

Noteworthy Revisions

2026 SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement

The U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) drafted revisions to the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement (the Code). Below is an overview of the noteworthy revisions and brief rationale behind the change. We value all of the stakeholder and external feedback gathered as part of the Code revisions process. The 2026 Code will go into effect on January 1, 2026.

Topic: Employment and Membership Decisions.

Changes: Expanded upon employment and membership decisions in Section V.E.2. to include licenses, certifications, eligibility decisions, or other analogous decisions. Also added board member retention and dismissal to the concept of employment decisions, and recognized attorney-client privilege as it may relate to employment investigations conducted by the USOPC's or NGB's legal counsel. P. 4.; fn. 2

Rationale: Since 2019, the Code has specifically recognized the NGB's ability to implement any necessary safety plans or temporary measures separate from the Center's measures and investigative process. The 2024 Code, in an effort to more clearly define the space between the Center's process and the decisions of the USOPC or NGB, added employment and membership decisions as those within the USOPC or NGB's purview even if the Center exercised jurisdiction over the underlying allegations. The last sentence in this provision reflects the Center's intent with regard to which Code is applicable to these membership or employment decisions. The addition in the 2026 Code recognizes that not all NGBs use a membership model and may instead have Participants based on licenses, certifications, and other analogous arrangements.

The 2026 Code also recognizes that in the course of an allowable employment investigation by the USOPC or NGB, there will be information specifically covered by the attorney-client privilege.

Topic: Consent.

Changes: Re-organized the Consent provision's subsections. Included clarification as to the Consent analysis when the close-in-age exception applies in cases involving Minors. Added Power Imbalance as a standalone enumerated subsection of Consent. Pp. 6-9.

Rationale: These changes serve multiple purposes. First, the reorganization of the provision allows for ease of reading and understanding. The addition to the Legal Capacity section clarifies how the close-in-age exception operates and makes clear that lack

of Consent can still be established by other means even when the other requirements of the close-in-age exception—age difference of less than 3 years and no Power Imbalance—exist. Lastly, the specific enumeration of the Power Imbalance concept within the Legal Capacity section better highlights that there can be no Consent under the Code when a Power Imbalance exists, regardless of purported Consent.

Topic: Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Changes: Added a definition for IDD and incorporated the concept into the Center’s processes, to include special considerations regarding who may serve as an Advisor (Section VIII.A.) or Support Person (Section VIII.Q.), who may qualify for a Conditional or Alternative Resolution (Section XI.H.), and the presumption that those with an IDD will not testify live at a hearing (Section XIV.27.d.5).

Rationale: The inclusion of individuals with IDD reflects the reality that special considerations within our process are often necessary to ensure fairness for those involved.

Topic: Sexual Harassment & Harassment.

Changes: Added language to incorporate situations in which the conduct is not specifically directed toward the Claimant. Pp. 15-16, 24.

Rationale: This language was added in acknowledgement that not all behaviors constituting Sexual Harassment and Harassment are said directly to the Claimant and instead are said to others *about* the Claimant. These particular situations and behaviors still inflict real harm to Claimants and serve no acceptable purpose in the culture of sport.

Topic: Sexual Harassment, Sexual Bullying Behavior, Sexual Hazing, Power Imbalance.

Changes: Removed *gender*, *gender identity*, and *gender expression* from the above respective provisions. Pp. 10, 15-16, 18-19. Although the above terms are omitted, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Bullying Behavior, and Sexual Hazing remain prohibited conduct under the Code. The Center also retains full authority to investigate and take action against any individual who engages in the harassment, bullying, or hazing of anyone within our jurisdiction.

Rationale: This amendment was informed by the explicit direction outlined in the August 7, 2025 “Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking” executive order.

Topic: Sexual Exploitation & Sexual Social/Cyber Bullying

Changes: Added “real or simulated” to Sections IX.C.4.b. & d., and Section IX.C.6.ii. Pp. 17, 19.

Rationale: This addition is meant to address conduct emerging as a result of the progression of technology (i.e., artificial intelligence, or “AI”). For example, there have been instances reported to the Center in which AI is used to create fake images or videos in which a Claimant is engaging in sexual activity or the photo or video appears to show the Claimant’s intimate parts.

Topic: Sexual Bullying Behavior.

Changes: Added more specific examples of Sexual Bullying. Pgs. 18-19.

Rationale: While the list of examples is not exhaustive, they were compiled based on trends in cases handled by the Center and will provide more concrete examples of the types of behavior often seen within the Movement and those meant to be captured by this Code provision.

Topic: Cyber Abuse

Changes: Added a new provision under Other Inappropriate Conduct to address various forms of electronic abuse. P. 26.

Rationale: This provision is intended to capture harmful behaviors which are perpetrated electronically. While some of the captured behavior could also be violative of other existing provisions (i.e., Harassment, Cyber Bullying, etc.), a specific provision regarding this conduct was necessary in light of the frequency with which the Center receives reports of these behaviors and the proliferation of technological avenues by which one can harm another.

Topic: Reporting Obligations

Changes: Added more specific language to the Reporting provisions related to Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct. Pp. 30-32.

Rationale: The additional language seeks to clarify for Adult Participants that their reporting obligation extends to information they became aware prior to joining the Movement specifically as it relates to Child Abuse and/or Sexual Misconduct.

Topic: Conditional Resolution & Alternative Resolution.

Changes: Included Adults with diagnosed intellectual or developmental disabilities as those who are eligible to receive Conditional and Alternative Resolutions, when appropriate. Pp. 36-37.

Rationale: Prior to this addition, generally only Minors under the age of 13 were eligible for Conditional Resolutions and Minors between 13-17 were eligible for Alternative Resolutions. The inclusion of Adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities acknowledges the reality that many of the issues and reasons for which these specific Resolutions exist for Minors are equally applicable to those with certain intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Center will continue to exercise discretion in determining which cases are appropriate for such a Resolution.

Topic: Purpose of Sanctions.

Changes: Added a list of purposes to the Sanctions section. P. 53.

Rationale: This list was added to enhance transparency and clarity regarding the Center's goals, intentions, and concerns when it renders Sanctions.

Topic: Considerations.

Changes: Added language establishing that when the violation involves child sexual abuse, the age of the incident(s) shall not be considered and are irrelevant to determinations of Sanctions. P. 62.

Rationale: The Center does not have a statute of limitations and therefore can—and often does—make findings of violations involving child sexual abuse from decades in the past. This addition makes clear that the Center takes these matters very seriously and will not fail to address the severity of the incident(s) just because it happened long ago. The Center will, however, consider any rehabilitative efforts engaged in by a Respondent following the misconduct.
