



HOCKEY CANADA

Fair Play  
Means

# Safety for All

A Guide To  
Understanding  
Abuse and  
Harassment For  
Parents and  
Guardians



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HOCKEY CANADA

# FAIR PLAY MEANS SAFETY FOR ALL

*A Parents' & Guardians' Guide*

*To Understanding Abuse & Harassment*

## **What does safety for my child mean?**

We all want our children to be safe - keeping them safe means putting the **child's best interests first**. In sports this means ensuring that the young player is treated with respect and integrity - emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically, culturally, and spiritually.

## **What is Hockey Canada's mission?**

The mission of Hockey Canada is to lead, develop, and promote positive hockey experiences. Hockey Canada's primary interest is the well being of its participants. This includes, among other things, a shared responsibility with parents to nurture the physical and emotional well-being of its participants.

# RECOGNIZING ABUSE & HARASSMENT

## When is my child unsafe?

Young people are unsafe when someone uses his or her power or position to harm them either emotionally, physically and/or sexually - this is ABUSE!! Your child's safety is also at risk when she or he is threatened, intimidated, taunted or subjected to racial slurs by a peer - this is HARASSMENT! Harassment can also occur when an adult discriminates against a youth.

## What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child's self esteem; it is psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, isolating, hazing or ignoring a child's needs!

**It is not:**

- benching a player for disciplinary reasons
- cutting a player from a team after tryouts
- refusing to transfer a player
- limiting ice time
- yelling instructions from the bench

## What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse is when a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or youth. This may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, striking, shoving, grabbing, hazing or excessive exercise as a form of punishment.

## What is neglect?

Neglect is the chronic inattention to the basic necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, nutritious diet, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise and fresh air. This may occur in hockey when injuries are not adequately treated, players are made to play with injuries, equipment is inadequate or unsafe, or road trips are not properly supervised.



## What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is when a young person is used by an older child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. There are two categories:

<b>Contact</b>	<b>Non Contact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• touched and fondled in sexual areas</li> <li>• forced to touch another person's sexual areas</li> <li>• kissed or held in a sexual manner</li> <li>• forced to perform oral sex</li> <li>• vaginal or anal intercourse</li> <li>• vaginal or anal penetration with object or finger</li> <li>• sexually oriented hazing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obscene calls/obscene remarks on computer or in notes</li> <li>• voyeurism</li> <li>• shown pornography</li> <li>• forced to watch sexual acts</li> <li>• sexually intrusive questions or comments</li> <li>• indecent exposure</li> <li>• forced to pose for sexual photographs or videos</li> <li>• forced to self-masturbate</li> <li>• forced to watch others masturbate</li> </ul>

## HARASSMENT

### What is harassment?

Harassment is a behaviour which is insulting, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive. Harassment can be a pattern of behaviour, a "chilly" or "hostile" environment or a

single event. Dealing with harassment can sometimes be difficult as what is viewed as harassment by one person may be viewed as a joke by another person. But it is the **impact** of the behaviour on the victim that is the most critical, not the intention of the person who is doing the harassing.

Like abuse, harassment is the misuse of power. Harassment can be non-criminal or criminal and falls into three categories: personal, sexual, or abuse of power and authority.

**Personal harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that degrades, demeans, humiliates or embarrasses a person, and that a reasonable person should have known would be unwelcome.** Examples are written or verbal abuse or threats, practical jokes which cause embarrassment or endanger a person's safety, discriminating against a person, or use of degrading words to describe someone.

**Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that negatively affects the person or the environment.** Examples are questions about one's sex life, sexual staring, sexual comments, unwanted touching, persistence in asking someone for a date even after they have said "No", and sexual assault.

**Abuse of power or authority** is when someone uses the power of their position or authority to negatively control, influence, discriminate or embarrass another person. Examples are displays of favouritism or dis-favouritism, subtle put-downs or ostracism.

## **What is hazing?**

Hazing is a humiliating and degrading initiation rite in which a player is forced to participate in order to be accepted.

## **How do I know when my children are being abused or harassed?**

- By listening to them
- By believing them
- By observing them
- By watching their interactions with others
- By being aware of sudden changes in their behaviour and/or anger in them
- By questioning unexplained bruises, marks on their faces, back, thighs, upper arms, heads, buttocks, genital areas

## **RECOGNIZING ABUSIVE & VULNERABLE SITUATIONS**

### **Who would hurt my child?**

Unfortunately, it is usually someone both you and your child know and trust.

- Harassers are usually peers who are insecure and want to feel power.
- Emotional and physical abusers have limited interpersonal skills and use their anger against children and youth.
- Sexual offenders “groom” children and youth by establishing trust relationships and then using them for sexual gratification.



## Sexual offenders are/can be:

- Most often male but may be female
- Heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual
- An older child, adolescent or adult
- Found in all levels of society and in all cultures
- Either infrequent offenders or pedophiles who are fixated on children as sexual objects
- Prone to rationalize and minimize their abusive behaviour

## Where is my child most at risk for all types of abuse?

Basically your child is most vulnerable when he/she is alone with another person - this could be in the arena, dressing room, car, bus, home, office, outside - anywhere!! In some situations, such as hazing, they are vulnerable in a group setting where there is inadequate supervision.



## **RECOGNIZING COPING MECHANISMS**

### **How do children and youth cope with the trauma of abuse and harassment?**

- Some pretend it never happened.
- Others convince themselves that it wasn't so terrible.
- Many find excuses as to why it happened.
- Some blame themselves.
- Some develop physiological defenses - headaches, body pains and illnesses.
- Others escape through drugs, alcohol, food or sex.
- A few try to hide from their pain by being perfect.

### **Why do kids not tell?**

They may:

- Be frightened.
- Believe they are responsible.
- Not want to get the offender into trouble.
- Be embarrassed and ashamed.
- Think no-one will believe them.
- Worry that they will not be allowed to play hockey.

## **IDENTIFYING PARENTS' & GUARDIANS' ROLE**

### **What do I do if a child or youth tells me he/she is being harassed?**

- Listen
- Believe
- Talk with your coach or officials
- Help the young person to learn effective ways of responding
- If it is mild harassment, try to resolve the situation informally
- If it is moderate or serious harassment, refer the complaint as specified in your organization's policy
- Give the child or youth continuous support

### **How do I protect my child or youth against hazing?**

- Talk with him/her about hazing; discuss peer pressure!
- Explain that he/she does not have to submit to hazing!
- Know Regulation R4 of the Hockey Canada Constitution, By-Laws & Regulations:  
*“Any player, team official, executive member of a team, club association or any other Hockey Canada member having participated or condoned any incident of hazing shall be subject to a suspension for a period of not less than one year. Notwithstanding the prescribed minimum suspension of one (1) year, in the event that the Branch would consider that such suspension would create undue hardship, given the circumstances, it may impose a lesser penalty, if it has received approval from the Hockey Canada officers.*
- Report it!

## **What do I do if a child or youth tells me about an abusive situation?**

### **DO:**

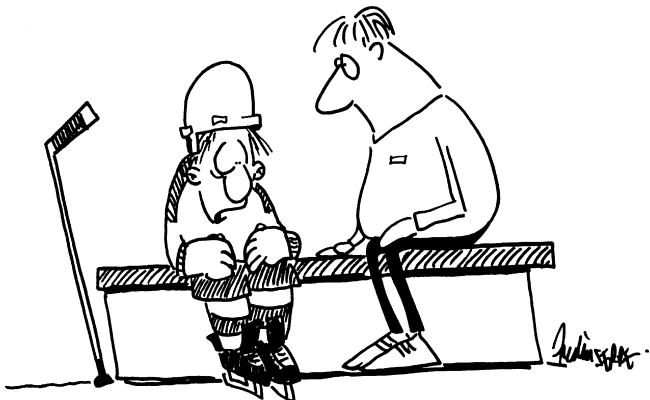
- Listen - take the time to hear what he/she is saying.
- Believe - “I believe you”.
- Reassure - “It’s not your fault!”
- Report - contact the appropriate authorities and make a report.
- Support - provide ongoing support to help the child or youth deal with the trauma of abuse.
- Take action - do not let the child or youth stay in a vulnerable situation.

### **DON'T:**

- React with shock, horror or disbelief - even though you may feel like it.
- Promise to keep a secret - you are legally bound to report.
- Promise “everything will be fine” - there are many problems to resolve, it will take time.
- Assume the child or youth hates the abuser - there may be conflicting feelings.
- Put the responsibility of reporting on someone else - they may not do it.
- Press the child or youth for details - the matter may go to court, so it is important that evidence is not contaminated.

## What do I do if I suspect my child is being abused?

- Document your observations.
- Record behaviors, dates, times and people involved.
- Identify vulnerable situations and be there to protect your child.
- Seek advice or information about abuse from a knowledgeable person.
- Tell your child your concerns.
- Listen to your child's fears about the situation.
- Do not promise that "everything will be fine".
- Report if your suspicions are strong.
- Keep it confidential; do not get caught in the "rumour mill".
- Support your child.



## **RECOGNIZING LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **What is my legal responsibility in reporting abuse?**

Every province and territory in Canada, except the Yukon, has **mandatory** reporting laws regarding the abuse and neglect of children and youth; the Yukon requests that concerns be reported. Consequently, it is the policy of Hockey Canada that any Hockey Canada personnel (part-time and full-time staff, volunteer, participant, team official, on ice official) or Hockey Canada partner (parent, guardian) who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a participant is, or may be suffering, or may have suffered from emotional, physical abuse and neglect and/or sexual abuse shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the local child protection agency and/or the local police detachment. Across Canada, a person is considered a child up to the age of 16 to 19 years depending on provincial and territorial legislation.

## **When I report, what questions will be asked?**

- The child's name, address, age, sex and birthdate
- Parents'/guardians' names and addresses
- The name and address of alleged offender
- Details of the incident(s) that prompted your report
- Your name and address

## **What happens when a report is made?**

- A social worker or police officer will decide if an investigation is needed.
- If the child is "at risk" and needs protection an investigation is started as soon as possible.
- An experienced interviewer will conduct the interview.
- The primary concern is safety of the child.
- The social worker and/or police officer will decide what further action is required.



## **Why don't people report?**

### **They don't report because they:**

- Are unaware of the reporting laws.
- Believe that they can take care of the problem themselves - it's their own business!
- Are fearful of retaliation from the abuser - or are friends with the abuser.
- Find it hard to believe.
- Assume someone else will make a report.
- Don't want "to tell" on someone.
- Want to protect their child from questions and embarrassment.
- Are not sure where or how to make a report.
- Just want it "all to go away".
- Forget that the child's best interests is the priority.

## **Do children ever make false allegations?**

Yes, sometimes it happens. Some of the research shows that about 8% of disclosures are false. Most of the false allegations by children are encouraged by adults - e.g. custody cases, others have been by adolescents who wanted "to get even". It is important to reinforce the truth - false allegations are devastating to the person accused!!!



# PROACTIVE ROLES

## How do I keep my children safe?

There are five essentials to keeping your child safe.

### 1. Communication

- Listen, talk, believe and reassure your children.
- Provide opportunities for conversations with your children.
- Be open to any questions; nothing is off limits.
- Be open to discussing difficult subjects such as sexuality.
- Develop frank and open communication with the coaches.
- If you have concerns, communicate them to the appropriate persons.
- If you see or hear harassing or abusive behaviour, **Speak Out!**

### 2. Knowledge

- Make your children aware of vulnerable situations in a matter-of-fact way.
- Review your club's abuse and harassment policy and procedures.
- Be aware of your club's screening and selection process for staff and volunteers.
- Get to know the adults who are interacting with your children.
- Discuss with the coaches their expectations and the setting of boundaries: physical, sexual and social.

### 3. Skills

- Teach your children specific ways to handle difficult situations.
- Help your children define their personal boundaries.
- Teach your children how to be assertive when their boundaries are crossed.

### 4. Build a safety plan

- Develop check-ins, contingency plans, family codes.
- Attend practices and games.
- Be wary of regular private closed practices.
- Be concerned of time spent alone with adults beyond training and game times.

### 5. Advocate

- You are your children's strongest supporter.
- Evaluate situations according to the **“best interest of your child”**.

## **What is Hockey Canada's role in promoting safety for my children?**

Protecting participants from all forms of harassment, abuse and neglect, whether emotional, physical or sexual, is an important element of safety. Hockey Canada considers any form of harassment, abuse or neglect to be unacceptable and will do all it can to prevent this intolerable social problem. To this end, Hockey Canada will promote awareness of all forms of harassment, abuse and neglect by providing educational materials and programs for participants, parents, volunteers and staff members.

## **What is Hockey Canada's policy on preventing harassment and abuse?**

It is the policy of Hockey Canada that there shall be no harassment, abuse and neglect, whether physical, emotional or sexual of any participant in any of its programs. Hockey Canada expects every parent, volunteer and staff member to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of its participants and protect them from any form of maltreatment.

## **Prevention of Abuse and Harassment Resources:**

At the beginning of the 1997-98 season, Hockey Canada produced the following resources for distribution through its member Branches to educate the membership and provide direction regarding the prevention of all forms of abuse and harassment. The campaign is entitled “Speak Out!: Abuse and Harassment Can Be Stopped.”

- Brochure for players ages 10–13 (puck-shaped).
- “Speak Out!” brochure for players ages 14–20.
- “Speak Out!” poster.
- “Speak Out!” video.
- “Speak Out! ... Act Now!” A Guide to Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Harassment for Clubs and Associations.
- “Fair Play Means Safety for All: A Guide to Understanding Abuse and Harassment For Parents and Guardians”
- Recognition and Prevention of Abuse Policy
- Forms for coach/volunteer application and police record checks. Contact your Branch or local association for these and other resources.



*Hockey Canada would like to thank the following individuals for their generous assistance in producing this document:*

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