a referee supervisor ends up alone with a junior referee at the end of a game, they should proactively report this to the allocator/assigner to allow changes to sign-out policies.

PARTICIPANTS

- Understand the concept of Open and Observable Environments and how this should be applied in practice.
- Ask to see a volleyball club/organisation's policies or guidelines for safe interactions.
- Respect conduct and behavioural expectations designed to maintain Open and Observable Environments that are developed by a volleyball club/organisation or a PIA.
- Proactively report and address any situation where an Open and Observable Environment is not maintained, identifying actions to take to ensure that this is not replicated in the future. For example, if an athlete receives a personal email from a coach, the athlete should respond by copying another PIA and/or their parents/guardians if they are a minor.
- Formally document and report a PIA if they consistently breach practices of applying "Open and Observable Environment or their behaviour is concerning.

Where can I find out more?

Read Volleyball Canada's [Open and Observable Environments](#) handout.

Visit www.volleyballbc.org/safe-sport for more information about what we are doing to address concussion, injury, abuse and maltreatment, and mental health in volleyball.



**LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES
& FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**