

PARENT AND GUARDIAN'S HANDBOOK FOR SAFER SPORT

RESPONDING TO POTENTIAL GROOMING BEHAVIOR



One of the most effective things that you can do to prevent and/or detect grooming is to have open communication and dialogue with your kids about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

Kids are often nervous about telling you when something has happened because they fear they've done something wrong or that they may get one of their peers or a coach in trouble. These tips will help your child feel more comfortable when they come to you with concerns about their relationship with an adult or much older youth.

- ▶ **Talk to your child about the difference between surprises and secrets.** Surprises are fun and something that everyone will know about soon – like birthday presents. Secrets are something you never tell, and they may make you uncomfortable. Teach your child that if anyone asks them to keep a secret forever, they should tell you right away.
- ▶ **Reassure your child that they won't get in trouble.** One reason kids often do not disclose their abuse is because they are fearful of upsetting their parents or caregivers. Remind your child that they will not get in trouble for talking to you, no matter what they say.
- ▶ **Be available.** It is critical that kids know they have someone who will be there for them if something happens. Reassure them that they do not need to be embarrassed or ashamed about what happened. Tell your child that they do not need to know for sure if what happened was wrong before they talk to you. They can talk to you when they first feel confused or uncomfortable and you can figure it out together.
- ▶ **Speak up when you see concerning (non-sexual) behavior.** If a child tells you something that is bothering them but is not necessarily sexual in nature, don't ignore it. For example, if a child tells you that someone makes them feel uncomfortable, address their feelings and help them figure out what to do. You could say something like, "I'm uncomfortable with Joe giving you a hug after every race. How about a high-five instead?"

Keep in mind you can always report any behavior that you are concerned with to your child's sport organization.

If your child or the individual of concern is involved in the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement, you can also report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport at uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern.

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