

TIPS FOR CREATING A POSITIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT



Use these tips to help you create a positive environment in which athletes can perform at their full potential and where abuse and misconduct are not tolerated.

- ❑ **Set behavioral expectations with athletes** (and parents/guardians of minor athletes) up front. Be sure your expectations are age and developmentally appropriate. Give examples of positive behaviors you would like to see as well as inappropriate behaviors and their consequences.
- ❑ **Model appropriate and respectful behavior** with athletes, parents, officials, and other coaches. Do not use slurs or other demeaning language when talking to or about others.
- ❑ **Create an environment that welcomes athletes of every background.** For example, learn how to pronounce names that you find difficult. Actively encourage athletes to respect each other's cultural practices.
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **Be aware of athletes' age and developmental level** when talking to them. Using clear, simple language makes it easier for everyone to understand.
- ❑ **Pay attention to the safety needs of athletes—**especially athletes with disabilities, LGBTQ+ athletes, and athletes of color. Athletes from marginalized groups are at a higher risk for being abused, bullied, and harassed.
- ❑ **Let athletes know winning isn't everything.** Their growth and well-being are more important.
- ❑ **Keep lines of communication open** with athletes and their parents/guardians. Get their feedback on your communication and coaching style. Offer athletes multiple ways to share their concerns.
- ❑ **Discuss core values, expectations, and policies often.** Be consistent in holding people accountable for following them.
- ❑ **Respond to misconduct** immediately and consistently.
- ❑ **Talk to athletes about bystander intervention.** Model bystander intervention by saying or doing something when you see abusive behaviors. Use the [Talking with Athletes About Bystander Intervention](#) handout to help your athletes learn and practice bystander intervention strategies.