

Berkshire Rowing and Sculling Society's (BRASS)

Safe Sport Policy

Preliminary Statement:

This Safe Sport Policy is intended to govern the conduct of BRASS coaches, adult volunteers and non-athlete adults in their interactions with athletes. "Athletes", as the term is used in these policies, means BRASS members or participants in BRASS-sanctioned, or BRASS-sponsored, workouts, training, or competition, who are below 18 years of age.

General Guidelines:

1. All rowing practices are open to observation by parents.
2. One coach and at least one other adult will be present at all practices and other sanctioned club activities whenever at least one athlete is present.
3. An open and observable environment will be maintained for all interactions between adults and athletes. Private or one-on-one situations will be avoided unless they are open and observable.
4. Coaches will not invite or have an athlete(s) to their home without the permission of the athletes' parents (or legal guardian). In the event of this situation occurring, another adult will also be present.
5. During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings, and/or other activities, two adults will be present and open and observable environments will be maintained.
6. Athletes are not allowed to ride in a coach's vehicle without another adult present, unless prior parental permission is obtained.
7. During overnight team travel, when athletes are paired with other athletes, they will be of the same gender and will be a similar age. Chaperones and/or team administration will stay in rooms on the same floor.
8. In the case that only one coach is traveling to a competition, at the competition the coach and athlete(s) will establish a "buddy" club to associate with during the competition and when away from the venue.
9. Communications between non-athlete adult members and athletes cannot include any topic or language that is sexual or inappropriate in nature.
10. Non-athlete adult members will respect the privacy of athletes in situations such as changing of clothes, showering, etc. Non-athlete adult members should protect their own privacy in similar situations.
11. Coaches and adult volunteers shall, refrain from engaging athletes in intimate, personal, or otherwise inappropriate communications. Fostering peer-to-peer relationships between coaches and athletes will not be tolerated. For example, coaches shall not discuss their own personal problems with athletes.

12. Coaches and other non-athlete adult members are not allowed to be involved with horseplay and rough housing with athletes.

13. When a coach touches an athlete as part of instruction, the coach will do so in direct view of others and inform the athlete of what he/she is doing prior to the initial contact. Touching athletes will be minimized outside the boundaries of what is considered normal instruction. Appropriate interaction includes high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, and consenting hugs (i.e. after an extraordinary race).

14. Coaches will not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for athletes outside club programs and activities.

15. Coaches will not engage in sexual intimacies with a former athlete for at least two years after the cessation or termination of professional services. Because sexual intimacies with a former athlete are frequently harmful to the athlete, and because such intimacies undermine public confidence in the coaching profession and thereby deter the public's use of needed services, coaches should not engage in sexual intimacies with former athletes even after a two-year interval except in the most unusual circumstances. The coach who engages in such activity after the two years following cessation or termination of the coach-athlete relationship bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light of all relevant factors, including:

1. The amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated;
 2. The circumstances of termination;
 3. The athlete's personal history;
 4. The athlete's current mental status;
 5. The likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others; and
 6. Any statements or actions made by the coach during the course of the athlete-coach relationship suggesting or inviting the possibility of a post-termination sexual or romantic relationship with the athlete or coach.
7. Both the athlete and the coach must be 18 years of age or older.

The BRASS Board has final say on all of the aforementioned guidelines. Those who violate any number of these will be subject to a Board hearing, wherein the possibility of removal from the Club may occur.

These are agreed upon, by all non-athletes and athletes involved, when registering to become a member of Berkshire Rowing and Sculling society.

Action Plan to Address Bullying: "If it's mean, intervene."

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Berkshire Rowing and Sculling Society (BRASS) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. BRASS is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach, board member or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of the Club's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the Club will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents and rowers a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents, rowers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make it clear and understandable on how to report bullying.
5. To spread the word that BRASS takes bullying seriously and that all rowers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Generally, bullying is the use of unreasonable aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more BRASS members of oral, written, electronic or other technological expression, image, sound, data or intelligence of any nature (regardless of the method of transmission), or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

- i. Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;
- ii. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- iii. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any rowing/club activity;
- iv. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any rowing/club activity; or
- v. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any rowing/club activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club).

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to your parents;
- Talk to a Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or e-mail to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;

- Make a report to the BRASS Safe Sport staff.

There is no express time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure, but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate club leadership as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, we will **stop bullying on the spot** using the following steps:

1. Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our club or it is reported to be occurring at our club, we address the bullying by **finding out what happened** and **supporting the kids involved** using the following approach:

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

1. First, we get the facts.

- a. Keep all the involved children separate.
- b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- c. Listen without blaming.
- d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
- e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information, and try to acquire a hard copy if possible.

2. Then, we determine if it's bullying. There are many behaviors that look like bullying, but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

- a. Review the definition of bullying;
- b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
 - What is the history between the kids involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?

- Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
 - Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
- c. Remember that it may not matter “who started it.” Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
 - d. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

3. Support the kids who are being bullied

- a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what’s been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
 - i. Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out.
 - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- c. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

4. Address bullying behavior

- a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that his or her conduct deemed to have been bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she acted in a way deemed bullying. For example:
 - i. Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
 - ii. Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support.
- d. Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

- i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - ii. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
 - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
- i. Zero tolerance or "three strikes, you're out" strategies don't work. Suspending or removing from the team rowers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Rowers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
 - ii. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
- f. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.

5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Every day, kids witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. Fortunately, there are a few simple, safe ways that athletes can help stop bullying when they see it happening.

- a. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
- b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member;
- c. Help the kid being bullied get away from the situation. Create a distraction, focus the attention on something else, or offer a way for the target to get out of the situation. "Let's go, practice is about to start."
- d. Set a good example by not bullying others.

Don't give the bully an audience. Bullies are encouraged by the attention they get from bystanders. If you do nothing else, just walk away.

Here are further websites if you have concerns regarding bullying:

Stopbullying.gov
Bullypolice.org

Kidshealth.org

Electronic Communication Policy

PURPOSE

Our program recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our rowers use these means as their primary method of communication. While BRASS acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, we also realize that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications between a coach (or other adult) and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the US Rowing Code of Conduct regarding Moral and Ethical Conduct.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?"

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with rowers is **Transparent**, **Accessible** and **Professional**.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the club's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the program. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have individual social media pages, but they are not permitted to have any junior athlete member of BRASS join their personal page as a "friend," even if it is a professional account. A coach should not accept any "friend" request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes cannot "private message" each other through Facebook and are not permitted to "instant message" each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

BRASS has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can "friend" for information and updates on team-related matters.

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information, unless the coach’s page is intended for professional purposes (meaning, not for personal connections). It is at the coach’s discretion whether or not he/she allows rowers to “friend” them after they have graduated high school and moved on. Even then, it can only be after the rower has completely departed from the BRASS junior program and is at least 18 years of age.

TEXTING

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 5am until 8pm. There are only 2 exceptions in relation to appropriate times during the day. The first is allowing rowers and coaches who have before 8am practices, to text during those times only in the event of an emergency situation (i.e. a rower’s car breaks down on the way to practice). The second is for those rowers whose practice goes after 8pm. They may text their group

coach up until 9pm, but only in the event of an emergency situation. All texting shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 5am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Parents or guardians of an athlete may request, in writing, that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication.