

Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy for Clubs

Model Policy For Junior Club Volleyball Programs

USA Volleyball junior clubs are now required to implement an electronic communication policy. The policy must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults affiliated with the club. The following is a model policy for appropriate electronic communications between adults and athletes, and is provided to assist USA Volleyball member clubs with developing their own policies. If a club chooses not to, or is unable to, create a written electronic communication policy, the following model policy will become the default electronic communication policy for that club. Once a customized set of policies is developed and approved by the club, the default policy will no longer apply. Each member club has the responsibility for approval and implementation of its own electronic communication policy.

Electronic Communication Policy of [insert the name of the club]

PURPOSE [Insert the name of the club] (the “Club”) recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today’s world. Many of our student-athletes use these means as their primary method of communication. While the Club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Club also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

GENERAL CONTENT All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Volleyball Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- Drugs or alcohol use;
- Sexually-oriented conversation; sexually explicit language, sexual activity
- The adult’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- Inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures.

Note: Any communication concerning an athlete’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: “Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?” or “Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient’s parents, the coaching staff, the board

or other athletes?”

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with athletes is Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

- Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

- Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so there is no question regarding accessibility.

- Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Club. This includes word choice, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method and manner of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, BLOGS AND SIMILAR SITES Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a “friend.” A coach should not accept any “friend” request from any athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “private message” each other through Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through Facebook chat or other IM methods.

The club has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can “like” or “friend” for information and updates on team-related matters.

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

TWITTER Best Practice: The club has an official Twitter page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

Alternative Option: Coaches and athletes may follow each other on Twitter. Coaches cannot re-tweet an athlete message post. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

TEXTING Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed

between coaches and athletes during the hours from 7am until 10pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach or a board member must also be copied.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communications. Immediate compliance without repercussion must be granted.

MISCONDUCT Social media and electronic communications can be used to commit misconduct (e.g. emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment and hazing). Such communications by coaches, staff, volunteers, administrators, officials, parents or athletes will not be tolerated and are considered violations of our SafeSport Handbook.

VIOLATIONS Violations of the Club's Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy should be reported to your immediate supervisor, a Club administrator or the Regional SafeSport Contact for evaluation. Complaints and allegations will be addressed following the appropriate procedure.

A USA Volleyball participant or parent of a participant who violates this policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including but not limited to: suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.