

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

[from the USA Hockey SafeSport Handbook 2019]

As part of USA Hockey's emphasis on safety, communications involving any Participant, and especially minor Participants, should be appropriate, productive, and transparent. Effective communication concerning travel, practice or game schedules, and administrative issues among coaches, administrators, players and their families is crucial. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media, and other forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and also provides potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to minor Participants. The improper use of social media, mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct. Adherence to the Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy helps reduce these risks.

All electronic communication originating from Applicable Adults to minor Participants must be professional in nature. Absent emergency circumstances, if an Applicable Adult with authority over minor Participants needs to communicate directly with a minor Participant via electronic communications (including social media), the Minor's parent must be copied. If a minor Participant communicates to the Applicable Adult (with authority over the minor athlete) privately first, said Applicable Adult should respond to the minor Participant with a copy to another Applicable Adult or the minor's legal guardian. When an Applicable Adult with authority over minor Participants communicates electronically to the entire team, said Applicable Adult must copy another adult.

Pursuant to these requirements, all electronic communication between coach and player must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Coaches, players and all team personnel must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowed electronic communication. All content between coaches and players should be readily available to share with the public or families of the player or coach. If the player is under the age of 18, any email, text, social media, or similar communication **must** also copy or include the player's parents.

Social Media

Social media makes it easy to share ideas and experiences. USA Hockey recognizes, however, that social media, mobile and other electronic communications can be especially concerning where minor Participants are involved. Coaches are prohibited from having minor Participants joined to or connected through their personal Facebook page, Instagram or any other similar social media application. To facilitate communication, an official organization or team page may be set up and players and parents may join (i.e., "friend") the official organization or team page and coaches can communicate to the team through that site. All electronic communication of any kind between coach (and any Applicable Adult) and a minor Participant, including use of social media, must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team oriented motivational purposes.

Email, Text Messaging and Similar Electronic Communications

Coaches, team managers and players may use email and text messaging to communicate. All email and text message content between coaches/team managers and minor Participants must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Emails and text messages from a coach to any minor Participant **must** include a copy to the player's parents. Where possible, a coach should be provided and use the organization web site email center (the coach's return email address will contain "@organization.com") for all communications with the team, players, and player's parents, where applicable.

Social Media and Group Chats Among Players

Minor hockey players often create group chats through texting or other social media applications. Such group chats are concerning because Minors may engage in bullying behavior, sexual misconduct, harassment, threats, discriminatory and other inappropriate conduct that may violate policies of USA Hockey. Group chats among Minor hockey players should be supervised by an adult to mitigate these risks.

Request To Discontinue All Electronic Communications or Imagery with Athlete

Following receipt of a written request by the parents of a minor Participant that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by coaches or other adults in the program, the Member Program, team, coaches and administrators shall immediately comply with such request without any repercussions for such request.

Abuse and Misconduct

Social media and other means of electronic communication can be used to commit abuse and misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other Participant of a USA Hockey Member Program will not be tolerated and are considered violations of USA Hockey's SafeSport Program.

A USA Hockey Participant who violates this Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.