

## Safety in sport position statement

### Toward Greater Safety in B.C. Amateur Sport

We commit to leading a culture that prioritizes respectful sport experiences that are safe for everyone. Harmful behaviour or maltreatment within sport results in a lack of physical and/or psychological safety for participants and the following summarizes our approach and actions to address safety in amateur sport.

### Summary

Through the efforts of viaSport British Columbia and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, the B.C. sport sector is mobilizing and working together to make sport experiences respectful and safe for everyone.

With the support of the provincial government and in collaboration with sport leaders, viaSport British Columbia leads the governance, promotion, and development of amateur sport in B.C. Everyone has the right to feel respected and safe in sport and we are committed to leading a culture that prioritizes experiences that are positive, inclusive, and free from physical and psychological harm at every level of amateur sport within the province.

Safety in sport means environments on the field, off the field, in locker rooms, in offices, and in boardrooms are all physically safe and accessible, as well as psychologically and culturally safe and inclusive. Injury prevention and management, as well as the creation of positive cultures is as much a part of safety in sport as addressing maltreatment when it occurs.

Maltreatment is a global human rights issue—it is not a localized issue in a particular sector, and it presents a system wide challenge in every community, province, country, and in every type of sport.

Maltreatment<sup>1</sup> in sport results in the absence of physical or psychological safety. While there are incidents of physical maltreatment (such as punching deliberately, denying adequate hydration, providing illegal drugs, or conducting sexual harassment), psychological maltreatment is by far the most prevalent and may present as behaviours that include shouting, belittling, and humiliating, or denying attention or support.<sup>2</sup> These harmful behaviours have become normalized in sport culture and contribute to many incidents of unreported maltreatment.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that all participants involved in sport, from coach to athlete, official to guardian, volunteer to administrator, may experience maltreatment. It is also possible that a person's likelihood of

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<sup>1</sup> "Maltreatment: A volitional act or omission that results in harm or has the potential for physical or psychological harm." *British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from [https://www.viaSport British Columbia.ca/sites/default/files/BC\\_UCC\\_2021.pdf](https://www.viaSport British Columbia.ca/sites/default/files/BC_UCC_2021.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Hartill, M., Rulofs, B., Lang, M., Vertommen, T., Allroggen, M., Cirera, E., Diketmuller, R., Kampen, J., Kohl, A., Martín, M., Nanu, I., Neeten, M., Sage, D., & Stativa, E. (2021). CASES: General Report. The prevalence and characteristics of interpersonal violence against children (IVAC) inside and outside sport in six European countries [Report]. Edge Hill University. <https://doi.org/10.25416/edgehill.17086616.v1>

<sup>3</sup> Stafford, A., Alexander, K., & Fry, D. (2013). "Playing through Pain: Children and Young People's Experiences of Physical Aggression and Violence in Sport: Children's Experiences of Physical Aggression and Violence in Sport." *Child Abuse Review*, 22(4), 287–299

experiencing maltreatment may be related to their gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual identity, and/or level of competition.<sup>4</sup>

We must all work together to address the cultures that allow harmful behaviours to persist. For change to occur, all participants in sport must take responsibility to create positive sport experiences, and organizations must have the structure, skills, and resources to support them.

viaSport British Columbia is committed to advancing work that provides education and resources to individuals and sport organizations, so that everyone understands and plays their role in ensuring safety in sport. Only together, will we provide more respectful and safer sport experiences for everyone and thereby extend the benefits of sport to more individuals and more communities around us.

*“Every Participant in sport has a responsibility to ensure their intentions, actions and efforts reflect a commitment to prioritizing the safety of all Participants.” British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct (BC UCC)*

## Our Commitment and Approach

viaSport British Columbia’s purpose is to lead the development and growth of amateur sport in B.C. – to bring more families to the field of play, more fans into the stands, more athletes to the podium, more sporting events to the province, and more supporters to the system. We can only do this if sport experiences are positive, inclusive, and safe.

We have made a commitment to develop long-term solutions to confront the systemic issue of maltreatment in sport, leading a safety in sport strategy in B.C. in alignment with the Red Deer Declaration for the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination and the Pathways to Sport: A Strategic Framework for Sport in British Columbia 2020–2025.

### **Play Safe B.C.**

Our safety in sport strategy was developed in consultation with over 100 organizations at all levels of sport in B.C., with sport system participants, with experts in the field, and with a review of the academic literature to understand what would make sport safer for everyone, including what has been done, what is working, what isn’t, and how viaSport British Columbia can further advance solutions that are tailored to organizational and system needs.

One of the key outcomes resulting from the strategic deliberations was the creation of the Play Safe B.C. program. Play Safe B.C. includes practical, accessible tools and resources to help participants at all levels understand and apply the principles of safety in amateur sport.

For sport organizations, Play Safe B.C. aims to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. It provides training opportunities, collaborative workshops, engagement opportunities for athletes and coaches, and conflict-and complaint-management tools. Play Safe B.C. is structured around four pillars of physical and psychological safety: prevention and awareness; reporting; management, and; compliance.

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<sup>4</sup> Willson, E., Kerr, G., Stirling, A., & Buono, S. (2021). “Prevalence of Maltreatment Among Canadian National Team Athletes.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1(23), 08862605211045096.

#### Four Pillars:

- Prevent: education and awareness about safety in sport;
- Report: how to report an incident;
- Respond: how incidents are managed; and
- Uphold: ongoing responsibility to create and implement safe practices in sport.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Participants understand the desired positive culture and the conditions that make sport safe, can identify prohibited behaviours in their environments, and feel empowered to act.
- Sport organizations have the structure, knowledge, skills, and resources to support safety in sport experiences.
- The B.C. sport system provides a vehicle for consistent safety in sport knowledge and messaging.

#### Our Progress and Actions

While there is much more work to be done before we reach our long-term goal of a culture that is truly respectful and safe for everyone, we have made solid progress in our journey toward greater safety in B.C. amateur sport, particularly across prevention and awareness.

Overall, we will continue our efforts in prevention by delivering awareness and education programs that help drive positive sport culture forward. These efforts support athletes, coaches, officials, parents, and bystanders to understand and recognize maltreatment and know what to do if they encounter or witness it. It offers leaders of sport organizations skills training and resources to deliver safer sport experiences. Read more about our progress [here](#).

#### Key Resources for safety in sport

viaSport British Columbia safety in sport: <https://www.viaSportBritishColumbia.ca/safe-sport>

British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct (BC UCC): [https://www.viaSportBritishColumbia.ca/sites/default/files/BC\\_UCC\\_2021.pdf](https://www.viaSportBritishColumbia.ca/sites/default/files/BC_UCC_2021.pdf)

The Canadian Sport Helpline: 1-888-83SPORT

Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/uccms>

Red Deer Declaration — For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/>

B.C. Pathways to Sport 2020–2025 Strategic Framework [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/sports-recreation-arts-and-culture/sports/bc\\_sport\\_framework.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/sports-recreation-arts-and-culture/sports/bc_sport_framework.pdf)

The viaSport British Columbia safety in sport position was developed in consultation with viaSport British Columbia's executive and staff, the Board of Directors, and the Safe Sport Working Group. As we

progress with our work, we will continue to seek guidance from the sport community and will update these pages with our progress.

For more information on viaSport British Columbia, please visit <https://www.viaSport British Columbia.ca/about-us>