



From the Office of the President

February 1, 2018

Dear Florida Region Members,

In light of the recent alarming news regarding USA Gymnastics, I want to address some of the concerns that must surely be part of the conversation in households across Florida. We all watched in disbelief as victim after victim approached the microphone in the courtroom to tell their story about a gymnastics sport leader that went unchecked. Additional articles noted that many athletes tried to notify someone about their concerns without success. The system failed those athletes for various reasons and I want to shine some light on what you can do to help us prevent this from happening again in the future; in every sport.

ATHLETES:

- See something, say something!
- Protect your friends and encourage them to report concerns.
- Talk with your parents about situations that feel uncomfortable.
- Become familiar with the process to report SafeSport concerns and get help. (SafeSportHelpLine.org)

PARENTS:

- Educate your child(ren) on what is appropriate & inappropriate in youth sports and talk with them often.
- Verify, verify, verify. (Ask questions about the credentials of those teaching/supervising/mentoring your child(ren)...specifically their background screening process and status.)
- Become familiar with the policies governing your sport organization(s).
- Notify authorities with detailed information when situations arise with your child.

SPORT LEADERS (COACHES/CLUB DIRECTORS/OFFICIALS):

- Require ALL adults affiliated with your club/organization to get background screened by USA Volleyball.
- Implement, communicate & enforce SafeSport policies on communication and travel.
- Set a standard of excellence in your communication with all athletes.
- Educate athletes on SafeSport reporting and encourage them to notify authorities if they have concerns.
- Create a culture of accountability amongst all adults involved in youth sports.

USA Volleyball was an early adopter of mandatory national background screening and has been lauded for implementing one of the first programs in the Olympic sport community. As an industry leader, we strongly desire to have the highest level of athlete safeguards to best protect our youth and junior members. We are also part of the US Olympic Committee (USOC) SafeSport program to identify, remove, and keep out those individuals that should not be involved in any youth sports. While background checks provide an initial screening and SafeSport policies provide a framework for education and reporting, nothing provides us with better real-time feedback than vigilant directors, coaches, parents, and teammates!

On behalf of our Florida Region Board of Directors and staff, I am asking for your help to continue the work that we have done. This is not lip service, we take this responsibility seriously and we work hard every day here in the Florida Region to create a safe sporting environment for all of our 15,000 members. I am your Florida SafeSport representative and you can reach me directly at 352-742-0080 or steve@FloridaVolleyball.org.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Bishop".

Steve Bishop, President

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