

## CREATING INCLUSIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENTS



*In inclusive sport environments, no one has to change to fit in. These suggestions can help your team, club, or facility be inclusive for people of all abilities, races, cultural backgrounds, and gender and sexual identities.*

### PROMOTE AGE-APPROPRIATE AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

- ❑ Encourage athletes to set physical and emotional boundaries. Respect the boundaries they set.
- ❑ Talk to athletes about why something is happening, how it will happen, and give them options when appropriate.
- ❑ Give athletes with disabilities the help they request, not the help someone assumes they need.

### MODEL OPEN AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

- ❑ Talk with the team often about your expectations for the team climate, including the importance of respecting others.
- ❑ Learn how to pronounce names that you find difficult. Actively encourage athletes to respect each other's cultural practices.
- ❑ Establish standard processes for dealing with disagreements, conflicts, and intentional and unintentional harm. Refer back to them throughout the season.
- ❑ Communicate in ways each athlete can understand. You may or may not be aware of each athlete's learning needs. Using clear, simple language makes it easier for everyone to understand.

### MODEL RESPECT, EQUITY, AND INTEGRITY

- ❑ Do not manipulate or exploit power imbalances.
- ❑ Have open, age-appropriate conversations about how issues of oppression such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism may be affecting them.
- ❑ Get to know each athlete as an individual you are helping to learn and grow, not solely as a means to winning. Value the unique contributions they bring to the team or organization.
- ❑ Invite athletes to share their names and pronouns. Keep in mind that some states' laws and organizations' policies require parental permission before using minors' names and pronouns. But an athlete may not be out to everyone. Be up front about what information you must share with parents according to your state's laws or organization's policies. Work with your athletes to make choices that respect their identities and keep them safe.

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### CREATE A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

- ❑ Remind athletes that everyone brings stress and trauma from their day-to-day lives into their sport activities. Check in with them regularly.
- ❑ If an athlete is acting out or breaking rules, consider what factors may be affecting their behavior before you decide on consequences.
- ❑ Address harmful behaviors, even if they are not policy violations, to maintain a safe and supportive environment for all athletes.

### ENSURE AN ACCESSIBLE SPORT ENVIRONMENT AND EXPERIENCE

- ❑ Give each athlete what they need to be successful, rather than treating all athletes the same.
- ❑ Review policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers for participation.
- ❑ Create alternate formats for policies, schedules, rules, and other important information. Use simplified language when possible.
- ❑ Advocate for equipment and physical environments that are accessible to all.