



## ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY

### Definitions

1. Terms in this Policy are defined as follows:

- a) **Athlete** – An individual who is an athlete participant with the Organization-sanctioned events and activities as an athlete who is subject to the policies of Ringette Alberta including the *Code of Conduct and Ethics and the UCCMS*.
- b) **Minor** – Any Participant who is under the age of 18 years old. Adults are responsible for knowing the age of a Minor.
- c) **Organizational Participants** – Refers to all categories of Member defined in the By-laws and Policies of Ringette Alberta and all individuals who are subject to the Governing Documents and Policies of Ringette Alberta. This includes all people employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities sanctioned by Ringette Alberta and its Members including, but not limited to, employees, contractors, athletes, coaches, facilitators, evaluators, instructors, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, committee members, parents or guardians, spectators, committee members, and Directors and Officers.
- d) **Person in Authority** – Any Organizational Participant who holds a position of authority within Ringette Alberta and its Member Associations including, but not limited to, coaches, instructors, officials, managers, support personnel, chaperones, committee members, and Directors and Officers.
- e) **Screened** – Any individual who has passed screening in accordance with Ringette Alberta's Screening Policy.
- f) **Social Media** – Communication media that permits users to create or generate content, share that content, interact with other users. Examples of social media include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Tumblr, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, and other similar websites and applications.
- g) **Vulnerable Organizational Participants** – as defined in the UCCMS at minimum: "person at increased risk of maltreatment and/or coercion, often due to age (e.g. Minors), gender, race, poverty, Indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity of expression, disability, psychosocial or cognitive ability and their intersections. Vulnerable Organizational Participants include persons who are not able to provide informed consent"

## **Purpose**

2. This *Athlete Protection Policy* describes how Persons in Authority shall follow appropriate contact and communication guidelines to ensure a safe sport environment for all Athletes. Other aspects of other appropriate conduct expected of all Organizational Participants is contained in the Ringette Alberta Code of Conduct and other Policies.
3. Parents/Guardians have a direct responsibility to ensure that Persons in Authority are maintaining appropriate boundaries in how they communicate and contact with their Athlete.

## **Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes – the ‘Rule of Two’**

4. Ringette Canada and Ringette Alberta require that the ‘Rule of Two’ be followed for all Persons in Authority who interact with Athletes, to the maximum extent feasible. The ‘Rule of Two’ is a directive that says that an Athlete must never be alone one-on-one with an unrelated Person in Authority.
5. Ringette Canada and Ringette Alberta recognize that fully implementing the ‘Rule of Two’ may not always be possible in some instances. Consequently, at a minimum, interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes must respect the following:
  - a) To the maximum extent possible, the training environment should be visible and accessible so that all interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes are observable.
  - b) Private and one-on-one situations, including electronic communications, that are not observable by another adult or Athlete should be avoided to the maximum extent possible.
  - c) A Vulnerable Participant may not be alone under the supervision of a Person in Authority unless prior written permission is obtained from the Vulnerable Participant’s parent or guardian.
  - d) Persons in Authority may not invite or host Vulnerable Organizational Participants in their home without the written permission from parents or guardians or without parents or guardians having prior knowledge of the visit.

## **Competitions and Training Sessions and other Gatherings (e.g. Meetings and Social events, etc)**

6. For competitions and training sessions and other gatherings:
  - a) A Person in Authority should never be alone with a Vulnerable Participant prior to or following a competition or training session unless the Person in Authority is the Vulnerable Participant's parent or guardian.
  - b) If the Vulnerable Participant is the first Athlete to arrive, the Athlete's parent/guardian should remain until another Athlete or Person in Authority arrives.
  - c) If a Vulnerable Participant would potentially be alone with a Person in Authority following a competition or training session, the Person in Authority should ask another Person in Authority (or a parent or guardian of another Athlete) to stay until all of the Athletes have been picked up. If an adult is unavailable, another Athlete, who is preferably not a Vulnerable Participant, should be present in order to avoid the Person in Authority being alone with a Vulnerable Participant.
  - d) Persons in Authority giving instructions, demonstrating skills, or facilitating drills or lessons to an individual Athlete should always do so within earshot and eyesight of another Person in Authority.
  - e) Persons in Authority and Athletes should take steps to achieve transparency and accountability in their interactions. For example, a Person in Authority and an Athlete who know they will be away from other Organizational Participants for a lengthy period of time must inform another Person in Authority where they are going and when they are expected to return. These Persons in Authority should always be reachable by phone or text message.

## **Communications**

7. For communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes:
  - a) All communication between a Person in Authority and Athletes must be between the hours of 6:00am and midnight unless extenuating circumstances justify otherwise.
  - b) Communication concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is not permitted.
  - c) Ringette Canada Social and Electronic Communications Media Policy can be referenced as a further resource on acceptable protocols for communication.

- d) No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation may be communicated in any medium.
- e) Persons in Authority are not permitted to ask Athletes to keep a personal secret for them.
- f) The context in which the communication occurs is relevant and may depend on a variety of things including, but not exclusive to, whether the communications is between two adults versus adult – teen or adult – child 12 and under.

#### Electronic Communications

- g) For electronic communications between Persons in Authority and Vulnerable Participants (e.g. minors), the Persons in Authority may only send texts, emails, direct messages on social media or emails to the parent/guardian, not to individual Athletes. The only exception is if the coach has permission from the parent/guardian to ask the athlete to text them directly if they won't be in attendance. Such communication that is only between a coach and an athlete is only for communicating information related to team issues and activities (e.g., non-personal information). Any such communication shall be professional in tone.
- h) Electronic communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes that is personal in nature should be avoided.
- i) For all Social Media Platforms when the Athlete is a Vulnerable Participant (including those under 18): the Person in Authority should not follow an Athlete's account/page and should not add Athletes who are Vulnerable Participants to their own personal accounts. The exception is if the Person in Authority or the Athlete is running the Team social media account/page for postings authorized by the Team.
- j) For all Social Media Platforms when the Athlete is not a Vulnerable Participant (including those over 18): the Person in Authority should consider the professional value and purpose for accepting or initiating requests to follow accounts/pages of the Athlete or themselves. When the Person in Authority does give the athlete access to their personal account/page, the Person in Authority must carefully monitor their own posting content. Social Media platforms on which a post is only available for a very brief time, the Person in Authority should not follow an Athletes personal account/page nor should they accept an Athlete following their own.
- k) Parents/guardians may request that their child not be contacted by a Person in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or may request that certain information about their child not be distributed in any form of electronic communication.

- l) Removing inappropriate content from Social Media after it has been posted (either publicly or privately) does not excuse the Organizational Participant from being subject to the Ringette Alberta Discipline and Complaints Policy.

### **Travel and Overnight Accommodation**

8. For travel involving Persons in Authority and Athletes:
  - a) Teams or groups of Athletes shall always have at least two Persons in Authority with them.
  - b) For mixed gender teams or groups of Athletes, there should be one Person in Authority from each gender.
  - c) If two Persons in Authority cannot be present, reasonable efforts should be made to supplement supervision with screened parents or other screened volunteers.
  - d) To the maximum extent possible, no Person in Authority may drive a vehicle alone with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent or guardian.
  - e) Parents/Guardians may only transport a Vulnerable Participant (including minors) from another family if they have the permission of the other Parent/Guardian AND they are not travelling alone with the Vulnerable Participant.
  - f) A Person in Authority may not share a hotel room or be alone with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent/guardian or spouse.
  - g) Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two Persons in Authority.
  - h) For overnight travel when Athletes must share a hotel room, roommates must be roomed responsibly considering, at a minimum, age, gender identity, and maturity.

### **Locker Rooms / Changing Areas**

9. For locker rooms, changing areas and other closed meeting spaces:
  - a) Interactions between Persons in Authority and an individual Athlete should not occur in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as a locker room, washroom or changing area. A second screened adult should be present for any necessary interaction between a Person in Authority and an Athlete in any such area.
  - b) If Persons in Authority are not present in the locker room or changing area, or if they are not permitted to be present, they should still be available outside the locker room or changing area and be able to enter the room or area if required,

for reasons including but not limited to team communications and/or emergencies.

### **Photography / Video (refer to RAB Code of Conduct for additional information)**

10. For all photography and video of an Athlete:

- a) Photographs and video should only be taken in public view. Content must observe generally accepted standards of decency, and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the Athlete.
- b) The use of recording devices in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a change room, is strictly prohibited.
- c) Examples of photos that shall be edited or deleted include:
  - i. Images with misplaced apparel or where undergarments are showing
  - ii. Suggestive or provocative poses
  - iii. Embarrassing images
  - iv. Images that the Athlete or their family requests be deleted for any reason
- d) If any content featuring an Athlete will be used on any form of public media, a Photo and Video Consent Form must be completed before the content is recorded.

### **Physical Contact**

11. Some physical contact between Persons in Authority and Athletes may be necessary for various reasons including, but not limited to, teaching a skill or tending to an injury. For physical contact, Ringette Canada and Ringette Alberta recommend:

- a) A Person in Authority must always request permission to make physical contact from the Athlete in advance and clearly explain where and why the physical contact will occur. The Person in Authority must make clear that they are requesting to touch the Athlete and not requiring physical contact.
- b) Infrequent, incidental physical contact during a training session is not considered a violation of the Policy.
- c) Non-essential physical contact may not be initiated by the Person of Authority. It is recognized that some Athletes may initiate non-essential physical contact such as hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as celebrating). This physical contact should always occur in an open and observable environment.

## **Enforcement**

12. Any alleged violations of this *Athlete Protection Policy* shall be addressed pursuant to the Ringette Alberta Code of Conduct and Ethical Behavior Policy as well as the Ringette Alberta *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

This Policy is subject to review at least once every year

**Date of last review: October 2024**

**Approved by Ringette Alberta Board of Directors: October 1, 2024**