

**SOFTBALL SASKATCHEWAN**  
**ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY**

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| Effective date           | April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2024                               |
| Archived date            | N/A  |
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| Replaces and/or amends   | N/A  |
| Approved by and date     | Softball Saskatchewan Board of Directors, January 12, 2026 |
| Safe Sport approval date |  |

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this Athlete Protection Policy is to make sure all Athletes in Softball Saskatchewan can take part in a safe, respectful, and supportive sport environment. It explains the responsibilities of all Persons in Authority when interacting with Athletes, whether in person, during travel, or online.

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

2. Softball Saskatchewan and its Members **strongly recommend** the ‘Rule of Two’ for all Persons in Authority who interact with Athletes, whether in person or remotely (i.e., in virtual settings). The Coaching Association of Canada describes the intention of the ‘Rule of Two’ as follows:

A coach must never be alone or out of sight with a minor athlete. Two NCCP trained or certified coaches should always be present with an athlete, especially a minor athlete, when in a potentially vulnerable situation such as in a locker room or meeting room. All one-on-one interactions between a coach and an athlete must take place within earshot and in view of a second coach except for medical emergencies. One of the coaches must also be of the same gender as the athlete. Should there be a circumstance where a second screened and NCCP trained or certified coach is not available, a screened volunteer, parent, or adult can be recruited.

3. Softball Saskatchewan recognizes that fully implementing the ‘Rule of Two’, as described above (and modified accordingly for Persons in Authority), in all circumstances, may not always be possible. Consequently, at a minimum, interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes must respect the following:
  - a) Unless prohibited by public health order, the training and competition environments should be open to observation so that all interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes are observable.
  - b) Private or one-on-one situations must be avoided unless they are open and observable by another adult or Athlete.
  - c) Persons in Authority shall not invite or have a Vulnerable Participant(s) in their home without the written permission and contemporaneous knowledge of the Vulnerable Participant's parent or guardian.
  - d) Vulnerable Participants must not be in any situation where they are alone with a Person in Authority without another screened adult or Athlete present unless prior written permission is

obtained from the Vulnerable Participant's parent or guardian.

### **Practices and Events**

4. As it relates to practices and/or competitions, the following shall be respected:
  - a) A Person in Authority should never be alone with a Vulnerable Participant prior to or following a competition or practice unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent or guardian.
  - b) If the Vulnerable Participant is the first Athlete to arrive, the Athlete's parent 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 practice, the Person in Authority should ask another Person in Authority (or a parent or guardian of another Athlete) to stay until all 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) If there is a concern with observing the Rule of Two, Persons in Authority and Athletes should take additional steps to achieve transparency and accountability in their interactions.

### **Communications**

5. Communications between Persons in Authority and Athletes shall be as follows:
  - a) Group messages, group emails, team pages, platforms such as Team Link are to be used as the regular method of communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes.
  - b) Persons in Authority may only send personal texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individual Athletes when necessary and only for communicating information related to team issues and activities (e.g., non-personal information). Any such texts, messages or emails shall be professional in tone and must be copied to another adult when the Athlete is a Vulnerable Participant.
  - c) No personal texts between Vulnerable Participants and Persons in Authority may be sent; however, if this is necessary under Section 5(b), it shall include one other adult person on the message (preferably the Vulnerable Person's parent(s)/guardian(s)).
  - d) Parents and guardians may request that their child not be contacted by a Person in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or to request that certain information about their child may not be distributed in any form of electronic communications.
  - e) All communication between a Person in Authority and Athletes must be between the hours of 6:00am and 11:00pm unless extenuating circumstances justify otherwise (e.g., cancelling an early morning practice).
  - f) Communications concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is not permitted.
  - g) No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation may be communicated by any medium.
  - h) Persons in Authority and Athletes are not permitted to offer or ask one another to keep a secret for them.

### **Virtual settings**

6. The Rule of Two shall apply to all Minors in a virtual environment. Specifically:
  - a) For Athletes under the age of 16, where possible, a parent/guardian should be present during any virtual session.

- b) Two adult coaches should be present or one coach and one adult (parent, guardian, volunteer, club administrator). One-on-one virtual sessions are prohibited.
- c) Coaches shall be informed by Softball Saskatchewan of the expected standards of conduct during virtual sessions.
- d) Parents/guardians of Minors shall be informed by Softball Saskatchewan of the activities that will take place during the virtual session, as well as the process of the virtual session.
- e) Parents/guardians of Minors shall provide consent to the Minor participating in the virtual session, if irregularly scheduled, or prior to the first session if the sessions will take place on a regular basis.
- f) Communications during virtual sessions shall take place in an open and observable environment. Sessions must be initiated in appropriate locations (i.e., not in personal or inappropriate locations such as bedrooms).
- g) Virtual sessions should be recorded whenever allowed by the technology being used.
- h) Parents/guardians should debrief with Minors on a weekly basis regarding virtual sessions.

### **Travel**

- 7. Any travel involving Persons in Authority and Athletes shall respect the following:
  - 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 will be one Person in Authority from each gender.
  - c) Screened parents or other volunteers will be available in situations when two Persons in Authority cannot be present.
  - d) No Person in Authority may drive a vehicle with an Athlete alone unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent or guardian.
  - e) A Person in Authority may not share a room or be alone in a hotel room with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent or guardian.
  - f) Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two Persons in Authority.
  - g) For overnight travel when Athletes must share a hotel room, roommates will be age-appropriate and, for Minors, shall be within two years of age of one another and of the same gender identity.

### **Locker Room / Changing Areas**

- 8. The following shall apply to locker rooms, changing areas, and meeting rooms:
  - a) Interactions (i.e., conversation) between Persons in Authority and Athletes should not occur in any room where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as a locker room, restroom or changing area. A second adult should be present for any necessary interaction between an adult and an Athlete in any such room. The Rule of Two must be respected.
  - 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, including but not limited to team communications and/or emergency.

### **Photography / Video**

- 9. Any photograph or video involving Athletes shall respect the following:
  - a) Photographs and video may only be taken in public view, 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 of any kind in rooms where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy 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
- d) If any photographs or videos will be used on any form of public media, an Image Consent Form must be completed before any images are taken and used.

### **Physical Contact**

10. It is recognized that 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. Any physical contact shall respect the following:
- a) Unless it is otherwise impossible because of serious injury or other justifiable circumstance, a Person in Authority must always clarify with an Athlete where and why any physical contact will occur prior to the contact occurring. The Person in Authority must make clear that they are requesting to touch the Athlete and not requiring physical contact
  - b) Infrequent, non-intentional physical contact during a training session is permitted
  - c) Hugs lasting longer than five seconds, cuddling, physical horseplay, and physical contact initiated by the Person in Authority is not permitted. It is recognized that some Athletes may initiate hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as crying or celebrating after a performance), but this physical contact may only occur in an open and observable environment.

### **Enforcement**

11. Any alleged violations of this *Athlete Protection Policy* shall be addressed pursuant to Softball Saskatchewan's *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

### **Privacy**

12. The collection, use and disclosure of any personal information pursuant to this Policy is subject to Softball Saskatchewan's usual policies and practices regarding private and/or confidential information.

