

**UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF BLIND ATHLETES ATHLETE SAFETY POLICY**

**Purpose:**

To establish a United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) policy that assures a safe environment for athletes and others who participate in our programs.

**Policy Statement:**

USABA is committed to the safety and well-being of all athletes and others who participate in our programs. This will be accomplished by creating a safe and positive environment that is free of misconduct to include bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct and emotional misconduct. USABA’s commitment extends to our role as a membership organization (including a training site in Fort Wayne, Indiana), as a United States Olympic Committee (USOC) Multi-Sport Organization and as the USOC High Performance Management Organization for the sport of goalball. This policy supports the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

**Along with this commitment, USABA establishes the following policy that applies to our employees, contractual staff, coaches, USABA referees, guides, pilots and athletes USABA designates for the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) required testing pool (RTP).**

1. **Prohibited Conduct:**
   1. **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; or
      2. Any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.
   2. **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.
   3. **Harassment (Including Sexual 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.
   4. **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 as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect).
   5. **Physical Misconduct**
      1. Contact or non-contact that results in, or reasonably threatens to, cause physical harm to an athlete or other sports 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).
   6. **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.**

Additional details regarding each type of misconduct described above can be found in the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement ([www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org))

Additionally, prohibited misconduct shall include, without limitation, the following:

Romantic or sexual relationships, which began during the sports relationship, between athletes and or other participants and those individuals (i) with direct supervisory or evaluative control, or (ii) are in a position of power and trust over the athlete or other participant. Except in circumstances where no imbalance of power exists, coaches have this direct supervisory or evaluative control and are in a position of power and trust over those athletes or participants they coach.

The prohibition on romantic or sexual relationships does not include those relationships where it can be demonstrated there is no imbalance of power. For example, this prohibition does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

1. **Criminal Background Checks:**

USABA shall require criminal background checks, at least every two years, for all employed and contracted staff and volunteers who are in a position over, or have frequent contact with athlete participants which includes applicable employees, contractual staff, coaches, guides, pilots, and USABA referees who have direct supervision over athletes. Additionally, criminal background checks are required for any non-athlete individual who stay or work at Olympic Training Centers or at USABA’s Goalball Residential Training Program housing. USABA will accept current and favorable background checks from the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) and other reputable background check organizations.

**3. Education and Training:**

Effective with the issuance of this policy, USABA shall require education and training concerning the key elements of this athlete safety policy and the USOC SafeSport program for applicable employees, contractual staff, coaches, guides, pilots and USABA referees who have direct supervision over athletes. Training will include review of this policy document and completion of USOC SafeSport training. This policy also extends to any non-athlete USABA authorizes to train, reside or work at USABA Goalball Resident Program housing. Individuals will be required to demonstrate successful completion of USOC SafeSport Training before being granted access to attending USABA sanctioned events and to Olympic Training Centers or USABA Goalball Resident Program housing. This policy document, a link to access USOC SafeSport training will be posted in a prominent location on the USABA website and mentioned in periodic USABA newsletters.

**4. Reporting:**

The process for issuing a report of complaint or accusation of misconduct from a USABA employee, contractual staff member, coach, guide, pilot and referee who have direct supervision over athletes will be to report such to the USABA Executive Director or USABA Assistant Executive Director, and when applicable, to local law enforcement authorities. No direct fees or other cost is involved in making a report. Contact your local authorities if you have a reasonable suspicion that child sexual abuse or neglect has occurred. All reports of child abuse or sexual assault of a minor must also be reported to local authorities. Reports of abuse not involving a minor may also be reported to local authorities. Reports to USABA may be anonymous; however to assist in investigation, they will be encouraged to be made with the identity of the accuser or reporter being identified. This process will be included in the training and education described above. USABA will establish and ensure a reporting process for complaints issued and the findings. If a report is associated with USABA’s role as a USOC Multi-Sport Organization or with USABA’s role as a USOC High Performance Management Organization for goalball, reports shall be made to the USOC and any applicable legal agencies as appropriate. A link to report complaints or accusations will be included in the USABA website in a prominent place along with links for training materials.

Report misconduct to USABA:

* Phone Number – (719) 866 3224 (calls directed to Executive Director or Assistant Executive Director)
* Email – [Staff Directory](https://usaba.org/index.php/about-us/staff/) (emails directed to Executive Director or Assistant Executive Director)

**5.** **Enforcement:**

* 1. USABA’s Grievance, Complaint and Appeal Procedures ([www.usaba.org](http://www.usaba.org)) as referenced in the previous section, are materially free of bias and conflicts of interest, to address allegations of misconduct following the report of complaint of misconduct which were adjudicated under a criminal background check.
  2. In cases where the Ted Stevens Act applies, USABA will comply with the Act’s requirements.
  3. USABA’s Grievance, Complaint and Appeal Procedures shall include the opportunity for review by a disinterested individual or body.

**Additional Terms of This Policy:**

This athlete safety policy may be amended from time to time by the USOC. Additionally, USABA shall be guided by the principle that the health, safety and well-being of our athletes are fundamental elements of our managerial responsibility.

USABA understands that failure to meet the minimum standards as set forth by this policy may result in disciplinary action by the USOC including, without limitation, loss of status as a USOC Multi-Sport Organization and loss of status and USOC support as the High Performance Management Organization for goalball.

Additionally, an individual who has committed a SafeSport violation who receives USOC benefits may, at the discretion, lose those benefits. Benefits that may be lost or restricted may include, but are not limited to, athlete support payments, tuition grants, use of and residence at Olympic Training Centers (including the Goalball Center of Excellence Resident housing), elite athlete health insurance, alumni relations programs, athlete marketing programs, athlete ambassador programs, athlete service centers, career assistance programs, media services, USOC workshops, conferences and summits, personal development programs, sports medicine and performance services, and sports coaching and education programs. Additionally, individuals may lose opportunities to participate in or be associated with the U.S. delegation at a Delegation Event and any other competition or event as determined by the USOC.