



## EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT

### How to Recognize, Reduce and Respond to Emotional Misconduct

#### What you need to know to protect athletes

Sport can help individuals build skills, making them stronger and better able to deal with challenges. The wide range of emotions athletes experience in practice and competition are a normal, healthy component of sport. However, a repeated pattern of behavior by either coaches or teammates that can inflict psychological or emotional harm has no place in sport. By gaining a complete understanding of the actions that qualify as emotional misconduct, participants can be in a stronger position to take action.

#### Definition

Emotional misconduct involves a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behavior includes verbal and physical acts, as well as actions that deny attention or support. It also includes any act or conduct (e.g., child abuse and child neglect) described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law.

#### Exceptions

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline or improving athletic performance.

#### Examples of Emotional Misconduct

##### *Verbal acts*

- Verbally attacking an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting)
- Repeatedly and excessively yelling at participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose

##### *Physical acts*

- Throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants
- Punching walls, windows or other objects

##### *Acts that deny attention and support*

- Ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time
- Routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice