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**For Immediate Release**

April 1, 2024

Contact: [media@safesport.org](mailto:media@safesport.org)**SafeSport Implementing Improvements to Increase Efficiency and Information Sharing**  
*Eight-month review, stakeholder engagement results in significant process changes*

**Denver, CO** – The U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) today announced process changes aimed at increasing efficiency, information sharing, and trauma-sensitivity.

After spending the past eight months conducting a top-to-bottom review of its processes and seeking feedback from athletes and national governing bodies (NGBs) along the way, the Center has launched an initial set of process improvements that impact nearly every aspect of its work. Center CEO, Ju’Riese Colón, previewed these updates during testimony before sub-committee hearings of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on March 20, 2024, and the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee on March 21, 2024.

The Center’s Response and Resolution team hosted an initial training for NGBs on March 21, 2024, and the Center issued a memo last week to inform stakeholders in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement of these improvements.

**“We are listening to athletes and responding with improvements to better serve them,”** Ju’Riese Colón, CEO of the U.S. Center for SafeSport said. **“We are proud of the progress we’ve made, but we are clear-eyed about the work ahead of us. We will continue to seek input as we evolve to meet the needs of athletes of all levels – from the practice fields in our neighborhoods to the podium in Paris.”**

Summary of process improvements:**1) Streamlined Response & Resolution**

The Center has restructured the Response and Resolution department to align internal communication and improve efficiency, combining the Intake and Resolutions, Investigations, and Legal teams to make a cohesive Response and Resolution unit reporting to General Counsel and Vice President of Response and Resolution, Jessica Perrill.

**2) Improved Process Communication**

The Center has created a new Process Education unit within the Education and Research department. Process Navigators (formerly Resource & Process Advisors) were transitioned from the Response and Resolution department over to Education with the goal of grounding their work in a department with strong subject matter expertise on pedagogy and the psychology of learning. This team is tasked with designing role-specific educational materials (for Claimants, Respondents, parents/friends/support people) that will account for the neurobiological impact of trauma on the way that people learn and retain information about processes and procedures. Participants in the Center’s process can contact Process Navigators at:

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[Process.Navigators@safesport.org](mailto:Process.Navigators@safesport.org)

3) **Enhanced Training Development**

The Center is dedicating 50% of an employee's time to implementing a comprehensive training curriculum for its Response and Resolution department, including enhanced trauma-sensitivity training grounded in research and best practices.

4) **Categorizing Outcomes for Case Closures and Holds**

Starting April 1, 2024, the Center will be redefining and recategorizing Administrative Closures and Holds to provide more clarity and understanding. As a part of this change, the Center will provide to participants in its process and NGBs specific categories that explain the reason for these outcomes, without compromising Claimant confidentiality. The Center continues to preserve its ability to hold a case with the potential for re-opening it if more information becomes available or a Claimant later decides to participate in the investigative process. The Center maintains that while NGBs are free to impose safety plans, limit one-on-one access to athletes, and make membership and employment decisions, federal law prohibits them from investigating allegations of sexual misconduct.

5) **Specialized Interview Team for Minor Claimants**

In January of 2024, the Center established a Specialized Interview Team trained in forensic interviewing of minors and trauma-sensitivity. The team travels for interviews as needed and is partnering with Child Advocacy Centers throughout the nation to use their locations for interviews and provide families with resources. The goal is for this highly-trained team to eventually conduct all interviews of minor Claimants.

6) **Opportunity to Review and Respond to Evidence**

After active investigations conclude, Claimants and Respondents will now have the option to review the Center's evidence (with the exception of confidential information such as medical records or personal identifiable information). Within a 14-day window, Claimants and Respondents may submit a written response and provide any additional relevant information. This procedural change will limit Respondents' ability to introduce new information during arbitration. This change will take effect on April 1, 2024.

7) **Ensuring Consistent Communication**

The Center is taking steps to ensure consistent communication with those involved in its process by asking Claimants their preferred method and cadence of communication and committing to providing updates as requested. The Center will also contact Respondents every 30 days. With the new case hold and closure types (discussed in #4), the Center will be providing more clarity to NGBs and encouraging them to engage with the Center more on process questions. These enhanced communication protocols go into effect on April 1, 2024.

#### 8) **Improving Data Collection and Accuracy**

The Center has built a Research, Evaluation & Data team who are working to develop new software architecture to more accurately capture information that is unique to the Center. The goal is to implement more robust systems that will allow the Center to collect, analyze, and share more complex and impactful information about cases and trends. The Center is also investing in staff training to ensure data consistency.

#### 9) **Revamping Online Education**

The Center is currently overhauling its online courses to make them shorter, role-specific, and sport-contextual. Newly-created guiding philosophies will be applied to ensure all education is theory and data informed, rooted in best practices, and trauma-informed. The Center will be forming an advisory group, consisting of subject matter experts in the fields of prevention education, trauma-informed learning, and sport culture to solicit insight and feedback on educational content. The new online courses are expected to roll out in 2025.

#### 10) **Expanding Event Audits into Grassroots Sports**

Considering the substantial number of minor athletes competing at non-national level events, the Center began conducting audits to seek accountability deeper into grassroots sports. These audits began in January of 2024 and were announced in 2022. In preparation, NGBs were provided site visits and technical assistance, and additional information was codified in the updated National Governing Body Audit Manual released to NGBs on November 16, 2023.

### **Need for Abuse Prevention in Sport**

The U.S. Center for SafeSport is the nation's only independent organization dedicated to ending sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in U.S. Olympic and Paralympic sport. The Center emerged in response to high profile cases of sexual abuse of minor athletes within Olympic and Paralympic sport in the mid-2010s. With the mission of making athlete wellbeing the centerpiece of the nation's sport culture, the Center has since been setting safety policies and receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints of abuse and misconduct. The Center also serves as an educational resource for sports organizations at all levels, from recreational sports organizations to professional leagues.

With the goal of ensuring athletes within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement of are safe, supported, and strengthened, the Center:

- Establishes safety policies, including the [SafeSport Code](#) and the [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies \(MAAPP\)](#).
- Investigates and resolves allegations of abuse and misconduct and levies sanctions, including temporary and permanent [bans from sport](#).
- Delivers comprehensive abuse prevention education within and outside of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

### **About the U.S. Center for SafeSport**

The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 codified the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center), a Denver, Colorado based 501(c)(3) nonprofit, as the nation's

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safe sport organization. It furthered the Center’s independence while underscoring its authority to hold individuals accountable. It also charged the Center with developing policies, procedures, and training to prevent abuse and misconduct to protect the 11 million individuals affiliated with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

In October of 2020, the Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act of 2020 became law, even further strengthening the Center’s independence and oversight functions while mandating minimum funding requirements for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee.

The Center opened its doors in March of 2017.

### **Reporting and Resources**

[Report here](#) to the U.S. Center for SafeSport if you have experienced abuse or misconduct—or if you have reasonable suspicion of abuse or misconduct inflicted on, or by, someone in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement. You can also call 833-587-7233 to make a report.

If a situation does not involve sport or anyone within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement, you can contact [RAINN's 24/7](#) online hotline or call 800-656-HOPE (4673).

For anyone in crisis, the [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) provides 24/7 free and confidential support at 988lifeline.org or by calling 988.

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