



## Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Locker Room Policy 2023-2024

*What makes Special Hockey so special is the diversity of players, skills and abilities. We welcome each individual with a shared love for the sport. From equipment to the locker room, we must consider the many needs of our players' diversity. On February 14, 2018 the "Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017" was signed into law and became effective immediately. This law was written for all of youth sports and did not consider the needs of special athletes. Nonetheless, in an effort to be compliant with this Federal mandate we are instituting the following locker room policy effective this season. We recognize that the proposed changes are significant and will cause both confusion and a fair bit of inconvenience. Keep in mind, however, that the proposed changes are designed to protect our players.*

### **Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Locker Room Policy:**

In addition to the development of our hockey players and enjoyment of the sport of hockey, the safety and protection of our participants is central to the goals of the Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey program. The Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program requests that all members respect this policy as a means to help protect its participants from physical abuse, sexual abuse and other types of misconduct, including emotional abuse, bullying, threats, harassment and hazing. To help prevent abuse or misconduct from occurring in our locker rooms, our program has adopted the following locker room policy for the 2023-2024 season. This policy is designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms.

There are a number of locker rooms available for program use. Some athletes in our program may also occasionally or regularly travel to play games at other arenas, and those locker rooms, rest rooms and shower facilities will vary from location to location. We expect that all team and event organizers will attempt to provide information on the locker room facilities in advance of games/activities. When participating in arenas for which you are unfamiliar, we expect that parents/team representatives plan to have extra time and some flexibility in making arrangements for their child to dress and undress.

### **Locker Room Monitoring:**

The Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program has predictable and limited use of locker rooms and changing areas (e.g., generally 30-45 minutes before and following practices and games). This allows for direct and regular monitoring of locker room areas. While constant monitoring inside of locker rooms and changing areas might be the most effective way to prevent problems, we understand that this may make some players uncomfortable. Additionally, it may even place our staff at risk for unwarranted suspicion. As such, at all times there are to be two monitors in the locker

room, consisting of a coach and locker room monitor who have been screened and have completed abuse training.

The Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program expects that team/event organizer staff will conduct a sweep of the locker rooms and changing areas before players arrive, and if the coaches are not inside the locker rooms (for example when all athletes are over the age of 18), a coach and locker room monitor (each of whom have been screened and have completed abuse training) will be posted directly outside of the locker rooms and changing areas during periods of use. Doors will only be left open when adequate privacy is still possible. Please note, team personnel will not be responsible for securing the locker room during times when the team is on the ice.

### **Parents in Locker Rooms:**

We discourage parents from entering locker rooms unless it is **truly** necessary. If a player needs assistance with their uniform or gear, if the player is or may be injured, or if a player's disability warrants assistance, then we ask that parents/guardians let the coach know beforehand that he or she will be helping the player. The coach may in his or her discretion prohibit parents from entering a locker room. To ensure compliance and privacy protection for independent individuals, the coach shall (as needed):

1. Require that all adults entering the dressing room have verified documentation of an accepted background check and sexual abuse training.
2. Determine the need for a "Family Dressing Area" (Similar to a Family Bathroom).
3. Implement a "Skate Tying Area" outside of the dressing room (often a primary reason for parental/guardian support in the locker room).

We encourage parents to teach players how to get dressed so that players will learn as quickly as possible how to get dressed independently.

### **Base Layer Requirements:**

Athletes are no longer permitted to remove their "base layer" of clothing. Athletes must arrive already with the shirt, shorts/sweatpants and jock/jill on for practice. Players can not remove these base layer clothes in the locker room. Athletes are permitted to change their base layer in a private bathroom or private changing area if it is available.

### **Athletes Over the Age of 18:**

Athletes over the age of 18 are no longer allowed to change in the locker room with athletes under the age of 18. There must be a separation in either time or separate room for those over 18. The law now requires that all participants over the age of 18 have background screening and abuse training. There is a waiver available for athletes unable to complete the abuse training.

### **Mixed Gender and Mixed Needs Teams/Organizations:**

The Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program proudly consists of both male and female athletes. It is important that the privacy rights of all of our players are given consideration and appropriate arrangements made. Deliberately exposing a special hockey player or minor to inappropriate

observation or nudity is a noted violation of program guidelines. If a player requires privacy for any reason, it is expected that the parent/guardian will make arrangements in advance to reduce the risk of any unwarranted suspicion and protect the privacy of the player.

Where possible, the Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program will have the male and female players dress/undress in separate locker rooms. This extends to individuals who require assistance from their parent/guardian to dress them. After dressing, the team can convene in a single locker room before the game or team meeting. Once the game or practice is finished, the players may come to one locker room for a team meeting and then proceed to their separate locker rooms to undress, if available.

If separate locker rooms are not available, then the players will take turns using the locker room to change. We understand that these arrangements may require that players arrive earlier or leave later to dress, but we believe that this is the most reasonable way to accommodate and respect all of our players.

### **Cell Phones and Other Mobile Recording Devices:**

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras, are not permitted to be used in the locker rooms. If phones or other mobile devices must be used, they should be taken outside of the locker room prior to use.

### **Prohibited Conduct and Reporting:**

The Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program prohibits all types of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, bullying, threats, harassment and hazing. Participants, volunteers or coaches in the Cincinnati Cyclones Special Hockey Program may be subject to disciplinary action for violation of these locker room policies or for engaging in any misconduct or abuse or that violates the policies. Reports of any actual or suspected violations should be emailed to the coaching staff, the appropriate authorities in your local area, USA Hockey at [SafeSport@usahockey.org](mailto:SafeSport@usahockey.org) and to the American Special Hockey Association.

### **Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program:**

#### **A. Criminal Background Check on All Staff with Access to Youth:**

All administrators and staff with access to youth/eligible individuals including directors, officers, coaches, assistant coaches, managers, volunteers etc. should have their backgrounds checked for acceptability prior to initial assignment of duties. Thereafter, a subsequent background check should be run every two year(s).

The Board shall appoint a Conduct Official each season. **Note: the conduct official can be the Risk Management Officer (RMO) or any other responsible administrator capable of protecting the confidentiality of information and is not prone to gossip.** The RMO responsible for implementing, monitoring, taking corrective action, disqualifying unfit candidates, and working with third party background check vendors on all issues related to our criminal background check program. The

Conduct Official should maintain the confidentiality of all information to protect against possible claims of slander or libel. The Conduct Official should work with third party vendors for assistance in interpreting background check results and to protect against possible claims under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, First Offender Act, and all other state and federal laws protecting those who undergo criminal background checks.

#### B. Policies to Protect Against Misconduct:

The following policies are to be communicated to all coaching and volunteer staff:

- All forms of abuse including sexual, physical, emotional, harassment, bullying, and hazing are prohibited.
- Prohibited sexual abuse physical acts include genital contact whether or not either party is clothed; fondling of a participant's breast or buttocks; sexual penetration; sexual assault, exchange of a reward in sport for sexual favors; lingering or repeated embrace that goes beyond acceptable physical touch; tickling, wrestling, or massage; and continued physical contact that makes a participant uncomfortable.
- Prohibited sexual abuse verbal acts includes making sexually oriented comments, jokes and innuendos; staff member discussing his or her sex life with participant; asking about a participant's sex life; requesting or sending a nude or partial dress photo; exposing participants to pornographic material; voyeurism; and sexting with a participant.
- Any type of grooming behavior is prohibited. (See next section for further definition)
- Prohibited forms of physical abuse include punching, beating, biting, striking, choking, slapping, or intentionally hitting a participant with objects or sports equipment; providing alcohol to a participant under legal drinking age; providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any participant; encouraging or permitting a participant to return to play after injury or sickness prematurely without clearance of a medical professional; prescribing dieting or other weight control methods for humiliation purposes; isolating a participant in a confined space; forcing participant to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose; withholding, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition medical attention, or sleep.
- Prohibited emotional abuse includes a pattern of verbally attacking a participant personally such as calling them worthless, fat or disgusting; physically aggressive behaviors such as throwing or hitting objects; and ignoring a participant for extended periods of time or excluding them from practice.
- Bullying includes an intentional, persistent, or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating (e.g., staff not preventing) physical, nonphysical, or cyber bullying behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate another person emotionally, physically, or sexually. It is often not the staff, but instead, other participants who are the perpetrators of bullying. However, it is a violation if the staff member knows or should have known of the bullying behavior but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the targeted participants.
- Prohibited hazing includes any contact which is intimidating, humiliating, offensive or physically harmful. Hazing typically is an activity that serves as a condition for joining a team of being socially accepted by team members.

- Two deep leadership is required where two adults (e.g., any combination of staff or parents) should be present at all times so that a minor participant can't be isolated with a single unrelated adult, except in the case of an emergency.
- All electronic communications including email, texting, social media, etc. between the staff member and a minor participant should be limited strictly to the legitimate activities of the organization.
- Pick-up of athletes by staff is strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one-on-one contact.

### C. Recognizing Grooming:

Grooming is the process of which sexual predators pave the way for sexual abuse by gradually gaining the trust of and conditioning of minors, parents, and administrators. The steps in the grooming process are as follows:

- Identify a vulnerable child whose needs are not being met such as lack of attention by parents, lack of spending money, etc.
- Fill the missing needs of the child by providing attention, transportation, help with homework, special favors, confiding in secrets, spending money, gifts, etc. to create a "special bond".
- Gain trust of family by spending disproportionate amount of time with them.
- Isolate the victim to create one on one opportunities.
- Gradually use boundary invasions that start off with inappropriate electronic communications and photo sharing, tickling, wrestling, massages, alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc. that lead to nudity and sexual activity.
- Maintain control and silence with threats of fear and shame.

### D. Awareness:

All administrators, staff and parents are to report all concerns, complaints, allegations, and policy violations to the Conduct Official within 24 hours. If the Conduct Official is the alleged abuser, the report should be made to coaching staff.

The Conduct Official should immediately perform an investigation with the results brought to the attention of the Board of Directors. The investigation should include a gathering of all pertinent facts in a fair, respectful, and confidential manner including an interview with both the accuser and accused.

After the investigation, the Conduct Official should determine if the alleged acts were appropriate, but unappreciated; inappropriate, but not illegal; or illegal. If the Conduct Official has reasonable cause to believe that child sexual or physical abuse has occurred, law enforcement should be immediately notified within 24 hours. At that point, the Conduct Official should immediately cease all investigation and let law enforcement do its job. The suspected staff member should be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

Staff members may be required by state and federal law to independently and directly report to law enforcement, within 24 hours, any suspicions of child sexual or physical abuse and may have criminal

and civil liability for failure to do so. All persons reporting suspected cases should be given immunity from civil lawsuits if acting in good faith.

Short of an illegal act, the Board should decide the appropriate action and can perform additional follow up investigation. Depending on the nature of the act, the Board may decide to give an oral or written reprimand, suspend, or terminate the staff member. The organization is prohibited from retaliating in any way against a staff member who makes a good faith report of suspicion of any form of misconduct.

**No Waiver of Discretion:**

Nothing in this program shall be construed as a waiver or limitation of the program's discretion to disqualify an applicant for a coaching or volunteer position, when in the sole opinion of the Board, such disqualification is in the best interest of the program or its participants.

Player Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_