



VOLLEYBALLBC

SAFE SPORT SERIES

APPROPRIATE & INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS

Commitment Statement

Volleyball BC is committed to an environment free from abuse. Individuals are required to report instances of maltreatment or suspected maltreatment so that those matters can be immediately addressed. As part of our commitment to safe sport, all members and clubs are required to abide Volleyball BC's policies to address abuse and harassment:

- [Abuse Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct and Ethics](#). This is based on the Universal Code of Conduct to Address Maltreatment in Sport.

Some of the language in the policies can be challenging. This document explains different types of maltreatment and provides examples of appropriate/ inappropriate behaviour to ensure that we all have a common understanding of what is acceptable in volleyball.

What is maltreatment in sport?

Athletes at all levels deserve to train and compete in a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Those who run sport are responsible for creating an athlete-focused environment where the health and wellbeing of participants are at the forefront. There have been many high profile examples in the media where this has not been the case but these are often extreme situations. Maltreatment can come in different forms - some behaviour may not meet the threshold of criminal activity but it still needs to be addressed and stopped.

The definitions and examples in this document are meant to be illustrative. There may be additional behaviours or examples outside of this list.

Who is at risk?

Volleyball BC's policies highlight two groups who are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment:

- **Children** - A child is someone under the age of 19 years. Child abuse refers to violence, mistreatment, or neglect that a child may experience while in the care of someone they depend on or trust.
- **Vulnerable Adults** - A vulnerable adult is someone who because of a physical, emotional, or psychological condition is dependent on other persons for care and assistance in day-to-day living. Vulnerable adult abuse may be psychological, financial, or physical, and is often described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust.

However, it is important to note that maltreatment can happen to any participant at any age and in any role. We are all at risk and must take actions to ensure that inappropriate behaviour does not happen.

TYPE OF MALTREATMENT	WHAT KIND OF BEHAVIOURS ARE COVERED BY THIS?	WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN VOLLEYBALL?
<p>Psychological or emotional maltreatment</p> <p>Verbal, non-physical behaviour, or actions that harm an individual's sense of self-worth. In sports, this conduct has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an individual when it is persistent, pervasive or patterned. Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally attacking someone with personal criticism, body shaming, demeaning, or derogatory comments. • Use of rumours or false statements to diminish someone's reputation. • Physically aggressive behaviors, including throwing objects or hitting, striking or punching objects in the presence of others. • Withholding attention. • Deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore someone. • Pressuring someone to do something or pushing someone too hard without recognising their limitations. • Excluding or isolating someone from a group. • Use of degrading or shaming nicknames • Repeatedly mocking someone for poor performance • Threats of frightening and inappropriate repercussions • Acts that deny attention and support: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator shares or uses confidential sport information inappropriately. • Coach refuses to recognise an athlete's needs and insists on training despite complaints of injury, thirst, or feeling unwell. • Personal trainer frequently uses name-calling or sarcasm to "beat down" an athlete's self-esteem. • Athlete is embarrassed or humiliated by a teammate in front of the rest of the team. • Referee repeatedly mocks another referee for making the wrong calls. • Coach repeatedly tells an athlete they are not good enough to be on the team • Athlete angrily throws a volleyball at the wall when others on their team mess up a drill.
<p>Physical maltreatment</p> <p>Contact or non-contact behaviours that have the potential to cause physical harm. Almost all sport involves strenuous physical activity. Athletes regularly push themselves to the point of exhaustion. However, any activity that physically harms an athlete—such as extreme disciplinary actions or punishment—is unacceptable. Physical maltreatment can extend to seemingly unrelated areas including inadequate recovery times for injuries and restricted diet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately punching, kicking, beating, biting, or slapping someone or using an object to hit someone. • Isolating a person in a confined space. • Forcing a person to assume a painful stance or position for no purpose. • Use of exercise for the purposes of punishment. • Withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep. • Providing alcohol to someone under the legal drinking age. • Providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to someone, including providing performance-enhancing drugs. • Encouraging or knowingly permitting someone to return to play prematurely following any injury or after a concussion and without the clearance of a medical professional. • Encouraging an Athlete to perform a skill for which they are known to not be developmentally ready. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete over the legal age of drinking provides alcohol to another athlete who is not. • Referee allocator insists a referee return to work after hitting their head, despite medical advice advising rest. • Coach tells the team to run laps for 45 minutes without a break because of poor performance in a game. • Team Manager circulates a restrictive diet for all the team members so that they lose weight for an upcoming game.

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<p>Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse</p> <p>Sexual Harassment is a series of upsetting comments or actions against someone because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identify or gender expression. It can also include making a sexual advance where the person making the advance is in a position of power over the other individual.</p> <p>Sexual Abuse or exploitation is unwanted sexual activity with the use of force, threats or taking advantage of individuals not being able to give consent. It may involve contact or non-contact, and may be in-person or online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bragging about sexual ability. • Demanding hugs. • Display or distribution of sexually offensive material. • Sexist jokes. • Inquiries or comments about someone’s sex life; • Persistent, unwanted attention after a consensual relationship ends. • Persistent unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, comments or propositions. • Persistent unwanted contact. • Sexual assault. • Sexually degrading words used to describe a person. • Threats, punishment, or denial of a benefit for refusing a sexual advance. • Unwelcome inquiries into or comments about someone’s gender identity or physical appearance; • Examples of sexual abuse include inviting someone to touch or be touched sexually, making someone undress, intercourse or rape, exhibitionism, or involving someone in prostitution or pornography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete takes a photo of another team mate while they are undressing in the change room and texts it to the rest of the team. • Male referee repeatedly tells a female referee that she is doing well “for a girl”. • Assistant Coach repeatedly tells an athlete how good they look in the team uniform. • Team Manager singles out and hugs an athlete every time they meet. • Athlete asks for explicit details about a team mate’s relationship with their girlfriend.
<p>Grooming</p> <p>Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person (or their families) so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. It is often a slow gradual and escalating process that is very difficult to recognize. The process allows for inappropriate conduct to become normalized. It is often preceded by building confidence and comfort that an individual can be trusted with the care of the child. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time, from weeks to years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive discussions about the groomer’s personal life. • Spending time with someone and/or their family outside of team activities. • Excessive or inappropriate gift-giving. • Socially isolating an athlete. • Restricting an athlete’s privacy. • Providing drugs, alcohol or tobacco. • Becoming overly involved in an athlete’s personal life • Displaying material of a sexual nature in the presence of someone. • Nudity. • Sexually oriented conversation or discussions about personal sexual activities. • Putting the Person in Authority’s needs above needs of an athlete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Coach uses the same social media app, chat forum, or website as an athlete to communicate about non-volleyball topics outside of training. • Adult referee consistently asks for relationship advice from an underage referee. • Team Manager pays for an athlete and their family to go out for dinner each week. • Coach frequently pulls an athlete aside to enquire about non-volleyball related topics.

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<p>Neglect Failing to provide what someone needs for their physical, psychological or emotional development and well-being. Neglect can be a lot of things which makes it hard to spot but it is often chronic and involves repeated incidents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially isolating a person repeatedly or for an extended period of time. • Withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep. • Ignoring an injury. • Knowing about abuse of an athlete but failing to report it. • Persistently ignoring them • ignoring psychological needs or socially isolating a person repeatedly or for an extended period of time; • Arbitrarily or unreasonably denying feedback, training opportunities, support or attention for extended periods of time and/or asking others to do the same. • Never showing any emotions in interactions, also known as emotional neglect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach consistently excludes an athlete from playing time, even in practice. • Supervisor/Mentor arbitrarily withholds or refuses to give feedback on a referee's performance. • Personal trainer tells athlete to stay on their own in the gym until they have perfected a technique. • Team Manager is aware that an athlete is being abused by a member of the coaching staff but does not report it to the club or to Volleyball BC.
<p>Harassment A series of upsetting comments or behaviour against an individual which is known or ought to reasonably be known to be unwelcome. Whether behaviour is harassing depends on the circumstances, including the nature, frequency, intensity, location, context, and duration of the behavior. Behaviour may not be harassment if it is merely rude, mean, or arises from conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condescending or patronizing behaviour intended to undermine self-esteem and diminish performance. • Deliberately excluding or socially isolating a person from a group or team. • Leering or other suggestive or obscene gestures. • Persistent sexual flirtations or invitations. • Hazing which is behaviour that is humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous activity expected of a junior-ranking person by a more senior person, which is required to be accepted as part of a team or group, • Persistent unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendo, or taunts. • Physical or sexual assault. • Practical jokes that endanger a person's safety, or may negatively affect performance. • Racial harassment, which includes racial slurs, jokes, name calling, or insulting behaviour. • Unwanted physical contact including touching, pinching, or kissing. • Written or verbal abuse, threats, or outbursts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Captain insists that new players complete a task that is not associated with the volleyball team in order to be part of the group. • Referee makes deliberate decisions to penalise a player in retaliation against for previously reporting harassment to Volleyball BC. • Coach persistently calls an athlete by a nickname that is demeaning despite an athlete indicating that they are not comfortable with the situation.





What is the difference between maltreatment and appropriate behaviour?

We may have experienced some of the behaviours listed above – or we may have even spoken or behaved in one of the ways ourselves. So how do we know the difference between abuse and acceptable behaviour? Situations can be complex and difficult to assess. Here are some factors to consider when assessing a situation:

Is the behaviour sustained? An isolated incident of inappropriate behavior may occur when someone is under stress and reacts. They may apologise and never demonstrate the same behaviour again. Ongoing and repeated incidents of the same behaviour is not acceptable.

Is there uneven power? The relationship between an adult and child or between a coach and athlete is not an equal one. In both these situations, the adult or coach has more power or influence in the relationship and the child or athlete is potentially vulnerable to abuse or exploitation.

Is the behaviour contextually appropriate? Sometimes a coach or trainer may need to touch an athlete to demonstrate or correct a skill. In this context, physical touch may be appropriate. However, in other contexts – eg. in the changerooms or to compliment on appearance – physical touch may not be appropriate.

Does the behaviour have a negative impact? How is the behaviour perceived by the person receiving it? Behaviours that cause physical or psychological distress to an individual are not appropriate.

It is helpful to consider that it is the BEHAVIOUR that should be assessed and not the PERSON. This makes any conversations or discussions less confrontational.

A SPECIAL NOTE ON MALTREATMENT VERSUS DISCIPLINE

In an athlete-coach relationship, it can be particularly hard to recognise the difference between discipline and abuse. Harmful coaching can be difficult to assess, particularly if behaviour is positioned as essential for performance. So how do we tell the difference?

- Positive coaching focuses on critique of specific behaviour or skills – eg. spike, play – it should never criticise an individual personally.
- Coaching methods of skill enhancement, human development, physical conditioning or improving athletic performance that are professionally-accepted and part of the NCCP curriculum are not considered maltreatment or abuse even though they might be physically or emotionally demanding for an individual.



Setting boundaries

Setting boundaries is an important way to help differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Establishing boundaries respects personal space and ensures that relationships are safe and healthy. At the start of a volleyball season, use example scenarios like the ones below to discuss and set physical, emotional, and social boundaries that clearly articulate what is appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour. This discussion can take place within a team, between a coach, parent, and athlete, or within a work environment. Crossing the line into inappropriate behaviour or abuse can be prevented by developing and maintaining clear boundaries for relationships.

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR	INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR
Coach asks athlete to re-enter game in conjunction with return to play guidance for injury - when athlete complains of discomfort, coach sits them for the rest of the game.	Coach orders players to re-enter games when they show signs of injury. An athlete's physical health and well-being take precedence over winning games.
Coach removes athlete from the starting line-up or game with a clear explanation of why. Removal for inappropriate behavior is different from removal for poor performance, and coaches need to be able to communicate that distinction clearly to team members.	Coach removes athlete from game or starting line up without explanation of why, leaving the athlete wondering whether it was because they are not good enough or made a mistake in the previous game.
Coach requires athletes to arrive early for the next practice to help set-up equipment. Teaching an athlete to respect the coach's time and that of others is discipline	Coach instructs team to run excessive laps following poor performance when they are already fatigued, particularly if temperatures are extreme. Over-exertion may cause physical harm to the young athlete's developing body.
Referee raises their voice as they disagree with another referee or a player. A raised voice may not be ideal but may be a normal reaction to a stressful situation under some circumstances.	Referee repeatedly shouts, berates, and verbally attacks other referees or players.
Referee mentor provides specific feedback on a referee's knowledge of the rules or calls during a game.	Referee mentor criticises the referee as a person, passing judgement on the individual's personality or intelligence.
Coach attends a sports award ceremony with their athletes.	Coach attends a social party with their athletes.
Trainer re-positions an athlete's body to improve their performance of a skill.	Trainer hugs an athlete despite the athlete indicating that they are uncomfortable.

Useful Resources

Volleyball BC - [Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)

Volleyball BC - [Abuse Policy](#)

Abuse Free Sport - <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/>

UK Child Protection in

Sport Unit - <https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

US Center for Safe Sport -

<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>

Kids in the Know - A national, interactive safety education program that uses age-appropriate lessons on boundaries and healthy versus unhealthy behaviours in relationships.

Grades 7-8:

https://www.kidsintheknow.ca/app/en/healthy_relationships_grades7_8

High School Age:

https://www.kidsintheknow.ca/app/en/healthy_relationships_high_school



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