



## How to Recognize, Reduce, and Respond to Physical Misconduct

### What you need to know to protect athletes

- Almost all sports involve strenuous physical activity. In practices and competition, athletes regularly push themselves to the point of exhaustion. However, any activity that physically harms an athlete – such as direct contact with coaches or teammates, disciplinary actions or punishment – is unacceptable. Physical misconduct can extend to seemingly unrelated areas including inadequate recovery times for injuries and diet. Two of the best ways to promote safe conditions are to set clear boundaries and take a team approach to monitoring athletes.

### Definition

Physical misconduct involves contact or non-contact behavior that can cause physical harm to an athlete or other sports participants. It also includes any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect and assault).

### Exception

Physical misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching method of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance.

### Examples of Physical Misconduct

#### *Contact offenses*

- Punching, beating, biting, striking, choking or slapping an athlete
- Intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment
- Providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (U.S. law)
- Providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete
- Encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play prematurely or without the clearance of a medical professional, following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion)
- Prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for nutritional well-being and health of athlete

#### *Non-contact offenses*

- Isolating an athlete in confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space)
- Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g., requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface)
- Withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep.

*~As adapted from the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee*