NWANA Safe Sport Policy

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SafeSport

Safe Sport Policy

The Nordic Walking Association of North America (NWANA, we, us, or our) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and protective environment for all participants, including youth athletes, adult participants, instructors, coaches, officials, volunteers, organizers, parents, guardians, donors, sponsors, and partners. This Safe Sport Policy applies to NWANA programs, events, competitions, challenges, training activities, certification activities, license activities, meetings, communications, online spaces, and related organizational activities. NWANA expects every person involved in its activities to help prevent abuse, harassment, misconduct, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, and unsafe behavior.

Effective Date: August 10, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Safe Sport Policy is to protect participants and create a culture of safety, respect, accountability, and trust. NWANA's Safe Sport standards are intended to: protect youth and vulnerable participants; promote safe adult-youth interactions; prevent abuse, harassment, bullying, and misconduct; establish reporting expectations; support appropriate boundaries; guide instructors, coaches, officials, organizers, and volunteers; protect the integrity of NWANA programs and events.

2. Who Must Follow This Policy

This policy applies to: participants and athletes; youth participants; parents and guardians; instructors and coaches; license holders; officials and judges; volunteers; organizers and event staff; board members and organizational leaders; sponsors and partners when involved in NWANA activities; spectators and guests at NWANA activities.

3. Prohibited Conduct

NWANA does not tolerate: sexual misconduct; physical abuse; emotional abuse; harassment; bullying; hazing; discrimination; threats or intimidation; retaliation; inappropriate adult-youth communication; inappropriate physical contact; grooming behavior; exploitation of authority; unsafe supervision; knowingly ignoring safety or misconduct concerns. This applies in person, online, by phone, by email, through social media, during events, during training, during travel connected to NWANA activities, and in any NWANA-related setting.

4. Youth Protection

Adults involved in NWANA activities must maintain appropriate boundaries with youth participants. Adults should avoid one-on-one isolated situations with minors whenever possible. Interactions with youth should be observable, interruptible, and connected to a legitimate NWANA activity. Adults must not use their role, authority, license, certification, coaching position, volunteer position, or organizational status to manipulate, pressure, exploit, or endanger a youth participant. Parents and guardians should be informed about youth participation, schedules, supervision, travel expectations, communications, and safety procedures when applicable.

5. Communication With Minors

Communication with minors should be appropriate, transparent, and related to NWANA activity. Adults should avoid private, inappropriate, secretive, or personal communications with minors. When possible, communications with youth participants should include a parent, guardian, another authorized adult, or use official group communication channels. Inappropriate messages, personal relationship-building, sexual content, pressure, secrecy, or grooming behavior are prohibited.

6. Physical Contact and Instruction

Nordic Walking instruction may involve demonstrations, technical correction, equipment adjustment, or safety guidance. Any physical contact must be appropriate, limited, respectful, and connected to a legitimate instructional or safety purpose. Participants should be told what correction or adjustment is being made. Physical contact should be avoided when verbal instruction or demonstration is sufficient. Inappropriate, unnecessary, sexual, punitive, forceful, or unsafe physical contact is prohibited.

7. Supervision and Event Safety

NWANA activities involving youth or vulnerable participants should include appropriate supervision based on the nature of the activity, participant age, location, risk level, and event format. Organizers, instructors, coaches, officials, and volunteers should take reasonable steps to maintain safe environments, including: clear check-in and check-out procedures where needed; appropriate adult supervision; safe course or training areas; emergency contact access; weather and environmental awareness; incident reporting procedures; respect for participant limits and abilities.

8. Reporting Concerns

NWANA encourages reporting of safety concerns, misconduct, harassment, abuse, bullying, discrimination, inappropriate conduct, boundary violations, or suspected policy violations. Reports should include as much information as possible, such as: names of individuals involved; date, time, and location; event or program name; description of the concern; witnesses, if any; screenshots, messages, documents, photos, or other supporting information. For urgent danger, medical emergencies, abuse, threats, or criminal conduct, contact emergency services or appropriate authorities immediately.

9. Mandatory Reporting

Nothing in this policy replaces any legal obligation to report suspected child abuse, abuse of a vulnerable person, sexual misconduct, or criminal conduct to law enforcement, child protection services, or other appropriate authorities. Individuals who are mandatory reporters under applicable law must comply with those legal duties. NWANA may also report concerns to appropriate authorities when required or when necessary to protect participants.

10. No Retaliation

NWANA does not tolerate retaliation against any person who makes a good-faith report, raises a concern, participates in a review, supports another person in reporting, or asks a safety question. Retaliation may include threats, harassment, intimidation, exclusion, punishment, loss of opportunity, public shaming, or other negative treatment because someone raised a concern.

11. Review and Response

NWANA may review reports, safety concerns, conduct concerns, or suspected policy violations. NWANA may take action when appropriate, including: warning; education or corrective action; removal from an event or program; restriction from NWANA activities; suspension of participation; disqualification; denial, suspension, or revocation of licenses or certifications; removal from instructor, coach, official, organizer, volunteer, or leadership roles; referral to law enforcement or appropriate authorities where required. NWANA may act immediately when needed to protect youth participants, participants, the public, or the integrity of NWANA activities.

12. Training and Education

NWANA may require Safe Sport training or related safety education for certain roles, including instructors, coaches, officials, organizers, volunteers, and license holders. Training requirements may vary by role, activity, level of responsibility, and contact with youth participants. NWANA may develop and offer Safe Sport education through NWANA Academy or direct participants to approved external education resources where appropriate.

13. Responsibility of Instructors, Coaches, Officials, and Organizers

Individuals in leadership or authority roles have a higher duty of care. Instructors, coaches, officials, organizers, volunteers, and license holders must: follow NWANA safety and conduct standards; maintain appropriate boundaries; protect youth and vulnerable participants; avoid conflicts of interest and misuse of authority; report serious concerns; cooperate with reasonable safety reviews; act in the best interest of participants and the organization.

14. Privacy and Confidentiality

NWANA will make reasonable efforts to handle reports with care and discretion. Information may be shared when necessary to review a concern, protect participants, comply with law, involve appropriate authorities, take corrective action, or operate NWANA programs safely. NWANA cannot promise absolute confidentiality when safety, legal duties, participant protection, or organizational responsibility require disclosure.

15. Policy Updates

NWANA may update this Safe Sport Policy from time to time. Updates will be posted on this page with a revised effective date. Continued participation in NWANA activities after updates are posted means you acknowledge the updated policy.

16. Contact NWANA

For Safe Sport questions or concerns, contact NWANA: Email: info@nwaofna.org. Subject line: Safe Sport Concern