REFEREE SAFETY PROCEDURES

1. Objectives and Application

- The objective of the Referee Safety Procedures is to provide minimum standards for safety and to create expectations for all individuals involved in refereeing.

- These safety procedures apply to any individual contracted by or engaged in refereeing with or on behalf of Volleyball BC.

- They apply to all individuals' conduct during and involvement with Volleyball BC business, teams, programs, competitions, events and activities including, but not limited to, games, practices, training camps, workshops, conferences, any travel associated with Volleyball BC activities, teams and competitions, the Volleyball BC office environment and any meetings concerning Volleyball BC business.

2. Safety Statement

- Volleyball BC is committed to a sport environment that is safe for all participants. These procedures outline the practical rules, expectations, and guidelines to ensure that safety is embedded into all Volleyball BC referee activities.

3. What is abuse, maltreatment and inappropriate behaviour?

- Volleyball BC has a Code of Conduct and Ethics that outlines expected behavioural conduct of all referees and other registered participants. The Code is based on and aligned with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

- The Code of Conduct states that all participants will avoid any actions that are abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, violence, or discrimination. It is a violation of the Code to engage in the following behaviours:

Psychological or emotional maltreatment	Verbal, non-physical behaviour, or actions that harm an individual's sense of self-worth *Eg. Referee repeatedly mocks another referee for making the wrong calls.*
Physical maltreatment	Contact or non-contact behaviours that have the potential to cause physical harm.

	Eg. Referee allocator insists a referee return to work after hitting their head, despite medical advice advising rest
Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse	Unwanted sexual activity or upsetting comments or actions against someone because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. *Eg. Male referee repeatedly tells a female referee that she is doing well "for a girl"*
Grooming	Building a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person (or their families) so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. *Eg. Adult referee consistently asks for relationship advice from an underage referee.*
Neglect	Failing to provide what someone needs for their physical, psychological or emotional development and well-being. *Eg. Supervisor/Mentor arbitrarily withholds or refuses to give feedback on a referee's performance*
Harassment	A series of upsetting comments or behaviour against an individual which is known or ought to reasonably be known to be unwelcome. *Eg. Referee makes deliberate decisions to penalise a player in retaliation against for previously reporting harassment to Volleyball BC.*

- We have produced this document that outlines more information about abuse, maltreatment, and appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour.

4. Safety Procedures while Refereeing

- There are many different situations that arise in volleyball including tryouts, practices, competitions, travel, and communication. An important part of creating a safe environment is setting shared expectations about how individuals should behave in these situations.

- A **Person In Authority** is anyone who holds a position of trust or authority because of the role that they have. Referees are Persons in Authority (PIA) because of the role that they play in our sport. However, within the referee and sport community, there are different levels and dynamics of authority: referee allocators or mentors, tournament organisers, coaches, and administrators may be in an elevated position of authority over an individual referee. Because of their position, Persons In Authority have inherent power over other participants and so must be careful not to abuse this, consciously or unconsciously.

- Referees who are minors and under the age of 19 years are considered particularly vulnerable. **All** guidelines below should be maintained in situations involving youth referees who are under the age of 19 years.
  The guidelines should also be considered for situations involving referees who are over the age of 19 years, particularly if there is an inherent power imbalance from age, gender, or position.

- Volleyball BC follows the concept of **"Open and Observable Environments**" which involves making all efforts to avoid situations where a Person In Authority might be alone with a vulnerable person. The name refers to the fact that interactions between an individual and an individual who is in a position of trust/authority should be in an environment or space that is both "open" and "observable" to others. The guidelines below are designed to uphold the concept of Open and Observable Environments at all times.

4.2 During Games, Competitions and Other Volleyball Activities

- All competition environments must be open to observation. Individuals should self-identify situations during training, competitions or other volleyball activities that may put themselves in a vulnerable position and consider ways to avoid or alter the environment to promote safety.

- Two Persons in Authority should always be present with an individual who is under 19 years old, when in a potentially vulnerable situation such as a meeting room.

- All one-on-one interactions between a Person in Authority and an individual must take place within earshot and in view of the second Person in Authority except for medical emergencies. One of the Persons in Authority must also be of the same gender identity as the referee.

- Private conversations should always happen in an open and observable environment such as in the corner of the gymnasium, in a café, in a glass-walled office, outside the gymnasium in an open location, as just a few examples. A closed-door meeting can take place if a second Person in Authority is present at all times.

- Interactions between a Person in Authority and a referee should not occur in any room where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as the change room or restroom.

- A Person in Authority or adult referee should never be alone with a referee who is a minor, unless they are the youth referee's parent or guardian. If an adult is not available, then another youth referee should be present.

- While there are circumstances where one on one medical treatment may be necessary due to the injury or treatment type, when at all possible medical staff should have their interactions take place in open and observable spaces

4.3 Communication

- Establish, monitor, and reinforce clear, appropriate, and consistent communication boundaries with referees of all ages.

- Eliminate one-to-one electronic messaging between adult and youth referees. A good practice is to pre-establish a message group so that group messages, group emails or team pages are used as the regular method of communication.

- If an adult referee, referee allocator or referee mentor receives a message directly from a referee under 19 years' old, the recipient should include another adult or parent in their response back. The designated parent or guardian of minor referees should be included in any individual communications from Persons in Authority.

- Persons in Authority may only send individual texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individual referees when necessary and only for the purpose of communicating information related to refereeing (e.g., non-personal information).

- The content of all electronic communication between Persons in Authority and referees must be professional in tone and for the purpose of communicating information related to referee activities.

- No communication concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is permitted. No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation is permitted.

4.4 Travel and Socialising

- A Person in Authority may not be alone in a car with a minor unless Person In Authority is the minor's parent or guardian or there are at least two minors and written consent is obtained by parents/guardians. If a minor travelling alone with a Person In Authority is absolutely necessary, permission should be obtained from the parent/guardian, all relevant people should be told the expected departure/arrival times, and the minor should travel in the back of the car

- A Person in Authority may not share a room or be alone in a hotel room with a referee/individual under the age of 19 years unless the Person in Authority is their parent or guardian.

- For overnight travel when referees share a hotel room, roommates will be age-appropriate (e.g., within 2 years of age or both adults) and of the same gender identity. If an individual is under the age of 19 years, consent should be obtained from the individual's parent/guardian.

- Volleyball BC has a zero-tolerance policy to the under-age consumption of alcohol and drugs.

4.5 Photography

- As part of the registration process or otherwise, referees (or the parents/guardians of referees under 19 years) should sign a photo release form that describes how their image may be used by Volleyball BC.

- Photographs and video may only be taken in public view, must observe generally accepted standards of decency, and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the individual.

- The use of recording devices of any kind in rooms where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is strictly prohibited.

- Examples of photos that should be edited or deleted include:
  Images with misplaced apparel or where undergarments are showing
  Suggestive or provocative poses
  Embarrassing images

- Without parent or legal guardian's consent in the case of a referee under the age of 19 years, or without an adult referee's consent, the referee may not be photographed or filmed and no images of them may be posted publicly or privately. If consent is given, it may be revoked at any time.

4.6 Physical Contact

Volleyball BC understands that some physical contact between Persons in Authority and individuals may be necessary for various reasons including, but not limited to, teaching a skill or tending to an injury. In this case, Volleyball BC requires the following guidelines:

- All physical interaction should be limited to non-threatening or non-sexual touching (e.g., high-fives, pats on the back or shoulder, handshakes, specific skill instruction, etc.)

- Unless it is not possible because of serious injury or other circumstance, a Person in Authority should always clarify with an individual where and why any touch will occur. Verbal cues and explanations are encouraged to further help educate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate contact. The Person in Authority must make clear that he or she is *requesting* to touch the referee and not *requiring* physical contact.

- Hugging, cuddling, physical horseplay, and physical contact initiated by a Person in Authority is not permitted.

5. Reporting abuse, maltreatment, or inappropriate behaviour

- Volleyball BC has an independent third-party to expertly and confidentially review complaints that concern abuse and maltreatment. Volleyball BC uses ITP Sport as an independent third-party to handle complaints that concern abuse and maltreatment. You can speak to someone confidentially and report any incidents directly to the helpline and they will provide you with advice and handle the complaint. If it is appropriate, they will also conduct an investigation into the complaint. ITP Sport can be contacted at 1-866-921-6714 or at www.integritycounts.ca

6. Flowchart for issue resolution

- The following flowchart is designed to provide you with practical steps in the event that you experience or witness abuse, maltreatment, or inappropriate behaviour

Volleyball BC is obliged to refer serious or complex complaints related to abuse and maltreatment to an independent third party to ensure that they are appropriately handled. At any time, you may also directly report any incidents or suspected incidents of abuse and maltreatment directly to the ITP Sport at www.integritycounts.ca

7. What information do I require in order to report something?

- When reporting any incidents or suspected incident, make a note of the following:
    - The name of the individual who experienced the incident, noting any disability or special needs (eg. communication/language) they may have or whether they are a minor.
    - The nature of the concern, suspicion or allegation. A description of any visible injury or other physical or behavioural indicators, taking care to be as accurate as you can.
    - Your own or the individual's account of what happened.
    - Dates, times and any other factual information, including details of the person suspected or alleged to have harmed the individual. The distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay.

Some important points to remember:

- If you report the incident verbally, make sure that you follow up with a written account to ensure that all details are accurately reported and maintained as soon as possible.
- Volleyball BC pledges that there will be no recrimination, dismissal, discipline, or penalization of individuals who submit a report concerning abuse and maltreatment.
- The confidentiality and privacy of individuals should be respected at all times. Do not share information about the incident or behaviour with anyone other than those immediately involved.

8. Additional Information

- Additional information about our commitment to safe sport, including the Safe Sport Handbook and handouts, can be found here.

Date: May 2026