



ATHLETE PROTECTION PROGRAM

The following recommendations are provided as an initiative of the USASF Mentoring Leaders program through the USASF National Advisory Board. Program owners are encouraged to incorporate these ideas into their overall safety plan for their organization.

Gym Owners & Coaches

Steps on protecting your business

1. Background Checks
 - Professional background checks and membership should be done on every staff member

2. Never let a coach be alone in the gym or in a car
 - Always try to have the opposite sex coach in the gym or multiple coaches
 - Giving a ride should be done by the same sex

3. Social Media & Appearance
 - Should still keep a professional relationship
 - Should keep appropriate hours
 - Watch pictures going up in the gym and on social media (ex. Body positions)

4. Cell phones & Email
 - Have a gym line and email address so personal life stays separate
 - Having these takes out any secretiveness and can always be protected

5. Body language
 - Hugs should be short and or to the side
 - Shouldn't hold hands
 - Watch hand placement and tickling
 - Shouldn't talk about body parts
 - Shouldn't sit on laps

Common Characteristics

What to look for

Be wary, but not paranoid, of adults who have one or several of these behaviors. Everyone thinks that there is an “image”...there is no “image” of a child predator.

- Refusal to take responsibility for actions and blames others or circumstances for failures
- A sense of entitlement
- Low self-esteem
- Need for power and control
- Lack of empathy
- Skilled at manipulation and linguistics
- Having no remorse

What to do

1. You do not want to further alarm the child. Stay calm. Your reaction and attitude will play a key role in your child's healing.
2. Call the police or sheriff's office immediately. The one who is responsible for this will probably do it again
3. Respect the child's privacy. Find a private place and listen to their story.
4. Share the information only with those who need to hear about it.
5. Continue to affirm the child and explain that they have done nothing wrong. Children easily assume the guilt and responsibility for what happened.
6. Get counseling/therapy for the child.

Social Media Awareness

Recommendations for Athletes

Social media is a wonderful outlet for cheerleaders in our industry to connect, share stories, ideas and pictures. When used appropriately, it can be a fun and creative way to shed light and positivity on our industry. However, as the digital age continues to flourish, the anonymous nature of social networking profiles can sometimes be dangerous. Here are a few tips to minimize the potential threat of a predator and ways to keep your profile safe and classy.

- ❖ Use your PRIVACY settings. You do not have to be “friends” or accept viewers you don’t know on social media. Always check profiles before accepting anyone you may not know personally.
- ❖ Do not hesitate to BLOCK anyone that continues to reach you against your will. If you have a bad feeling about someone, chances are you should. *Trust your intuition.*
- ❖ Remember that no trusted adult will ask a child or minor to send them pictures, or engage in a personal or flirtatious conversation. If you are approached in this way, tell your parent or a trusted adult immediately.
- ❖ Watch your language on social media. That doesn’t just mean “no curse words”. If you wouldn’t say something in front of your parents or a five year old, it should not be put in 140 characters or less. Stay positive, uplifting, and encouraging with your words. Personal strength and integrity are barriers against the manipulation of a predator.
- ❖ Remember that your photos are a representation of who you are. Don’t post anything that can reflect poorly on you, your parents, your gym, or your future. Once pictures are posted online, they are out there forever, regardless if you decide to delete them one day.
- ❖ Your awesome flexibility can be seen in the gym, during competition, and on your team’s private facebook page (see below for examples of tasteful and positive photos to display). As much as you would like to show off your skill on social media, remember that these types of pictures are targets for potential predators and exploitation of your body. Think before you post.

