

Protecting BC's Children.

SPORT

Creating a
Safer Environment
for Sport and Recreation

Safe

As a parent, part of supporting your child's involvement in sport and recreation activities includes ensuring their safety while they're having fun. All parents have a responsibility to make sure their children are protected from abusive situations. This brochure will provide you with information on what to watch for and where to turn if you suspect harassment or abuse.



A Guide for Parents

Dealing with Harassment and Abuse



While there are differing degrees of harassment and abuse, both provide serious setbacks to a child's enjoyment of, and participation in, sport and recreation activities. Abuse is any action, physical or verbal, which exploits or potentially harms or damages a child's physical, emotional or psychological health. When a child is abused, he or she often experiences abuse by people older than them, usually by people they know and trust.

Harassment or abuse can take many forms:



Physical - where a child is intentionally injured or made to do excessive exercises as punishment;

Sexual - where a child is exposed to, or invited to participate in sexual contact, activity or behavior;

Emotional - where a child is made fun of, criticized, discriminated against, or put under unrealistic pressure to perform;

Neglect - where a child is not provided an appropriate level of care and supervision.

If you feel that the abuse is of a sexual or physical nature, it must be reported to [child protection authorities](#) or the police.

How to recognize abusive situations



As a parent, you know your kids best. Look for signs that they are not their normal selves and may be unusually withdrawn, disinterested, unhappy or angry.

There are many signs, both physical and behavioral, to suggest possible abusive situations. Unexplained injuries, sexually explicit actions or language



beyond their age, new friendships with older persons, or sudden changes in behavior are just a few examples.



What you can do about it

You can protect your child both at home and in the environment in which they participate. Encourage your child to talk openly to you about their activities and let them know that it's okay to tell when something isn't right. In addition, you should:

- ✓ be aware of your child's sport or recreation environment;
- ✓ get involved in their activities by getting to know their coaches, volunteers and other parents;
- ✓ talk to your child and their coach about what's okay behavior and what your child wants to get out of their activity;
- ✓ ensure their sport or recreation association has a harassment policy and a screening process in place for staff and volunteers;
- ✓ know how to voice your own concerns;
- ✓ listen to your child's complaint and no matter how far-fetched it seems, check it out;
- ✓ if the problem is not sexual or physical abuse, try to resolve it with league or club officials before approaching other community services;
- ✓ have the situation corrected and, if necessary, remove your child from the environment.



Creating a safer place for our children to play is everyone's responsibility...

coaches, volunteers, sport and recreation organizations, local clubs and associations, schools, all levels of government, the participants, and you, the parent.



Be Involved



Who to call

The most important action you can take is to contact someone when you suspect an abusive situation. Because there are different levels of concern and you may be unsure if harassment or abuse is occurring, it is important that you know who to contact. Be involved and get to know your community.

Locally

If you have specific concerns about a situation, you should try to resolve it at your local level. Talking to someone affiliated with the sport or recreation association, club or league, like the coach, manager or club president can often clear up a simple misunderstanding. However, if you feel that the situation cannot be resolved at this level, there are other options for you.

Provincially

The next step is to contact the provincial sport or recreation organization for your child's sport to voice your concerns. Your local sport or recreation organization should be able to provide you with a telephone number.

Local Authorities

If you suspect child abuse of a physical or sexual nature, report it to your local police and/or call the Helpline for Children phone number below.

Helpline for Children - 310-1234 (area code is not required)

If you suspect child abuse, call 310-1234, a 24-hour toll-free service available to anyone concerned about child abuse.

Crimestoppers Tips Line - 1-800-222-TIPS

A co-operative program run by local police departments which allows you to leave an anonymous tip with a police officer. In most regions the telephone number is listed online or in the white pages of your telephone book. In regions without a dedicated service, call 1-800-222-TIPS and your call will be directed to the service nearest to you.

Victim Information Line - 1-800-563-0808

Victims can receive more information about services available to them and to report crimes through this service set up by the Ministry of Justice.

Youth Against Violence Line - 1-800-680-4264

Callers can receive direct assistance from police officers in their community. To ensure confidentiality callers can leave as much information as they want on a voice mail system. There is no call display.