



USA POWERLIFTING

ATHLETE PROTECTION CODE

AND CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Official Policy Manual

Applicable to Covered Individuals participating in USA Powerlifting activities

This policy is intended to support a safe, respectful, and professional powerlifting environment. It should be read together with USA Powerlifting bylaws, rules, policies, Athlete Protection training, and Code of Conduct requirements.

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OUR COMMITMENT TO ATHLETE PROTECTION

USA Powerlifting is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and positive environment for the physical, emotional, and social development of all participants. The organization expects all Covered Individuals to conduct themselves with professionalism, dignity, and good sportsmanship at all times.

This Athlete Protection Code and Code of Conduct Policy establishes boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate conduct and identifies expectations for prevention, reporting, and response. It is designed to support a powerlifting environment free from abuse, misconduct, bullying, harassment, hazing, retaliation, discrimination, and other inappropriate behavior.

This Policy is intended to align with USA Powerlifting Athlete Protection training, USA Powerlifting Code of Conduct expectations, applicable law, and appropriate athlete safety principles. The only acceptable standard in USA Powerlifting is good sportsmanship, respect, and conduct that protects the integrity and safety of the sport.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this Policy is to define prohibited misconduct, establish reporting expectations, and provide a framework for addressing conduct that may threaten athlete safety or the integrity of USA Powerlifting activities.

This Policy applies to Covered Individuals when participating in, serving at, attending, overseeing, or otherwise acting in connection with USA Powerlifting activities, including but not limited to sanctioned competitions, national events, state and local events, referee activities, coaching activities, committee work, athlete protection training, drug testing activities, organizational meetings, and official communications.

This Policy does not replace legal reporting obligations. Adult Covered Individuals are responsible for understanding and following mandatory reporting obligations under federal law, state law, this Policy, and any applicable USA Powerlifting procedures. Lack of knowledge of a reporting obligation is not a defense.

DEFINITIONS

Prohibited Misconduct

For purposes of this Policy, Prohibited Misconduct includes the categories below and any related conduct prohibited by USA Powerlifting policy, applicable law, or applicable SafeSport standards when relevant to the matter:

- Child Abuse
- Sexual Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct
- Emotional Abuse or Emotional Misconduct
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Grooming or Boundary Violations
- Other Inappropriate Misconduct
- Retaliation, failure to report, abuse of process, or willful tolerance of misconduct

Covered Individuals

Covered Individuals are prohibited from engaging in Prohibited Misconduct. A Covered Individual includes any individual who is seeking to be, currently is, or was at the time of an alleged Policy violation:

- A USA Powerlifting member, athlete, coach, referee, Technical Secretary, meet director, Drug Control Officer, official, volunteer, employee, contractor, board member, committee member, state chair, or appointee;
- An individual under the governance, disciplinary, event, or membership jurisdiction of USA Powerlifting;
- An individual authorized, approved, appointed, or invited by USA Powerlifting to have regular contact with athletes or authority over athletes, including minor athletes;
- An individual participating in or serving at a USA Powerlifting sanctioned event, national event, training, clinic, meeting, program, or activity; or
- Any other individual who formally agrees or is required to be bound by this Policy.

An Adult Covered Individual is a Covered Individual who is age 18 or older. A Minor is an individual under the age of 18.

MINOR ATHLETE ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES (MAAPP)

USA Powerlifting recognizes that policies governing interactions with minor athletes are an important part of preventing abuse and misconduct. The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies, referred to in this document as MAAPP, are intended to reduce isolated, unobservable, and high-risk interactions between adults and minor athletes.

Covered Individuals must follow the MAAPP standards adopted or recognized by USA Powerlifting, along with any more restrictive law, facility rule, event rule, or organizational policy that applies. Where a policy requires parent or guardian consent, consent should be documented and should not be used to avoid reasonable safeguards.

One-on-One Interactions

Observable and interruptible interactions are the foundation of safe sport practice. One-on-one interactions between an Adult Covered Individual and a minor athlete should occur only when they are observable and interruptible by another adult, except where a recognized exception applies, such as emergency circumstances or an approved medical or therapeutic setting.

In powerlifting settings, this includes coaching conversations, attempt selection discussions, rules explanations, training feedback, weigh-in related interactions, equipment checks, travel logistics, and post-event follow-up.

Meetings and Individual Training Sessions

Individual meetings or training sessions with a minor athlete should be observable and interruptible. When possible, they should occur in open areas, visible spaces, or with another adult present. Closed-door meetings, private hotel room meetings, or isolated training sessions with a minor athlete are not appropriate unless an applicable exception exists and proper safeguards are used.

Electronic Communications

Electronic communications with minor athletes must be professional, transparent, and related to legitimate sport purposes. Communications should include a parent or guardian, another Adult Covered Individual, or use a team/group communication platform whenever possible.

Electronic communications include text messages, emails, direct messages, social media messages, messaging apps, group chats, video calls, online coaching platforms, and any similar digital communication. Late-night, secretive, sexual, harassing, degrading, or overly personal communication with a minor athlete is prohibited.

Social Media and Digital Boundaries

Adult Covered Individuals must maintain appropriate boundaries online. They should not use social media, private messaging, disappearing message applications, or personal accounts to create secrecy, pressure, intimidation, favoritism, dependency, or inappropriate personal relationships with minor athletes.

Photographs, videos, livestreams, interviews, or social media content involving athletes must be respectful and appropriate. Images or content taken in changing areas, bathrooms, locker rooms, weigh-in rooms, medical areas, or other private spaces are prohibited unless expressly authorized for a legitimate purpose and consistent with all privacy expectations.

Locker Rooms, Changing Areas, Restrooms, and Weigh-In Areas

USA Powerlifting recognizes that competitions may involve weigh-ins, equipment checks, changing areas, restrooms, and warm-up spaces where privacy must be protected. Adult Covered Individuals must respect athlete privacy and may not intentionally expose or observe private areas of an athlete except where necessary for a legitimate, permitted, and appropriate purpose.

Recording devices, photography, livestreaming, or video calls are prohibited in locker rooms, changing areas, restrooms, and weigh-in areas. Athletes should be provided reasonable privacy during weigh-ins and changing, and event staff should use appropriate safeguards when minors are present.

Travel

Travel involving minor athletes must be handled with appropriate boundaries, transparency, and parent or guardian involvement. Adult Covered Individuals should not transport a minor athlete one-on-one unless an applicable exception applies, such as emergency circumstances, documented parent or guardian consent, or other recognized safeguards.

Team travel, event travel, lodging arrangements, and transportation plans should avoid unnecessary isolated contact and should respect athlete privacy and safety.

Lodging and Overnight Stays

Adult Covered Individuals should not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete unless an approved exception applies, such as the adult being the minor athlete's parent, guardian, sibling, or otherwise permitted under applicable policy. Room checks or welfare checks should be observable and interruptible whenever possible.

Medical Treatment, Therapy, Massage, and Recovery Services

Medical, therapeutic, massage, stretching, or recovery services involving a minor athlete should occur with appropriate consent, professional boundaries, and observability. The presence of a parent, guardian, or another adult is strongly encouraged and may be required depending on the circumstances.

Training Environments and Powerlifting-Specific Safeguards

Powerlifting environments may include spotting, loading, warm-up rooms, platform areas, equipment checks, weigh-ins, and coaching interactions that require professionalism and appropriate boundaries. Physical contact should be limited to what is necessary for safety, instruction, spotting, or a legitimate sport purpose, and should never be sexual, punitive, humiliating, or excessive.

REPORTING

General Requirements

Adult Covered Individuals must know their reporting requirements under this Policy, state law, and federal law. Lack of knowledge about a reporting obligation is not a defense.

Nothing in this Policy requires a victim of child abuse or other misconduct to self-report. No person should investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or Prohibited Misconduct, attempt to determine whether a report is credible, or delay a report in order to gather additional proof.

Reporting obligations are individual obligations. Reporting to a supervisor, meet director, state chair, committee chair, administrator, or another official does not relieve an Adult Covered Individual of the obligation to report as required. Adult Covered Individuals must report even if they believe someone else already reported.

Reports to USA Powerlifting

Reports may be made through the reporting process identified on the USA Powerlifting Athlete Protection Program or Code of Conduct pages. Reports should include the names of individuals involved, the date and location of the conduct, a factual description of what occurred, any immediate safety concerns, and available witness or contact information.

If there is immediate danger or an emergency, call 911 or local law enforcement first.

Child Abuse

An Adult Covered Individual who learns of information or reasonably suspects that a child has suffered child abuse, including but not limited to physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect, must immediately:

- Make a report to law enforcement or child protective services as required by law; and
- Make a report through the applicable USA Powerlifting reporting process.

Reporting to USA Powerlifting alone is not sufficient where a report to law enforcement or child protective services is required by law. Child abuse includes incidents involving a victim who was a minor at the time of the alleged incident, even if the victim is now an adult.

Other Prohibited Misconduct

An Adult Covered Individual who learns of information or reasonably suspects that Prohibited Misconduct other than child abuse has occurred must promptly report the incident through the applicable USA Powerlifting reporting process and, where applicable, to the U.S. Center for SafeSport or other appropriate authority.

Failure to Report

A Covered Individual's failure to report as required under this Policy may itself be a violation of this Policy and may result in disciplinary action.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

It is the policy of USA Powerlifting that Covered Individuals are prohibited from engaging in child abuse. Child abuse includes any conduct defined as child abuse under applicable federal or state law and may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other conduct that harms or threatens the safety of a minor.

Child abuse may occur in person, online, during travel, at a competition, in a gym, in a home, or in any other setting. A report must not be delayed because the conduct occurred away from a USA Powerlifting event or because the person receiving the information is unsure whether USA Powerlifting has jurisdiction.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

It is the policy of USA Powerlifting that Covered Individuals are prohibited from engaging in sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, sexual exploitation, exposing a minor to sexual content or imagery, sexual bullying, sexual hazing, intimate relationships involving an imbalance of power, and other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual misconduct may occur through physical contact, verbal conduct, written communication, electronic communication, images, video, social media, or any other medium. Consent is not a defense when the individual is a minor or when a power imbalance, coercion, incapacity, or other factor makes consent legally or ethically invalid.

Examples include, without limitation:

- Unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, messages, images, or requests;
- Sexual contact or sexualized touching under the guise of coaching, spotting, stretching, recovery, or instruction;
- Pressuring an athlete for a romantic, intimate, or sexual relationship;
- Sharing, requesting, creating, or threatening to share sexual images or private images;
- Exposing a minor athlete to pornography or sexual content;
- Sexual comments about an athlete's body, clothing, weigh-in, weight class, or appearance;
- Any sexual conduct involving a minor athlete by an Adult Covered Individual.

PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

It is the policy of USA Powerlifting that Covered Individuals are prohibited from engaging in physical misconduct. Physical misconduct includes contact or non-contact behavior that causes or has the potential to cause bodily harm, personal injury, or a threat of immediate bodily harm.

Physical misconduct may include intentionally hitting, slapping, pushing, grabbing, choking, restraining, throwing objects at or near a participant, using equipment in a threatening manner, denying water or medical attention, forcing unsafe training or weight-cutting practices, or requiring exercise as punishment in a manner that is excessive, dangerous, or unrelated to legitimate sport instruction.

Powerlifting-specific examples include pressuring an athlete to take an unsafe attempt, continuing a lift after a clear injury or medical concern, forcing extreme dehydration or weight-cutting practices, using spotting or hands-on correction to intimidate or humiliate, or throwing plates, collars, clips, chalk, water bottles, or other equipment at or near participants.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT POLICY

It is the policy of USA Powerlifting that Covered Individuals are prohibited from engaging in emotional abuse or emotional misconduct. Emotional misconduct includes a pattern of deliberate non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to a participant.

Emotional misconduct may include verbal acts, physical acts, acts that deny attention or support, stalking, or criminal conduct. A single severe incident may also constitute misconduct depending on the circumstances.

Examples of emotional abuse or misconduct include, without limitation, a pattern of:

- Personally attacking a participant by calling them worthless, disgusting, weak, embarrassing, or similar degrading names;
- Repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular athlete in a manner that serves no productive motivational purpose;
- Body shaming, humiliating, or mocking an athlete's weight class, body composition, clothing, disability, performance, or appearance;
- Throwing sport equipment, punching walls, slamming objects, or acting physically aggressive in a way that intimidates participants;
- Routinely excluding, ignoring, isolating, or denying support to an athlete without legitimate sport purpose;
- Threatening to ruin an athlete's reputation, ranking, eligibility, coaching relationship, team standing, or future opportunity.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AND HAZING POLICY

USA Powerlifting supports an environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and hazing. The purpose of this Policy is to promote consistency and help create a climate in which bullying, harassing, threatening, humiliating, or degrading behavior is unacceptable.

Bullying

Bullying is repeated or severe behavior that is aggressive, directed at a minor, and intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the minor emotionally, physically, or sexually. Bullying may include physical acts, verbal acts, social acts, cyberbullying, or criminal conduct. Bullying-like behaviors directed at adults may be addressed under other misconduct categories, including harassment, emotional misconduct, or hazing.

Petty slights, minor inconveniences, and lack of good manners do not constitute bullying unless the conduct, considered individually or together and under the totality of the circumstances, meets the standard set forth above.

Harassment

Harassment includes repeated or severe conduct that is intended or likely to cause fear, humiliation, or annoyance; offend or degrade; create a hostile environment; or reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual participant or group.

Harassment may be based on sex, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, age, body size, weight class, competitive status, or any other protected or personal characteristic. Whether conduct is harassment depends on the totality of the circumstances, including the nature, frequency, intensity, location, context, and duration of the behavior.

Petty slights, minor inconveniences, and lack of good manners do not constitute harassment unless the conduct, considered individually or together and under the totality of the circumstances, meets the standard set forth above.

Hazing

Hazing includes any conduct that is intended or likely to subject another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of joining, remaining in, being accepted by, or gaining status within a group, team, club, committee, gym, or organization.

Purported consent by the person subjected to hazing is not a defense, regardless of the person's perceived willingness to cooperate or participate.

Examples include forced or pressured drinking, unsafe weight-cutting, humiliating initiation activities, forced nudity or exposure, forced physical tasks unrelated to legitimate training, degrading social media posts, or any activity that places acceptance, participation, or status in USA Powerlifting on humiliating or dangerous conduct.

GROOMING AND BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS

Grooming is a process by which a person builds trust, access, secrecy, dependency, or control in order to exploit or abuse an athlete or other participant. Grooming may be directed at the athlete, the athlete's family, teammates, coaches, officials, or the broader community.

Boundary violations may be warning signs of grooming even when they do not independently constitute abuse. Covered Individuals must maintain appropriate boundaries and must report concerns when behavior appears designed to isolate, manipulate, control, or exploit a participant.

Examples of grooming or boundary concerns include:

- Excessive private communication unrelated to legitimate sport purposes;
- Giving special gifts, attention, privileges, travel opportunities, or coaching access in a way that creates secrecy or dependency;
- Encouraging an athlete to keep secrets from parents, guardians, coaches, officials, or USA Powerlifting;
- Testing physical boundaries through unnecessary touching, spotting, massage, stretching, or private meetings;
- Creating emotional dependency by positioning the adult as the only person who understands or supports the athlete;
- Isolating an athlete during travel, in hotels, at training sessions, at events, or online;
- Using power over selections, attempts, judging, coaching, team roles, or opportunities to pressure compliance.

OTHER INAPPROPRIATE MISCONDUCT POLICY

It is the policy of USA Powerlifting that Covered Individuals shall not engage in other inappropriate misconduct, including inappropriate intimate relationships, intentional exposure of private areas, inappropriate physical contact, violations of professional boundaries, or other conduct inconsistent with athlete safety and the integrity of the sport.

Covered Individuals are expected to treat athletes, referees, officials, administrators, meet directors, spectators, sponsors, members of the media, venue employees, and all others involved in the sport with respect, courtesy, and dignity. Rude, abusive, unprofessional, threatening, or discriminatory language or conduct will not be tolerated.

All members are expected to abide by USA Powerlifting bylaws, policies, rules, regulations, anti-doping expectations, and event requirements. Conduct that disrupts a competition, undermines athlete safety, interferes with officials, intimidates participants, or detracts from the integrity of the sport may be subject to discipline.

ADDITIONAL MISCONDUCT

USA Powerlifting or its designee may have authority and jurisdiction over the investigation, response, and resolution of reports or allegations of the following additional misconduct under this Policy:

1. A Covered Individual's failure to report a violation as required under this Policy;
2. Retaliation against any reporting party, witness, athlete, parent, guardian, official, or other participant in the investigation, response, or resolution process;
3. Abuse of process, including discouraging participation in an investigation, destroying or concealing information, falsifying or distorting information, violating confidentiality requirements, or failing to comply with temporary measures or final sanctions;
4. Bad faith reporting, meaning a knowingly false report made for an improper purpose;
5. Willful tolerance of Prohibited Misconduct where there is a power imbalance between the Covered Individual and the person being subjected to misconduct;
6. Violation of MAAPP requirements or other athlete protection safeguards;
7. Violation of temporary measures, no-contact directives, suspension terms, probation conditions, or other restrictions;
8. Any other misconduct prohibited by this Policy, the USA Powerlifting Code of Conduct, USA Powerlifting rules or bylaws, or applicable athlete protection requirements.

TEMPORARY MEASURES AND SANCTIONS

Temporary Measures

Any Covered Individual alleged to have violated this Policy may be subject to temporary measures pending the outcome of an investigation or review. Temporary measures are not final discipline and may be imposed to protect athlete safety, preserve the integrity of an investigation, reduce risk, or protect the organization and its participants.

Temporary measures may include temporary suspension, event removal, no-contact directives, role restrictions, communication restrictions, travel restrictions, restrictions from coaching or officiating, or other measures deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

Sanctions

Any Covered Individual who violates this Policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Sanctions may include, without limitation:

- Verbal or written warning;
- Required education or retraining;
- Probation or monitoring;
- Restriction from certain roles, events, communications, or activities;
- Removal from an event or volunteer assignment;
- Suspension of membership, certification, appointment, or eligibility;
- Revocation of referee, coach, meet director, committee, leadership, or other credentials;
- Permanent suspension, lifetime ineligibility, or ban from USA Powerlifting activities;
- Referral to the U.S. Center for SafeSport, law enforcement, child protective services, or another appropriate authority;
- Any other sanction or corrective action permitted by USA Powerlifting policy, bylaws, rules, or applicable law.

CONFIDENTIALITY, NON-RETALIATION, AND RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS

USA Powerlifting expects all Covered Individuals to protect the privacy and dignity of those involved in reports of misconduct. Information should be shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know, such as law enforcement, child protective services, USA Powerlifting officials handling the matter, the U.S. Center for SafeSport where applicable, or other appropriate authorities.

Retaliation is prohibited. Retaliation includes threats, intimidation, harassment, exclusion, adverse treatment, loss of opportunity, public criticism, gossip intended to punish or shame, or any other action taken because a person made a report, participated in a process, supported another participant, or refused to participate in misconduct.

When receiving a disclosure or concern, Covered Individuals should listen calmly, thank the person for reporting, avoid promising secrecy, avoid leading questions, avoid investigating, and report promptly through the appropriate channels.

RESOURCES AND REPORTING QUICK REFERENCE

Situation	Action / Resource
Emergency or immediate danger	Call 911 or local law enforcement immediately.
Suspected child abuse	Report to law enforcement or child protective services as required by law, and report through USA Powerlifting reporting channels.
Sexual misconduct or SafeSport concern	Report through the applicable SafeSport and USA Powerlifting reporting process.
Code of Conduct or non-sexual misconduct	Report through the applicable USA Powerlifting Code of Conduct or Athlete Protection process.
State reporting information	Child Welfare Information Gateway: childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/how/
USA Powerlifting Athlete Protection	usapowerlifting.com/athlete-protection-program
USA Powerlifting Code of Conduct	usapowerlifting.com/code-of-conduct
U.S. Center for SafeSport	uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/
Additional support resources	RAINN: rainn.org ; Stop It Now!: stopitnow.org ; Cyberbullying Research Center: cyberbullying.org ; National Children's Advocacy Center: nationalcac.org/find-a-cac/

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By participating in USA Powerlifting activities, Covered Individuals are expected to understand and comply with this Policy, the USA Powerlifting Code of Conduct, applicable athlete protection training, and all other applicable USA Powerlifting rules, bylaws, policies, and procedures.

This document is intended for publication and reference. USA Powerlifting may amend, replace, or supplement this Policy at any time.