



# Respectful Conduct Policy

Current as of: 01/01/2020



### Policy and Purpose

Cheer Canada expects respectful interaction from and between individuals and organizations on all our social media channels, in personal and electronic interactions between our members, and on our website. We recognize our role as a gatekeeper to safety in issues of bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination (BAHD) and are committed to demonstrating strong leadership in identifying and eradicating these practices. Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring that we model respectful behavior in all our written and verbal communications. For the protection of our athletes, our stakeholders, and our organization, we ask that all of our members and stakeholders also adopt this commitment.

The World Health Organization (2010) states that abuse is comprised but not limited to all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Cheerleading is growing in prominence in Canada. We are currently pursuing recognition as an official sport in Canada in support of our desire to be represented at the Olympic level. We want to encourage the sport of cheerleading in Canada as an opportunity for personal as well as athletic development, while we also mentor a respectful and bully free environment. Cheerleading may be the official sport of our athletes, or it may be a hobby, and/or a recreational activity with a social outlet. Regardless, we want our members to continue to enjoy the sport of cheerleading freely and in a safe, supportive and mutually respectful environment. We understand that this allows our athletes to flourish and optimize their athletic performance and to experience maximum personal and social growth in a sport setting. We also understand that this guides our athletes as they move through their careers and into mentor positions themselves.

Cheer Canada recognizes that bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination stem from power relations and abuses of power, and Cheer Canada is committed to promoting a culture of dignity, respect and safety in our sport. Therefore, we have drafted this policy to demonstrate we are committed to ensuring we provide a safe, welcoming, and accessible sport environment, free of bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination.

### Bullying, Abuse, Harassment and Discrimination

- Bullying

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no bullying of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor (including choreographers and guest coaches or clinicians) or other participant. Bullying is the use of verbal/physical/emotional force to seek to harm, intimidate, or coerce another person. Bullying often involves an intentional and persistent or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate another person. Bullying can occur through written, verbal or electronically transmitted communication or by means of a physical act or gesture. Bullying of any kind is prohibited in any manner in connection with any Cheer Canada sanctioned activities or events.

- Abuse

- Sexual Abuse

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no sexual abuse of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by an employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant. Sexual abuse is any sexual interaction with person(s) of any age that is perpetrated against the victim's will, without consent, or in an aggressive, exploitative, coercive, manipulative, or threatening manner. Behavior can be contact or non-contact and include but is not limited to: touching, indecent exposure, showing sexually explicit pictures, sexually-oriented comments or jokes, rewards for sexual favors and/or sexual contact of any kind.

It is understood that there is a necessary element of physical interaction between coaches and athletes. Infrequent, accidental touching of an athlete during spotting that could be perceived as invasive or inappropriate should not be misconstrued as sexual misconduct. An element of physical contact that is reasonably designed to coach, teach, demonstrate or improve a skill associated to cheerleading, including physical conditioning, team building, and appropriate discipline should be understood.



Permitted physical conduct may include, but is not necessarily limited to, physical touch that is non-threatening, non-sexual in manner with the purpose of training and direction. Unless an athlete is in imminent danger to self or others, coaches should refrain from touching body parts that could be perceived as invasive or inappropriate, even for corrective measures. To avoid that perception, coaches need to stay highly trained on proper spotting techniques and should acknowledge the occurrence if an accidental touch does occur. Program Owners are encouraged to put in place a process of documentation of such accidental touches. Diligent oversight on the part of Program Owners will allow for the tracking a pattern of misconduct, should one exist.

As per the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, no person under the age of 12 is able to consent to sexual activity under any circumstances. Children between the ages of 12 and 13 are sometimes considered able to give consent and then, only if the age difference is less than 2 years and the child is deemed able to give consent. Between the ages of 14 and 15, children are also sometimes able to consent to sexual activity, but again, only if the age difference is less than five years and therein exists no power relationships. Children 16 and over are considered able to give consent provided there is no power relationship. It is further understood that is never acceptable for any member to engage in a sexual relationship with an athlete under 18 years old or an intimate or sexual relationship with an athlete over the age of 18 if the individual is in a position of power, trust, or authority over the athlete. Every coach is considered to be in a position of power.

- Physical Abuse

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no physical abuse of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant. Physical abuse means physical contact with a participant that intentionally causes or has the potential to cause the participant bodily harm or personal injury. Physical abuse also includes non-contact behavior that can cause physical harm. Examples of bullying prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation, physical behaviors, including punching, kicking or choking. Physical abuse also includes physical contact with a participant that intentionally creates a threat of immediate bodily harm or personal injury. Physical abuse may also include intentionally hitting or threatening to hit an athlete with objects or sports equipment.

In addition to physical contact or the threat of physical contact of a participant, physical abuse also includes the providing of alcohol to a participant under the age of consent and the providing of illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any participant. Without limiting the above, any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under applicable federal or provincial law constitutes physical abuse under this Policy.

- Emotional Abuse

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no emotional abuse of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by an employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant. Emotional abuse involves a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to a participant. Any pattern of deliberate non-contact behaviors by a person within a critical relationship role that has the potential to be harmful.

Emotionally abusive behaviors may include but are not limited to verbal acts such as personal attacks, repeated and excessive yelling that serve no productive or motivational purpose and/or is identified by the athlete to be counterproductive to the athlete's progress; physically aggressive acts/behaviors such as throwing items at or near participants or physically assaulting objects in a manner that makes athletes or observers feel threatened; and acts that deny attention and/or to athletes such as ignoring a participant for an extended period of time; physical, emotional, educational or medical neglect; routinely and/or arbitrarily excluding participants from practice or training, and/or providing inadequate supervision or exposing athletes to unsafe or violent environment, denying athletes adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep; ignoring an injury or athlete's report of pain; denial of non-sport, developmentally valuable experiences; and/or knowing about abuse but failing to report. Cheer Canada recognizes that while a single incident of any of the above behaviors may be inappropriate and justify a review and/or disciplinary or other action by Cheer Canada or any of its Member Programs, such isolated behaviors would typically not constitute emotional abuse unless a pattern of such conduct had occurred. Constructive criticism about an athlete's performance is not emotional abuse or misconduct. Further, emotional abuse does not include generally-accepted and age appropriate coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, motivation, team building, appropriate discipline, or improving athletic performance.

- Hazing

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no hazing of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor (including choreographers and guest coaches or clinicians) or other participant. Hazing includes any act or conduct described as hazing under federal or provincial law, usually it involves abusive initiation rituals that often but don't necessarily have sexual components and in which newcomers are targeted. Activities that fit the definition of hazing are considered to be hazing regardless of a person's willingness to cooperate or participate. Examples of hazing prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation, requiring or forcing (including through peer pressure) the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs; tying, taping, or physically restraining a participant; sexual simulations or sexual acts of any nature; sleep deprivation, 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, and verbal abuse or threats or implied threats. Hazing includes any conduct which is intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or physically harmful. The hazing conduct is typically an activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or being socially accepted by a group's members.

Hazing does not include group or team activities that are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or promote team cohesion, so long as such activities do not have reasonable potential to cause emotional or physical distress to any participant. While other team members are often the perpetrators of hazing toward their teammates, it is a violation of this Policy if a coach or other responsible adult<sup>1</sup> knows or should know of the hazing but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the targeted participant(s).

- Harassment

It is the policy of the Cheer Canada that there shall be no harassment of any participant involved in any of its Member Programs by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant. Harassment includes any pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are intended to cause fear, humiliation, or annoyance, (b) offend or degrade, (c) create a hostile environment, or (d) reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual participant or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, or mental or physical disability. Harassment includes any systemic written or verbal abuse or threats, unwanted attention, ridiculing of performance, domination of meetings, play space or equipment, condescending or patronizing behavior, undermining self-respect or work performance, offensive phone calls or photos, and/or stalking.

Gender harassment includes but is not limited to derogatory treatment of one gender or another which is systematic and repeated but not necessarily sexual, vandalism on the basis of gender, or any form of bullying/abuse based on gender. Members may face disciplinary action for sending inappropriate electronic communication or posting online content or comments that harass, offend, intimidate, or humiliate another member, as outlined in our member protection policy or code of conduct. Under certain circumstances, cyber bullying (e.g. bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, a chat room, discussion group, instant messaging or website) is a criminal offence that can be reported to the police. In addition, members who publish false or misleading comments about another person in the public domain (e.g., Facebook, YouTube or Twitter) may be liable for defamation. Electronic communications should never be used to harass, righten, degrade, intimidate or humiliate other members of Cheer Canada.

Threatening behavior is also prohibited in any manner in connection with any Cheer Canada sanctioned activities or events. A threat to harm others is defined as any written, verbal, physical or electronically transmitted expression of intent to physically injure or harm someone else. A threat may be communicated directly to the intended victim or communicated to a third party.

- Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability. These reasons, also called grounds, are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note, for the purposes of this policy, an adult affiliated with Cheer Canada, is considered any person 18 years of age or older that has a professional role within Cheer Canada or any Cheer Canada member organization, or any adult, 18 years of age or older, who is a current athlete in a Cheer Canada program. This includes, but is not limited to gym owners, programmers, coaches, choreographers, photographers, team parents, adult age athletes and employees of the program.

Examples of discrimination prohibited by this Policy include, without limitation such non-physical offenses as (a) making negative or disparaging comments about a participant's gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, mental or physical disability, race, religion, skin color, ethnic traits or other legally protected grounds; (b) displaying offensive materials, gestures, or symbols; and (c) withholding or reducing job opportunities and remuneration, and/or practice or playing time to a participant based on his/her sexual orientation, gender expression (not to include prohibitions on participation when eligibility is based on gender), disability, religion, skin color, ethnic traits or any legally protected grounds.

What we ask you to do:

- Model appropriate behavior in your personal and cheerleading life. The best method of addressing BAHD is to personally reflect on our own behavior and actions and how they affect and are perceived by others. Once we've examined our own behavior, then we can best mentor those around us in a supportive and respectful manner.
- Refrain from commenting negatively or sarcastically about results, judging, other people, other countries, and all organizations.
- Cheer Canada recommends The Respect in Sport Activity Leader Program for all youth leaders, coaches, and officials to recognize, understand and respond to issues of bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination.
- Intervene on behalf of individuals, teams, coaches, or programs who are violating these policies. Speak to the individual in a timely fashion, report behaviors to their supervisors or mentors, program owners, and, if all else fails, report to Cheer Canada. BAHD behaviors of any kind is prohibited in any manner in connection with any Cheer Canada sanctioned activities or events. Furthermore, it is a violation of this Policy if a coach or other responsible adult knows or should know of BAHD behaviors but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the targeted individual, team, coach, or program.

#### Duty to Report

In the event that any Cheer Canada or any of its Member Programs' employees or volunteers observe inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations), suspected physical or sexual abuse, or any other type of abuse or misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of such person to immediately report their observations. Cheer Canada, all Member Programs, and all "Covered Individuals" (as defined in the Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy) are required to promptly report any alleged violations of the Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy. In addition to reporting to Cheer Canada, such persons must also report suspected child physical or sexual abuse to appropriate law enforcement authorities WITHIN A 24-HOUR PERIOD when required under this Policy and/or under applicable law. Employees 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 law enforcement authorities.

#### Process to Report

Complaints and concerns should first be addressed at the local level, such as with the gym, club or school. If not resolved at the local level, the complaint should then be taken to the Provincial Sports Authority. If not resolved at the provincial level, then the complaint should be escalated to Cheer Canada. If there is no reporting method at the provincial level, the complaint should be escalated to Cheer Canada directly.

#### Non-compliance

Any Cheer Canada member, participant or parent of a participant who engages in any act of bullying, harassment, abuse or discrimination is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension, and/or referral to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. The severity and pattern, if any, of the behavior and/or result shall be taken into consideration when disciplinary decisions are made.