



How to Recognize, Reduce, and Respond to Harassment

What you need to know to protect athletes

Sport is an incredibly constructive outlet for individuals, in part because athletes are judged solely on their abilities and performance. In this environment, hard work, persistence and improvement are defining characteristics. Harassment based on race, gender or sexual orientation affects team cohesion, performance and an individual's ability to focus on building skills and enjoy competition. As with bullying and hazing, coaches and staff can create a supportive environment for sport by setting a zero-tolerance policy.

Definition

Harassment is a repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behavior intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, offend or degrade, create a hostile environment, or 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. It includes any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law.

Examples of Harassment

Physical offenses

- Hitting, punching, pushing, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant
- Throwing at, or hitting an athlete with objects, including sporting equipment

Non-physical offenses

- Making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete's sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color or ethnic traits
- Displaying offensive materials, gestures or symbols
- Withholding or reducing an athlete's playing time based on his or her sexual orientation