SafeSport Refresher Course 1: Recognizing and Reporting Misconduct
Do’s and Don’ts for Reporting Abuse

Reporting abuse is a difficult thing to do. Follow this advice to give authorities what they need to proceed.

DO’s

DO tell the athlete reporting the abuse that you are glad he/she told you what happened.
This helps the athlete feel safe and heard. Let the athlete know there is a process you will follow to report the incident.

DO report abuse right away.
Remember, federal law requires you to report a suspicion of abuse to law enforcement within 24 hours. Your state may have similar requirements. If you are a covered individual through a national governing body, you should also make a prompt report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport. Notify your organization as well, in accordance with their policies.

DO give investigators your name and contact information.
Many states allow you to make a report anonymously, but if you provide your information, investigators can contact you later if needed for follow-up. Giving your name also creates a record that you fulfilled your reporting responsibilities.

DO tell investigators as much as you can.
Give investigators as much information as possible, including: who was abused, who committed the reported abuse, when it happened and where it happened.

DO tell investigators if the athlete is likely to come into contact with the perpetrator.
This helps authorities address safety planning for the athlete.
DON'TS

DON'T doubt an athlete's report of abuse.
False reports of abuse are extremely rare. Simply listen to the athlete's story so you can make an accurate report to authorities.

DON'T ask leading questions.
Let the athlete tell you what happened in their own words. If you need to ask follow up questions, make them open-ended: “What did this person do?” (Rather than, “This person hurt you, didn't they?”)

DON'T automatically call an athlete’s parents.
Authorities, such as child protective services, can contact the child's parents. Your organization may also have procedures to follow regarding when and how to notify parents. In cases where the reported abuse is committed by a parent or other family member, authorities can take steps to ensure the athlete's safety.

DON'T talk to others to “check out the story.”
It is not your responsibility to determine if the report is true or to uncover more information, and it could harm the investigation. Leave that to trained investigators.

DON'T confront the perpetrator.
When you learn an athlete has been abused, you may be upset and angry, but going to the perpetrator could tip them off, compromise the legal investigation and may even put you and the athlete in danger.