

INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION POLICY



Vertical Adventures is committed to creating a safe environment for athletes and participants involved in climbing. Vertical Adventures uses this handbook as a resource to guide the development, implementation and internal review of the Individual Protection Policies and Procedures regarding misconduct in our corporation.

Note: In the context of this document, **'safety'** or **'providing a safe environment'** refers solely to the provision of an environment safe from misconduct. Rock climbing is dangerous.

Vertical Adventures developed their Individual Protection Policy directly from the United States Olympic Committee SafeSport Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons to participate in sports—at any level. As a life-long activity, people often participate in sports to have fun and spend time with friends. Sports also encourage a healthy lifestyle, build self-confidence; athletes are also more likely to do better “off the field.” They learn goal-setting, teamwork and time management. Athletes are less likely to use tobacco, drugs and alcohol; they have higher graduation rates and are more likely to attend college. Unfortunately, sports can also be a high-risk environment for misconduct, including physical and sexual abuse. Here, we identify six primary types of misconduct:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct
- Sexual Misconduct, including Child Sexual Abuse

All forms of misconduct are intolerable and in direct conflict with Vertical Adventures’ ideals. Misconduct may damage an athlete’s psychological well-being; athletes who have been mistreated experience social embarrassment, emotional turmoil, psychological scars, loss of self-esteem. There are also negative impacts on family, friends and the sport. Misconduct often hurts an athlete’s competitive performance and may cause him or her to drop out of the activity entirely.

Vertical Adventures is committed to the safety of athletes and participants involved in climbing. Vertical Adventures uses this handbook as a resource to guide the development, implementation and internal review of the Individual Protection Policies and Procedures in our corporation. This handbook includes both youth and adult.

DEFINITIONS

Child, Children, Minor and Youth - Anyone under the age of 18. Here, “child,” “children,” “minor” and “youth” are used interchangeably.¹

Child physical abuse - Non-accidental trauma or physical injury caused by contact behaviors, such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. Child physical abuse may also include non-contact physical misconduct as described in the Individual Protection Policy.²

Child sexual abuse - Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a minor that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between minors can also be abusive if there is a significant imbalance of power or disparity in age, development or size, such that one child is the aggressor. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive written or electronic communications, exposure or voyeurism.³

Grooming - The strategies that offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or guardian), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse.

Misconduct - Conduct which results in harm, the potential for harm or the imminent threat of harm. Age is irrelevant to misconduct. There are six primary types of misconduct: emotional, physical and sexual misconduct, bullying, harassment and hazing.

Participants - Minors who participate in a sport or recreational activity through a club or organization (e.g., athletes, officials or referees).

Participant Safety Handbook - As used here, a set of guidelines, collecting policies and practices related to an organization’s strategy for recognizing, reducing and responding to child sexual abuse and other misconduct at Vertical Adventures.

¹ Saul J, Audage NC. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2007. Legal definitions vary by state. To find guidelines concerning your state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov).

² Legal definitions vary by state. To find guidelines concerning your state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov).

³ Legal definitions vary by state. To find guidelines concerning your state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov).

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

We require staff members and volunteers to report abuse, misconduct and violations as specified in Vertical Adventures' Individual Protection Handbook. To do so, staff members and/or volunteers should have a basic understanding of sexual abuse, sexual abusers and 'grooming' behavior.

Accordingly, all supervisors and managers as well as staff members and volunteers who work directly with youth are required to have completed awareness training concerning misconduct within the previous 2 years before performing services for Vertical Adventures. This training consists of

- Successful completion the SafeSport Online Training.⁴ The certificate of the SafeSport Training will be stored in Vertical Adventures staff documents
- Reading Vertical Adventures' Individual Protection Policy Handbook and signing a statement confirming that they have read and understood that handbook. This statement will be stored in Vertical Adventures' staff files.

⁴ <http://safesport.org/take-the-training/>

SCREENING STAFF MEMBERS AND/OR VOLUNTEERS

Staff members and volunteers must consent to, and pass, a formal applicant screening process before performing services for Vertical Adventures.

Elements of our screening process include, as applicable, successful completion of an application, interview, reference check and criminal background check.

EDUCATION ABOUT VERTICAL ADVENTURES' PROTECTION POLICY

To deter applicants who may be at risk of abusing athletes or participants from applying for positions, Vertical Adventures educates its applicants about its protection policies and offers applicants an early opt-out by:

- Requiring awareness training before placement and/or before working with athletes and participants.
- Informing applicants about our policies and procedures relevant to prevention.
- Asking applicants to review and agree to our policies and procedures before proceeding with the process.
- Requiring applicants to sign a document acknowledging review of our policies and procedures.

WRITTEN APPLICATIONS

Each applicant for a position will complete an application form consisting of personal, identifying information and a general release with applicant's signature.

The written application will:

- Ask about previous work and volunteer experiences.
- Ask questions intended to elicit information concerning high-risk behaviors.
- Provide a written release for contacting personal references and performing a criminal background check, including an indemnification clause.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage broad answers.
- Use disclosure statements to ask applicants about previous criminal arrests or convictions for sexual offenses, violence against youth and other violent criminal offenses or felonies.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Appropriate staff will interview applicants whose experience and credentials are considered a fit for available positions. During this interview, Vertical Adventures will ask questions to encourage discussion, clarify responses and expand on the applicant's answers to questions from the written application.

REFERENCES

References of applicants will be contacted (either by phone or in writing) and asked specific questions regarding the applicant's professional experiences, demeanor and appropriateness for involvement with minor athletes and participants.

RELEASE

Each applicant will also provide a signed release, consistent with federal, state and local laws regulating employment practices, that allows references to speak freely about the applicant's qualifications without fear of reprisal and authorizing Vertical Adventures to obtain information

concerning an applicant's past employment, volunteer experience and information provided by the applicant during the screening process (i.e., written application and personal interview).

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY

All applicants will be asked to undergo a criminal background check that complies with the Fair Credit Reporting Act before providing services for Vertical Adventures. Through this criminal background check, Vertical Adventures will utilize reasonable efforts to ascertain past criminal history of an applicant.

PROCESS

The Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form must be submitted and the applicant cleared before he or she may perform services for Vertical Adventures.

On receipt of the Criminal Background Check Consent and Waiver Release form, Vertical Adventures will request that its vendor perform the criminal background check. As part of its criminal background check, Vertical Adventures will, at a minimum and without limitation,

- Perform a national search of state criminal repositories
- Perform a search of state sexual offender registries
- Verify a person's identification against his or her social security number or other personal identifier

POTENTIALLY DISQUALIFYING FACTORS

Criminal History

Vertical Adventures will use a criminal background check to gather information about an applicant's prior criminal history. The information revealed by the criminal background check may disqualify an applicant from serving as a staff member, contractor and/or volunteer. Information that could disqualify an applicant includes, but is not limited to, arrests, pleas of no contest and criminal convictions—especially if the underlying criminal behavior involved sex or violence.

Pending Court Cases

No decision will be made on an individual's eligibility for work as a new staff member, contractor and/or volunteer if they have a pending court case for any of the potentially disqualifying offenses until the pending case concludes. If, however, during the case's pendency, the organization undertakes an independent investigation and conducts a hearing, any determination may be used to disqualify the individual.

Full Disclosure

Each applicant has the affirmative duty to disclose his or her criminal history. Failing to disclose or intentionally misrepresenting an arrest, plea or conviction history in an application or any other information provided by an applicant during the screening process is grounds for employment, volunteer and/or membership revocation or restriction, regardless of when the offense is discovered.

- If an applicant (1) is arrested, (2) pleads or (3) is convicted of a crime other than a traffic offense during the screening process, the applicant is required to disclose such information immediately.
- In the event a person is serving as a staff member, contractor or volunteer and (1) is arrested, (2) pleads or (3) is convicted after the completion of the screening process, he or she has an affirmative duty to disclose such information immediately to his or her supervisor or Vertical Adventures administrator.
- Any applicant who has been banned by another sport organization, as temporarily or permanently ineligible, must self-disclose this information. A failure to disclose is a basis for disqualification for potential applicants.

Findings

Notice of findings will be provided to:

- The designated contact of Vertical Adventures that submitted the application
- Other designated authority/Organization, Where relevant
- Other designated individual where necessary to protect the safety of a minor

Discretion

If any discretion is exercised in the application of this policy, it shall be exercised in a uniform manner so that substantially similar convictions and circumstances result in substantially similar treatment of applicants.

Appeal to Criminal Background Check Vendor

Any disqualified individual has the right to dispute the findings of the criminal background check directly with Vertical Adventures' approved Criminal Background Check Vendor.

Frequency of Criminal Background Checks

Criminal background checks will be refreshed every 2 years or as otherwise required by law, for staff members and/or volunteers who are 18 years of age or older and work with youth for Vertical Adventures.

Other Potential Disqualifying Factors

Even if an applicant passes a criminal background check, other factors may disqualify an applicant. An individual may be disqualified and prohibited from providing services for Vertical Adventures if the individual has:

- Been held liable for civil penalties or damages involving sexual or physical abuse of a minor
- Been subject to any court order involving any sexual or physical abuse of a minor, including but not limited to domestic order or protection
- A history with another organization (employment, volunteer, etc.) of complaints of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- Resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position - paid or unpaid - due to complaint(s) of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- A history of other behavior that indicates they may be a danger to participants in Vertical Adventures' activities; or
- Not met the job requirements

Review of Disqualifiers

Vertical Adventures will review its disqualifiers every two years or as otherwise required or modified by law.

Records

Records are secured onsite for a period indicated by applicable law or until the applicant is no longer affiliated with Vertical Adventures, whichever date is later.

INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION POLICY

COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

OVERVIEW

Vertical Adventures is committed to creating a safe and positive environment for athletes' physical, emotional and social development and to ensuring that it promotes an environment free of misconduct.

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations), suspected physical or sexual abuse, or misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of each staff member and volunteer to immediately report his or her observations to an immediate supervisor or Vertical Adventures' administrator.

Staff members and volunteers should not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate authorities. Instead, it is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to immediately report suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse to an immediate supervisor or Vertical Adventures' administrator. Complaints and allegations will be addressed under Vertical Adventures' Disciplinary Rules and Procedures.

Vertical Adventures recognizes that the process for training and motivating athletes will vary with each coach and athlete, but it is nevertheless important for everyone involved to support the use of motivational and training methods that avoid misconduct.

This Policy applies to

- Staff members and volunteers
- Vertical Adventures' athletes and participants

Staff members, volunteers, athletes and participants shall refrain from all forms of misconduct, which include:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct
- Sexual misconduct, including child sexual abuse

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

Acts or conduct described as child sexual abuse under federal or state law.

Note concerning peer-to-peer child sexual abuse: Sexual contact between minors also can be abusive. Whether or not a sexual interaction between children constitutes child sexual abuse turns on the existence of an aggressor, the age difference between the children, and/or whether there is an imbalance of power and/or intellectual capabilities.

Exception

None

Examples

Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as verbal acts, sexually suggestive electronic or written communications, exposure or voyeurism.

EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT

A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Non-contact behaviors include:

- Verbal acts
- Physical acts
- Acts that deny attention or support
- Any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect).

Exception

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

Examples

Examples of emotional misconduct prohibited by this policy include, without limitation:

- Verbal Acts. A pattern of verbal behaviors that (a) attack an athlete personally (e.g., calling them worthless, fat or disgusting) or (b) repeatedly and excessively yelling at a particular participant or participants in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
- Physical Acts. A pattern of physically aggressive behaviors, such as (a) throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at, or in the presence of, participants; or (b) punching walls, windows or other objects.
- Acts that Deny Attention and Support. A pattern of (a) ignoring an athlete for extended periods of time or (b) routinely or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice.

Note: Bullying, harassment, and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of emotional misconduct.

PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT

Contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threaten to, cause physical harm to an athlete or other sport participants; or

Any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault).

Exceptions

Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance. For example, hitting, punching, and kicking are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in swimming.

Examples

Examples of physical misconduct prohibited by this policy include, without limitation:

Contact offenses; behaviors that include:

- Punching, beating, biting, striking, choking or slapping an athlete
- Intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment;
- Providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age (under U.S. law);
- Providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete;
- Encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play pre-maturely following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional;
- Prescribing dieting or other weight-control methods (e.g., weigh-ins, caliper tests) without regard for the nutritional well-being and health of athlete.

Non-contact offenses; behaviors that include:

- Isolating an athlete in a confined space (e.g., locking an athlete in a small space);
- Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (e.g. requiring an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface);
- Withholding, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep.

Note: Bullying, harassment and hazing, defined below, often involve some form of physical misconduct.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Any touching or non-touching sexual interaction that is (a) nonconsensual or forced, (b) coerced or manipulated, or (c) perpetrated in an aggressive, harassing, exploitative or threatening manner;

Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative; or

Any act or conduct described as sexual abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, rape)

Note: An imbalance of power is always assumed between a coach and an athlete.

Types of sexual misconduct include:

- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse, or

- Any other sexual intimacies that exploit an athlete. Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly prohibited.

Exceptions

None

Examples

Examples of sexual misconduct prohibited under this Policy include, without limitation:

Touching offenses; behaviors that include:

- Fondling an athlete's breasts or buttocks
- Exchange of reward in sport (e.g., team placement, scores, feedback) for sexual favors
- Genital contact
- Sexual relations or intimacies between persons in a position of trust, authority and/or evaluative and supervisory control over athletes or other sport participants.

Comment

Authority and Trust. Once the unique coach-athlete relationship is established, the authority and trust on the part of the coach over the athlete shall be assumed, regardless of age. Accordingly, sexual interaction or intimacies between a coach and an athlete or other participant are prohibited, regardless of age, both during coaching and during that period following coaching if an imbalance in power could jeopardize effective decision-making.

Imbalance of Power. Factors relevant to determining whether there is an imbalance of power include, but are not limited to:

The nature and extent of the coach's supervisory, evaluative or other authority over the athlete being coached;

- The actual relationship between the parties;
- The parties' respective roles;
- The nature and duration of the sexual relations or intimacies;
- The age of the coach;
- The age of the athlete or participant;
- And whether the coach has engaged in a pattern of sexual interaction with other athletes or participants.

Exception. This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

Non-touching offenses; behaviors that include:

- A coach discussing his or her sex life with an athlete
- A coach asking an athlete about his or her sex life
- A coach requesting or sending a nude or partial-dress photo to athlete
- Exposing athletes to pornographic material
- Sending athletes sexually explicit or suggestive electronic or written messages or photos (e.g. "sexting")
- Deliberately exposing an athlete to sexual acts
- Deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity (except in situations where locker rooms and changing areas are shared)

Sexual harassment; specifically, the sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is:

- Sexual in nature, and is unwelcome, offensive or creates a hostile environment, and the offending individual knows or is told this.
- Sufficiently severe or intense to be harassing to a reasonable person in the context.

BULLYING

An intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non- physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership

Any act or conduct described as bullying under federal or state law

Exceptions

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

For example, bullying does not include verbal admonitions to encourage team members to train harder and to push through a difficult training regimen.

Examples

Examples of bullying prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

Physical behaviors; behaviors that include:

- Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, or slapping an athlete;
- Throwing at, or hitting an athlete with, objects such as sporting equipment.

Verbal and emotional behaviors; behaviors that include:

- Teasing, ridiculing, intimidating;
- Spreading rumors or making false statements; or
- Using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate (“cyber bullying”).

HARASSMENT

A repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, offend or degrade, create a hostile environment or reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability; or

Any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law

Exceptions

None

Examples

Examples of harassment prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

Physical offenses; behaviors that include:

- Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking or slapping an athlete or participant;
- Throwing at or hitting an athlete with objects including sporting equipment.

Non-physical offenses; behaviors that include:

- Making negative or disparaging comments about an athlete’s sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color, or ethnic traits;
- Displaying offensive materials, gestures, or symbols;
- Withholding or reducing playing time to an athlete based on his or her sexual orientation.

HAZING

Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for:

- Joining a group
- Being socially accepted by a group’s members

Any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or state law

Exception

Hazing does not include group or team activities that are meant to establish normative team behaviors or promote team cohesion.

Examples

Examples of hazing prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation:

- Requiring, forcing or otherwise requiring the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Tying, taping or otherwise physically restraining an athlete
- Sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature
- Sleep deprivation, otherwise unnecessary schedule disruption or the withholding of water and/or food
- Social actions (e.g. grossly inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g. public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule
- Beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault
- Excessive training requirements focused on individuals on a team

Comment: Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of an athlete’s willingness to cooperate or participate.

WILLFULLY TOLERATING MISCONDUCT

It is a violation of this Individual Protection Policy if a staff member and/or volunteer knows of misconduct, but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the athlete(s), participant(s), staff member, and/or volunteer.

REPORTING

Although these policies are designed to reduce child sexual abuse and other misconduct, it can still occur. Staff members, volunteers and participants of Vertical Adventures shall follow the reporting procedures set forth in Vertical Adventures’ Reporting Policy. Vertical Adventures does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse, or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations, as a condition of reporting suspicions or allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

VIOLATIONS

Violations of the Individual Protection Policy shall be reported pursuant to our Reporting Policy and will be addressed under our Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

MANAGING TRAINING AND COMPETITION

SUPERVISION OF ATHLETES AND PARTICIPANTS

During training and competition, Vertical Adventures strives to create two-deep leadership and minimize one-to-one interactions to create a safe training environment and to protect athletes and participants.

Appropriate One-on-One Interactions

Individual Meetings

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete's concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, coaches, staff members and/or volunteers are to observe the following guidelines:

- Any individual meeting should occur when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed
- Where possible, an individual meeting should take place in a publicly visible and open area, such as the corner of a gym
- If an individual meeting is to take place in an office, the door should remain unlocked and open
- If a closed-door meeting is necessary, the coach, staff member and/or volunteer must inform another coach, staff member and/or volunteer and ensure the door remains unlocked

Individual Training Sessions

An individual training session(s) with an athlete or participant may also be desired or necessary. Under these circumstances, the training session should occur during open gym hours and while there is another coach, staff and/or volunteer present.

Prohibited One-on-One Interactions

Except as set forth above, minor athletes and participants will not be left unattended or unsupervised during Vertical Adventures' activities and Vertical Adventures' coaches, staff members and/or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual athlete or participant in any room or building.

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH ATHLETES

Appropriate physical contact between athletes and coaches, staff members, contractors or volunteers is a productive and inevitable part of sport. Athletes are more likely to acquire advanced physical skills and enjoy their sport participation through appropriate physical contact. However, guidelines for appropriate physical contact reduce the potential for misconduct in sport.

Appropriate Physical Contact

Vertical Adventures adheres to the following principles and guidelines in regards to physical contact with our athletes:

Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make them both safe and appropriate. These include:

- The physical contact takes place in public
- There is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact
- The physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

The safety of our athletes is paramount and in many instances we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

- Spotting an athlete so that they will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment
- Positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire an athletic skill, get a better sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination
- Making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use
- Releasing muscle cramps

Celebration

Sports are physical by definition and we recognize participants often express their joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

- Greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs
- Congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, "jump-arounds" and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment

Consolation

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly:

- Embracing a crying athlete
- Putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down ("side hugs")
- Lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and "dusting them off" to encourage them to continue competition

Prohibited Physical Contact

Prohibited forms of physical contact, which shall be reported immediately under our Reporting Policy include, without limitation:

- Asking or having an athlete sit in the lap of a coach, administrator, staff member or volunteer
- Lingering or repeated embraces of athletes that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact
- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from an athlete
- "Cuddling" or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay
- Playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., tickling or "horseplay" wrestling)
- Continued physical contact that makes an athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not
- Any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

Violations

Violations of this policy must be reported to a supervisor and/or Vertical Adventures' administrator. Violations will be addressed under our Disciplinary Rules and Procedure. Some forms of physical contact may constitute child physical or sexual abuse that must be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As part of Vertical Adventures' emphasis on athlete safety, all electronic communications between a coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the athlete's family. At the request of a parent or guardian, any email, electronic text, social media or similar communication will copy or include the athlete's parents or guardians.

Social Media Safety Principles:

- 1) All communication (including posts, messages, etc) between coaches and athletes must maintain a professional demeanor.
- 2) All communication must either
 - a. Be viewable to the public, or,
 - b. Include a parent or another coach in the messages.
- 3) Coaches should inform VA of all social media profiles.
- 4) It is best practice for Coaches' social media accounts to be public/un-locked. If a coach chooses to lock a social media account, it is recommended that other coaches be added as members.

FACEBOOK, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may not require athletes join a personal social media page, or permit them to join a personal, 'locked' social media site or page. Athlete members and parents can friend the official Vertical Adventures' Team page and coaches can communicate to athlete members through the site. All posts and messages between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and publically visible on such a site. Any posts or messages that are 'direct' or 'private' must include either a parent of the athlete, or another coach.

TWITTER, INSTANT MESSAGING, AND SIMILAR MEDIA

Coaches and athletes may "follow" each other. All Coaches' accounts should be public or should include other coaches as members. If the account is private and no other coaches are included, then no use of the account should be made with athletes.

EMAIL AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. All email content between coach and athlete must be professional in nature. Where the coach is a staff member and/or volunteer, email from a coach to any athlete should come from the club website email center (the coach's return email address will contain @verticaladventuresohio.com or @ohioclimbs.com).

TEXTING AND SIMILAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. All texts between coach and athlete must be professional and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. All text communication should adhere to the 'rule of three'.

ELECTRONIC IMAGERY

From time to time, digital photos, videos of practice or competition, and other publicly obtainable images of the athlete - individually or in groups - may be taken. These photos and/or videos may be submitted to local, state or national publications, used in club videos, posted on club or club associated websites, or offered to the club families seasonally on disc or other electronic form. It is the default policy of Vertical Adventures to allow such practices as long as the athlete or athletes

are in public view and such imagery is both appropriate and in the best interest of the athlete and the club.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND IMAGERY

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by any form of electronic communication by coaches (photography or videography).

MISCONDUCT

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

VIOLATIONS

Violations of Vertical Adventures' Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy should be reported to your immediate supervisor and/or Vertical Adventures' administrator. Complaints and allegations will be addressed under Vertical Adventures' Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS

The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

FACILITIES

We have a changing area that is shared with Vertical Adventure's members and customers. As such, there are likely to be regular gym users in the changing area around the time of practice.

MONITORING

Vertical Adventures has staggered practices, with different groups arriving and departing throughout the day. It is therefore not practical to constantly monitor locker rooms and changing areas over this extended course of time. While we do not post staff members inside or at the doors of the locker rooms and changing areas, we do make occasional sweeps of these areas. Staff members conduct these sweeps, with women checking on female-designated areas, and men checking on male-designated areas.

Coaches and staff make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice. If they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.

We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let the coach or administrator know about this in advance.

If an athlete needs assistance with his or her uniform or gear (for example, a child under the age of eight), or an athlete's disability warrants assistance, then we ask that parents let the coach or an administrator know beforehand that he or she will be helping the athlete.

MIXED GENDER TEAMS

Vertical Adventures has separate locker rooms/changing areas for each gender. Male and female climbers dress/undress in separate locker rooms and then convene in the climbing area.

USE OF CELL PHONES AND OTHER MOBILE RECORDING DEVICES

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. As a result, THERE WILL BE NO USE OF ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICE IN THE LOCKER ROOMS OR CHANGING AREAS.

Violations of this policy will be addressed under the Disciplinary Rules and Procedure and may result in the sanctions as set forth therein, including temporary suspension.

TRAVEL

Travel is a standard aspect of our competitive season and Vertical Adventures has established policies to guide our travel, minimize one-on-one interactions, and reduce the risk of misconduct. Adherence to these travel guidelines will increase athlete safety and improve the sport experience while keeping travel a fun and enjoyable experience.

LOCAL AND TEAM TRAVEL

Vertical Adventures distinguishes between travel to training, practice and local competition (“local travel”), and team travel involving a coordinated overnight stay (“team travel”).

UNSUPERVISED TRAVEL

Unsupervised travel occurs when Vertical Adventures does not sponsor, coordinate, or arrange for travel. For unsupervised travel, athletes or their parents/guardians (for minor athletes) are responsible for making all travel arrangements. In these instances it is the responsibility of the athlete or their parents/guardians (for minor athletes) to ensure the person transporting the athlete maintains all safety and legal requirements, including, but not limited to, a valid driver’s license, proper insurance, well maintained vehicle, and compliance with all state laws.

In an effort to minimize one-on-one interactions, Vertical Adventures’ staff members, coaches and/or volunteers, who are not also acting as a parent, should not drive alone with an unrelated athlete and should only drive with at least two other athletes or another adult at all times except in emergencies.

In any case where a staff member and/or volunteer is involved in the athlete’s travel, a parental release is required in advance. Efforts must be made to ensure that staff and/or volunteers are not alone with an athlete or participant, by, e.g., picking the athletes up in groups.

Coaches, staff members and volunteers who are also an athlete’s guardian may provide shared transportation for any athlete(s). We encourage guardians to pick up their athlete first and drop off their athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement. We also recommend completing a shared travel declaration form signed by the parents/guardians of any minor athlete who is being transported as part of such a carpool arrangement.

SUPERVISED TRAVEL

Supervised travel is overnight travel that occurs when Vertical Adventures sponsors, coordinates or arranges for travel so that our teams can train and/or compete locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Because of the greater distances, coaches, staff, volunteers and chaperones may travel with the athletes. However, no coach, staff member, or volunteer will engage in team travel without the proper safety requirements in place, including valid drivers’ licenses, proper insurance, well-maintained vehicles and compliance with all state laws.

Vertical Adventures makes efforts to provide adequate supervision through coaches and other adult chaperones.

For supervised travel, hotels and air travel will be booked in advance by Vertical Adventures. Athletes will share rooms, with 2-4 athletes assigned per room depending on accommodations. Vertical Adventures will also notify hotel management should any special arrangements be warranted. Meetings do not occur in hotel rooms, and we will reserve a separate space for adults and athletes to socialize.

We encourage family members who wish to stay in the team hotel to do so. If family members do not stay in the team hotel, we encourage all athletes to call parents and guardians regularly and allow for any unscheduled calls by either the athlete or parent/guardian.

TRAVEL NOTIFICATION

When possible, Vertical Adventures will provide reasonable advance notice before team travel. Notice will include the dates, location and duration of travel. Travel notice will also include designated team hotels for overnight stays as well as a contact person within Vertical Adventures. This individual will be the point of contact to confirm your intention to travel and to help with travel details.

Vertical Adventures will post specific travel itineraries when they become available. These will include a more detailed, hour-by-hour itinerary as well as contact information for team travel chaperones.

MIXED GENDER AND MIXED AGE TRAVEL

Team Vertical is made up of male and female athletes across various ages. Athletes will only share a room with other athletes of the same sex and age group. Athletes will also be grouped by age and sex for the purposes of assigning an appropriate chaperone. We will make every effort to provide these groups at least one chaperone of the same sex. However, we rely on parents to serve as chaperones and may be limited in providing this match.

Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling or spouse of that particular athlete). Where an adult is registered both as a coach and an athlete member of Vertical Adventures, and is functioning primarily as a coach, he or she may share sleeping arrangements with another registered coach.

COACH AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

During team travel, coaches and staff members will help athletes, fellow coaches and staff members adhere to policy guidelines, including, without limitation, the Travel Policy, Locker Rooms and Changing Areas Policy and Reporting Policy.

If a coach or staff member transports an athlete or other organization member in their private car for team travel, a copy of the coach's or staff member's valid driver's license is required.

When not practicing, training, competing, or preparing for competition, coaches and staff will monitor the activities of athletes, fellow coaches and staff during team travel. Coaches and staff will:

- Prepare athletes for team travel and make athletes aware of all expectations. Supplemental information will be given to parents/guardians of athletes who are considered inexperienced travelers, new or relatively new to team travel, or who are under the age of 14
- Familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before the initiation of team travel
- Conform to, and monitor for others' adherence, the Individual Protection Policy and all policies during team travel
- Encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communications with their parents/guardians
- Help athletes be on time for all team commitments (as possible)
- Assist with team travel logistical needs (as possible)
- Support chaperones and/or participate in the monitoring of athletes for adherence to curfew restrictions set based on age and competition schedule as listed in travel itinerary

- Ensure athletes are complying with hotel room restrictions based on gender or age bracket requirements
- Make certain that athletes are not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff and chaperones
- Not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching duties
- Immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations
- Notify parents before taking any disciplinary action against a minor athlete if the athlete is traveling without his or her parents.

CHAPERONE RESPONSIBILITIES

Chaperones accompany team travel to ensure that the athletes, coaches, staff, and volunteers adhere to the Vertical Adventures' policy guidelines. While these include the travel policy, it also includes all other relevant policies contained in Vertical Adventures' Participant Safety Handbook.

If a chaperone has not undergone a criminal background check and Vertical Adventures' awareness training, the chaperone will not be permitted to have any one-on-one interactions with athletes or other youth participants. If a chaperone has undergone a criminal background check and awareness training, he or she may have appropriate one-on-one interactions as outlined in Vertical Adventures' Participant Safety Handbook.

If a chaperone will be operating a private car for team travel, a copy of the chaperone's valid driver's license and auto insurance is required to be on file.

Chaperones will monitor the activities of all coaches, staff members, volunteers and athletes during team travel. Specifically, chaperones will:

- Familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before team travel
- Monitor for adherences to club policies during team travel
- Encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communications with their parents/guardians
- Help athletes be on time for all team commitments (as possible)
- Assist coaches, staff and other volunteers with team travel logistical needs (as possible)
- Monitor athletes for adherence to curfew restrictions set based on age and competition schedule as listed in travel itinerary
- Ensure athletes comply with hotel room restrictions based on gender or age bracket requirements
- Not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their chaperone duties
- Make certain that athletes are not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff and chaperones
- Immediately report any concerns about sexual and physical abuse, misconduct or policy violations to a Vertical Adventures' administrator.

RESPONDING TO ABUSE, MISCONDUCT, AND POLICY VIOLATIONS

REPORTING POLICY

Every Vertical Adventures' staff member and/or volunteer must report:

- Violations of the Individual Protection Policy,
- Misconduct as defined in Vertical Adventures' Individual Protection Policy, and
- Suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse.

As a matter of policy, Vertical Adventures does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Reports should be made to staff supervisor or Vertical Adventures administrator and where applicable, appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Vertical Adventures also encourages member parents, athletes and other sport participants to communicate violations of Vertical Adventures' Individual Protection Policy, and/or allegations and suspicions of child physical and sexual abuse to a Vertical Adventures' administrator. Where applicable, parents may also report to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

To Whom to Report

Staff members and volunteers must report to any supervisor or Vertical Adventures' administrator with whom they are comfortable sharing their concerns.

How to Report

Vertical Adventures will take a report in the way that is most comfortable for the person initiating a report including an anonymous, in-person, verbal or written report. Regardless of how you choose to report, it is helpful to Vertical Adventures for individuals to provide, at a minimum:

- The name of the complainant(s)
- The type of misconduct alleged and the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct.

Reporting Form

Individuals reporting child physical or sexual abuse or other misconduct should complete a Misconduct Incident Report Form.

CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMOUS REPORTING AND BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS

CONFIDENTIALITY

To the extent permitted by law, and as appropriate, Vertical Adventures will keep confidential the complainant's name on request, not make public the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator or the people who made a report of child physical and sexual abuse to the authorities.

Anonymous Reporting

Vertical Adventures recognizes it can be difficult for an athlete, teammate, friend or family member to report an allegation of misconduct and strives to remove as many barriers to reporting as possible. Anonymous reports may be made without the formality of completing an Incident Report Form:

- By completing the Reporting Form without including their name
- By expressing concerns verbally to a Vertical Adventures administrator
- Through email, texts or notes left for a Vertical Adventures administrator

However, anonymous reporting may make it difficult for Vertical Adventures to investigate or properly address allegations.

All suspicions of child physical or sexual abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

“Whistleblower” Protection

Regardless of outcome, Vertical Adventures will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. Vertical Adventures will not encourage, allow or tolerate attempts from any individual to retaliate, punish, allow or in any way harm any individual(s) who reports a concern in good faith. Such actions against a complainant will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action.

Bad-Faith Allegations

A report of abuse, misconduct or policy violations that is malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith is prohibited. Such reports will be considered a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook and grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the allegation, a person making a malicious, frivolous or bad-faith report may also be subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

HOW REPORTS ARE HANDLED

Reporting to Law Enforcement and/or Child Protective Services

A mishandled investigation can harm youth and/or interfere with the legal investigative process. Vertical Adventures, its staff members and/or volunteers do not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. As necessary, however, Vertical Adventures may ask a few clarifying questions of the minor or person making the report to adequately report the suspicion or allegation to law enforcement authorities.

Immediate Suspension or Termination

When an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse is made against a staff member, youth and/or volunteer, Vertical Adventures may immediately remove that individual from contact with any children in the program until the allegation has been investigated by an official agency. As necessary, Vertical Adventures may suspend or change the assignment of a staff member and/or volunteer.

A staff member or volunteer's failure to report to a supervisor and/or Vertical Adventures administrator is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of a staff member and/or dismissal of a volunteer.

Misconduct and Policy Violations

Vertical Adventures addresses internally alleged policy violations and misconduct – bullying, harassment, hazing, emotional, physical and sexual – that are not reportable under relevant state or federal law. Staff members and/or volunteer must report policy violations and misconduct to an immediate supervisor and/or Vertical Adventures' administrator.

Vertical Adventures may also investigate allegations of child physical or sexual abuse that are reportable, if such investigation does not interfere with any ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution for abuse. Such allegations may include:

- Emotional abuse
- Abuse reported outside the relevant statutes of limitation
- Allegations of abuse that were reported to authorities, but: (a) legal authorities did not press criminal charges; (b) criminal charges were filed, but not pursued to trial; or (c) the alleged offender was acquitted at trial

Notification

Following Vertical Adventures' notice of a credible allegation that results in the removal of an employee, coach or other volunteer, Vertical Adventures may consider the circumstances in which it will notify other parents of athletes with whom the accused individual may have had contact. In Vertical Adventures' discretion, as appropriate, and after consultation with counsel, Vertical Adventures may notify its staff members, contractors, volunteers, parents, and/or athletes of any allegation of child physical or sexual abuse or other criminal behavior that (1) law enforcement authorities are actively investigating; or (2) that Vertical Adventures is investigating internally. Advising others of an allegation may lead to additional reports of child physical or sexual abuse and other misconduct.

DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURES

While Vertical Adventures endeavors to provide support and guidance to participants on a day-to-day basis, it is also important for Vertical Adventures to have a formal procedure for disciplinary action to address alleged violations of its policies and other inappropriate behaviors.

APPLICATION

This Policy is used to address the following allegations against staff members, athletes, participants and/or volunteers:

- Violations of Vertical Adventures' policies; and/or
- Child abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) that does not involve an ongoing legal investigation or criminal prosecution.

Vertical Adventures will not investigate an allegation of child physical or sexual abuse if it undermines or interferes with a pending legal investigation or criminal prosecution.

DISCIPLINARY RULES

Vertical Adventures recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a minor athlete who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, Vertical Adventures' disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

On receipt of an allegation, Vertical Adventures will determine in its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct based on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.

Vertical Adventures will address allegations against a staff member and/or volunteer under its Employment Policies and Procedures.

Vertical Adventures' disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme cases, misconduct will result in immediate summary dismissal. If the accused individual is a minor, Vertical Adventures will contact his or her parents or guardians.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Sanctions for violations of the Participant Safety Handbook will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, Vertical Adventures may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- Inform the individual's direct-line supervisor or, in the case of a youth participant, the youth's parent or guardian
- Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- Temporary suspension
- File a formal incident report
- Issue a verbal warning
- Issue a written and/or final written warning
- Implement a limited access agreement (e.g., limiting an individual's access to certain buildings or to youth)

- Provide informed supervision, where at least one staff member is informed of the allegation and is instructed to vigilantly supervise the accused participant or stakeholder in his or her interactions with the program and/or organization
- Engage in restorative practices, i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when a misunderstanding or harm has occurred
- Suspend or terminate employment, membership, and/or participation

ONGOING EMPLOYMENT AND/OR PARTICIPATION

On receipt of a credible and specific allegation of child abuse or other serious misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual abuse as defined in our Individual Protection Policy), Vertical Adventures may immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual to ensure participant safety.

COMPLAINANT PROTECTION

Regardless of outcome, Vertical Adventures will support the complainant(s) and his or her right to express concerns in good faith. Vertical Adventures will not encourage or tolerate attempts to retaliate, punish or in any way harm any individual(s) who report(s) a concern in good faith. Such actions will be grounds for disciplinary action.

BAD-FAITH ALLEGATIONS

Any individual who alleges misconduct under the Participant Safety Handbook that, upon review, is determined to be malicious, frivolous or made in bad faith will be a violation of our Participant Safety Handbook. Bad-faith allegations may also be subject to criminal or civil proceedings.

MONITORING STRATEGY

By monitoring the interactions among staff, volunteers, athletes, and other participants, Vertical Adventures works to prevent, recognize and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors as set forth in our Individual Protection Policy, while reinforcing appropriate behaviors.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Vertical Adventures monitors for compliance with its policies and procedures, including without limitation its Awareness Training, Travel, Locker Room and Changing Areas, and Physical Contact Policies.

MONITORING METHODS

Vertical Adventures utilizes multiple monitoring methods to observe how individuals are interacting, including without limitation:

- Formal supervision, including regular evaluations
- Informal supervision, including regular and random observation (e.g., roving and checking interactions throughout practices)
- Maintaining frequent contact with staff members, volunteer and athletes who interact off-site.

RESPONDING TO INTERACTIONS

While Vertical Adventures has a formal reporting policy, staff members and volunteers should be prepared to respond immediately to inappropriate or harmful behavior, potential risk situations and potential boundary violations.

Staff members and volunteers will redirect inappropriate behaviors to promote positive behaviors, confront inappropriate or harmful behaviors, and report behaviors if necessary.

REPORTING

Staff members and volunteers are required to report policy violations, misconduct and physical and sexual abuse consistent with Vertical Adventures' Reporting Policy. Vertical Adventures does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.