U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT™

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.

COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND RESPECTFULLY

☐ Initiate team dialogues that set expectations about culture, engagement, and respect for others.

☐ 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. Some athletes (such as those with intellectual and developmental disabilities or whose primary language differs from yours) require simplified, clear language. Others do not.

☐ Let athletes know your pronouns and ask them which they use.

MODEL RESPECT, EQUITY, AND INTEGRITY

☐ 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.

☐ Have open, age-appropriate conversations about how issues of oppression such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism are affecting them.

☐ Do not manipulate or exploit power imbalances.

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.

☐ Integrate Universal Design for Learning principles into facilities, policies, and coaching practices.

☐ 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.