



COACHING YOUTH IN SPORT POLICY

Doc. No.	BCSA-POL-003
Rev.	0
Originator:	D. Hawkins
Checker	I. Toellner
Approver:	C. Craig
Status:	Published
Effective:	December 2023

Big Country Soccer Association recognizes that coaches and adult volunteers are in a position of trust in supporting a safe and healthy environment where youth athletes can develop their skills and personalities as it relates to the sport of soccer. If professional boundaries that are in place to ensure this safe and healthy environment are broken, the relationship between the coach and athlete will dissolve.

It is recognized that youth athletes are often taught to listen to and respect those adults in a position of authority such as the coach. This relationship ensures youth athletes benefit from the coach's knowledge and training to further develop their skills and experience in the sport.

However, this relationship is fragile when the adult places their needs above the needs of the youth athlete and gains personally or professionally at the expense of the youth athlete. When this happens the coach-youth athlete relationship boundaries are at risk and violations can occur.

The responsibility is always with the adult to establish and maintain an appropriate boundary with children.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior

Big Country Soccer Association coaches and volunteers are expected to model behavior that upholds public confidence and enhances safe and healthy relationships with children and families.

Examples of Appropriate Behavior:

- Respectful language, tone, and attitude towards others.
- Respect for personal physical and emotional boundaries.
- Responding to children to meet with the child's needs and not the adult's.
- Engaging with children in a manner that would be seen by a reasonable observer as maintaining reasonable boundaries.
- Keeping practices open to observation by parents.
- Communication with children (including electronic) is transparent and accountable.

Examples of Inappropriate Behavior:

- Disrespectful language.
- Humiliating or intimidating children.
- Inappropriate touching of children (e.g., massaging, stroking, caressing, roughhousing, tickling).
- Confiding or sharing overly personal information with a child.
- Asking children to keep secrets.



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- Electronic communication with children that is personal and not directly tied to coaching duties.
- Communication that is sexual or flirtation in nature.
- Pictures taken with personal devices or in change rooms.

Standard of Measure for Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

All interactions and activities with youth athletes should be, including electronic communication:

- Transparent,
- Accountable,
- Tied to coaching/ volunteer duties, and
- In response to meeting the child's needs.

Age of Protection

The Age of Protection in Canada is the age at which a young person can legally consent to sexual activity. The Age of Protection in Canada is generally 16 years old, but the Criminal Code increases that age to 18 in the context of certain relationships. If the child is:

- under the age of 12 years old – No person can engage in sexual activity with the child under any circumstances.
- 12 or 13 years old – The age difference must be LESS THAN 2 years AND the relative positions of the parties must be so that a child is able to give consent.
- 14 or 15 years old – The age difference must be LESS THAN 5 years AND the relative positions of the parties must be so that a child is able to give consent.
- 16 or 17 years old – The relative positions of the parties must be such that a child is able to give consent.

Provided however, for all children ages 12-17, if the other person is in a position of trust or authority over the child (e.g., a coach, technical staff etc.), the child is dependent on the other person or the relationship is exploitative of the child, the child is NOT able to give consent, making sexual activity in the context of such relationships illegal. In these situations, only a person aged 18 or older is capable of consent. The increased age takes into account the inherent vulnerability of the child is meant to protect the child in situations that involve a power or other imbalance.



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Reporting Procedure – Inappropriate Behavior

Any youth athlete who feels that inappropriate activities should take one or more of the following steps:

- Talk to their parents.
- Talk to a coach, and/ or Big Country Soccer Association Board member.
- Write a letter or email to a coach and/ or Big Country Soccer Association Board member.
- Make a report to Big Country Soccer Association.

Every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the Big Country Soccer Association Board immediately to stop the inappropriate behavior as soon as possible and to make sure that memories are fresh and the behavior can be accurately recalled.

Reporting Procedure – Sexual Abuse

All coaches and volunteers must report suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behavior or incidents that they become aware of, whether the behavior or incidents were personally witnessed or not.

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviors (for example, child sexual abuse) that a coach/ volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to police and/ or child welfare.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in our care, all allegations, or suspicions of potentially illegal behavior that a coach/ volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to police and/ or child welfare. Police and/ or child welfare will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. Big Country Soccer Association will support the proper investigation into such incidents and will be available to the authorities, when requested.

References

Canada Soccer Guide to Safety

Respect in Sports

Alberta Soccer Association- Steps for Reporting Inappropriate Conduct

Big Country Soccer Association Harassment Policy (Ref: BCSA-POL-004)

Big Country Soccer Association Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy (Ref: BCSA-POL-011)

Big Country Soccer Association Rule of Two Policy (Ref: BCSA-POL-014)

Big Country Soccer Association Volunteer Screening Policy (BCSA-POL-015)

Big Country Soccer Association Discipline Committee Requirements (Ref: BCSA-GOV-006)

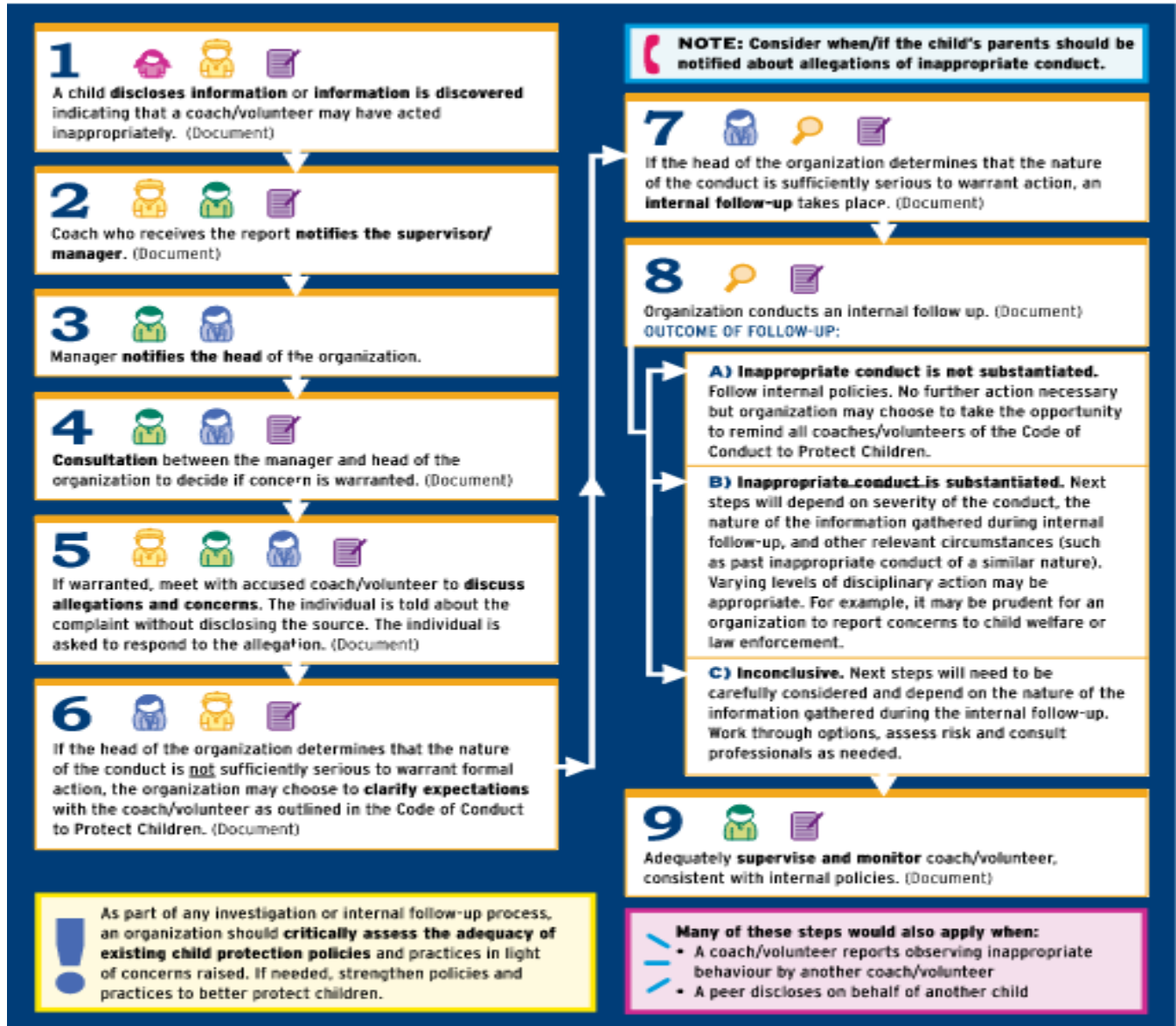


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INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT STEPS FOR REPORTING:

This card is a component of the Commit to Kids® program. It is intended as a quick reference for use in a sporting environment and is not meant to be exhaustive or to replace legal advice. Users are strongly encouraged to consult with any or all of child welfare, law enforcement and legal counsel as appropriate to a given situation.



The safety of the child and other children in the organization must be ensured at all times in the process.



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