



ATHLETICS. EQUALITY. CHANGE.

## **ADMINISTRATOR'S TOOLKIT**

**A 6-STEP GUIDE TO SAFETY & GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS**



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## ABOUT



### THE ADMINISTRATOR'S TOOLKIT

#### A 6-STEP GUIDE TO SAFETY AND GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS

Who do young athletes look up to? Who pushes them to achieve their dreams? Who shapes them, perhaps more than anyone other than their parents?

## COACHES.

Athletic coaches are some of the most important role models in the lives of their players. Every coach holds the responsibility of close, influential relationships with their players. This toolkit helps community-level athletic administrators educate their coaches to promote safety and gender equity in sports.

### WHAT IMPACT ARE YOU HAVING ON YOUR PLAYERS?

More young people are involved in sports than any other after school activity. In sports, youth learn about commitment, teamwork, and leadership—they also learn about the expectations surrounding their gender identities, and the way they think about and treat others. The players on your teams soak up the messages they hear from coaches, parents and everyone around them. These messages shape the decisions they make ON and OFF the field. What type of practice and game environment currently exists on your fields/courts/rinks? Do your coaches help boys develop into respectful, nonviolent, healthy young men? Are girls paired with role models that help them flourish as athletes and confident young women? Or are your coaches letting it slide when one boy calls another “pussy” or “bitch”? Are your coaches ignoring sexist comments directed towards female athletes because they don’t want to deal with it?

As athletic administrators, you are responsible for the athletic environment that shapes your players. Some of the factors, such as parents’ behavior, are at times out of your control. Let’s focus on what you can control—coaches’ education and expectations—to ensure their interactions with players are safe and positive.

When coaches change their behavior, it impacts the decisions players make today, tomorrow, and well into the future. Every athletic organization is a platform to mold and shape our youth. This guide gives you the resources you need.

## WHY DO WE COACH?



*Only an extremely small percentage, and likely none of the youth who participate in community athletics will go on to play professional sports. Likely, every single participant will go on to be a boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, husband, or wife. Athletics provides both a platform to instill competitiveness, grit, and hard work, as well as an understanding of healthy relationships and respect for women and girls.*

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

The rate of violence against women and children is staggering. Every day, three women across America are murdered by their boyfriends or husbands and every 25 seconds a woman or girl is raped.

Everybody knows a woman or girl who has experienced this type of violence in the past, or will experience it in the future. In addition to life threatening violence, harassment causing serious psychological harm is experienced by women and girls of all ages and backgrounds. Teen girls regard sexual harassment and abuse as a normal part of everyday life in middle and high schools. Approximately one in four 9th grade girls report the occurrence of “unwanted sexual comments, jokes and gestures.” Boys are also victims of sexual assault at a rate of 1 in 20, according to the Crimes Against Children Research Center. Violence against women and children has become normal in our communities.

### **IT STARTS YOUNG**

A body of research reveals that hyper-masculine sexist messages in media and peer culture strongly influence, even encourage, males to perceive women as objects—rather than individuals with equal value and worth. By the time a boy reaches age 14, he'll have seen thousands of sexist images from television, magazines, internet, and video games. These messages have a particularly strong influence on boys as their brains develop and their understanding of reality solidifies during adolescence.

### **SEXIST MESSAGES SHAPE BOYS' BELIEF SYSTEMS**

Sexist messages come in many forms, from overt objectification of a woman's body to subtle differences in the positioning of men relative to women in advertisements. Regardless of the intended consequence, these media messages affect male perceptions of women. But it takes more than media to shape a young boy's reality—it requires peers, role models, and adults to reinforce those sexist messages. The ongoing exposure to imagery that degrades, dehumanizes, objectifies, and exploits, coupled with reinforcement from peers and adults, leads to distorted beliefs that contribute to high rates of violence against women and children.

As coaches, mentors, and parents, we have a choice: **do we reinforce sexist messages, do we stay silent, or do we intentionally promote gender equity and safety?**



## BEING A PART OF THE SOLUTION

Imagine if every athletic coach in America taught ten young boys about gender equity and respect for women. The cumulative effect of this type of role modeling would be enormous. Small changes in the values and beliefs passed on to young people have an enormous impact on the cumulative future decisions of our youth. By intentionally passing on messages reinforcing the importance of healthy, nonviolent relationships, we can shape a future generation of young men committed to equality and ending violence against women and girls.

### USING THE ADMINISTRATOR'S TOOLKIT

This toolkit includes resources for Executive Directors, Club Presidents, Coaching Directors or other leaders of community athletic organizations. The resources included will teach your coaches to promote safety, respect, and gender equity with all players. This guide is meant to provide examples and a framework for the development of your organization's policies and procedures. Our previous work with the Minnesota State High School League, Arrowhead Youth Soccer Association, Winona Youth Soccer Association, and other sports organizations, has taught us that every organization is unique. We encourage you to work with us directly to tailor your approach to your specific community of coaches and players. Contact Men As Peacemakers at [info@menaspeacemakers.org](mailto:info@menaspeacemakers.org) or 218-727-1939 to get started.

### PROMOTING SAFETY AND GENDER EQUITY

Just as individual players on a team act and make decisions based on the rules and training they receive from their coach, the behavior of coaches is shaped by organizational rules and the training he or she receives. Coaches' behavior reflects the values, codes of conduct, and policies, of the athletic organization they are a part of. This guide provides athletic administrators with a roadmap to create an athletic organization where coaches produce competitive players and teams, while also promoting respect and gender equity.

The steps provided were compiled from case studies of athletic organizations that successfully embedded respect and gender equity into their organizational culture and are currently serving thousands of coaches and youth.



# STEP ONE

## SECURE BUY-IN FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*As any Executive Director, President, or Manager of an athletic organization knows, ultimately, they report to a Board of Directors or another a managing body. Allocating time and resources to anything requires buy-in and the support of the Board. Here are a few strategies for securing Board support:*

1. Define the organization's motivation for these efforts. Ask yourself and articulate in your own words why respect and gender equity are important and beneficial to the organization. For example, perhaps you want to increase the participation of girls and young women in your program and in order to achieve that you need to attract and retain more female coaches. Or, maybe parents have complained about negative interactions between coaches and players and your participant numbers are decreasing. Or, maybe your organizations is focused on supporting positive youth development beyond athletic skills.
2. Communicate with individual board members to gauge the level of support for these efforts. Stress the positive benefit to the organization and the community. Ask Board members to discuss with others to secure buy-in with likely supporters prior to engaging the entire group.
3. Once you've secured support from key Board allies, begin an open dialogue during a Board Meeting or at a Board retreat. Start with a concrete step: changing the organization's mission statement.





## STEP TWO

### REVISE THE ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement communicates the organization's purpose. By including a statement about the organization's commitment to gender equity, respect, and/or healthy relationships, it becomes a part of the organization's focus, thus allowing for time and resources to be directed towards these efforts.

*Consider bringing in an external facilitator to conduct meetings with interested Board members or form a committee devoted to shaping the mission statement. The process will be most beneficial if it's deliberate and occurs in a small group setting. After the group or committee develops the mission statement then it can be brought to the entire Board for discussion, changes, and approval. Example mission statements include:*

1. Our mission is to provide all youth an opportunity to participate and excel in the sport of football while developing healthy relationships, confidence, leadership, and respect for others.
2. Organization X strives to create a safe, fun, and nurturing environment that helps players grow in the sport of soccer while encouraging respectful relationships, sportsmanship, and respect for all people.

*Alternatively, if changing your entire mission statement is not possible, you may consider adding a phrase to your existing mission like, "...and promote respect for all people," or "and encourage healthy relationships."*



## STEP THREE

### SET EXPECTATIONS FOR COACHES



We recognize that individual organizations have different expectations for coaches. Try setting baseline requirements, by creating or adding to your coaches' code of conduct and coaches' conflict resolution guide.

A code of conduct ensures coaches understand their role includes both fostering athletic excellence as well as character development. Here's an example of a code of conduct that holds coaches accountable.

*Organization X wants to thank you for volunteering to coach a youth sports team. By following the guidelines listed below, you will enrich the season for yourself, your team and the families involved. A game should be friendly and unifying – a spirited social and athletic occasion for players, coaches, referees and spectators. We expect coaches to adhere to following:*

1. Coaches will serve as important role models in the lives of their players, promoting the equality of all people on and off the field.
2. Coaches will role model and promote respectful relationships, attitudes, and behaviors on and off the field.
3. Coaches will promote nonviolence, gender equity, and service to others.

*Considering adding additional content to your website and coaches' handouts to clarify their role:*

#### COACH, WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

1. As a coach, you play one of the most important roles in the lives of your players.
2. In sports, kids learn about grit, competition, commitment, teamwork, and leadership. They also learn about respecting themselves and others—including people of different races, abilities, and genders.\*
3. These messages are soaked up at a young age, and reinforced through adolescence, continually shaping decisions youth make in relationships with friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, and partners.
4. By promoting respect and gender equity rather than domination and violence, you will leave a lasting, positive impact on your players.

*\*For example, what message does this send: "Hey boys, MAN up! You're playing like a bunch of girls!" The message is clear: Girls are weak. Boys should be powerful. The last thing you want to be is a girl. Messages like these shape the way boys think about girls today, tomorrow, and in future relationships.*



## STEP 3 CONTINUED



Clear policies and procedures provide necessary direction to coaches when harmful situations arise. Create a **Conflict Resolution Guide** for coaches. The example below was adapted from the Winona Youth Soccer Association's conflict guide:

*Coaches can be faced with many different situations that need to be addressed to ensure that gender equity and mutual respect are promoted with players, parents, and coaches. It is not acceptable for coaches to 'turn a blind eye' to situations that they see or hear that may threaten the success of the team. Coaches need to take responsibility and apply the simple rule:*

***"If you see it or hear it, you own it!"***

### WHEN CONFLICTS ARISE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- How severe is the conflict?
- Where the conflict occurred? The practice field, during a game, traveling to a game?
- Who did it involve—players, parents, referees, coaches?
- Was the conflict face-to-face, by phone, text, social media?
- Who is available to support you in resolving the conflict?

### DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF CONFLICT:

Minor conflict: involves one or two players from the same team or another team; use of inappropriate language (swearing, shouting, gestures); showing disrespect to another person, player, coach, parent, referee; making fun of or teasing other individuals or groups; making inappropriate comments or insults; being overaggressive to other players; isolating other players and not being inclusive.

Moderate conflict: involves a person's gender, race, ethnicity or other personal traits/ characteristics such as sexual orientation, age or disability; using gender to insult; bragging/ jokes about sexual exploits; lewd or foul behavior (catcalls, whistling, sexual innuendo); derogatory language against women; intimidating or threatening behavior; continual harassment of another player.

Major conflict, e.g. physical violence (choking, slapping, punching, biting, etc); sexual violence (rape, unwanted or forceful touching, groping, coercing a person to engage in a sexual act against their will); use of a weapon to threaten or hurt or any actions that would put the individual in immediate danger.

## STEP 3 CONTINUED

### DECIDE WHO TO INVOLVE:

PARTIES TO INVOLVE	MINOR CONFLICT	MODERATE CONFLICT	MAJOR CONFLICT	CONTACT DETAILS
Coach and Player	•	•		
Coach, Assistant Coach and Player	•	•		
Coach, Parent and Player	•	•		
Coach and Team	•	•		
Coach and Parents	•	•	•	XXXX
Coaching Director		•	•	XXXX
Local Club Official		•	•	XXXX
State Club Official			•	XXXX
Law Enforcement*			•	911
County Community Services – Mandated Reporting **			•	XXXX

*\*If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger, contact your local law enforcement agency right away. If the child is not in immediate danger, contact your County Community Services and alert your Club Director.*

*\*\*Mandated reporting laws vary by state. Consult your local Community Services or Health and Human Services Office before adding requirements. Generally, laws require professionals and their delegates who work with children to make a child protection report if they know or have reason to believe:*

- *A child is being neglected or abused, or*
- *A child has been neglected or abused within the preceding three years.*

### ADDRESS THE CONFLICT

- Prepare for the conversation: think about what you want to say, how to say it and what message you want to convey.
- Address the issue immediately: your silence condones the behavior.
- Find an appropriate place to have the conversation: quiet, away from other players if necessary, but always within sight of other adults.
- Never be alone one-on-one with any player.
- Involve your Assistant Coach or other witnesses as appropriate.
- Don't judge and listen openly to what the player has to say.
- Validate the allegation by talking to witnesses or reviewing documentation.
- Remain calm, respectful and use appropriate language.
- Be consistent and fair: don't treat your 'star' player any differently to your other players.
- Consider your response carefully, e.g. player apology, send home, suspend from practices and/ or games.
- Do not overstep your boundaries and involve the parents and Club Officials if necessary.
- Follow up and watch for any continuation of the conflict and address again if required.
- If a major conflict occurs document all details in writing and call 911 if you suspect a child is in immediate danger.



## STEP FOUR

### EDUCATE COACHES

*Coaches are the most important role models in the lives of their players. You can help ensure they are leaving a lasting, positive impact on your players. Men As Peacemakers' suite of resources for your coaches includes:*



- Coaching for Change - an online learning module that provides a crash course in coaching respect and gender equity.
- Coaches' Insert - a preventative guide to promoting messages of respect and gender equity with players.
- Awareness Guide - a reference that gives coaches the tools necessary to recognize harm and take appropriate action.

All materials are available [www.menaspeacemakers.org/impact](http://www.menaspeacemakers.org/impact).

Before your season starts, provide your coaches with a timeline and list of requirements:

### ONLINE TRAINING

- Coaching for Change (Community Athletics version)  
To access the training go to: <http://www.menaspeacemakershost.org/communitycoachingforchange/login/login.php>  
Click 'Create an Account' to get started.  
The training must be completed prior to the in-person orientation.

### ORIENTATION TRAINING

- Why are we focusing on respect and gender equity?
- Understanding gender violence and how coaches can use their role to impact their athletes.
- Dialog with coaches on situations and scenarios they would see on the sidelines and in interactions with players and parents.
- Introduction to IMPACT coaches' resources

### TURN YOUR LEARNING INTO ACTION DURING THE SEASON

- Access the IMPACT Coaches' Insert and Awareness Guide online at [www.menaspeacemakers.org/impact](http://www.menaspeacemakers.org/impact)

### END OF SEASON DEBRIEF

- Discuss challenges and successes



## STEP FIVE

### EDUCATE PARENTS AND DEVELOP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

*Communicating with parents and developing community partnerships can be beneficial. Create a simple parent code of conduct that is available on your website and provided as a handout during parent information sessions:*

#### CODE OF CONDUCT:

1. Promote a positive, competitive, and safe environment during games
2. Do not yell at individual players, referees, or coaches
3. Promote respect
4. Do not use sexist, vulgar, or degrading language

Consider providing parents with a letter that describes your organizations commitment to respect and gender equity and also references the parent code of conduct.

*Dear parents,*

*Thank you for choosing X organization. Our goal is to ensure your child has a positive, safe, and rewarding experience in the sport of X.*

*Our organization strives to develop competitive athletes. We also recognize sports are critical to positive youth development. We are committed to improving our community by generating athletes of great character. As a result, we are providing coaches with trainings and resources to help them promote self-confidence, respect, and healthy relationships.*

*We want coaches to promote the success of players ON and OFF the field/rink/court.*

*We have also developed a parent code of conduct that ensures a positive environment for all athletes.*

It is an unfortunate reality that many youth, including the children on your teams, witness domestic violence at home and may themselves be victims of abuse. By connecting with community organizations that are experts in violence against women and children you can help reduce the harm. Look for opportunities to communicate with organizations that serve victims of domestic violence and child abuse. You can find your local organizations through a simple search for “domestic violence” or “sexual violence” and your community or county name. Consider providing links to these organizations somewhere on your website.





## STEP SIX

# 6

### SHAPE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Players' development is shaped by the physical environments in which they practice and play. Just like food nourishes the development of muscles, every image, comment, and message they receive—positive or negative—nourishes the development of their beliefs, values, and behaviors. Think about what makes up the physical environment at practices and game spaces. Are there advertisements, music, or maybe clothing with messages on them? Make sure the imagery and messaging that shape the physical environment reflects respect and gender equity. A positive slogan printed on jerseys, like "Respect for All," provides a constant reminder of positive behavior. Banners on fields remind spectators, parents, and coaches to be conscious of their behavior and language.

### MEN AS PEACEMAKERS CAN PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

- Banners for fields/rinks/courts.
- Slogans adaptable language and graphics that can be added and added to patches, jerseys, bags, water bottles, and more.







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