



HARASSMENT AND ABUSE

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Over the last 15 years the subject of the athlete's safety and well being has become one of the most important in all sports including ice hockey. In many aspects ice hockey has led the way in establishing guidelines to ensure that the athlete, no matter what his or her age, has a positive experience from their involvement in ice hockey.

Chapter Overview:

- Responsibilities of all Parties
- Policy Development
- The 4 different types of Abuse
- Their ramifications and long-term effects on the athlete
- Guidelines for protecting Coaches
- What Harassment is and the differences from Abuse
- Bullying and its effects
- Making an athletes participation in ice hockey a positive experience

Responsibilities

In many countries there is already legislation and strict laws regarding the protection of children, which are enforceable, and failure to comply could mean arrest and imprisonment.

All groups involved in any sporting endeavour have responsibility for the well being of every child/athlete that comes to play that sport.

Association/Federation

It is the responsibility of each National Association to have in place a Child Protection Policy that outlines in detail the treatment of athletes participating in their sport.

This policy should also be in place for all member clubs and teams to comply to and base their own policies on.

Club

All clubs in the National Association should comply with the National Association Child Protection Policy. They should also develop and implement their own Child Protection Policy, procedures and guidelines.

To ensure that these procedures are adhered to clubs should appoint a Child Protection Officer, who has been trained in the Child Protection Policies already in place in the country. This person would be responsible for the proper implementation of all policies protecting children.

Clubs should instigate a vetting or background checking system for all adults involved in the operation of their club including coaches and managers.

Coaches

The coaches have a responsibility to make sure all children participating in their team have a positive experience while involved in the sport. They must be fair but firm with their decisions. The coach also must always be open and honest and in doing so create an open and honest environment where players feel they can be heard.

The coach must remember he will be a role model for his players so thus must be a good one. They must be aware of and watch for any signs of abuse or harassment and respond accordingly.

All coaches should be educated in the Child Protection Policies in place and keep up-to-date on relevant issues pertaining to Child Protection.

Policy

A policy is like a road map it shows what direction an organization is going and it also outlines how the organization and its members will get there. Included in the Child Protection Policy should be a description on the behavior that is expected of the organization and its members. It should also detail the outcome if expectations are not met.

Steps in Developing a Policy

The organization must identify the key sections required in the policy i.e., the reason the policy is needed in the first place and identifying who and where it applies.

Once reasoning behind the policy is understood there has to be a description of what behavior is acceptable and more importantly what behavior is not acceptable.

The policy must set out guidelines for dealing with complaints and how this is dealt with from all aspects. Then discipline procedures for people whose behavior has been deemed unacceptable by the policies outlines. Finally, a proper procedure in dealing with appeals on decisions made in accordance with the policy.

Key Principles

The basic principles of the policy are: it must be fair to all parties involved in the activity; this includes athletes, coaches, managers and parents.

The policy must be relatively easy to understand by everyone involved, so there is no chance of misinterpretation or misunderstanding and must be in accordance with the legal obligations of the country.

Key Considerations

First and foremost the policy must have confidentiality for all concerned, especially the victim, it has to have a clear outline of the standard of behavior that is acceptable.

Consideration has to be given to selecting a method of reviewing complaints and identifying grounds for appeal

A decision has to be made by every organization involved as to whether they develop one all encompassing policy or two separate policies, one for Harassment and another for Abuse.

A qualified investigator, preferably someone outside of the organization, must carry out the fact-finding on any contravention of policy.

A good policy will:

Ensure that individuals respect the process because it is viewed as objective, fair and effective. It makes sure that individuals are dealt with fairly and responsibly. It should simplify an already complicated process by clearly outlining how the issue will be dealt with, and protect your organization by clearly outlining what is not acceptable behavior

ABUSE

Abuse is defined as “to ill-use, to misuse, or to insult.”

In sport because of the nature and age of the majority of the participants, abuse is generally interpreted as child abuse.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is any form of mistreatment or lack of care, both physical and mental, that causes damage to the child’s physical or mental health and endangers the child in any way.

There are 4 types of child abuse:

- PHYSICAL ABUSE
- NEGLECT
- EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- SEXUAL ABUSE

Physical Abuse

- To physically hurt or injure children
- Hitting, shaking, biting or burning
- Administering/giving alcohol, drugs or poison
- Condoning or failure to intervene in drug use
- Attempting to suffocate or drown
- Using inappropriate training, regimes and methods
- Failure to do a risk assessment of physical limits or pre-existing medical conditions

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises
- Bite marks
- Cigarette burns
- Broken bones
- Hand marks on the body

Behavioral Indicators

- Fear of parents being contacted
- Withdrawn behavior
- Depressed state
- Reluctance to change in front of others

Examples of Physical abuse in Ice Hockey may occur when the nature or the intensity of the training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature or growing body. Where under aged players are allowed to consume alcohol after a game. A coach checking players during drills or shooting full power slap shots at young goalkeepers.

Neglect

- Failure to meet a child's basic needs, e.g. food, warm clothing, good hygiene, supervision, safe environment
- Leaving a child alone or unsupervised
- Failure to give love, affection and support

Physical Indicators

- Constantly hungry
- Unkempt state
- Underweight or large weight loss
- Inappropriate dress
- Untreated medical problems

Behavioral Indicators

- Missing games & practices
- Constantly tired and unwell
- Few friends
- Plays truant

In Ice Hockey Neglect can occur when a coach or manager fails to ensure the players are safe both on and off the ice or allows players to play or practice in unsafe and inappropriate equipment.

Emotional Abuse

This is the most difficult type of abuse to identify and prove.

- Persistent lack of love and affection
- Chronic attack on the players self esteem
- Constantly being taunted, belittled, put down, shouted at or threatened
- Where child is rejected, isolated, ignored, terrorized corrupted or exploited
- Other 3 types of abuse can cause emotional abuse

Physical Indicators

- Delayed development
- Speech disorders develop

Behavioral Indicators

- Neurotic behavior
- Fear of making mistakes
- Unable to play
- Self harm

Constant criticism of a player or putting unrealistic pressure to perform can be construed as Emotional Abuse. Always dressing a player for games and never playing them can lead to low esteem and can be considered as abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Adults use children to meet their own sexual needs and gratification this includes intercourse, oral sex, fondling. Also the showing of or taking part in pornographic pictures or videos

Physical Indicators

- Itching or pain in the genital area
- Vaginal discharge
- Infection
- Anal bleeding
- Pregnancy

Behavioral Indicators

- Eating disorders
- Fear of someone
- Changes in attitude
- Self harm or suicide attempts
- Becomes aggressive

In Ice Hockey an adult could misuse their position to pressure children into performing sexual acts. Showering with your players and watching them change can be considered Sexual Abuse.

Main effects of Abuse of Children are:

- Pain and distress
- Behavioral difficulties
- Problems at school or with the police
- Developmental delay (physical, emotional and mental)
- Low self esteem
- Depression leading to self harm or suicide
- Permanent injury
- Death

Protecting Yourself

As a coach not only is there a need to understand the issues involved in child abuse, but also to be aware of all indicators pointing towards a case of abuse.

There are also some basic guidelines a coach has to be aware of to protect himself:

- Do not rely on your good reputation as a way of protecting yourself
- Be very aware of physical contact of any type. Things like patting a player on the head or the bottom and putting your arm around a players shoulders while maybe showing genuine concern for the player can be interpreted completely differently by the player or his parents
- Never be alone in a one on one situation with a player. Do not put yourself at risk of accusations (children can and do fabricate stories that can cause accusations)
- Leave the door open when meeting in a room, have another adult in attendance during the meeting
- Take notes of the meeting and make sure everyone agrees they are a true representation of the meeting

Child Protection Officer

As part of the clubs obligations of having a proper Child Protection Policy and to ensure that these procedures are adhered to, all clubs should appoint a Child Protection Officer. The person appointed can be any club official or parent involved with the club.

The Child Protection Officer should be trained on the Child Protection Policies already in place in the country and attend courses to obtain information on procedures.

This person would be responsible for the proper implementation of all policies protecting children. They will also be a focal point for all information on issues regarding child protection and be the first point of contact in any allegations or complaints. It will be the Child Protection Officer who makes contact with Social Services, or Police Child Protection Unit with reference to any complaint.



Guidelines if Abuse is disclosed or suspected

If abuse is suspected the most important thing is not to delay in taking the appropriate action. Contact the club Child Protection Officer and have the clubs Child Protection Policy put into action.

Instigate a thorough and discreet investigation into the allegation gathering as much information as possible. Where appropriate talk to parents or carers of the child. However, be aware that in many cases of suspected abuse it is the parents/carers who are the perpetrators.

If necessary after investigations are completed notify the appropriate authority.

Keep a written record of all actions taken.

HARASSMENT

What is Harassment?

Harassment is conduct, gestures or comments which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals, and which create a hostile or intimidating environment for work or sports activities, or which negatively affect performance or work conditions.

Any of the different forms of harassment may be based on the grounds prohibited in human rights legislation, such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation and religion. Harassment may occur between peers (e.g.: player to player of the same age group, parent to official, coach to coach) or between someone in a position of power or authority and an adult in a subordinate position (e.g.: coach to player, sports administrator to employee).

There are many different examples of Harassment:

- Unwelcome jokes, innuendo or teasing about a person's body, looks race, sexual orientation etc
- Condescending, patronizing threatening or punishing actions which undermine self-esteem
- Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, any activities which may endanger a person's safety
- Any form of hazing (initiation)
- Unwanted or unnecessary physical contact including touching, patting, pinching
- Unwanted conduct, comments, gestures or invitations of a sexual nature which are likely to cause offence or humiliation or which might on reasonable grounds be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for training or advancement
- Bullying
- Sexual assault or physical assault

BULLYING

In some cases of harassment it may be a child/children or a young adult/adults who are responsible for the harassment towards their peers, for example, in the case of bullying. Bullying however, is not confined to children as an adult could also bully their peers.

Bullying is an issue that is serious enough to be dealt with as a separate area of harassment.

Bullying may be seen as particularly hurtful behavior usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can take many forms including:

- Physical e.g. hitting / kicking
- Verbal (including teasing) e.g. racist remarks, spreading rumours, threats or name calling
- Emotional e.g. isolating a child from the activities or social acceptance of the peer group
- Harassment e.g. using abusive or insulting behavior in a manner intended to cause alarm or distress
- Children may be bullied by adults, their peers and in some cases by their families.

Identifying Bullying

Bullying can be difficult to pick up because it often happens away from others and the victims do not tend to tell. However you can watch for signs that may indicate the presence of bullying. The following lists common bully victim behavior.

If a child:

- Hesitates to come to training sessions or games
- Is often the last one picked for a team or group activity for no apparent reason, or gets picked on when they think your back is turned.
- Is reluctant to go to certain places or work with a certain individual.
- Has clothing or personal possessions go missing or damaged.
- Has bruising or some other injury
- Keeps losing their pocket money
- An usually quiet person becomes suddenly prone to lashing out at people, either physically or verbally.

Action to help the Victim(s) and prevent bullying

Most importantly, take all signs of bullying seriously and deal with immediately.

Create an open environment, encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help and support the victim(s) to feel comfortable in speaking out.

Treat all allegations seriously and take action to ensure the victim(s) is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately. Reassure the victim(s) that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.

Keep records of what is said i.e. what happened, by whom and when. Report any concerns to the Child Protection Officer.

DISCRIMINATION

The many forms of discrimination can be the reason for harassment.

Children and adults may experience discrimination because of their race or ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, culture, age, disability, gender, sexuality or religious beliefs. Although not in itself a category of abuse, it may be necessary for the purposes of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures, for discriminatory behavior to be categorised as emotional abuse.

KEY POINTS

- *Seldom is the situation black and white*
- *The severity ranges on a spectrum from mild to serious*
- *Reaction to harassment is subjective, perceptions can and do vary*
- *Impact on victim ranges from discomfort to fear of safety*
- *May be either physical, emotional, verbal or psychological*
- *May be based on discriminatory grounds or may be sexual in nature*
- *Must look at impact of behavior and how it is interpreted by the victim, rather than intent of perpetrator*
- *Some forms of harassment may be considered abuse if the victim is a minor*

Responding Informally to Harassment

- Respond promptly
- Attack the behavior, not the person
- Use penalties when prescribed
- Monitor for further problems

Harassment Impact on the Victim

- Humiliation
- Helplessness
- Anger
- Withdrawal
- Aggression

Harassment and Abuse – Differences and Similarities

Similarities

The philosophy towards Harassment and Abuse is the same with the victim not being to blame and the offenders responsible for their behavior.

Both have areas/types that are similar in nature.



Differences

The victims of abuse are children, under the age of consent, harassment victims can be any age.

Racial or other forms of prejudice and discrimination can motivate harassment.

Investigation of the 2 are different Abuse will involve an external group, police or child welfare, to the organization. Harassment most often dealt with internally by the organization except in sexual cases.

HOCKEY AS A QUALITY LIFE EXPERIENCE

The hope is that every person, especially the children, involved in ice hockey has a happy and positive experience. This responsibility falls onto everyone involved in the sport.

Listed are ways that this goal can be achieved:

Players:

There has to be a mutual respect and sense of fairplay between players. They need to treat all team members and opposition as equals. They have to take responsibility for their own actions and have a sense of accountability. They must understand and respect a **No Bullying Policy**.

For the players to achieve this they must be educated about Harassment and Abuse. They must understand the concept of fair play and respect.

Guidance in these areas must come from the club and the coach.

Club:

The club has the responsibility of setting up guidelines and policies for Child Protection, including a No Bullying Policy. Make it known that the club has a child protection policy in place.

Appoint a Child Protection Officer to oversee the clubs Child Protection Policy. Have in place background checks done on coaches and managers before they are allowed to be involved with a team.

Coaches:

Coaches need to be educated in the 4 areas of abuse and 3 areas of harassment. This education should be provided firstly by the Child Protection Officer and added to by attending courses that deal with the relevant issues on protecting children.

The coach must remember he is, and has to be, a role model for the players. In doing so he must have goals and standards that he lives and works by. He has to be firm but fair in all the decisions he makes.

The coach also must always be open and honest and in doing so create an open and honest environment where players feel they can be heard and be able to voice their opinions and feelings without a judgment being made.

Watch out for signs of abuse and respond according to the clubs Child Protection Policy.

Game Officials:

Game Officials must work with coaches in all areas of child protection.

They should have a Code of Practice that outlines their involvement in the sport, which provides clear guidelines of how they behave and work.

Parents:

Parents have the most influence over their children and as such should set an example for all those involved in the sport all the time.

They should be made aware of the guidelines and policies in the areas of Harassment and Abuse including the National Associations and clubs Child Protection Policies and be expected to follow club rules and guidelines.

They could help develop a Parents Code of Conduct as a guideline for their involvement in the team.

Finally to help the child's involvement in the sport be positive the parent should support decisions made by the coach.