

Responding To Reports of Red-Flags



As a supervisor, you may receive two types of reports: reports of abuse and reports of red-flags, like policy violations or inappropriate or suspicious behaviors. For reports of abuse, contact your local law enforcement agency and your Athlete Protection Officer. For reports of red-flags, consider these guidelines:

1. Respond quickly.

A child's safety may be in jeopardy and a delay in action could allow abuse to occur. Red-flags can quickly lead to abuse. That means you need to respond right away, no matter how busy you are.

2. Find out as much as you can about the situation.

Get as much information as you can from the person making the report and from any others who may have relevant information, like co-workers. You may also find it helpful to review personnel records to determine if this is a first time report or a recurrence.

3. Review your findings with management.

Because your actions can have serious legal implications, it's always a good idea to review what you've learned with your supervisor and/or the Board and to discuss what steps should be taken next.

4. Based on what you find out, take the necessary disciplinary action.

Follow your organization's progressive disciplinary procedure for dealing with policy violations.

5. Thoroughly document what you learned from your investigation and what actions you took in response.

Documentation can be crucial if you must later prove that you exercised due diligence in acting on a red-flag or report of inappropriate or suspicious behavior.

6. Decide who else needs to know about the situation.

You may need to advise other coaches or the parents of the children involved. Other coaches may have heard rumors or have questions that you can put to rest. Parents may need information to allay any fears they may have and to discuss the situation with their children. Most people appreciate being in the know directly, rather than hearing stories through the rumor mill.

7. Use the situation to strengthen training, monitoring and supervision and your policies.

Incidents teach us a great deal if we let them. Use what happened in this situation to ask yourself, "How could this happen?" as well as, "What did we do well?" Maybe you'll see that your coaches need more training on how to supervise children or how to respond if they see a red flag. Don't let an incident go by without learning something from it so you can do an even better job in the future.