

Writing Effective Club Policies

Safety Champion Series #1



Risk Management-- Assessing Your Vulnerabilities

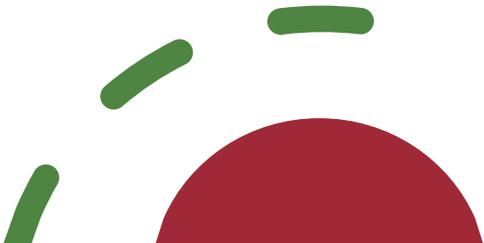




What is Risk Management

- Risk is defined as “the chance of injury, damage or loss.”
- Risk Management is defined as “reducing the chances of injury, damage or loss by taking steps to identify, measure and control risks.”

Primary Categories of Risk

- Injury
 - Staff misconduct
 - Property damage/loss
 - Negative public relations
 - Travel
 - Instruction/Supervision
- 

Most Important
Areas of
Responsibility
for Sports Clubs



Strategies for Controlling Risk

Risk acceptance

- Likelihood of the event is small (ex: Flooding in a non-flood zone)
- Risk is acceptable (Ex: staff transporting athletes)

Risk Mitigation

- Follow a maintenance schedule for equipment
- Video management
- Cloud based document retention
- Fire drills
- Professional development
- Insurance and lawyer on retainer

Risk Transfer

- Insurance
- Waivers of liability

Risk avoidance

- Inclement weather policy
- Level up policies



Assessing your risk level

What is meant by 'Risk Level'?

'Risk Level' is the chance — Low, Medium or High — that somebody could be harmed by hazards within your club, with an indication of how serious the harm might be.

- **Low:** Unlikely, although conceivable
- **Medium:** Could occur sometimes
- **High:** Could occur quite easily

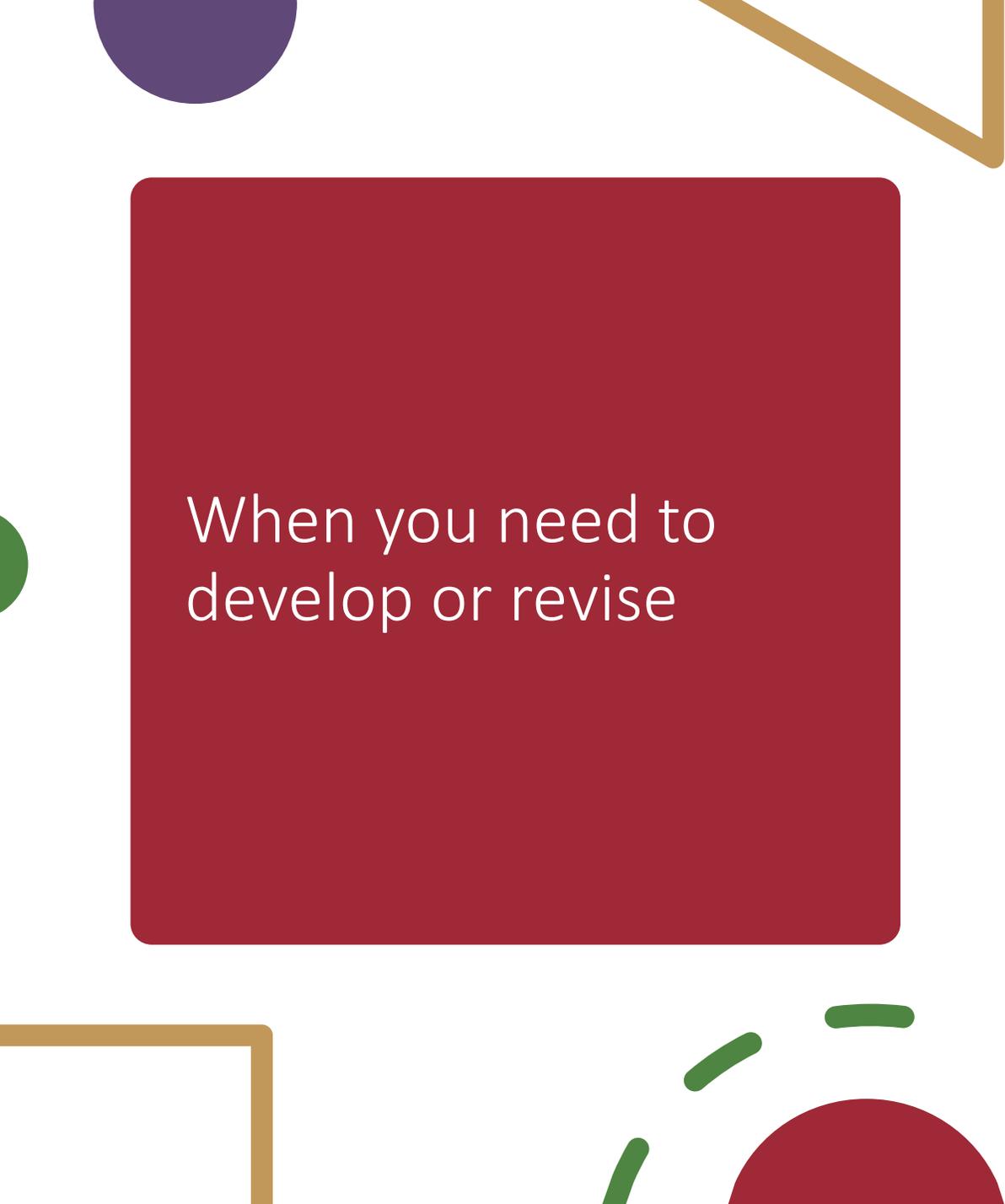
Policy—The When
and Why



Policies: Why you need them and what they can do for you

- Links vision to operations
- Spells out expectations and sequence of events
- Allows you to attract the people you want involved in your club
- Sets the standard for communication, chain of command, and consequences
- Helps manage financial and human resources
- Projects positive image toward the community
- Improves trust with your parents





When you need to
develop or revise

- New laws/regulations
 - New technology
 - Trends identified
 - Staff or customer turnover
 - Confusion
 - To set the tone
 - Outdated
- 



Which policies do you need?

- Ask yourself these questions:
 - What policies are required by law? (e.g., mandatory reporting, labor)
 - What policies are required for purposes of membership status? (e.g., SafeSport, fees)
 - What policies are required by regulators? (e.g., childcare, afterschool, funders)
 - Are there any recurring instances or issues in the organization that could best be addressed by a policy? (e.g., drop off/pick up, parental viewing, bathroom monitoring)
 - What policies are needed for purposes of risk management? (e.g., equipment maintenance, protection of private information, access to images of minors)
 - What lessons would you prefer to not repeat?

Different types

Standard
organization wide

Internal Processes

Stakeholder specific
(e.g.,parent, athlete,
staff, volunteer)

Program specific

Event specific

Topic Specific
(equipment
maintenance,
technology, security)

Disaster Continuity

Developmental Stages of Policy Development

- Identify the potential problem
 - What could go wrong?
- Who does it apply to? (staff, parents, athletes)
- Measure
 - What is the likelihood and what is the liability? Is this a priority?
- Control
 - How do we keep it from happening?
 - How do we mitigate the severity when it happens?
- Research/Solicit Input
 - Is it working? How will we know?

Questions to consider:

1. Who has a stake in a particular policy?
2. Who is the owner?
3. How and when will it be communicated?
4. When will it be reviewed?
5. How will you know it was read?

Setting the Tone

- Do the policy handbooks include the mission and values of the organization?
- Is there a statement of the importance of open communication and reporting?
- Do all stakeholders feel welcome and safe by the tone of policies?
- Is there a statement on the importance of health and safety?
- Is there a statement of inclusion?
- Do policies appear to be fair for all stakeholder groups?



Necessary Club Policies--Business Protection

Internal Business

- Hiring/Screening Practices
- Job descriptions
- Equal opportunity
- Conflict of interest
- Photo and video release
- Method of reporting low level concerns
- Protection of private information
- Documentation
- Document retention
- Compensation/Benefits
- Inclement weather
- Video Management

Stakeholder Expectations

- Code of conduct
- Harassment
- Mandatory Reporting
- Accident/Injury protocol
- Methods of communication
- Social media usage and guidelines
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Sick leave
- Professional boundaries



Staff Policies=Staff Expectations

- Staff
 - Code of Conduct
 - Confidentiality
 - Misconduct Overview
 - 1:1 (Electronic communication, gifting, etc.)
 - Travel
 - Private lessons
 - Parental communication
 - Discipline
 - Reporting
 - Professional Development Expectations
 - Preinjury planning and post injury response
 - Employee specific (pay, time off)

Examples of Common Club Policies

Parent

- Financial expectations w/refund policies
- Return to play following injury
- Missed practices/time off
- Required meetings
- Code of Conduct/spectator viewing
- Communication Protocols
- Reporting
- Booster Club/fundraising responsibilities
- Picking up/dropping off
- Team selection
- Engagement

Athlete

- Anti-Bullying/Anti-hazing
- Sportsmanship
- Level Up expectations
- Reporting
- Dress code
- Practice expectations
- Team selection

Writing Policy—The How



Policies vs. Procedures

Policy

- Widespread application
- General in nature
- Describes who it covers
- Doesn't change w/out thorough evaluation
- Addresses the "what" and "why"

Procedure

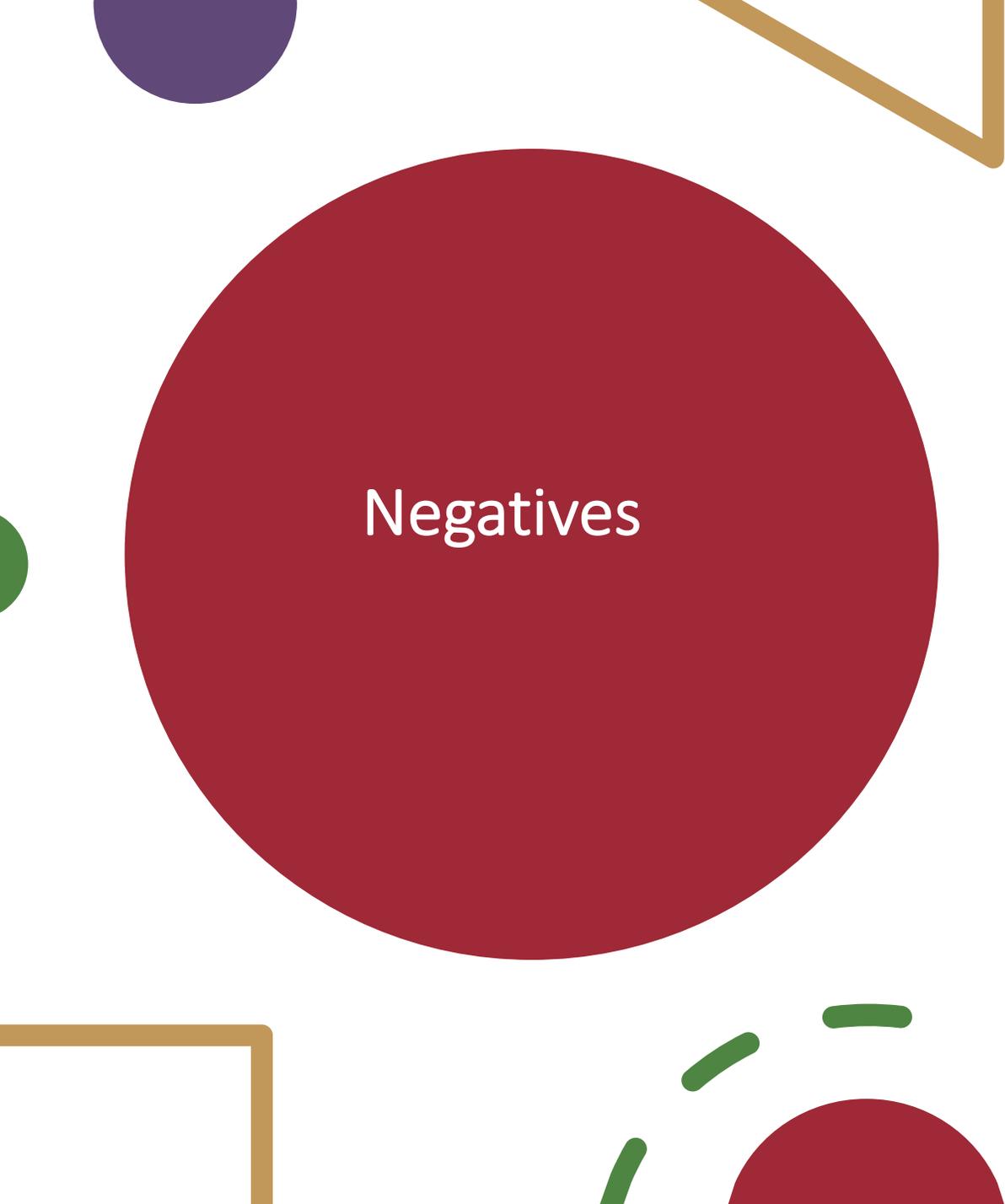
- Prone to change
- States "how", "when", and "who"
- Describes process
- Identifies specific actions
- Sets timelines

Basic Rules of Writing Policy

- Use Similar Formatting
- Limit length
- Use succinct language
- Use bullets, lists and charts when you can
- Link to referenced documents
- Include a glossary
- Use clear titles
- Write in third person
- Refer to individuals by role/avoid names

What is the expectation?

Who does it apply to?



Negatives

As opposed to negative, stick with the expectation.

Example 1

- N: “You may not contact athletes through social media”
- E: “All communication with athletes must occur through club approved applications.”

Example 2

- N: “Parents may not talk to their child during practice!”
- E: “For the safety of the athletes and coaches, parents may only communicate with their children in the event of an emergency. If a parent needs to speak with their child for non-emergency purposes, they must inform the front desk attendant who will then inform the coach.”



Dismissive tones or ambiguity

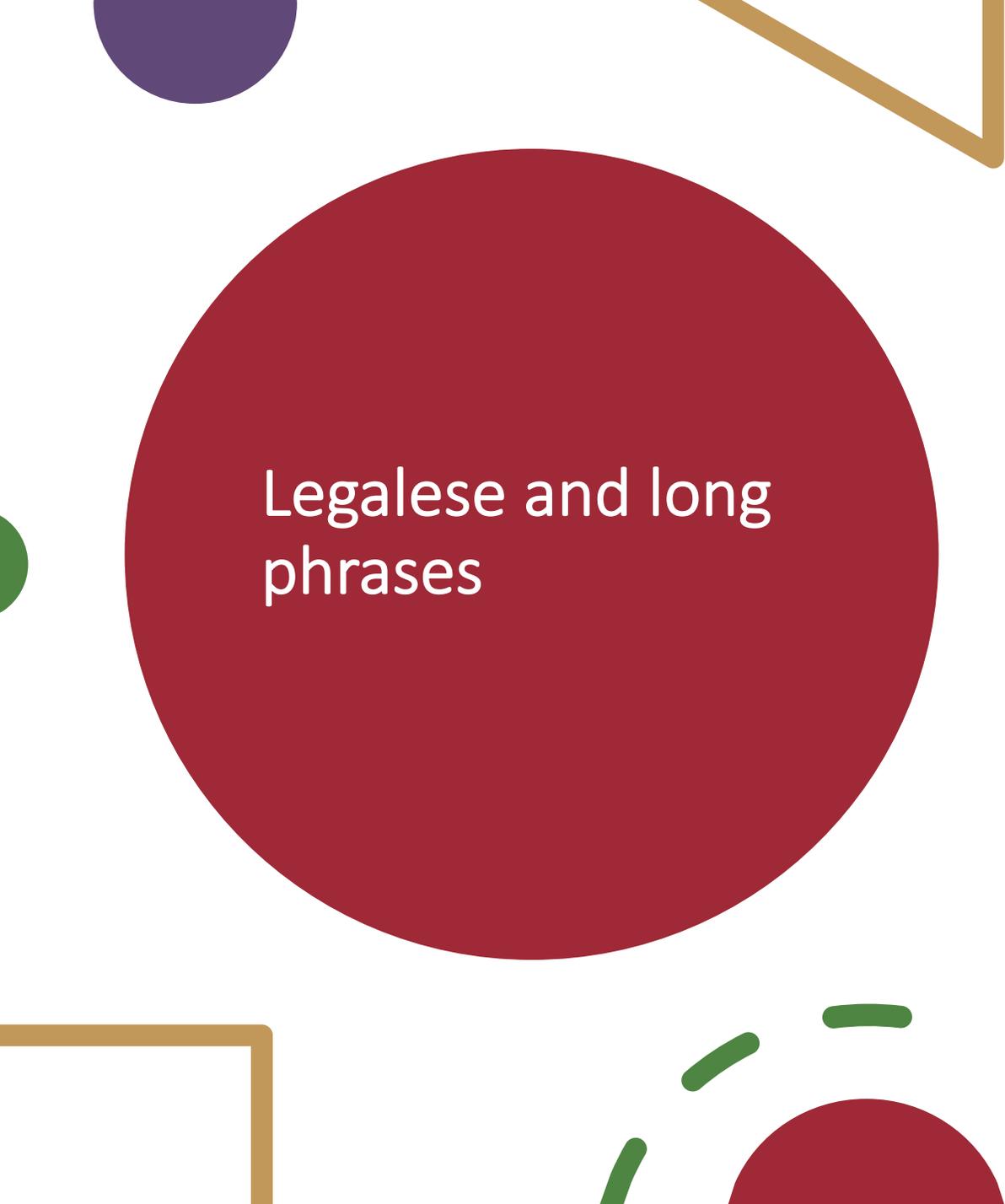
As a general rule...

Avoid "should" and "would"

Use "must" for an obligation, "must not" for a prohibition, "may" for a discretionary action, and "should" for a recommendation.

Example

- W: "Coaches should avoid the locker rooms when athletes are changing."
- S: "Coaches must not enter the locker rooms when athletes are changing, unless they are the assigned monitor or in the event of an emergency."



Legalese and long phrases

Legalese is like a complicated math problem...and most people don't like math. Avoid words that aren't used in daily language for better understanding by your client base and staff.

Example

- "In accordance with school policy and team agreements signed by all parents prior to participation, for the purposes of fair play for all athletes, the terms herein based on the above-mentioned receipt of acknowledgment that \$350 of fair share fundraising is due by May 1."
- "\$350 of fair share fundraising is due by May 1."



Communication...It
Doesn't Matter if
No One Knows
About it

Putting policy into action

- Who needs to know about it?
- Who is accountable?
- What are the methods of communication?
- How will you know policy has been read and understood?
- How will you know if the policy is being followed?
- What is your feedback mechanism?

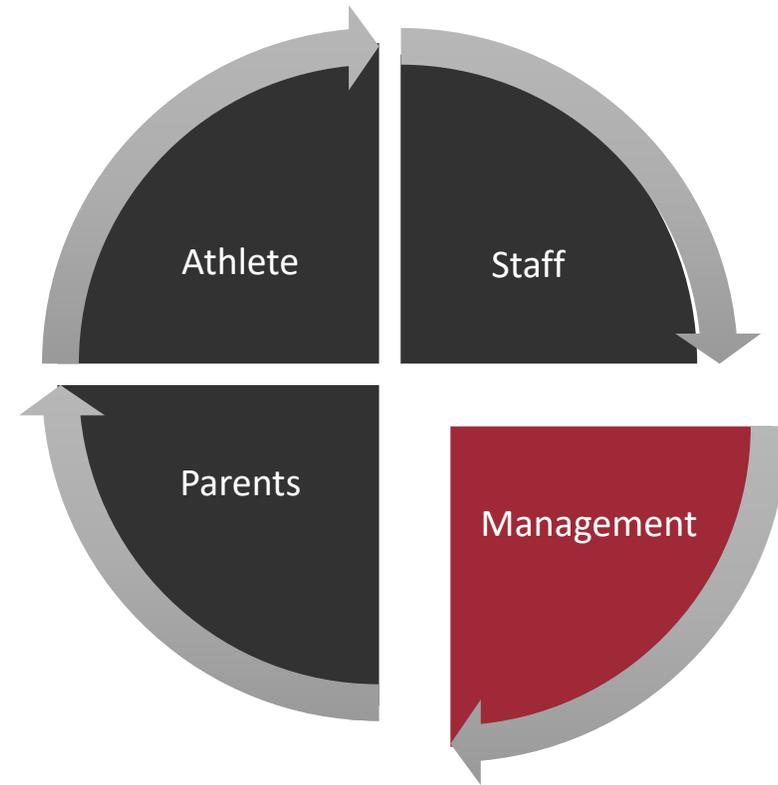
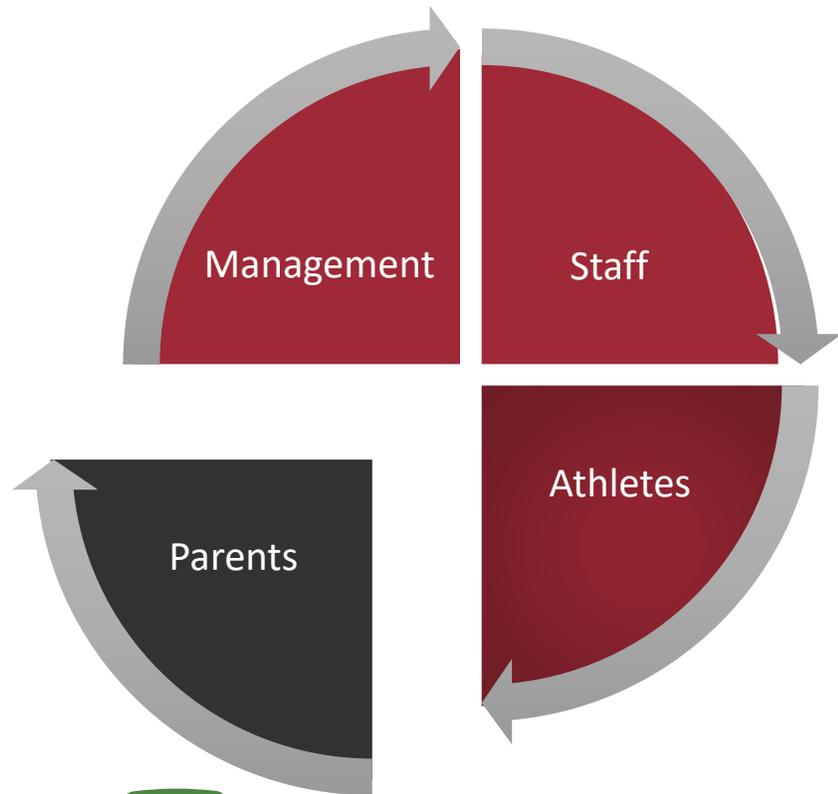
“But they signed it.”



How is your policy communicated?



When the communication circle breaks



Incident Reporting

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____



Incident Reporting General Guidelines

Incident reports can be initiated by any staff member or volunteer

All staff must be trained when the incident report is used, how to complete it, and where to turn it in

Management should devise a system for retention of reports

Management response is a written part of all incident reports

Collection of necessary data from incident reports will allow management to assess needed and outdated policies

Incident reports are not a group project!

Incident Reports should be completed immediately following the adverse event. Do not wait!

Incident Reporting Necessities

Incidents that usually require reports

- Injury
- Damage to property
- Theft
- Cybersecurity issues
- Staff Misconduct
- Threats by parents
- Anytime police, child services or 911 is called
- Athlete on athlete bullying

Whenever an unexpected or adverse event occurs

Necessary Information

- Date/Time
- Location
- Detailed/clear description
- Factual/without conjecture
- Who it happened to
- Witnesses
- Damage/Injury description
- Photo/video (if applicable)
- Response
- Weather/temperature (if applicable)
- Noise level (if applicable)
- Signatures
- Follow up



When/Where	People Involved	Witnesses	Description of Incident	Response	Management Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date • Time • Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of person completing form • Name and role of anyone directly involved • Age of minors involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who saw it • Who heard it • Who responded to it • How many people were around the incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First person • Factual • Detailed • Atmosphere • Photos • Video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate actions taken • People called (Police, 911, parents) • Report number/name of responder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors notified (insurance, plumbing, electrical, security, attorney) • Parent notification and response • Regulator notification • Resolution

Do not use conjecture, opinions, or reference past incidences

Examples of Incorrect Statements

Incorrect

“She said she hurt her ankle, BUT I believe she was lying.”

“When I arrived in the morning, I noticed the door was left unlocked by the night staff.”

“Susie’s mom began yelling in the lobby, because she feels that her daughter is being treated unfairly and threatened to call Safe Sport, although there is no reason to call Safe Sport.”

Correct

“She stated she hurt her ankle. I assessed for injury and found no swelling or redness.”

“When I arrived in the morning, the door was unlocked.”

“Ms. Smith began yelling in the lobby after she was told that she couldn’t schedule anymore private lessons with Coach Bob. She stated that her daughter was being treated unfairly and threatened to call SafeSport.”



Correct

“While working with an athlete at the vault, I saw Steve Smith (minor 12 years old) fall from the high bar, while working on his routine. The athletes were training between vault and High bar between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. I ran over to the mat where he was holding his arm. The arm appeared to be broken by evidence of the swelling. Steve was crying and shaking. I had Coach Becky Peters call 911, while Coach Tyler Thompson called Steven’s parents. I had another athlete go get ice, while I stayed with Steven to help him calm down. The paramedics arrived and took Steve to the hospital, allowing me to ride with him. His mother met us at the hospital. Per policy, practice was cancelled for the rest of the night for reasons of staffing and to complete necessary paperwork. All athletes contacted their parents and the gym was closed at 8:15 p.m.”

Management Response:

“During the incident involving Steve Smith, the following staff were on duty: T. Smith, Head Coach, C.Jones., Men’s Coach F. Thomas., Desk Receptionist, B. Peters, Level 7 Women’s Coach

I was not at the gym during the incident involving Steve Smith. I was called immediately following 911 and parental notification. I immediately headed to the gym to aid in the closing of the gym. I made sure all staff involved completed incident reports and to secure a copy of the video of the incident. The next morning, I contacted “ABC Insurance” to report the incident and ask for guidance. A staff meeting was held the following afternoon to review injury policy and protocol. We had the kids write cards for Steven and I hand delivered them to his mother.”



Final Thoughts: Be Careful of the Pitfalls and Don't Over Complicate!

- Static and shelved
- Created from the top down
- Not communicated to all stakeholders
- Inconsistent application
- When policies for the athletes and parents are more comprehensive than the staff
- Policy without procedure
- Outdated and unnecessary policy

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Thank You!

Next Safety Champion Webinar:

“Supervising Coaches Who Are Also Teens”

For more information:

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