



Athlete Protection Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all coaches, volunteers, and representatives of the AKBA maintain a safe, respectful, and accountable sport environment for all players.

This policy establishes standards designed to protect athletes—particularly minors—from situations that could place them in a vulnerable position.

SAFE SPORT COMMITMENT

The AKBA is committed to fostering a **Safe Sport environment** in which all participants are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.

The AKBA adopts and supports the principles of **Safe Sport**, which seek to eliminate all forms of:

- Abuse
- Harassment
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Neglect
- Grooming
- Retaliation

All participants—including coaches, volunteers, players, and parents—are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that supports a **safe, inclusive, and positive sport environment**.

The AKBA may adopt or incorporate policies, procedures, and training programs established by **Baseball Ontario, the Coaching Association of Canada, or other governing bodies** to promote Safe Sport principles.

Any behaviour that undermines a safe sport environment may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the **AKBA Harassment, Discipline and Complaints Policy**.

THE “RULE OF TWO”

The AKBA strongly recommends the implementation of the **“Rule of Two”** for all coaches and volunteers who interact with players, whether in person or remotely.

The **Coaching Association of Canada** describes the intention of the “Rule of Two” as follows:

A coach must never be alone or out of sight with a minor athlete. Two NCCP-trained or certified coaches should always be present with an athlete, especially a minor athlete, when in a potentially vulnerable situation such as in a locker room or meeting room.

Accordingly:

- All one-on-one interactions between a coach and an athlete must take place **within earshot and in view of a second coach or responsible adult**, except in medical emergencies.
- Whenever possible, **one of the supervising adults should be of the same gender as the athlete**.
- If a second **screened and NCCP-trained or certified coach** is not available, a **screened volunteer, parent, or other responsible adult** may be present.

AKBA recognizes that fully implementing the Rule of Two may not always be possible. However, **at a minimum**, all coach–player interactions must follow these principles:

- Training and competition environments should remain **open and observable** so that interactions between coaches and players can be readily seen.
- Private or one-on-one situations must be **avoided whenever possible**, unless they are open and observable by another adult.
- Coaches **shall not invite or host a player in their home** without the **written permission and contemporaneous knowledge of the player’s parent or guardian**.

With respect to practices, competitions, and other AKBA-sanctioned events, the following guidelines apply:

- A coach should **never be alone with a player** before or after a practice or competition unless the coach is the player’s **parent or guardian**.
- The **parent or guardian of the first player to arrive** should remain until another player or coach arrives.
- If a player may otherwise be left alone with a coach after an event, the coach should ask **another coach or parent/guardian** to remain until all players have been picked up.
- Coaches providing **individual instruction, demonstrations, or drills** must do so **within earshot and sight of another adult or coach**.
- If adherence to the **Rule of Two** becomes difficult in a particular circumstance, coaches and players should take **additional steps to ensure transparency and accountability**.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications between coaches and players must comply with the following guidelines:

- **Group emails, group messages, or official team pages** shall be the **primary method of communication** between coaches and players.
- Coaches may only send **individual messages to players when necessary** and strictly for team-related matters (e.g., scheduling or logistical information).
- Any individual communication with a player **under the age of majority must copy another adult**, such as a parent/guardian or another coach.
- **Personal conversations unrelated to team activities are prohibited**.
- Parents or guardians may request that their child **not be contacted electronically by coaches**, or that certain information about their child **not be distributed electronically**.
- Coaches and players **must never ask one another to keep secrets**.

VIRTUAL SETTINGS

The **Rule of Two** applies equally to **virtual environments** involving players under the age of 18.

Where possible:

- A **parent or guardian should be present** during virtual sessions.
- **Two adult coaches** should participate in the session, or **one coach and another adult** (parent, guardian, volunteer, or AKBA administrator).

One-on-one virtual sessions between coaches and players are strictly prohibited.

TRAVEL

Any travel involving coaches and players must follow these guidelines:

- Teams or groups of players must be accompanied by **at least two responsible adults**.
- A coach **may not drive alone with a player** unless the coach is the player's **parent or guardian**.
- A coach **may not share a hotel room with a player** unless the coach is the player's **parent or guardian**.
- **Room or bed checks** during overnight stays must be conducted by **two adults**.
- For overnight travel where players share hotel rooms:
 - Roommates must be **age-appropriate**
 - Players should be **within two years of age of one another**
 - Players must share rooms with individuals of the **same gender identity**, unless otherwise approved by parents/guardians.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

Photography or video involving players must respect the following standards:

- Images or videos must be taken **in public view** and must follow **generally accepted standards of decency**.
- Images must be **appropriate and in the best interests of the player**.
- The use of **recording devices in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy** (e.g., locker rooms or washrooms) is strictly prohibited.

Examples of images that must be **deleted** include:

- Images with **misplaced apparel or visible undergarments**
- **Suggestive or provocative poses**
- **Embarrassing or degrading images**

PHYSICAL CONTACT

AKBA recognizes that some physical contact between coaches and players may occasionally be necessary for purposes such as **teaching skills or responding to an injury**.

Any physical contact must adhere to the following principles:

- Except in cases of **serious injury or other justifiable circumstances**, a coach must **explain where and why physical contact may occur before it happens**.
- The coach must make clear that the player is being **asked for consent**, not required to accept physical contact.
- **Infrequent, incidental physical contact** during training sessions is permitted.
- **Prohibited conduct includes:**
 - Hugs lasting longer than five seconds
 - Cuddling
 - Physical horseplay

- Initiating unnecessary physical contact

Players may occasionally initiate physical contact (e.g., celebration or emotional distress). Such contact must occur **in an open and observable environment**.

ENFORCEMENT

Any alleged violation of this policy shall be addressed by the **AKBA Discipline Committee** in accordance with the **AKBA Harassment, Discipline and Complaints Policy**.

Upon receiving a complaint, the Board of Directors may, in its **sole and absolute discretion**, notify appropriate authorities, including but not limited to:

- **York Regional Police**
- **Children's Aid Society**
- Other relevant authorities as required by law.

DUTY TO REPORT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

All coaches, volunteers, board members, and other representatives of the AKBA have a responsibility to **report any suspected misconduct, abuse, or violations of this policy**.

Where an individual has **reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection**, that individual has a legal duty under the **Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (Ontario)** to report the suspicion directly to the **Children's Aid Society**.

This duty to report:

- Applies to **all individuals**, including volunteers and coaches.
- Cannot be delegated to another person.
- Applies **even if the information is confidential or uncertain**.

Failure to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect may constitute a **violation of Ontario law**.

In addition to any legal reporting obligations, individuals are expected to report concerns to the **AKBA Board of Directors or Discipline Committee** so that the Association may take appropriate action.

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