



# **GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE/INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT BETWEEN ADULTS/ADOLESCENTS AND CHILDREN**



Queen City United Soccer Club (QC) acknowledges sport offers incredible experiences and opportunities for children. These experiences are integral to enhancing child development. Positive experiences are tied to healthy relationships between athletes and coaches, as well as to safe environments where adults are accountable for their actions and behaviours. As such, QC has adopted the Commit to Kids Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Children in Sport. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a common understanding of expectations for adults interacting with children in sport, and a sense of safety for those who need to bring forward any concerns of misconduct towards children.

*For the purpose of this document, “a coach or adult” refers to any person working, volunteering or otherwise interacting with children in sport. “Children” refers to anyone under 18 years old.*

*This document does not address every situation, nor is it meant to be an exhaustive list of acceptable or unacceptable conduct. It is meant to provide a framework within sport in which individuals are expected to exercise common sense and good judgment when interacting with children.*

### **The Coach and Athlete Relationship**

Generally, coaches are in a position of trust, and it is through professional boundaries that this foundation of trust between coaches and athletes is built. If boundaries are broken, that pillar of the relationship crumbles.

The coach and athlete relationship is also characterized by a power imbalance in favour of the coach. Athletes are taught to respect and listen to their coaches, and they are dependent upon the coach’s knowledge and training to further develop their skills.

Both trust and power can be used to breach the coach-athlete relationship, and often this happens through boundary violations, which occur when the adult places their needs above the needs of the child and gains personally or professionally at the child’s expense.

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

### **Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior**

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 adults.
- 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 respond to a situation where you notice a coach and athlete relationship that appears inappropriate. Reporting inappropriate behaviour creates accountability so proper action can be taken and expectations can be re-established.

#### **Steps for Reporting Inappropriate Conduct**

1. A child discloses information or information is discovered indicating that a coach/volunteer may have acted inappropriately.
2. Coach who received the report notifies the Stream Lead.
3. Stream Lead notifies the Director of Club Operations.
4. Director of Club Operations notifies the Board of Directors.



5. The Director of Club Operations will notify the child's parents/guardians/caregivers, of the child's report of inappropriate conduct.
6. Consultation between the Stream Lead, Director of Club Operations and Board of Directors to decide if concern is warranted.
7. If warranted, meet with the accused coach/volunteer to discuss allegations and concerns. The individual is told about the complaint without disclosing the source. The individual is asked to respond to the allegation.
8. If the Director of Club Operations and Board of Directors determine that the nature of the conduct is not sufficiently serious to warrant formal action, the organization may choose to clarify expectations with the coach/volunteer as outlined in the Code of Conduct to Protect Children.
9. If the Director of Club Operations and Board of Directors determine that the nature of the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant action, internal follow-up takes place.
10. Organization conducts an internal follow-up. OUTCOME OF FOLLOW-UP:
  - a. **Inappropriate conduct is not substantiated.** Follow internal policies. No further action is necessary, but the organization may choose to take the opportunity to remind all coaches/volunteers of the Code of Conduct to Protect Children.
  - b. **Inappropriate conduct is substantiated.** Next steps will depend on severity of the conduct, the nature of the information gathered during internal follow-up, and other relevant circumstances (such as past inappropriate conduct of a similar nature). Varying levels of disciplinary action may be appropriate. For example, it may be prudent for an organization to report concerns to child welfare or law enforcement.
  - c. **Inconclusive.** Next steps will need to be carefully considered and depend on the nature of the information gathered during the internal follow-up. Work through options, assess risk and consult professionals as needed.
11. Adequately supervise and monitor coach/volunteer, consistent with internal policies.

### **Steps for Reporting Child Sexual Abuse**

1. Child discloses abuse or abuse is discovered with the adult involved in the abuse being a coach/volunteer.
2. Coach/volunteer who receives disclosure:
  - Notifies law enforcement and/or child welfare about the incident.
  - Consults with child welfare about notifying parents; and
  - Notifies the Stream Lead, who in turn notifies the Director of Club Operations, who in turn notifies the Board of Directors.



3. Director of Club Operations suspends coach/volunteer suspected of abuse with or without pay until case is resolved (must seek legal guidance prior to suspension and/or dismissal). If the individual is a volunteer or unpaid staff, consider if the individual should be dismissed from their position immediately.
4. A child welfare agency and/or police carry out investigation. Organization should conduct an internal follow-up in consultation with police/child welfare and adjust internal policies if needed. POTENTIAL OUTCOME OF INVESTIGATION:
  - a. **Substantiated/Guilty.** Coach/volunteer is dismissed from his/her position (must seek legal guidance prior to suspension and/or dismissal).
  - b. **Inconclusive/Not Guilty.** Seek legal counsel. Consider if coach/volunteer should be dismissed, with or without severance. Criminal processes can be complex and lengthy. A finding of not guilty may not necessarily mean that the abuse did not occur. Consult with a lawyer.
5. Document the outcome of the investigation on the incident report form and document the results of the internal follow up.