



INTERNATIONAL CHEER UNION GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETE SAFETY & WELFARE

The International Cheer Union (ICU) is committed to the safety and well-being of all the athletes that compete and participate in the Sport of Cheer. Athlete safety and welfare are paramount, and the ICU reserves the right to do whatever is necessary to make this our most important priority.

In cooperation with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), ICU follows the enclosed guidelines, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations that are incumbent on our Member National Federations and their coaches, staff, members, and associates to follow and incorporate in all their activities associated with the Sport of Cheer.

The International Olympic Committee (“IOC”) Consensus Statement: Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport (2006) states that *“Sexual harassment and abuse occur worldwide. In sport, they give rise to suffering for athletes and others, and to legal, financial, and moral liabilities for sport organizations. No sport is immune to these problems which occur at every performance level. Everyone in sport shares the responsibility to identify and prevent sexual harassment and abuse and to develop a culture of dignity, respect, and safety in sport. Sport organizations, in particular, are gatekeepers to safety and should demonstrate strong leadership in identifying and eradicating these practices.”*

According to the IOC Consensus Statement: Harassment and Abuse in Sport (2016), *“[I]t is incumbent upon all stakeholders in sport to both adopt general principles for safe sport... and to implement and monitor policies and procedures for safe sport... which state that: all athletes have a right to be treated with respect, protected from non-accidental violence...”* and that *“the welfare of athletes is paramount.”*

The ICU is committed and remains forever vigilant to the continued implementation of the necessary steps to provide support, education, and guidance to its global membership through the development of educational materials, services, references, and other resources on all issues of athlete welfare, including nondiscrimination, harassment, and abuse in sport.

The ICU is committed to the recommended policies from the *“IOC Framework for safeguarding athletes and other participants from harassment and abuse in sport (Games-time period)”*.

The ICU adopts and implements Safeguarding Policies as well as the following guidelines, also directed to all levels of our sport (including National Federation & grass-roots levels, etc.), to serve as, at minimum,

the standard when adopting and implementing all those policies related to harassment and abuse in sport.

The ICU will take advantage of the ongoing available educational material, best case studies as well as other practical information, some of which may be provided by the IOC.

1. DEFINITIONS

The following are similar to those from the IOC Code of Ethics, incorporated into the ICU list of definitions:

“Harassment” / “Harassment and Abuse” includes psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, and neglect. These forms of harassment and abuse may occur in combination or in isolation.

“Psychological Abuse” means any unwelcome act(s) including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.

“Physical Abuse” means any deliberate and unwelcome act - such as, for example, punching, beating, kicking, biting, and burning - that causes physical trauma or injury. Such act can also consist of forced or inappropriate physical activity (e.g., age-, or physique- inappropriate training loads; when injured or in pain), forced alcohol consumption or forced doping practices.

“Sexual Harassment” means any verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which is unwelcome, or where consent is coerced, manipulated, or cannot be given. Sexual harassment can take the form of sexual abuse. An athlete cannot grant consent to any form of sexual harassment.

“Neglect” within the meaning of this document means the failure of a coach or another person with a duty of care towards the athlete to provide a minimum level of care to the athlete, which is causing harm, allowing harm to be caused or creating an imminent danger of harm.

Harassment and abuse can be based on any grounds including race, religion, color, creed, ethnic origin, physical attributes, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socio-economic status, and athletic ability. It can include a one-off incident or a series of incidents. It may be in person or online. Harassment may be deliberate, unsolicited, and coercive.

Harassment and abuse can often result from an abuse of authority, meaning the improper use of a position of influence, control, power, or authority by an individual against another person.

Further details and examples of what can constitute harassment and abuse can be found in the IOC Consensus Statement: Harassment and Abuse in Sport (2016).

2. ICU SAFEGUARDING POLICY

When adopting and implementing a Safeguarding Policy by all stakeholders of our Sport, the ICU recommends that the following be taken into consideration:

2.1 Definition of Harassment and Abuse: this includes aggressive pressure or intimidation.

Develop a clear definition of the term “harassment and abuse”, which is consistent with the definition in Section 1 and with applicable laws.

2.2 Scope of Application

Apply the safeguarding policies to all persons affiliated with the ICU, directly or indirectly, including athletes.

2.3 Education and Prevention

Inform all athletes, their entourages, coaches, officials as well as other relevant persons on what may constitute harassment and abuse and where they may seek further information, advice, and support, e.g., by organizing training or by making available educational material.

Provide for mechanisms to prevent involvement of known offenders in the ICU or their respective National Federations activities.

2.4 Reporting Procedure

Establish a reporting procedure for alleged incidents of harassment and abuse, specifying the different reporting channels and designated persons through which an alleged incident of harassment and abuse may be reported to the ICU, either directly or indirectly from any member National Federations or participating person as well as the information that should be included in the report.

2.5 Investigation Procedure

Establish an investigation procedure to respond to alleged incidents of harassment and abuse which aims to assemble comprehensive information on the alleged incident. Such information may be reported directly to the ICU, through the Secretary General or the Ethics Committee. The investigation procedure will be listed and made available on the ICU website or by request to Secretary General, the Ethics Committee, or the office of the ICU President.

2.6 Support of Concerned Persons

Establish appropriate mechanisms to provide support and information to persons involved in an alleged incident of harassment and abuse (“concerned persons”) including the ICU Ethics Committee or the appointment of someone who is responsible for following up on all alleged incidents of harassment and abuse (e.g., a “Welfare/Support Officer”). Such person should be trained and experienced in the field of safeguarding from harassment and abuse (e.g. medically and/or legally), and his/her responsibilities should, in particular, include playing a central role in: (i) the reporting and investigation procedures, (ii) determining whether information of a case should be disclosed to the competent local authorities, (iii) providing support to any concerned persons throughout the reporting and investigation procedures, (iv) the opportunity of direct communication with the ICU Secretary General, (v) or the opportunity of direct communication with the Ethics Committee.

2.7 Disciplinary Procedure

Establish a disciplinary procedure for alleged incidents of abuse and harassment, which includes, in particular, disciplinary decisions, measures and sanctions. This could include an array of actions from probations to the termination of an individual(s) or groups involvement with any and/or all ICU activities, events, programs, or gatherings/meetings.

2.8 Measures and Sanctions

Establish guidelines on measures and sanctions detailing how incidents of harassment and abuse should be sanctioned. Measures and sanctions must respect the principle of proportionality, be in proportion to the severity of the behavior and consistent with applicable laws. The following factors should be taken into consideration when determining proportionality: the nature and severity of the violations; the number of violations; any other relevant circumstances (e.g., when the abused or harassed person is a minor) and others deemed necessary by the Ethics Committee, the Welfare / Support Office, or the office of the ICU Secretary General.

2.9 Fair Process

Provide the responding party with fair process, including notice and the right/opportunity to be heard before applying any measure or sanction. Due process will be included in those respective documents where the necessary and needed information is provided by the ICU to the National Federations as well as those who are involved in any one of the various forms of involvement with the Sport of Cheer

2.10 Involvement of Relevant Public Authorities and Other Organizations

Consistent with applicable laws, inform the relevant public authorities about potential criminal cases. This will be managed on a country-by-country basis. When such applications are not well known or guided, such determinations will be presented from the Ethics Committee to the Governing Counsel for their review and recommended course of action.

If the ICU is unable (e.g., because it does not have the financial or human resources) to adopt and/or implement the above-described safeguarding measures, assistance and support could be sought from relevant public authorities or other organizations.

2.11 Confidentiality

Establish a confidentiality policy, which states that an alleged incident of harassment and abuse be regarded as confidential, and that personal information (including in particular name, date of birth, address, identification numbers) should not be disclosed, except, for example, if the concerned person gives his/her prior consent, if disclosure is necessary to protect someone from harm or if a potential criminal act comes to the attention of the ICU or the respective National Federation.

2.12 Involvement of athletes

Involve athletes in the development of safeguarding policies. A representative group of both male and female athletes will be included throughout the development of the above listed programs and activities.

These IOC Guidelines for IFs and NOCs related to creating and implementing a policy to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport were approved by the IOC Executive Board on 2 June 2016, in Lausanne

3. ADDITIONAL ICU SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

- 3.1 Seminars/education for National Federation and event producer implementation**
- 3.2 Safe coaching seminars for athletes, coaches, parents, administrators/owners**
- 3.3 National Cheer Federation coordination for traveling coaches/choreographers**
- 3.4 Required background checks for coaches, staff, and officials**
- 3.5 Restricted and limited access to competitions areas**
- 3.6 On-site Safeguarding awareness videos playing during competitions**
- 3.7 More restrictive age eligibility requirements for all ICU divisions**
- 3.8 Mandatory image guidelines for athletes**
- 3.9 Designated ICU hotline resource safesport@cheerunion.org**
- 3.10 Gym owner agreement requirements to assure Safeguarding policy implementation at grass-roots level**