

POSITION PAPER

CANADIAN ACADEMY OF SPORT AND EXERCISE MEDICINE ABUSE, HARASSMENT, AND BULLYING IN SPORT (December 2010)

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This position statement was prepared by the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) Women's Issues in Sport Medicine Committee. The accompanying discussion paper expands upon the concepts discussed.

Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine Position Statement: Abuse, Harassment, and Bullying in Sport

It is proposed that as supporters of safe and healthy performance environments, the sport medicine community may play an important role in maltreatment prevention. As such, it is essential that sport medicine specialists be educated on issues of abuse, harassment and bullying in sport, and be equipped with strategies to intervene if/when potential cases arise. This position statement seeks to provide the medical community with the knowledge to appropriately identify and address cases of abuse, harassment, and bullying, and proposes recommendations for the potential role of sport medicine professionals in athlete protection.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse

A pattern of physical, sexual, emotional or negligent ill-treatment by a person in a caregiver capacity (e.g. parent, coach) resulting in actual or potential harm to the athlete.

Harassment

Single or multiple acts of unwanted or coerced behaviours by a person within a prescribed position of authority over the athlete (e.g. coach, official, administrator) that have the potential to be harmful. Harassment occurs outside the context of a care giving relationship.



Bullying

A pattern of physical, verbal, or psychological behaviours between peers (e.g. teammates) that have the potential to be harmful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What should I do if an athlete discloses an experience of abuse, harassment, or bullying?

1. Listen carefully and calmly.
2. Do not speak poorly about the perpetrator.
3. Encourage the individual.
4. Avoid asking specific questions.
5. Assure the athlete that the maltreatment is not his/her fault.
6. Report.
7. Make a referral.

What should I do if I suspect a case of abuse, harassment, or bullying in sport, but I am not sure?

1. Look for signs and symptoms.
2. Report.

As a medical professional how can I help protect athletes from future cases of abuse, harassment and bullying?

1. Maintain focus on the well-being of the athlete.
2. Educate.
3. Ensure that the sport organization has in place a policy for athlete protection.
4. Foster strong partnerships with parents/caregivers in the prevention of athlete maltreatment.
5. Promote and support scientific research on these issues.

What can I do to protect myself from unwarranted allegations of abuse, harassment, or bullying?

1. Respect the professional boundaries involved with the physician-athlete relationship.

2. Ensure that your sport organization has preventative policies and codes of conduct in place.
3. Maintain accurate and timely records of physician / athlete encounters.