



ATHLETICS. EQUALITY. CHANGE.

AWARENESS GUIDE



The average youth athletic coach interacts with 3 youth that could have been sexually abused

EVERY SEASON.

These are complex issues. You are not expected to have all the answers. With some basic information you could potentially change a life.

What to Look For

Basic warning signs that suggest you should dig deeper:

- Drastic mood changes
- Increased physical aggression
- Withdrawn or disengaged demeanor

If you notice these behavioral changes with one of your players, talk with them and see if you can find out what's going on.

Definitions

Sexual abuse: unwanted or forceful touching, groping, and rape.

Physical abuse: striking, shoving, grabbing, squeezing, slapping, and biting.

Violence at home: witnessing and exposure to domestic violence in the home.

Harmful behaviors can take many forms. Pay attention to particular signs that might suggest certain types of abuse.

Witnessing Violence

- Irrational fear
- Blaming themselves excessively
- Fatigue and constant tiredness
- General aches and pains
- Nervousness
- Acting overly aggressive and tough

Directly Experiencing Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries (bruises, burns, and others)
- Anxiety and depression
- Fear of going home
- Lack of personal hygiene

Sexual Abuse

- Self-injury
- Anxiety and depression
- Withdrawn or disengaged
- Fear of closeness or intimacy
- Drastic mood swings
- Exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language, and knowledge
- Thinks of self or body as repulsive

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How to Help

Listen and watch for comments and behaviors that reveal the "tip of the iceberg."

Young people are careful who they speak to. They often reveal only a small portion of the problem to see if it is safe to tell more.

Most instances of **CHILD ABUSE** go unreported.

Remember abuse is never the fault of the victim.

In addition to keeping your eye out for subtle signs of abuse, be ready for direct conversations with your players.

When you create a team atmosphere of respect and trust, its likely athletes will feel more comfortable revealing troubles at home or in their relationships. Be prepared to have the conversation.

In the Moment

- Find a safe place to talk
- Listen calmly
- Show you care
- Avoid assumptions
- Always believe the child
- Determine the athlete's immediate need for safety

Take Action

1. Contact a representative of the athletic organization you are affiliated with.
2. Follow organizational protocol. If protocols do not exist, suggest your organization contact Men As Peacemakers to develop them.
3. Call your local advocacy organization: First Witness Child Advocacy Center 218-727-8353
4. If you suspect immediate danger contact: Initial Intervention Unit 218-726-2012, 800-450-9777, or the local police

Contact Us

www.menaspeacemakers.org/impact
info@menaspeacemakers.org
f /menaspeacemakers e @MAP_MN