

Policy: Abuse Policy & Bullying and Harassment Policy

Created: 2011 Revisions: June 2015 | July 2019 | March 2022

The 2019 Revision was completed with guidance from Respect in Sport Director, Mark Allen. Visit www.respectgroupinc.com

1. AOA Abuse Policy

This policy sets out the principles and practices of Alpine Ontario Alpin (AOA) with regards to abusive behaviour towards its participants. Each AOA ski club is responsible for adopting a similar policy and adapting it to provincial, regional, or local requirements as appropriate.

It is the policy of AOA that there shall be no abuse and neglect, whether physical, emotional, or sexual of any participant in any of its programs. AOA expects every parent, volunteer, and staff member to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of its participants and protect them from any form of maltreatment.

Relationship to harassment/bullying policy

Some behaviours which are defined as abuse, when a child or youth's protection is at risk, can also constitute harassment or bullying, when the behaviour breaches human rights or appropriate relationship/conduct boundaries. AOA Harassment/Bullying Policy covers such behaviours. Together, the two policies address the entire spectrum of abusive, bullying, and harassing behaviours.

Statement of Purpose

AOA is part of the sporting community in our country that is committed to seeking better ways to keep our youth safe. Protecting participants from all forms of abuse and neglect, whether emotional, physical, or sexual, is an important element of safety. AOA considers any form of abuse or neglect to be unacceptable and will do all it can to prevent this intolerable social problem. AOA is committed to the highest possible standards of care for its participants including the following actions by all AOA staff

and coaches:

1. Respect in Sport Training for all AOA Staff and Coaches
2. Background Screening with Sterling BackCheck in partnership with Alpine Canada Alpin (ACA)

Any additional developments to AOA's commitment to Safe Sport will be posted on the AOA website here

<https://www.alpineontario.ca/alpine-ontario-alpin-racing/coaching/responsible-coaching/>

Recognition and Prevention of Abuse Policy

Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care which causes physical injury or emotional damage to a child. A common characteristic of all forms of abuse against children and youth is an abuse of power or authority and/or breach of trust. In Ontario a person is considered a child up to and including age 17. In Ontario you are considered an adult at age 18.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child's self-esteem; it is psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, or ignoring the child's needs.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when a person in a position of power or trust or a peer purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or youth. This may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, throwing, and shoving, and grabbing, hazing or excessive exercise as a form of punishment.

Neglect

Neglect is chronic inattention to the basic necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, nutritious diets, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise and fresh air. This may occur in alpine skiing when injuries are not adequately treated or athletes train/race with injuries, equipment is inadequate or unsafe; no-one intervenes when team members are persistently harassing another player, or road trips are not properly supervised. It may also originate in the home, and coaches/other adults, may notice something and must act if they suspect neglect or any other form of abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a young person is used by an older child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. There are two categories:

Contact:

- Touched or fondled in sexual areas
- Forced to touch another person's sexual areas
- Kissed or held in a sexual manner
- Forced to perform oral sex
- Vaginal or anal intercourse
- Vaginal or anal penetration with an object or finger
- Sexually oriented hazing
- Forced to self-masturbate or forced to watch others masturbate

Non-Contact

- Obscene remarks on phone/computer or in notes
- Voyeurism
- Shown pornography
- Forced to watch sexual acts
- Sexually intrusive questions and comments
- Forced to pose for sexual photographs or videos

Duty to Report

Abuse and neglect are community problems requiring urgent attention. AOA is committed to help reduce and prevent the abuse and neglect of participants. AOA realizes that persons working closely with children and youth have a special awareness of abusive situations.

Therefore, these people have a particular reporting responsibility to ensure the safety of Canada's young, by knowing their provincial protection acts and following through as required.

Ontario has mandatory reporting laws regarding the abuse and neglect of children and youth. Consequently, it is the policy of AOA that any AOA personnel (part-time and full-time staff, volunteer, participant, official, coach) or AOA partner (parent, guardian) who, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a participant is, or may be, suffering, or may have suffered from emotional, physical abuse and neglect and/or sexual abuse shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the local child protection agency and/or the local police detachment.

Those involved with AOA in providing alpine ski racing opportunities understand and agree that abuse or neglect, as defined above, may be the subject of a criminal investigation and/or disciplinary procedures. Failure to report an offence and thereby, failure to provide safety for participants may render the adult who keeps silent legally liable for conviction under the provincial child protection acts.

2. AOA Bullying and Harassment Policy

This Policy sets out the principles and practices of AOA regarding bullying and harassment. Each ski club is responsible for adopting a similar policy as appropriate.

Relationship to Recognition and Prevention of Abuse Policy

Some behaviours which are defined as harassment or bullying, when the behaviour breaches human rights or appropriate relationship/conduct boundaries, can also constitute abuse, when a child or youth's protection is at risk. AOA's recognition and prevention of Abuse Policy covers such behaviours. Together, the AOA Abuse Policy along with the AOA Bullying & Harassment Policies addresses the entire spectrum of abusive, bullying, and harassing behaviours.

Statement of Purpose

AOA is committed to providing a sport and work environment which promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices and bullying.

Harassment is a form of discrimination which is prohibited by human rights legislation in Canada. Bullying involves a person expressing their power through the humiliation of another person. Bullying may be a form of harassment but also has some of its own defining characteristics. The sport setting is one setting in which bullying occurs. In some cases, coaches and players use bullying tactics deliberately to motivate performance and to weaken opponents.

AOA supports the right of all its members, whether athletes, volunteers, or employees, to participate in all AOA activities free from any form of harassment and bullying. Further, AOA emphasizes the importance of eliminating harassment and bullying in alpine ski racing as a key element in ensuring the safety of young participants. A sports environment which actively discourages harassment and bullying and builds relationships based on trust and mutual respect is an environment which discourages the abuse of children and youth and encourages the overall development of the individual.

To further these objectives, AOA will make every reasonable effort to promote awareness of the problem of harassment and bullying among all its members, and to respond quickly and effectively to complaints or disclosures of harassment or bullying.

Policy

It is the policy of AOA that harassment and bullying in all its forms will not be tolerated during the course of any AOA activity or program. Accordingly, all AOA personnel (staff, volunteers, team officials) and partners (parents, guardians) are responsible to uphold this commitment. Specifically, this includes refraining from harassing or bullying behaviour, responding promptly and informally to minor incidents of harassment or bullying and following local or national policy

guidelines for reporting or responding to more serious complaints of harassment or bullying. Players and other participants are expected to refrain from harassing or bullying behaviour and are encouraged to report incidents of harassment or bullying.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is defined as conduct, gestures or comments which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals, and which create a hostile or intimidating environment for work or sports activities, or which negatively affect performance or work conditions. Any of the different forms of harassment must be based on the grounds prohibited in human rights legislation, such as race, ethnicity, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability, pardoned conviction, and sexual orientation.

Harassment may occur among anyone between peers (e.g.: skiers on the same age group, parent to official, coach to coach, parent to AOA staff) or between someone in a position of power or authority and an adult in a subordinate position (e.g.: coach to player, sports administrator to employee).

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of harassment:

1. Unwelcome jokes, innuendo or teasing about a person's body, looks, race, sexual orientation etc.
2. Condescending, patronizing, threatening, or punishing actions which undermine self-esteem
3. Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, or may endanger a person's safety
4. Degrading or inappropriate hazing rituals
5. Unwanted or unnecessary physical contact including touching, patting, pinching
6. Unwanted conduct, comments, gestures, or invitations of a sexual nature which are likely to cause offence or humiliation, or which might on reasonable grounds be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or advancement
7. Sexual assault or physical assault (also considered an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada)

It is important to note that the behaviours described in items 5 to 7, when directed towards a child or youth, constitute abuse under child protection legislation. This may also be true of other behaviours, for example, certain hazing practices. In such cases, the duty to report provisions of the Recognition and Prevention of Abuse Policy are applicable.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying involves a person expressing their power through the humiliation of another person. Bullying occurs between people at any age and is not addressed under human rights legislation. It is inappropriate behaviours that are typically cruel, demeaning and hostile toward the bullying targets (most commonly occurs between children under the age of twelve but may also constitute

behaviours between youth or between adults). Bullying is similar to harassment, but the behaviours are not addressed under human rights laws. Bullies are typically cruel, demeaning and hostile towards the targets of their bullying.

The actual issue of bullying is not addressed by the law, except when the behaviour does become a criminal issue – e.g., extortion, physical assault, harassment (stalking)... Bullying can be broken down into four types:

1. Physical (hit or kicks victims; take/damage personal property)
2. Verbal (name calling; insults; constant teasing)
3. Relational (try to cut off victims from social connection by convincing peers to exclude or reject a certain person)
4. Cyber bullying

The following is a non-exhaustive list of tactics used by bullies to control their targets:

1. Unwarranted yelling and screaming directed at the target
2. Continually criticizing the target's abilities
3. Blaming the target of the bullying for mistakes
4. Making unreasonable demands related to performance
5. Repeated insults or put downs of the target
6. Repeated threats to remove or restrict opportunities or privileges
7. Denying or discounting the targets accomplishment
8. Threats of and actual physical violence

Responses and Remedies

It is the position of AOA that harassment and bullying cannot and should not be tolerated in any environment, including alpine ski racing. Both harassment and bullying are unacceptable and harmful. AOA recognizes the serious negative impact of all types of harassment and bullying on personal dignity, individual and group development and performance, enjoyment of the sport and in some cases, personal safety.

At the same time, AOA recognizes that not all incidents of harassment and bullying are equally serious in their consequences. Both harassment and bullying cover a wide spectrum of behaviours, and the response to both must be equally broad in range, appropriate to the behaviour in question and capable of providing a constructive remedy. There must be no summary justice or hasty punishment. The process of investigation and settlement of any complaint of harassment or bullying must be fair to all parties, allowing adequate opportunity for the presentation of a response to the allegations.

Minor incidents of harassment or bullying should be corrected promptly and informally, taking a constructive approach and with the goal of bringing about a change in negative attitudes and behaviour.

More serious incidents should be dealt with in a timely, sensitive, responsible, and confidential manner. There should be no tolerance of reprisals taken against any party to a complaint. The names of parties and the circumstances of the complaint should be kept confidential except where disclosure is necessary for the purposes of investigation or taking

disciplinary measures.

Anyone making a complaint which is found to be clearly unfounded, false, malicious, or frivolous may be subject to discipline.

Anyone (an individual or individuals) who wish to file a complaint should contact AOA Board Member, Brian Silveira for a copy of the *“Abuse, Bullying & Harassment Complaint Procedures”* document.

Additional Safe Sport resources are also available online here:

<https://www.alpineontario.ca/safesport/>

Brian Silveira

AOA Board Member – Governance

Brian.silveira@gmail.com