

# **Arlington-Belmont Crew SafeSport Policy and Participant Safety Handbook Approved November 2016**

As a US Rowing member organization, Arlington-Belmont Crew (AB Crew) has adopted the following athlete safety program. The policy prohibits and defines the following conduct:

- Bullying
- Hazing
- Harassment (including sexual harassment)
- Emotional Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct
- Sexual Misconduct (including child sexual abuse)

The AB Crew program is designed to assure athletes' safety at the cage, erg room, on the water, and at all events, promoting an environment free from bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct and sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse).

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Our policies and procedures require coaches, Board members, and/or volunteers to report abuse, misconduct, and violations of this Participant Safety Handbook. To do so, coaches and/or volunteers (volunteer coaches, parent chaperones, referees, other volunteers) should have a basic understanding of sexual abusers, as well as "grooming," the most common strategy offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse.

***Accordingly, all coaches must complete online awareness training concerning misconduct in sport before performing services for AB Crew. All AB Crew members, parents, and volunteers are also encouraged to complete the training.***

## **APPLICANT SCREENING**

Staff members, contractors and/or volunteers must consent to, and pass, a formal Applicant screening process before performing services for AB Crew.

Elements of our screening process may include, as applicable, successful completion of an application, interview, reference check and criminal background check.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

### **Bullying**

- (1) An intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership.
- (2) Any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.

### ***Exceptions***

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and to push through a difficult training regimen.

### ***Examples***

Examples of bullying prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Physical behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, or slapping an athlete; (b) throwing at or hitting an athlete with, objects such as sporting equipment.
- (2) **Verbal and emotional behaviors.** Behaviors that include (a) teasing, ridiculing, intimidating; (b) spreading rumors or making false statements; or (c) using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (“cyber bullying”).

### **Hazing**

- (1) Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group’s members; or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law.

### ***Exception***

Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

### ***Examples***

Examples of hazing prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) requiring, forcing or otherwise requiring the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs
- (2) tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining an athlete
- (3) sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature
- (4) sleep deprivation, otherwise unnecessary schedule disruption or the withholding of water and/or food
- (5) social actions (e.g. grossly inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule
- (6) beating, padding or other forms of physical assault
- (7) excessive training requirements focused on individuals on a team

### **Harassment**

- (1) A repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, (b) offend or degrade, (c) create a hostile environment or (d) reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability; or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law

### ***Examples***

Examples of harassment prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant; (b) throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects including sporting equipment.
- (2) **Non-physical offenses.** Behaviors that include (a) making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete's sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color or ethnic traits; (b) displaying offensive materials, gestures or symbols; (c) withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on his or her sexual orientation.

### **Emotional Misconduct**

- (1) A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behaviors include:
  - a. verbal acts
  - b. physical acts
  - c. acts that deny attention or support

- (2) Any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under

federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect).

### ***Exception***

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

### ***Examples***

Examples of emotional misconduct prohibited by this policy include, without limitation

- (1) **Verbal Acts.** A pattern of verbal behaviors that (a) attack an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting) or (b) repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular participant or participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
- (2) **Physical Acts.** A pattern of physically aggressive behaviors, such as (a) throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants; or (b) punching walls, windows or other objects.
- (3) **Acts that Deny Attention and Support.** A pattern of (a) ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time or (b) routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice.

***Note: Bullying, harassment, and hazing often involve some form of emotional misconduct.***

### **Physical Misconduct**

- (1) Contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threaten to, cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants; or
- (2) Any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault).

### ***Exceptions***

Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance. For example, hitting, punching, and kicking are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in rowing.

### **Examples**

Examples of physical misconduct prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) punching, beating, biting, striking, choking or slapping an athlete;
  - (b) intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment;
  - (c) providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (under U.S. law);
  - (d) providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete;
  - (e) encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play pre-maturely following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional;
  - (f) prescribing dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of athlete.
  
- (2) **Non-contact offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) isolating an athlete in a confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space);
  - (b) forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g., requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface);
  - (c) withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep.

***Note: Bullying, harassment and hazing often involve some form of physical misconduct.***

### **Sexual Misconduct**

- (1) Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is (a) nonconsensual or forced, (b) coerced or manipulated, or (c) perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner;
- (2) Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative; or
- (3) Any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape)

**Note: An imbalance of power is always assumed between a coach and an athlete.**

## ***Types of Sexual Misconduct***

Types of sexual misconduct include:

- (1) sexual assault,
- (2) sexual harassment,
- (3) sexual abuse, or
- (4) any other sexual intimacies that exploit an athlete. **Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult**, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited.

## ***Examples***

Examples of sexual misconduct prohibited under this Policy include, without limitation:

- (1) **Touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) fondling an athlete's breasts or buttocks
  - (b) exchange of reward in sport (e.g. team placement, scores, feedback) for sexual favors
  - (c) genital contact
  - (d) sexual relations or intimacies between persons in a position of trust, authority and/or evaluative and supervisory control over athletes or other sport participants.
- (2) **Non-touching offenses.** Behaviors that include:
  - (a) coach discussing his or her sex life with an athlete
  - (b) coach asking an athlete about his or her sex life
  - (c) coach requesting or sending a nude or partial-dress photo to athlete
  - (d) exposing athletes to pornographic material
  - (e) sending athletes sexually explicit or suggestive electronic or written messages or photos (e.g. sexting)
  - (f) deliberately exposing an athlete to sexual acts
  - (g) deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity (except in situations where locker rooms and changing areas are shared)
  - (h) sexual harassment; specifically, the sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, and
    - a. is unwelcome, offensive or creates a hostile environment, and the offending individual knows or is told this
    - b. is sufficiently severe or intense to be harassing to a reasonable person in the context.

## **Child Sexual Abuse**

- (1) Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child regardless of whether there is deception or the child understand the sexual nature of the activity

**Note concerning peer-to-peer child sexual abuse:** Sexual contact between minors can also be abusive. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power and/or intellectual capabilities.

- (2) Any act or conduct described as child sexual abuse under federal or state law.

### ***Examples***

Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive electronic or written communications, exposure or voyeurism.

### ***Grooming***

Because sexual abusers “groom” children for abuse – the process used by offenders to select a child, to win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or guardian), to manipulate the child into sexual activity and to keep the child from disclosing abuse – it is possible that a staff member and/or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. All questions or concerns related to appropriate, suspicious or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an AB Crew officer.

## **WILLFULLY TOLERATING MISCONDUCT**

It is a violation of this Athlete Protection Policy if a coach and/or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s), participant(s), and/or volunteers.

## **REPORTING**

Although these policies are designed to reduce child sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. Coaches, volunteers, parents, and participants of AB Crew programs will report any concerns to an AB Crew officer (President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer). *Any persons planning to report an incident are encouraged to do so in writing as well as in a verbal communication. You may do so anonymously if you wish, without fear of retribution.* **AB Crew does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations, as a condition of**

**reporting suspicions or allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

### **Bad-Faith Allegations**

A report of abuse, misconduct or policy violations that is malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith is prohibited. Such reports will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the allegation, a person making a malicious, frivolous or bad-faith report may also be subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

## **HOW REPORTS ARE HANDLED**

### **Suspicions of Allegations of Child Physical or Sexual Abuse**

#### ***Reporting to Law Enforcement and/or Child Protective Services***

An independent investigation can harm youth and/or interfere with the legal investigative process. AB Crew, its staff members and/or volunteers **do not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.** As necessary, however, AB Crew officers may ask a few clarifying questions of the minor or person making the report to adequately report the suspicion or allegation to law enforcement authorities.

For mandatory reporting laws, visit

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dcf/child-abuse-neglect/>.

#### ***Immediate Suspension or Termination***

When an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse is made against a staff member, youth and/or volunteer, AB Crew may immediately remove that individual from contact with any children in the program until the allegation has been investigated by an official agency. As necessary, AB Crew may suspend or change the assignment of a staff member and/or volunteer.

#### **Misconduct and Policy Violations**

AB Crew addresses internally alleged policy violations and misconduct – bullying harassment, hazing, emotional, physical and sexual – that are not reportable under state or federal law. Staff members and/or volunteers must report policy violations and misconduct to an immediate supervisor or AB Crew officer.

## **NOTIFICATION**

Following AB Crew's notice of a credible allegation that results in the removal of an employee, coach or other volunteer, AB Crew may consider the circumstances in which it will notify other parents of athletes with whom the accused individual may have had contact. At AB Crew's discretion, as appropriate, and after consultation with counsel, AB Crew may notify its staff members, contractors, volunteers, parents and/or athletes of any allegation of child physical or sexual abuse or other criminal

behavior that law enforcement authorities are actively investigating. Advising others of an allegation may lead to additional reports of child physical or sexual abuse and other misconduct.

## **DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURE**

### **DISCIPLINARY RULES**

AB Crew recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a youth participant who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, AB Crew's disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

On receipt of an allegation, AB Crew will determine in its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct base on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.

AB Crew's disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme case, misconduct will result in immediate summary dismissal, provided that the accused individual shall be advised of their right to a hearing. If the accused individual is a minor, AB Crew will contact his or her parent(s) or guardian(s).

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Sanctions for violations of the Participant Safety Handbook will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, AB Crew may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- In the case of a youth participant, inform the youth's parent or guardian
- Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- Temporary suspension from competition
- File a formal incident report
- Issue a verbal warning
- Issue a written and/or final written warning
- Provide informed supervision, where at least one staff member is informed of the allegation and is instructed to vigilantly supervise the accused participant or stakeholder in his or her interactions with the program and/or organization
- Engage in restorative practices, i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when a misunderstanding or harm has occurred
- Suspend or terminate employment or membership

### **ONGOING EMPLOYMENT AND/OR PARTICIPATION**

On receipt of a credible and specific allegation of child abuse or other serious misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual abuse as defined in our Athlete Protection Policy), AB Crew may immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual to ensure participant safety.

### **COMPLAINANT PROTECTION**

Regardless of outcome, AB Crew will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to concerns in good faith. AB Crew will not encourage or tolerate attempts to retaliate, punish or in any way harm any individual(s) who report(s) a concern in good faith. Such actions will be grounds for disciplinary action.

### **BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS**

Any individual who alleges misconduct under the Participant Safety Handbook, that, upon review, is determined to be malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith will be a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook. Bad-faith allegations may also be subject to criminal or civil proceeding

### **AB CREW MONITORING STRATEGY**

By monitoring the interactions among staff, volunteers, athletes and others, AB Crew works to prevent, recognize and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors as set forth in our Participant Safety Handbook, while reinforcing appropriate behaviors.

**ONLINE SAFESPORT TRAINING-----MANDATORY for all AB Crew coaches, and strongly recommended for anyone having contact with young athletes.**

**General information on the background for USRowing Safesport policy can be viewed by clicking this link:**

**<http://www.usrowing.org/safety/safesport>**

**CLICK THE LINK BELOW TO REGISTER AND TO COMPLETE THE FREE ONLINE TRAINING, INCLUDING ONLINE QUIZZES. YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID!!**

**<http://training.teamusa.org/store/details/1>**

**I have reviewed Arlington-Belmont Crew's SafeSport Policy and Participant Safety Handbook, approved November 2016, and I agree to abide by all policies contained within.**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_