

RESOURCES FOR ADVOCATES TO NAVIGATE CONVERSATIONS WITH COACHES AND PEOPLE IN SPORT

**This sheet is for:**

This sheet is for advocates and can be shared with coaches to engage with sports systems to interrupt and prevent abuse in sport.

How advocates can use this:

Advocates can use this sheet to think about guidelines and resources for talking with coaches and sports systems.

Your role as an advocate may involve being in communication with coaches, sports medicine professionals, referees, sports facilities staff, or more. This is an opportunity to assist coaches and other sports staff in understanding their responsibility to recognize, interrupt, respond to, and prevent abuse in sport.

Reaching out to sports systems, coaches or others in the sport community should follow the same protections of confidentiality that are applied to other situations, such as advocacy in the criminal legal system with a survivor. But it is important to consider that these interactions may not have any additional safeguards or protections for information.

Resources to Share with Coaches: Compassionate Coach®

Compassionate Coach® is an educational training course developed by The Athlete Survivors' Assist to equip coaches to center athlete well-being and create safer, more supportive sport environments by doing the following:

- Building trust and connection by creating an athlete-centered culture.
- Strengthening a coach's impact with practical, trauma-informed tools to support athletes' physical and emotional health.
- Supporting a coach's leadership in creating safer sports by skill-building on modeling accountability and transparency within sports organizations.
- <https://theathletesurvivorsassist.org/what-we-do/guides-courses/compassionate-coach/>

Assisting Coaches in Understanding their Roles and Responsibilities:

Knowing if they are a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect or other forms of harm, and to whom they must report. If they are, encourage them to take the following trauma-informed approaches:

- Be upfront about your reporting requirements. Let athletes and others know that you have to report abuse.
 - If you have to report abuse, include the reporter or person impacted, if possible.
 - Provide access to safety planning - reporting can trigger various system responses (law enforcement, child protective services) that can create dangerous conditions for some survivors (such as increased risk of retaliatory violence, kidnapping, threats). It is critical to ask survivors and other members of the support team to think through various protections and safety plans, given the reporting.
 - Periodically remind people of your responsibilities, especially as your relationship with the survivor evolves, and trust grows.
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Steps to take if a coach and/or sports staff is causing harm:

- Follow your mandatory reporting responsibilities if you have a duty to report. See Mandatory Reporting in Sport sheet.
 - Talk with the athlete survivor about next steps and safetying planing - this can include possible reports to the US Center for SafeSport, the National Governing Body of the sport, and/or law enforcement. See Sports Systems of Accountability sheet for more information on each of these pathways.
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Strategies for engaging with coaches and people in sport around abuse in sport:

These strategies and discussions can be helpful for engaging coaches and other people in sport to encourage support for athlete survivors, improve reporting of abuse, and provide more trauma-informed care for athlete survivors within the sport ecosystems.

What coaches and others in sport can do if you suspect abuse:

- If it is safe to do so, talk to the survivor/target/victim of the abuse and see how you can help.
- Share local and sports-specific resources:
 - Connect survivors to confidential advocates.
 - Follow your mandatory reporting responsibilities, but be transparent about those when talking with athletes.

How coaches and people in sport can listen to athlete-survivors:

- Active listening: listening without a plan, agenda, or judgment is important!
- Make eye contact and use supportive body language.
- Try not to interrupt the narrative. Let the person share at their own pace and in their own way.
- Remember that trauma can be difficult to recall, and we often have protective responses that prevent the storing of memories and keeping them in a chronological order.

Strategies for coaches and people in sport to interrupt abuse:

This section describes the strategies for Direct, Distract, Delegate and Delay for interrupting abuse in sport. These strategies can be helpful when advocates talk with coaches and people in sport about what they can do if they see harmful behaviors.

Direct:

Confronting the situation in the moment by directly calling out the behavior or speaking to the person causing harm. Saying something about unhealthy behavior at the moment.

You see the team captain yelling at a younger player. You walk up and ask what is going on and why the captain is yelling.

Distract:

Creating a diversion to stop or interrupt the unhealthy behavior. This can look like asking a question or even walking up to the people involved.

You see two of your teammates starting to argue. You walk up and offer them some of your chips.

Delegate:

Seeking someone in a position of authority or asking those nearby for assistance.

You are a parent watching your child's team soccer practice. You see the assistant coach push a player for missing a pass. After practice, you talk to the head coach and describe what you saw. The head coach talks with the assistant coach. This might also require a report to the US Center for SafeSport if it crosses a threshold for abuse and falls under their mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Delay:

After the fact, you talk with and check in with the person who was targeted. It is good to have resources available and to offer support.

You are a teammate on the track team. You see a coach berating and then spitting on another player on the sidelines during a meet. After the meet, you approach the player and check in to see how they are doing. It is good to have resources ready to share, such as letting them know that abuse is never okay and there are places they can report the abuse, such as the US Center for SafeSport.