



Highlands Trailblazers Cross Country Athlete Protection Policy

Table of Contents

Definitions	3
Purpose	3
Gaps of Power and Privilege between Persons in Authority and Athletes.....	3
Emotional Safety for Athletes.....	4
Physical Safety for Athletes and Physical Contact.....	4
Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes – The ‘Rule of Two’	5
Practices and Competitions	6
Communications	7
Travel.....	7
Locker Rooms/ Changing Areas.....	8
Photography/ Video	9
Enforcement	9
Privacy.....	9

Definitions

Terms in this Policy re defined as follows:

- a) ***Athlete*** – An individual who is subject to the policies of Highlands Trailblazers, and who may also be subject to the policies of Cross Country Ski Ontario, Nordiq Canada, and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (“UCCMS”)
- b) ***Minor*** – As defined in the UCCMS and as amended from time to time by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada
- c) ***Participant*** – Refers to all categories of individual members and/or registrants as defined in the bylaws of Highlands Trailblazers, who are subject to the policies of Highlands Trailblazers. This also refers to all people employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities with Highlands Trailblazers including, but not limited to; employees, contractors, athletes, coaches, instructors, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, committee members, parents/ guardians, spectators, directors, or officers
- d) ***Person in Authority*** – Any participant who holds a position of authority within Highlands Trailblazers including, but not limited to; coaches, instructors, officials, managers, support personnel, chaperones, committee members, directors, or officers. In addition to the responsibilities described herein and in the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*, a Person in Authority is responsible for knowing what constitutes Prohibited Behaviour and Maltreatment under the UCCMS
- e) ***Vulnerable Participants*** – As defined in the UCCMS and as amended from time to time by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada

Purpose

This *Athlete Protection Policy* describes how Persons in Authority shall maintain a safe sport environment for all Athletes.

Gaps of Power and Privilege between Persons in Authority and Athletes

Relationships between Persons in Authority and Athletes have an inherent power differential whereby Persons in Authority carry greater positions of power and privilege. Applying an intersectional lens (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989), which identifies layers of power and privilege such as gender identity,

race, and age, can highlight the extent of the gap between a Person in Authority and an Athlete. For example, a Person in Authority who is a white, male, middle aged, cis gendered, able bodied coach carries multiple layers of added power if he is coaching an Athlete who is a Black, transgender, youth, with an unseen physical disability. It is the responsibility of the Person in Authority: to be aware of their own position of power and privilege in relation to an Athlete; to be sensitive to the position of the Athlete; to empower Athlete's voice, choices, and self determination; to take a one down stance in an attempt to decrease some of the power differential; to request feedback from those with lesser positions of power and privilege; and to integrate feedback.

Emotional Safety for Athletes

There is zero tolerance of Persons in Authority using racism, sexism, transphobia, ableism, comments that belittle Athletes, or that undermine their sense of themselves. For further information on emotional safety for Athletes, refer to *Code of Conduct and Ethics*. Persons in Authority can intentionally take an anti oppressive stance in their role with Athletes. For example, in setting up training exercises Persons in Authority can refrain from using binary categories such as "male" and "female" and can create groups across genders that can be inclusive of 2SLGBTQQIA (Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) Athletes.

Feedback for Athletes' development is to be offered in ways that promotes integrity, is collaborative, strength based, and provides opportunities for the Athlete to improve. Persons in Authority work to foster a collaborative team environment that uplift Athletes to support each other's growth and development. Persons in Authority request anonymous feedback from Athletes and parents/ guardians to ensure Athletes experience growth, enjoyment, and a sense of safety in Highlands Trailblazers programs.

Physical Safety for Athletes and Physical Contact

There is zero tolerance of any form of violence, threats of violence, implied or 'jokes' of violence by Persons in Authority. For further information on physical safety for Athletes, refer to *Code of Conduct and Ethics*. During a training session or competition, for a Person in Authority who is becoming emotionally dysregulated, the following is the responsibility of the Person in Authority: catch their own escalation, request another Person in Authority to

step in for them, safely remove themselves from the context, cool down, only return when they are able to promote a sense of safety for Athletes, take personal accountability for any impacts on Athletes of their escalation, and to implement strategies that ensures future safety of Athletes. If a Person in Authority demonstrates a pattern of emotional dysregulation or any other form of inappropriate behaviour, refer to the *Enforcement* section below.

For specific guidelines on the behaviour of Athletes, see *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

Some physical contact between Persons in Authority and Athletes may be necessary for various reasons including teaching a skill or tending to an injury. For physical contact, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) A Person in Authority must always request permission to make physical contact from the Athlete in advance and clearly explain where and why the physical contact will occur. It is the responsibility of the Person in Authority to first clearly ask permission to touch the Athlete and to clearly state that is the Athlete's choice. If an Athlete indicates no in their words or demeanour, a Person in Authority will respect the choice of the Athlete unless doing so puts a person at risk (e.g., an injury).
- b) Infrequent, accidental physical contact during a training session may not necessarily be considered a violation of this *Athlete Protection Policy*. The impact for the Athlete will be considered primarily and the intent of the Person in Authority will be secondary.
- c) Nonessential physical contact such as a hug may not be initiated by a Person of Authority. It is recognized that some Athletes may initiate nonessential physical contact such as hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as celebrating or crying after a poor performance). This physical contact should always occur in an open and observable environment.

Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes – The 'Rule of Two'

Nordiq Canada and Cross Country Ski Ontario require that the 'Rule of Two' be followed for all Persons in Authority who interact with Athletes, to the maximum extent feasible. As a club that is registered with Cross Country Ski Ontario, Highlands Trailblazers adopts this requirement. The 'Rule of Two' is a directive

that says that an Athlete must never be alone one-on-one with an unrelated Person in Authority.

Highlands Trailblazers recognizes that fully implementing the 'Rule of Two' may not always be possible. Consequently, at a minimum, interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes must respect the following:

- a) To the maximum extent possible, the training environment should be visible and accessible so that all interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes are observable by others such as Persons in Authority, parents, or adults.
- b) Private and one-on-one situations that are not observable by another adult or Athlete should always be avoided unless in emergency circumstances.
- c) A Vulnerable Participant may not be alone under the supervision of a Person in Authority unless prior written permission is obtained from the Vulnerable Participant's parent or guardian.
- d) Persons in Authority may not invite or host Vulnerable Participants in their home without the written permission from parents or guardians or without parents or guardians having concurrent knowledge of the visit.

Practices and Competitions

For practices and competitions, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) A Person in Authority should never be alone with a Vulnerable Participant prior to or following a competition or practice unless the Person in Authority is the Vulnerable Participant's parent/ guardian.
- b) If the Vulnerable Participant is the first Athlete to arrive, the Athlete's parent/ guardian should remain present until another Athlete or Person in Authority arrives.
- c) If a Vulnerable Participant would potentially be alone with a Person in Authority following a competition or practice, the Person in Authority should ask another Person in Authority (or a parent/ guardian of another Athlete) to stay until all of the Athletes have been picked up. If an adult is unavailable, another Athlete, who is preferably not a Vulnerable Participant, should be present to avoid the Vulnerable Participant being alone with a Person in Authority.
- d) Persons in Authority giving instructions, demonstrating skills, facilitating drills, or leading lessons with an individual Athlete should always do so in a manner that is observable, is sensitive to the experience of the Athlete, and takes into account the Athlete's sense of safety and security.

- e) Persons in Authority and Athletes should take steps to achieve transparency and accountability in their interactions. For example, a Person in Authority and an Athlete who know they will be away from other Participants for a lengthy period of time must inform another Person in Authority where they are going and when they are expected to return. Persons in Authority should always be reachable by phone or text message.

Communications

For communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) Persons in Authority may only send texts, direct messages on social media, or emails to individual Athletes when necessary and only for communicating information related to team issues and activities (e.g., non-personal information). Any such correspondence shall be professional.
- b) Electronic communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes that is personal in nature should be avoided. If such personal communication is unavoidable, it must be recorded and available for review by another Person in Authority and/or by the Athlete's parent/guardian (when the Athlete is a Vulnerable Participant).
- c) Parents/guardians may request that their child not be contacted by a Person in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or may request that certain information about their child not be distributed in any form of electronic communication.
- d) All communication between a Person in Authority and Athletes must be between the hours of 6:00am and midnight except for extenuating circumstances.
- e) Communication concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is not permitted.
- f) There is zero tolerance for Persons in Authority to use any form of sexually explicit or implicit comment or conduct in person or in electronic communication with any Athlete, Minor, Participant, or Vulnerable Participant.
- g) Persons in Authority are not permitted to ask any Athlete, Minor, Participant, or Vulnerable Participant to keep a secret.

Travel

For travel involving Persons in Authority and Athletes, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) Where reasonably possible teams or groups of Athletes should have at least two Persons in Authority with them.
- b) For mixed gender teams or groups of Athletes, reasonable efforts should be made for team staff to include at least one Person in Authority from different genders. However, where required by the Highlands Trailblazers Board of Directors, one Person in Authority from different genders shall travel with mixed gender teams or groups of Athletes. This is to promote a sense of safety for Athletes who identify as female or who are 2SLGBTQIA.
- c) If more than one Person in Authority cannot be present, reasonable efforts should be made to supplement supervision with screened parents/ guardians or other volunteers.
- d) To the extent possible, no Person in Authority may drive a vehicle alone with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent/ guardian.
- e) A Person in Authority should never share a hotel room or bedroom or be alone with an Athlete in a hotel room or bedroom unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent/ guardian or spouse.
- f) Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two Persons in Authority and in a manner that Athletes feel a sense of safety and security.
- g) For overnight travel when Athletes share a hotel room, roommates must be age appropriate and of similar gender identity.

Locker Rooms/ Changing Areas

For locker rooms, changing areas, and other closed meeting spaces, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes should not occur in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as a locker room, washroom, or changing area. If for any reason a Person in Authority must be in a locker room, changing area, or other enclosed meeting spaces, it is their responsibility to ensure the privacy and respect of any Athletes present, that a second adult should be present, and that they exit together as quickly as possible.

- b) If Persons in Authority are not present in the locker room or changing area, or if they are not permitted to be present, they should still be available outside the locker room or changing area and be able to enter the room or area minimally if required, with another Person in Authority for team communications and/ or emergencies.

Photography / Video

For all photography and video recordings of Athletes, Highlands Trailblazers recommends:

- a) Photographs and videos should only be taken in public view. Content must observe generally accepted standards of decency and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the Athlete.
- b) The use of recording devices in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is strictly prohibited.
- c) Examples of photos that shall be edited or deleted include:
 - i. Images with misplaced apparel or where undergarments are showing
 - ii. Suggestive or provocative poses
 - iii. Embarrassing images
 - iv. Any image an Athlete requests to be deleted

Enforcement

Any alleged violations of this *Athlete Protection Policy* shall be addressed according to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

Privacy

The collection, use, and disclosure of any personal information pursuant to this Policy is subject to Highlands Trailblazers' usual policies and practices regarding private and/or confidential information.