

Recognizing, Reducing and Responding to Misconduct and Creating a Healthy, Supportive Environment for Junior Orienteers and all participants

Adults working with juniors need to prevent bullying, harassment, and hazing, as well as emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct. The absence of clear behavioral boundaries is a significant risk factor for misconduct. If inappropriate conduct is not clearly defined, unacceptable situations and behaviors may result in serious physical, psychological and/or emotional harm. A protection policy creates a safe and positive environment for all athletes/participants. It also emphasizes and sets forth standards of conduct that clearly describe unacceptable behaviors, minimizes opportunities for misconduct, and helps to prevent unfounded allegations.

It is the policy of the Quantico Orienteering Club that board members, volunteers, athletes, and participants shall refrain from all forms of misconduct, including:

BULLYING: An intentional, persistent, and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate the targeted athlete(s)/participants. These behaviors include: hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, slapping, throwing at, or hitting an athlete/participant with any objects. Bullying also includes such behaviors as teasing, ridiculing, intimidating, spreading rumors, or making false statements using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (cyberbullying).

HARASSMENT: Any isolated or repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, offend or degrade, create a hostile environment or reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability.

HAZING: Coercing, requiring, forcing, or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members.

PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT: Contact or noncontact conduct that results in, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to an athlete or other sports participants, or any act or conduct described as physical abuse. Physical misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete/participant performance. High-fives and side hugs celebrating a good performance or consoling an individual who is dissatisfied or unhappy with their performance, are not considered physical misconduct.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is forced, coerced, manipulated, or perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner. Any sexual interaction with an athlete/participant where there is an imbalance of power is always inappropriate. *Note: An imbalance of power is ALWAYS assumed between a coach and an athlete/participant.* Any sexual interaction between an adult (18 years of age or older) and a minor (under 18 years of age) is strictly prohibited. Touching offenses include fondling, and any sexual contact. Discussion of sex lives, sexual activities, exchange of sexual materials and pictures, sexting and similar behaviors are not permitted.

EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT: Any verbal or physical act that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to the athlete/participant, including denial of attention or support. Emotional misconduct includes insults or repeated derogatory remarks, repeated yelling or banging, throwing items, and other intimidating behaviors.

Every responsible adult and junior captain must act to protect our juniors. Everyone must be aware of high-risk activities and areas, appropriate one-to-one interactions, and prohibited one-to-one interactions, and take appropriate measures if they suspect there is an issue.

During training and competition, one-to-one interactions should be minimized to create a safe environment and to protect athletes/participants and leaders. Individual meetings should generally occur in publicly visible, open areas such as spectator areas, pavilions, parking lots, hotel lobbies or restaurants. If a meeting occurs in a room, the door should remain unlocked and ajar. If a person is given individual training sessions, it should be with different coaches so that there aren't opportunities for an individual to groom someone toward inappropriate behavior. Generally, the "rule of three" should be used: one adult with more than one junior, or one junior with more than one adult.

Appropriate physical contact takes place in public thereby limiting the potential for physical or sexual intimacies. Physical contact is to be only for the benefit of the athlete, not the emotional or other needs of an adult. Appropriate physical contact includes such things as positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination, positioning an orienteer's fingers and thumbs on a map with a compass, releasing muscle cramps, bandaging a wound or removing a tick or thorn from a location the athlete cannot reach or taping an ankle or wrist.

It is appropriate to express the joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts such as high-fives, fist bumps, brief hugs and pats on the back. It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete/participant (e.g., someone who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly embracing someone who is crying, putting an arm around the person while verbally engaging them in an effort to console them, or lifting a fallen athlete/participant off the ground and dusting them off to encourage them to continue competition.

Inappropriate contact includes such things as asking or having an athlete sit in the lap, lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact, physical contact meant to discipline, punish, or achieve compliance from an athlete, cuddling, or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel, or overnight stay, tickling, horseplay, or wrestling, or any continued physical contact that may make an athlete/participant uncomfortable, whether expressed verbally or not.

Changing areas for orienteering athletes/participants can be an issue. Common sense practices should rule and recording devices shall not to be used at any time while an athlete/participant is changing. One adult should not be changing in proximity to one youth, especially out of a public area, and males and females should dress and undress in separate areas.

When an individual is not abiding by the norms of behavior defined within this policy, their actions MUST be reported to a supervisor or member of the Safety Committee. Violations will be addressed under the club's disciplinary rules and procedures. In addition, any persons affiliated with QOC, who are designated as Junior Coaches or assistants must consent to completing a criminal background check at the expense of QOC.

In summary, junior athletes/participants should feel safe. If they feel that something is strange or not right, they should be encouraged to discuss this with other responsible adults or team leaders. Coaches, chaperones, or leaders involved in working with juniors, are on the front line of keeping our juniors safe. It is important that they act, if they feel that something is not right or that these policies are being violated. If you suspect there is a potential problem, please discuss your concerns with the coach or a member of the Safety Committee (see the list below), or another responsible adult. The Quantico Orienteering Club is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its junior orienteers and all event participants.

The QOC Safety Committee consists of the following members:

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