



GO!

**ATHLETE
SAFETY
GUIDELINES**



MLS GO

ATHLETE PROTECTION GUIDELINES: SAFETY FUNDAMENTALS FOR MLS GO

PURPOSE

The safety and well-being of all participants in the MLS GO recreation youth soccer program is paramount. MLS GO promotes a program where boys and girls of all abilities are given a chance to develop their fundamental soccer skills in a positive, inclusive, and safe environment. MLS GO strives to create a safe environment both on and off the field. MLS GO does not tolerate any type of abuse against a minor, including, but not limited to, sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse or any bullying, hazing, or harassment. MLS GO's goal is to prevent child abuse from occurring through required background check screenings, training and education, and mandated reporting of abuse.

APPLICABILITY

The Athlete Safety Guidelines apply to all Covered Persons (as that term is defined below) and players in any MLS GO program, including local MLS GO leagues and MLS GO regional and national tournaments. This includes League Operators and any of their owners, officers, and directors, volunteers, coaches, referees, or anyone who provides regular services to the League Operators or MLS GO tournaments and has regular access to or contact with MLS GO players. Anyone with questions on who the Athlete Safety Guidelines apply to should contact the operator of MLS GO, RCX Sports at safety@rcxsports.com.

ENFORCEMENT

Local MLS GO league operators ("League Operators") must enact policies and establish a culture that prohibit activities that promote or allow any form of misconduct or abuse (mental, physical, emotional, or sexual) between players, coaches, parents/guardians/caretakers, spectators, volunteers, and/or any other individual associated with the MLS GO program. League Operators must remove any individual engaged in mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct from participation in any MLS GO Program and, if applicable, report the individual to the proper law enforcement or other authorities immediately.

As part of the MLS GO league registration process, League Operators agree to comply with all aspects of the MLS GO Athlete Safety Guidelines. Any violation of the Athlete Safety Guidelines may result in the suspension or revocation of a League Operator's tournament privileges, termination of a League Operator's League Registration Agreement, and/or sanction by RCX Sports.

Any questions regarding the interpretation of the Athlete Safety Guidelines should be directed to RCX Sports at safety@rcxsports.com. The MLS GO Athlete Safety Guidelines will be updated and modified as necessary.

DEFINITIONS

Child/Minor: Any individual who is younger than 18 years of age.

Covered Persons: Any employee of RCX Sports, any MLS GO League Operator, or any other person who has regular access to or contact with Minors in connection with League Programs and

Activities, whether through RCX Sports or an MLS GO League Operator, which may include: coaches, referees, League Operators (and their owners, officers, directors, and other on-field representatives), game day staff, athletic trainers, and event staff.

League Programs and Activities: Any MLS GO games, practices, tournaments, approved activities, and/or approved special games are considered MLS GO programs and activities, whether operated by a League Operator or RCX Sports.

LOCAL LEAGUE CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

All sanctioned MLS GO League Operators **must** adhere to the following minimum standards to remain affiliated with MLS GO, each as described more fully below:

1. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Conduct background checks every two years on all Covered Persons participating in the League Operator's league.

2. MANDATORY AND RECOMMENDED TRAINING & CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Annually require all Covered Persons to complete the training necessary for SafeSport certification.
- Require all Covered Persons to complete any state-mandated training regarding child abuse, concussions, cardiac arrest, or other issues in accordance with applicable law.
- Recommend that all Covered Persons complete a child abuse awareness training program, to the extent not covered in any mandatory training.

3. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Prohibit any Covered Person or player from engaging in any of the following Prohibited Conduct: Child Abuse, Grooming, Bullying, Hazing, and Harassment (each defined below).

4. MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Require all Covered Persons to report Child Abuse, including but not limited, to sexual abuse involving a Minor, to the proper law enforcement or other authorities within 24 hours, or a shorter timeframe if required by applicable law. When a League Operator determines that a mandatory report of Child Abuse is appropriate, the League Operator must ensure the mandatory report is made, and then notify RCX Sports at safety@rcxsports.com immediately after making the report to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

5. NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING

Adopt a policy that prohibits retaliation against good faith reports of Child Abuse and other Prohibited Conduct.

6. PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Adopt a policy that limits one-on-one interaction between Minors and an adult (who is not the Minor's legal guardian) without being in an observable and interruptible distance from another adult, except in emergency circumstances.

1. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

A. BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS

League Operators are required to engage a reputable company with experience in youth sports to complete a background check (or a vulnerable sector check) for all Covered Persons, in accordance with applicable law. A background check is required to be conducted on every applicant before the individual assumes *any* of his/her duties and will be conducted again at least every two years for as long as that individual qualifies as a Covered Person. If a Covered Person turns 18 after assuming his/her duties, the background check must be conducted within 45 days of him/her reaching the age of majority.

For League Operators located in Canada, MLS GO has partnered with a preferred background check provider, JDP, to provide background checks for League Operators and coaches at a reduced rate of \$35. A background check is required to be conducted on every League Operator and every coach before the individual assumes *any* of his/her duties and will be conducted again at least every two years.

The background check must, at a minimum, contain the following components: a social security number validation (e.g., Social Security Trace) and ID search; a nationwide criminal database search that includes a search of the federal prohibited person database, and a search of the Federal Government Watch List (OIG, OFAC, Terrorist Watch Lists); a national and state sex offender registry search, that includes all outlying U.S. Territories and Indian Reservations; a search of county criminal records for each name used and county where the individual currently lives or has lived during at least the past seven years, going back the length of time records are available and reportable for each county searched; a search of federal district courts for each name used and each district where the individual lived during the past seven years; a review of the U.S. Center for SafeSport's Centralized Disciplinary Database; and a comprehensive international records search for individuals who have lived outside the United States for six consecutive months in any one country, during the past seven years.

In connection with the League Operator's annual registration with MLS GO, RCX Sports requires the League Operator to certify in writing that it is in compliance with the background check requirements of the Athlete Safety Guidelines and all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local laws related to background checks. League Operators must keep proof of compliance with this background check policy and, upon request by RCX Sports, must be able to produce such proof. The failure to produce satisfactory proof of compliance may result in disciplinary or other adverse action available under any agreements between the League Operator and RCX Sports, up to and including termination of the League Operator's operating agreement.

NOTE: Some states have enacted laws that require additional background check requirements that are different from or supplement those mandated by RCX Sports. League

Operators shall conduct all background checks required by applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances, and as otherwise consistent with the background check standards mandated by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee.

B. BACKGROUND CHECK PROCESS

The League Operator must review the results of the background check in accordance with the Athlete Safety Guidelines to determine if the Covered Person is suitable to participate in League Programs and Activities.

Any criminal background check that is obtained pursuant to the terms of this Policy will report the findings of its search to the League Operator based upon a “Red Light / Green Light” system.

1. “Green Light” or “meets the criteria” finding indicates that the background check did not identify criteria that would indicate that the individual is unsuitable to participate in League Programs and Activities.

2. “Red Light” or “does not meet initial criteria” finding indicates that one or more of the below-listed criteria was flagged during the background screening process and requires review by the League Operator to determine if the Covered Person is suitable to participate in League Programs and Activities. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, any of the following criteria appearing on a background check will result in a “Red Light” finding:

a. Any felony (any crime punishable by confinement of greater than one year).

b. Any lesser crime:

1. In which sexual misconduct is an element;

2. Of a sexual nature to include but not limited to: rape, child molestation, sexual battery, lewd conduct, possession and distribution of child pornography, possession and distribution of obscene material, prostitution, indecent exposure, public indecency, and any sex offender registrant, including “victimless” crimes of a sexual nature (including pornography);

3. Involving controlled substances or alcohol;

4. Involving harm to a minor, including, but not limited to, offenses such as child abandonment, child endangerment/neglect/abuse, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and DUI with a minor;

5. Involving violence against a person (including crimes involving firearms and domestic violence);

6. Involving stalking, harassment, breaking and entering, trespassing, false impersonation, blackmail, violation of a protection order, and/or threats;

7. Destruction of property, including arson, vandalism, and criminal mischief;
8. Any crime which requires a sex offender registration;
9. Any violation of the SafeSport Code; or
10. Animal abuse or neglect.

If a criminal background check results in a “Red Light” determination that is the result of a clerical or administrative error, the Covered Person will have an opportunity to challenge the correctness of the determination by contacting the applicable background check provider.

Upon re-review, if the Covered Person still receives a “Red Light” determination as a result of one or more offenses or other matters noted in his/her background report, the League will review the “Red Light” determination and make a decision in accordance with the Adjudication Matrix provided by RCX Sports. The Covered Person will be informed of the decision in writing.

RCX sports will check all names approved after the background check process against the SafeSport and Disciplinary and Risk Management Action Report provided by the U.S. Soccer Federation. RCX shall have the right, but not the obligation, to make the final decision regarding whether an individual is suitable for the intended role with the League.

NOTE: If a Covered Person is under investigation for any type of Child Abuse, or has a pending charge against, or involving, a Minor, that individual must be suspended until the outcome of the investigation or pending charges are complete and the allegations are resolved.

If a League Operator becomes aware of information at any time, by any means whatsoever, that a Covered Person has been charged with, convicted of, pled guilty, pled no contest, or admitted to any crime involving or against a Minor, the League Operator must immediately contact the applicable governmental agency to confirm the accuracy of the information before allowing the Covered Person to participate in the league and suspend the Covered Person until the information is received and reviewed.

2. MANDATORY TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Training and Education are important tools in the prevention of abuse. League Operators are required to provide the training outlined below. Each League Operator should also provide ongoing education beyond the minimal required training. Each League Operator should create a program within its league to keep coaches, parents, volunteers, and players informed of player protection and safety.

The League Operator’s failure to produce satisfactory proof of completion of the training required in this or any other policy, may result in disciplinary or other adverse action available under any agreements between the League Operator and RCX Sports, up to and including termination of the League Operator’s operating agreement.

A. Mandatory Training

League Operators and their administrators, staff, volunteers, officials, coaches, owners, officers, directors, and other on-field representatives must complete the U.S. Soccer Core SafeSport Training. This consists of three modules: (1) Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education, (2) Mandatory Reporting, and (3) Emotional & Physical Misconduct. Once the participant has taken the Core SafeSport Training, the participant shall complete the annual training required to maintain SafeSport certification.

The League Operator is responsible for verifying that Covered Persons have completed the required training by obtaining certificates of completion from each Covered Person and retaining a copy of the certificate and providing a copy of such certificate to RCX Sports upon request. League Operators shall instruct their Covered Persons to retain copies of their SafeSport certificate(s) of completion for a period of five years. League Operators may be required, at any time, to produce copies of SafeSport certifications to RCX Sports. The failure to produce certifications demonstrating compliance with these Athlete Safety Guidelines, as determined by RCX Sports, may result in disciplinary or other adverse action available under any agreements between the League Operator and RCX Sports, up to and including termination of the League Operator's operating agreement.

In addition, each League Operator is responsible for ensuring that its Covered Persons complete all other training required by applicable state law, including any state-mandated training regarding child abuse, concussions, cardiac arrest, or other issues.

League Operators located in Canada and their coaches must also complete the SafeSport Training Module developed by the Coaching Association of Canada: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/safe-sport-training>. This training must be completed annually before the start of each season.

The League Operator is responsible, before the start of each season, for verifying the required training by obtaining certificates of completion from each coach and retaining a copy of the certificate and providing a copy of such certificate to RCX Sports upon request. League Operators shall instruct their coaches to retain copies of their SafeSport certificate(s) of completion for a period of five years. League Operators may be required, at any time, to produce copies of certifications to RCX Sports. The failure to produce certifications demonstrating compliance with these Athlete Safety Guidelines, as determined by RCX Sports, may result in disciplinary or other adverse action available under any agreements between the League Operator and RCX Sports, up to and including termination of the League Operator's operating agreement.

On an annual basis and prior to every season, League Operators in Canada must submit an attestation form to RCX confirming that they have complied with the obligations set forth in these Athlete Safety Guidelines.

B. Recommended Training and Continuing Education Opportunities for Leagues:

It is strongly recommended that each League Operator require all Covered Persons to complete a child abuse awareness training program, to the extent not covered in any mandatory training.

To help create a player-centric environment, each League Operator should implement the following continuing education for its members:

- **Meet with Volunteers:** It is important to hold regular meetings in which both volunteers and parents can talk about child abuse and ask questions. The Athlete Safety Guidelines should be reviewed with participants and their parents annually.
- **Make Your Position Clear:** Make adults and Minors aware that the League Operator will not tolerate Child Abuse and other Prohibited Conduct in any form.
- **Stress the Role of Adults in Your League:** Adults can identify potentially uncomfortable situations, for themselves, as well as for Minors. The welfare of the players in your league is the highest priority in any situation.
- **Provide Additional Resources:** Many organizations will gladly assist your efforts to protect your players, several of which are listed below. Feel free to provide the name of the below organizations and the websites to parents, coaches, volunteers, referees, as well as Minors.
 - [Player's Health](#)
 - [SafeSport](#)
 - [SafetoCompete.org](#)

3. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

- It is a violation of this policy for any Covered Person or MLS GO player to engage in any of the following forms of misconduct (“Prohibited Conduct”).
 - A. Child Abuse: The term “Child Abuse” has the meaning set forth in Section 203 of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (34 U.S.C. § 20341), or any applicable state law. Child Abuse, includes, but is not limited to physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a Minor.

Different types of Child Abuse:

- Physical Child Abuse means any attempt to inflict physical injury (“Physical Injury”), upon a Minor by other than accidental means. Physical Injury may include, but is not limited to, lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe bruising, or serious bodily harm.
- Mental Child Abuse means any conduct that reasonably causes harm to a Minor’s psychological or intellectual functioning (“Mental Injury”). Mental Injury may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or outward aggressive behavior, or a combination of those behaviors, which may be demonstrated by a change in behavior, emotional response, or cognition.
- Sexual Child Abuse means any activity involving a sexual act (“Sexual Interaction”) with a Minor. Sexual Interaction includes, but is not limited to: rape; sexual battery; physical sexual contact; molestation; sexually explicit or offensive verbal communication; sexually oriented conversations; verbal sexual harassment;

voyeurism; sexual intercourse or sexual touching; sexual exploitation (including creating or disseminating pornographic images); exposing of genitalia; viewing of sexual activity; viewing or disseminating content or imagery of a sexual nature; or permitting, allowing, or encouraging a Minor to engage in prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation of children.

- Neglect means any activity involving the failure, refusal, or inability on the part of a caregiver, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, water, clothing, medical or dental care, or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of a Minor.

Grooming is a tactic used by sexual predators to methodically build a trusting relationship with victims, parents, and the community to place themselves in a position of trust, which the perpetrator then uses to draw the victim into a sexual relationship. Many times, the perpetrator becomes a family friend. Grooming can be subtle and hard to recognize. It's important to bring awareness of grooming to all individuals in the league. Understanding the grooming process and behaviors of grooming can help prevent abuse from occurring. The required Abuse Awareness training for all Covered Persons is one way to begin to raise awareness within the league of grooming. The more individuals in the league who are equipped with knowledge to understand and recognize grooming the better protected the Minors are within the league.

Leagues can use the following resources to help educate the members of the league on grooming:

- [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)
- [Players Health](#)

B. Bullying. Bullying consists of repeated or severe behavior(s) that are (i) aggressive, (ii) directed at a Minor, and (iii) intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the Minor emotionally or physically. Examples of Bullying include, without limitation, repeated or severe: (i) Physical Bullying; (ii) Verbal Bullying; (iii) Emotional Misconduct; (iv) Social Media Misconduct; and (v) Criminal Bullying, as detailed further below:

- Physical Bullying is contact and non-contact behavior that can cause physical injury to an individual. Physical Bullying includes the hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, strangling, slapping, spitting at, or throwing objects (such as sporting equipment) at another person, tying, taping, or otherwise physically restraining another person, paddling, or other forms of physical assault.
- Verbal Bullying is the act of using words to forcefully criticize, threaten, insult, or denounce another person. Verbal Bullying is any objectively inappropriate use of language aimed at another person that a reasonable person would find degrading or threatening. Such conduct generally includes ridiculing, taunting, name-calling, or intimidating or threatening to cause someone harm.
- Emotional Misconduct is repeated and excessive verbal attacks against someone personally in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.

Emotional Misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved Player performance.

- Social Media Misconduct is the use of rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person's reputation using electronic communications. It includes, but is not limited to, the use of social media or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate, humiliate, and/or socially exclude someone, and asking others to do the same. Social Media Misconduct includes what is referred to as "Cyberbullying," or bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else or causing embarrassment or humiliation.
- Criminal Bullying is any conduct described as bullying under federal, state, provincial, or local law.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, conduct may not rise to the level of Bullying if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views or positions. Bullying does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved player performance.

C. Hazing. Hazing is any conduct that is intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or physically harmful that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members. Purported consent by the person subjected to Hazing is not a defense, regardless of the person's perceived willingness to cooperate or participate. Examples of Hazing may include (i) Physical Hazing; (ii) Emotional Misconduct (defined above); (iii) Verbal Bullying (defined above); (iv) sexualized acts; or (v) Criminal Conduct, as detailed further below:

- Physical Hazing includes (i) tying, taping, or otherwise physically restraining another person; beating, paddling, or other forms of physical assault and (ii) requiring or forcing the consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other substances (or illegal/improper use of any drugs), including participation in binge drinking and drinking games; personal servitude; requiring social actions (e.g., wearing inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (e.g., public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule; excessive training requirements demanded of only particular individuals on a team that serve no reasonable or productive training purpose; sleep deprivation; otherwise unnecessary schedule disruptions; withholding of water, food; and/or restrictions on personal hygiene.
- Criminal Conduct means any act or conduct that constitutes Hazing under applicable federal, state, provincial, or local law.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Hazing if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a

pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views or positions. Hazing does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved player performance.

D. Harassment: is repeated and/or severe unwelcome conduct that: (i) causes or is intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance; (ii) offends or degrades; (iii) creates a Hostile Environment (defined below); (iv) reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual or group based on their protected status; or (v) any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law.

- A Hostile Environment exists when the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive such that it interferes with, limits, or deprives any individual of the opportunity to participate in any League Program and Activities. Conduct must be deemed severe, persistent, or pervasive from both a subjective and objective perspective. Whether a Hostile Environment exists depends on the totality of known circumstances.
- Some examples of conduct that may contribute to a hostile environment may include making negative or disparaging comments about a participant's gender, mental or physical disability, race, skin color, or ethnic traits; or withholding or reducing practice or match time to a player based on a protected characteristic.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Harassment if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views or positions. Harassment does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved player performance.

E. Codes of Conduct

Both children and adults may experience frustration at times. It is important to recognize when a person needs to take a break from activities to calm down. Adult volunteers should never escalate a situation when someone is upset. Instead, he/she should attempt to de-escalate any stressful situation.

MLS GO recommends that League Operators create and issue a "Coach Code of Conduct" and a "Player/Parent Code of Conduct" that is upheld by players, coaches, other volunteers, and parents. This should be reviewed each season to establish a safe environment for everyone involved with the local league season.

If any Covered Person is considered to be in violation of the provisions above, RCX Sports reserves the right to dismiss them from MLS GO and prohibit further participation or affiliation with the MLS GO program.

4. MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

A. Obligation to Report

Any Covered Person who participates in League Programs and Activities must report suspected Child Abuse within 24 hours to the proper law enforcement or other authorities or a shorter timeframe if required by applicable law. If a case of Child Abuse is suspected within a league, it must be reported to the appropriate child services organizations and/or local law enforcement, as well as to the League Operator. League Operators must designate a person to receive reports of Child Abuse. League Operators must also designate a next level of management who can receive the report if the Covered Person is not comfortable making the report to the designated person, or the designated person is unavailable. League Operators should strongly encourage Covered Persons to provide their names and contact information when reporting incidents of Child Abuse. League Operators should also encourage Covered Persons to document the incident and document the report, including when, how, and to whom the report was made.

A Covered Person who reasonably suspects that a Minor has suffered or is suffering an incident of Child Abuse should interrupt the Child Abuse, if physically safe to do so. However, the Covered Person should not investigate the incident, nor should the Covered Person evaluate the credibility or validity of the allegations. **If you or someone else is in immediate or serious danger, you should call 911.**

B. Obligations upon Receiving Report

When an allegation of Child Abuse is made against a Covered Person, the League Operator must keep the alleged abuser away from all Minors in the program until the incident is reported to one or more of the below outlets **and** completely investigated. Congress, through the SafeSport Act, all fifty (50) States, and the District of Columbia have enacted laws which address mandatory reporting of Child Abuse to protect the health and safety of children. It is strongly recommended that League Operators consult with legal counsel in their jurisdiction to determine the applicability, if any, of federal, state, and local requirements and laws to its programs regarding the reporting of Child Abuse. **An individual who is required but fails to report suspected Child Abuse, may be subject to criminal and civil penalties in addition to, if applicable, the revocation or termination of his or her League Operating Agreement.** When a League Operator determines that a mandatory report of Child Abuse is appropriate, the League Operator must ensure the mandatory report is made, and then notify RCX Sports at safety@rcxsports.com immediately after making the report to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

- Investigating Suspected Abuse
Once a report of Child Abuse has been made, the League Operator should promptly notify the alleged abuser that he/she is suspended from any involvement with the league until the investigation is completed. MLS GO urges League Operators to work with a lawyer who can advise them regarding the obligations of the league and advise about the rights of an alleged abuser. If the investigation substantiates the allegations, the League Operator must assure that the individual will not have any further contact with Minors in the local league.
- Reporting of Suspected Abuse

As Child Abuse reporting laws vary from state to state, each League Operator should refer to the law of its specific state for guidance. Federal law and the SafeSport Act establish a nationwide duty to report suspected Child Abuse. After making a report of Child Abuse or becoming aware of a report of Child Abuse involving a Covered Person in the league, the League Operator must also notify RCX Sports by emailing safety@rcxsports.com.

- Suspension/Termination

If allegations of Child Abuse are made against a Covered Person, the League Operator must take steps to assure that the individual will not have any further contact with Minors in the league.

While allegations of Child Abuse are under investigation or if criminal charges are pending, the League Operator must promptly notify the individual that he/she is suspended until the matter is resolved by an external investigation or through the court system. While an individual is suspended, he/she may not volunteer in any local league activity.

If the allegations of abuse against an individual are substantiated, the League Operator must notify the individual that he/she is terminated from his/her position and may no longer volunteer for the League Operator or MLS GO in any capacity. The League Operator must also notify RCX Sports at safety@rcxsports.com.

5. NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING

A League Operator may not retaliate against any individual who makes a good faith report of suspected Child Abuse or Prohibited Conduct, even if the allegation is later determined to be unsubstantiated. Reporters of Child Abuse or Prohibited Conduct cannot be afraid to come forward in cases where they either have firsthand knowledge of or a good faith belief that Child Abuse or Prohibited Conduct has occurred, even if there is a possibility that the report is wrong. The League Operator should encourage all individuals in the league to be vigilant and observant in regard to the safety and protection of the children in the league. Many states provide immunity to those who report suspected Child Abuse in “good faith.”

6. PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Most child sexual abuse or grooming is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between players and adult coaches and volunteers, you reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. To minimize the chance of an individual’s opportunity to groom or abuse a player, the League Operator must adopt a one-one-one policy relating to the interactions between a player and any Covered Person during the League Program and Activities. The League should adopt a policy prior to the start of the season and provide a copy to all Covered Persons within the league. At a minimum the policy should include the following:

- Covered Persons are prohibited from being alone with a Minor athlete during League Program and Activities unless:
 - There is an emergency.

- The Covered Person is the player's parent/legal guardian, sibling, or personal care assistant.
- A Covered Person's interactions with minors must be observable and interruptible by another adult, except under emergency circumstances.
- Covered Persons (other than the player's parent/legal guardian, sibling, or personal care assistant) are prohibited from contacting players directly through social media or electronic communication, including, but not limited to, text messages and emails, unless another Covered Person or the player's parent/legal guardian is copied on the communication.
- Covered Persons (other than the player's parent/legal guardian, sibling, or personal care assistant) are discouraged from interacting one-on-one with unrelated Minor athletes in settings outside of League Program and Activities (such as the Covered Person's home, restaurant, or vehicle).
- Physical contact between Covered Persons and players should be very limited. Some examples of appropriate physical touch include high fives or administering appropriate first aid.

SUMMARY

The safety and well-being of all participants in the MLS GO program is paramount. The MLS GO Athlete Safety Guidelines provide tools for League Operators to create a safe environment for its players. Protection begins with each League Operator. Every League Operator must place the safety and well-being of its players above all else. Each League Operator must adhere to the requirements of the MLS GO Athlete Safety Guidelines and utilize the additional resources provided to customize its own program to protect its participants which meets the unique needs of its local league. Parents/Guardians play a critical role in assuring the safety of their players. It is critical that leagues arm parents/guardians with awareness and share the Athlete Safety Guidelines with everyone within the league. RCX Sports is available to offer assistance to League Operators regarding the Athlete Safety Guidelines by contacting safety@rcxsports.com.