



Bullying Prevention in Sports

Whether it's from parents, players or coaches, disrespectful behaviour has become a growing concern in our gyms, rinks and on our playing fields.

There are steps we can take to equip ourselves with awareness and knowledge so that every young athlete can walk away from practice and competition with a positive self-image.

This fact sheet will help parents, players and coaches identify and deal with such issues as bullying, abuse and harassment in sport.

“Team Alberta is committed to providing a sport environment in which all individuals are treated with respect. Participants shall refrain from comments and behaviours that are disrespectful, offensive, abusive, racist, or sexist.”

– Team Alberta Code of Conduct

Bullying is defined as:

A conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. Severe bullying can lead to a feeling of terror on the part of the person being bullied.

Bullying forms include:

Verbal: taunts, name-calling, put-downs, threats, and intimidation

Social: exclusion from peer groups, ganging up, or group teasing

Physical: hitting/kicking victims and/or taking/damaging personal property

Cyber: using the computer or other technology to harass or threaten

Bullying before, during or after sports may appear as:

1. Unwarranted yelling and screaming directed at the target.
2. Continually criticizing the target's abilities.
3. Blaming the target for mistakes.
4. Making unreasonable demands related to performance.
5. Repeated insults or put downs of the target.
6. Repeated threats to remove or restrict opportunities or privileges.
7. Denying or discounting the target's accomplishments.
8. Threats of, and actual, physical violence.
9. E-mails or instant messages containing insults or threats.

Need to talk to someone about bullying?
Call 1-888-456-2323 (24 hours, toll-free in Alberta).

b-free.ca

Children's Services and Education are proud to lead Alberta's Cross-Ministry Strategy for the Prevention of Bullying.

Alberta



What Parents and Adults Can Do:

- Recognize that you are a role model to your child, other players and parents. Set a good example and reinforce positive behaviour when you see it.
- Maintain open and honest communication with your child and the coach to discuss acceptable boundaries of behaviour to ensure that any concerns are addressed.
- Ensure that a pre-season meeting is held with parents, athletes, coaches and board members to discuss acceptable boundaries of behaviour for everyone involved.
- Inquire whether the coach is certified and a member of a provincial sport governing body with a code of ethics and harassment policy. If not, work with the coach, other parents and board members toward getting the coach certified.
- Try to attend practices and games whenever possible. If private practices are held, ask for an explanation.
- If you observe bullying, bring the matter to the attention of the coach, other parents or league officials.

What Players Can Do:

- Trust your instincts. If someone's behaviour is making you feel uncomfortable or threatened, don't ignore it. You have the right to be treated respectfully. There is something that can be done.
- Talk to someone you trust—a parent, friend, coach, manager or another player. Remember to keep speaking up until someone helps you.
- Call the 24 hour Bullying Prevention Helpline at **1-888-456-2323**, toll-free in Alberta, for advice and strategies on bullying prevention.
- Stay calm. Bullies love a reaction so don't give them one.
- Project confidence. Hold your head up and stand up straight. Bullies pick on people who they think are afraid. Show them you're not.
- Don't reply to messages from cyberbullies. If you're receiving threatening text messages or e-mails don't reply, but keep the messages as evidence. The police and your Internet Service Provider and/or telephone company can use these messages to help you.

- Understand what bullying is and the negative impact it can have on you and those around you. If you're standing around watching bullying happen, you're part of the problem instead of the solution. You're exactly the audience that the bully wants. You, more than anyone else, have the power to help. Here's what you can do as a bystander:
 - speak up;
 - walk away and go get help;
 - help the target; and
 - don't fight the bully.

What Coaches and Volunteers Can Do:

- Recognize that you are a role model to players. Set a good example and reinforce positive behaviour.
- Accept your obligation to ensure a safe and respectful sport environment by not engaging in, allowing, condoning, or ignoring behaviour that constitutes, or could be perceived as, bullying.
- Establish open and honest communication between all parties involved, including parents, players, managers and volunteers.
- Be prepared to look critically at your own behaviour. Accept feedback without being defensive and change, if needed.
- Don't view screening procedures, policy or training as a threat to your character, but rather as an opportunity to learn and to work towards a safer and healthier sporting environment for everyone.
- Consider becoming a certified coach and a member of a provincial sport governing body with a code of ethics and harassment policy.

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