

PRINCE ALBERT YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN IN SPORT



PAYSA
Prince Albert Youth Soccer Association



Sport expands unimaginable encounters and open doors for children. These encounters are essential to upgrading a child's growth. Positive encounters go hand in hand with a safe rapport among athletes and coaches in addition to safe environments where adults are responsible for their activities and practices. Therefore, the reason for these guidelines is to ensure that a safe and positive environment is established and expected when adults are interacting with children in sport as well as provide safety for individuals who present any concerns of misconduct towards children.

For the purpose of this document, an individual working, volunteering or interacting with the children in sport is hereinafter referred to as "a coach or adult". Anybody under 18 years of age is hereinafter referred to as "children". This document does not address each circumstance nor is it intended to be a thorough rundown of tolerable or intolerable conduct. It is intended to give a framework. Individuals are required to practice good judgment and common sense ability while interacting with children.

The Coach and Athlete Relationship

Coaches are in positions where trust is an important factor in what they do. Professional boundaries is the groundwork in developing a trusting bound between coaches and athletes. Boundaries that break will deteriorate a relationship. In addition, a coach and athlete relationship is portrayed as a power imbalance for the coach. Athletes are to listen and rely on their coaches and coach's teachings, which will help further develop the athlete's skills in the sport. Trust and power can dissolve if a coach puts their needs ahead of the athlete and improves themselves personally or professionally. The adult's responsibility is to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with children.



Age of Protection in Canada

The age of protection (also called the age of consent) 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 12 years old	No person can engage in sexual activity with the child under any circumstance.
12 or 13 years old	The age difference <u>must</u> be LESS THAN 2 years AND the relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*
14 or 15 years old	The age difference <u>must</u> be LESS THAN 5 years AND the relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*
16 or 17 years old	The relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*

* For all children aged 12-17: If the other person is in a position of trust or authority over the child (e.g., a coach, teacher, 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 and is meant to protect the child in situations that involve a power or other imbalance.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviour

Individuals working or volunteering in sport are expected to model behaviour that upholds public confidence and enhances healthy relationships with children and families.

Examples of Appropriate Behaviour:

- Respectful language, tone and attitude towards others
- Respectful of personal physical and emotional boundaries
- Responding to children to meet 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 Behaviour:

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

Standard of Measure for Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

All interactions and activities with children should be (including electronic communication):

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

Parents and Coaches Play a Role

It can be difficult to react to a situation where you notice a coach and athlete relationship that appears inappropriate. Reporting inappropriate behaviour creates accountability and responsibility so appropriate action can be restored. Parents or coaches who have concerns should speak with that coach's supervisor. Parents and coaches should also have regular age-appropriate conversations with children about personal safety and boundary-breaking behaviour. Some topics to talk with children about are the qualities of healthy relationships, importance of personal boundaries, and how to get help/where to bring concerns.

For these topics and more, please visit: kidsintheknow.ca/safetysheets.

Any concerns about any sexual images that have been shared, please visit: Cybertip.ca.

As well, for more information around reporting inappropriate conduct and child sexual abuse you can visit: commit2kids.ca/safesport.