



Play Rugby USA's Child Abuse Prevention Policy & Procedures

Child Abuse Prevention Statement:

As a youth-serving organization, *Play Rugby USA* considers the safety and wellbeing of the youth in our programs a top priority. We strive to put safety first with our programming and policies. Our organization prohibits bullying, discrimination, abuse, and other violence and we strive to proactively address reports of this type of conduct, even if it means that someone will be embarrassed or upset. We want to hear about problems or concerns and will strive to act on them in a fair, balanced way in accordance with our policies.

1. The **Mentor & Volunteer Selection Process** shall include the following:
 - a. Written Application – Every mentor and volunteer wanting to work with youth athletes in our program is required to complete a written application that will set forth appropriate background information, require disclosure of any prior claims or allegations of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct, and provide the names of at least two individuals (not just family or friends) as references to the good character of the mentor or volunteer. This application must be completed each year, even if the mentor/ volunteer is returning from the previous year/season.
 - b. Reference Check - A designated representative will contact the mentor/ volunteer's references to help verify previous volunteer and work experience and give insight into the mentor/ volunteer's character.
 - c. Personal Interview – A designated representative from Play Rugby will interview each prospective mentor/volunteer. This screening process will include specific questions regarding the existence of any prior claims of inappropriate behavior with respect to youth or youth athletes.
 - d. Background Check – All potential mentors/ volunteers will be screened through the applicable state sex offender's registry and may also be subject to a background check with the National Centre of Safety Initiatives and the Sex Offender Registry Information Line. The background check will include appropriate inquiries regarding any previous record of sexual abuse or other unlawful activity by the potential mentor. For current mentors/volunteers, this background check will be updated at least every five (5) years.
 - e. Final Decision- All of the organization's decisions regarding a mentor/volunteer's participation shall be made on a non-discriminatory basis and without regard to race, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or national origin. Play Rugby USA shall have the right to deny the participation of any individual, who refuses to fill out the volunteer application form completely, lies or knowingly misrepresents information on the application form, or violates the principles of these child protection policies. Play Rugby USA shall have the right to terminate any coach or volunteer who falsifies information or is found guilty of child abuse, neglect, or other crimes.



- f. Training- All mentors/ volunteers will be trained in child and mentor/ volunteer protection as well as Play Rugby curriculum as appropriate. Mentors/ volunteers shall be subject to ongoing evaluation. Additional training may be required to maintain in good standing with Play Rugby.

2. Barriers to Abuse

Play Rugby advocates and expects exemplary behavior by all of its mentors and volunteers. Play Rugby will hold a strict line on conduct as laid out in these policies.

a. Abuse Defined

- i. **Child Abuse:** an injury, a sexual crime, or impairment of physical, mental, or emotional health inflicted or allowed to be inflicted upon a child
- ii. **Child Maltreatment:** a parent or guardian fails to exercise a minimum degree of care

b. Appropriate Behavior with Children

- i. **Uphold the Rights of all Children.** All children regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and disability have equal rights to protection and safety without discrimination.
- ii. **Two Deep Leadership.** There must always be 2 adults with youth. This can be 2 Play Rugby mentors/ volunteers, 1 Play Rugby mentor with 1 Play Rugby volunteer, or a Play Rugby mentor/ volunteer with another adult (school administrator, school teacher, or parent). All mentor/volunteer interactions with children must be observable and interruptible by another adult.
 1. If there is only 1 mentor/ volunteer present, Play Rugby and the site coordinator/ principal need to be notified immediately. Play Rugby and the site need to try to provide another adult immediately.
- iii. **Respect Privacy.** Mentors/ volunteers must respect the privacy of youth in situations such as changing clothes, taking showers after practice, and bathroom breaks. Intrusion is only permitted if a child's health or safety is in danger. Mentors/ volunteers must protect their privacy in similar situations.
- iv. **Appropriate Touching Guidelines**

These guidelines are used as a way to protect the children in our care while still promoting a positive, safe, and engaging environment for rugby. Touching should occur at a very minimal level. Since our program engages youth in kindergarten through high school, some level of touching is unavoidable. Use common sense, respect, and the awareness that child abuse is a reality in our society when mentoring and volunteering with children.

 1. Touching should be in response to the need of the child, not the need of the mentor/ volunteer
 2. The child should initiate touching
 3. Touching should be with the child's permission



4. Resistance to touching must be respected
 5. Touching must never include the breast, buttocks, or groin
 6. Touching should be done in the open, not private
 7. Touching should have a brief, limited duration
 8. Touching is age and developmentally dependent; what's appropriate changes over time
- v. **Ensure a Mentally and Physically Safe Environment.** Play Rugby mentors/ volunteers must ensure the safety of all kids within Play Rugby programs and outside of program activities. The environment should be free from emotional and physical harm or threat of harm. The mentors/ volunteers will encourage positive interactions and use positive reinforcement and praise. A mentor/ volunteer will not use corporal punishment or allow abuse, maltreatment, hazing, or bullying to occur.
 - vi. **Dress Appropriately.** Do not wear reveling or inappropriate attire. Wear Play Rugby USA attire to all tournaments so that all mentors/ volunteers can be easily recognized.
 - vii. **Constructive Discipline.** Discipline should focus on setting limits for youth, reinforcing good behavior, and providing children with time outs or breaks from activities so that they have time to reflect on a rule they broke and how they can fix it for next time. Corporal punishment is not allowed.
- c. Discouraged Behavior with Children
 - i. **One-on-One Interaction.** In situations when a personal conference is required, the meeting must be conducted in an environment that is observable and interruptible by other adults and youth.
 - ii. **Out-of-Program Contact.** Contact with youth outside of Play Rugby USA programming should rarely occur and must occur under parental or guardian permission. All emails with youth will have another adult cc'd on the email. The Digital and Social Media Privacy Policy below needs to be followed.
 - d. Prohibited Behavior with Children
 - i. **Verbal, Physical, or Sexual Harassment or Abuse.** Verbal communication from all mentors, volunteers, and youth will not be profane, degrading, or sexually provocative. A mentor, volunteer, and youth will have limited physical contact with all participants. There will be no patting on the buttocks, intimate, romantic, or sexual contact, corporal punishment, or contact that causes physical harm. Any behavior that involves anything of a pornographic nature is prohibited. Verbal praise, pats on the back, and high fives may be used.
 - ii. **Bullying.** Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying from all adults and youth is prohibited.
 - iii. **Hazing.** Physical hazing and initiations may not be included as part of any team induction ceremony.
 - e. If a Play Rugby mentor/ volunteer participates in any discouraged behavior or prohibited behavior with children or a report of suspected child abuse is filed against a Play Rugby mentor/ volunteer, the situation will be immediately



investigated. During the investigation, the accused individual will be suspended from all activities involving the supervision of children. The suspension will continue until the person is cleared or allegations are proven. If the allegations are proven correct, the individual will be removed from all Play Rugby activities.

3. Report Child Abuse

All Play Rugby mentors and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotion state of all program participants. Play Rugby mentors are mandated reporters and are required by law and have an ethical obligation to report any suspected cases of child abuse. Play Rugby volunteers have an ethical obligation to report cases of child abuse. Please read the possible signs of abuse below. If you witness a participant being abused or suspect a participant is being abused, please fulfill your legal or moral obligation to uphold children's safety and welfare by following the reporting process outlined below.

- a. Recognize Signs of Abuse: Any abrupt change in behavior that is maintained for a week or longer is a sign that the child is experiencing stress that could stem from a variety of causes, including family disruption, illness, death of a pet, a move to a new neighborhood, or child abuse. Read below for signs of possible child abuse:
 - i. **Physical Abuse:** Suspicious injuries that are different from those normally associated with childhood bumps and bruises such as burns, bruises in abnormal places, lacerations, abrasions, and fractures.
 - ii. **Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse to others, extreme sensitivity to criticism, self-destructive behavior, appears to be a danger to others, continuous unwillingness or inability to form trusting relationships, chronic rebellion against authority, constant socially disruptive behavior, lagging physical development, and in severe cases habit disorders such as thumb sucking or rocking.
 - iii. **Sexual Abuse:** Difficulty in walking; torn, stained, or bloody clothing; pain or itching in the genital area; bruises or bleeding in the body's private areas; sexually transmitted diseases; an age-inappropriate understanding of sex; reluctance to be left alone with a particular person; persistent and inappropriate sex play with peers; wearing excessive amounts of clothing; fear of touch.
 - iv. **Neglect:** Child consistently shows up inappropriately dressed, shows obvious need of medical care, lacks personal hygiene, consistently over hungry. If asked, the child will likely make excuses for his or her parent(s)/ guardians.
- b. Your Responsibility:

Follow the steps below as soon as you suspect child abuse or maltreatment.

 - i. **Initial Response**
 1. Show support and concern for any youth who might be affected.
 2. Do not jump to any conclusions. Ask clarifying questions, but do not conduct your own investigation.
 3. Ask the youth in indirect ways if "everything is all right." Be available for the child, but do not force the child to confide in you. Do not ask leading or insinuating questions.



4. Consider stating your observations to the child's parents. Do not directly or indirectly accuse a suspected adult of child abuse.
5. Speak confidently with other adult leaders who have contact with the child. In a school setting, you can speak with the site coordinator, school social worker, and/or teacher.
6. Handle the matter as discreetly and respectfully as possible.
7. If child is in immediate danger or needs medical attention, call 911.

ii. **File a Report**

All mentors/ volunteers shall report any good-faith suspicion or belief that any child is or has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused or neglected. A report needs to be placed no matter who is involved such as a parent/ guardian, school employee, Play Rugby mentor/ volunteer, or stranger. No person may abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person. Follow the steps below and in Appendix A to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

1. **Call NYS Register of Child Abuse & Maltreatment (SCR) Hotline immediately.**
 - a. **Play Rugby mentors (mandated reporters) call 800-635-1522**
 - b. **Play Rugby volunteers call 800-342-3720**
 - c. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.
 - d. You will need to report:
 - i. The child's name, location, and injury
 - ii. Reason for suspension
 - e. Please read Appendix B for a summary of what will happen when you call the SCR and your confidentiality agreement. This can be found at <http://www.playrugbyusa.com/become-a-volunteer/volunteer-in-nyc.html>
2. Notify Play Rugby and file a written report.
3. Notify site program of incident and your actions.
4. Mandated reporters must file a written and signed report (see Appendix C) to the SCR within 48 hours of filing an oral report. This form can be found at <http://www.playrugbyusa.com/become-a-volunteer/volunteer-in-nyc.html>
5. All mentors will receive an emergency contact card with the NYS Central Child Abuse & Maltreatment Hotline's number, the President and Founder's number, and Director of Programs' number.

4. **Digital and Social Media Privacy**

These principles apply to all mentor and volunteer's online and electronic participation and set out the standards of behavior expected as a mentor/ volunteer in the Play Rugby USA program. Remember, you should participate in all Play Rugby associated media the same way as you would with other media or public forums. These principles address the



growing need to protect children from abuse and mentors/ volunteers from misunderstandings and false accusations. All mentors/ volunteers should adhere to the following principles for social media, such as Facebook, podcasts, 'wikis' (such as Wikipedia), message boards, social bookmarking websites (such as del.icio.us), social networking websites (such as blogs, bebo, Myspace), and content sharing websites (such as Flickr and Youtube) :

- a. **Transparent Communication.** All mentors/ volunteers, regardless of whether they have a current volunteer application form on file, need to maintain transparency in their communications with children while protecting children's identity and privacy. It is the responsibility of adults to maintain appropriate boundaries.
- b. **All communications must be directed to parents and guardians,** which includes phone calls, e-mails, and text messages. It is up to a child's parent(s) and/ or guardian(s) to forward necessary communications about participation and the program to their children. If, for older players or youth volunteers, parents/ guardians allow direct communications with a player or youth volunteer, parents must still be copied on any and all messages. Mentors/ volunteers should refrain from private, personal, on-going electronic conversations with children.
- c. **Never use a minor's real name or likeness** (picture, video or otherwise) in your conversations, updates, or blog posts without written parental consent. We don't want to put our youth in danger. This information is private. Sharing it violates youth's privacy
- d. **Digital and social media should not interfere with or shed a negative light on your colleagues, commitments to your team(s), youth you serve, and Play Rugby.** Any reference to Play Rugby or the people involved should be in a positive light. Play Rugby USA is best represented by the people associated with it. What you publish in media may reflect on our brand and the people associated with us.
- e. **Be aware of your association with Play Rugby USA** in digital and social spaces. If you identify yourself as a Play Rugby USA mentor/ volunteer, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself , your colleagues, your team, the youth you serve and Play Rugby.
- f. **Mentors/ volunteers are personally responsible** for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time, so protect your privacy and respect Play Rugby as an organization.
- g. **Don't instigate quarrels through media outlets and be the first to correct your own mistakes,** and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
- h. **Respect your audience.** Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory-such as politics and religion.
- i. **Identify yourself** when relevant to Play Rugby USA and when you discuss Play Rugby USA or Play Rugby USA related matters. Write in the first person. You



must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Play Rugby USA.

- j. If you publish content to any website outside of Play Rugby USA and it has something to do with service as a mentor/ volunteer or services associated with Play Rugby USA or your program site, **use a disclaimer** such as this: “The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Play Rugby USA, or my program site.”
- k. **Respect copyright** for fair use and financial disclosure laws. Press associated with Play Rugby, program partner site staff, and parents will be the only people allowed to take pictures or other media at Play Rugby events. All press engaged by Play Rugby will complete a photo consent acknowledging that all pictures and media from the event are property of Play Rugby. Play Rugby USA reserves the right to waive this requirement at will.

I (print name) _____ understand the Mentor and Volunteer Selection Process, Barriers to Abuse, Mandatory Report of Abuse, and Digital and Social Media Privacy Policies outlined in the Child Prevention Policy. I will adhere to all Child Prevention Policies. I understand and agree that the safety and wellbeing of all youth are a top priority.

Signature

Printed Name

Date



Appendix A- Reporting Child Abuse Steps

