

## **Introduction**

Upper Valley Rowing Foundation (UVRF) is a non-profit sports organization run by volunteers. Its mission is to create a community for the sport of rowing by offering a wide variety of opportunities for area residents to row on the Connecticut River. UVRF offers instructional and recreational programs, competitive opportunities for Masters and Junior rowers, and promotes education about the sport. UVRF is a member of USRowing.

Beginning in 2015, all USRowing member organizations must have athlete safety policies in place to safeguard children and adult club members. Organizations need to certify that they can provide USRowing with a copy of their policy and update their policy annually. The primary aim of the **Safe Sport** policy is to protect children from sexual abuse and harassment. The UVRF Board appoints a Safety Officer annually who is charged with implementing this SafeSport program and ensuring all members are aware of its existence and provisions for dealing with abusive situations.

Program coaches must successfully complete the online SafeSport training and testing described in the Education and Awareness Training section. Coaches should view the UVRF Program Coach Checklist for a concise list of requirements.

## **Prohibited Conduct**

Misconduct in sport includes:

- Bullying
- Harassment (including sexual harassment)
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct
- Sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse)

Coaches, club members, and volunteers are required to report abuse or misconduct. To do so fairly, reporters should have a basic understanding of sexual abusers and the "grooming" strategies they use to seduce their victims. With a combination of attention, affection, gifts, or preferential treatment, sexual offenders select a child, win their trust (and the trust of their parents or guardians), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse.

Bullying, harassment, and hazing can involve acts of emotional, physical or sexual misconduct. Emotional misconduct often involves non-contact behaviors that verbally abuse an athlete or deny attention or support.

Physical misconduct may or may not involve actual contact, and causes or threatens physical harm. Physical misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athlete performance.

Contact offenses include but are not limited to behaviors that involve any physical injury, provision of alcohol or illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications that may result in harm to the athlete, or permitting an athlete to return to play prematurely after an injury.

Non-contact offenses include but are not limited to behaviors that may isolate an athlete as an act of coercion or punishment, forcing a painful stance or position, or withholding or denying adequate hydration or medical attention.

Sexual misconduct can include assault, harassment, abuse or any other intimacies that exploit an athlete. **In New Hampshire and Vermont persons under the age of 16 years old cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult**, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a person under 16 is strictly prohibited.

Sexual misconduct can occur even without contact and represents an abuse of authority and trust implicit in the coach-athlete relationship. Especially in the case of Juniors, coaches must be aware of misinterpretation of overly personal interaction. Non-contact offenses include but are not limited to: a coach discussing their sex life with an athlete or asking an athlete about his or her sex life, requesting or sending inappropriate photos or sexually explicit or suggestive messages, deliberately exposing an athlete to nudity (except in shared changing areas), initiating, inviting or responding to sexual solicitation, or any other unwelcome or offensive behaviors that are sexual in nature.

Adults in positions of power, like coaches, must be aware that Juniors may misinterpret or misreport or even fantasize what might seem to the adult to be casual or harmless remarks that are sexual in nature.

Coaches are looked up to for guidance in improving rowing skills, for training and race preparation, and they control coveted boat and seat assignments. They must be cognizant of this power they wield, and manage the trust relationship with their athletes with heightened sensitivity and maturity. Coaches cannot always be "best friends" with their athletes, just as parents, at times, cannot expect to be best friends with their children and parent effectively.

### **Education and Awareness Training**

Coaches are required to complete the online awareness training offered by the USRowing SafeSport program every 3 years. The short course teaches about the nature of misconduct in sport and provides actionable information to better protect athletes. A current certificate must be on file with UVRF prior to contact with athletes.

- Visit the website → <https://safesport.org/>
- Register for an account or log in.
- If you register, please "Add membership" to "U.S. Rowing", using the account access code for USRowing: **J5YZ-UJKV-YMFX-4ENI**

- Complete the 3 online units: Sexual Misconduct Awareness, Emotional and Physical Misconduct, and Mandatory Reporting
- Save PDF copies of all 3 certificates of completion and email to [uppervalleyrc@gmail.com](mailto:uppervalleyrc@gmail.com).

### **Applicant Screening**

Coach employment screening with UVRF includes an application, interviews, reference checks, and criminal background checks. Each applicant has an affirmative duty to disclose his or her criminal history. Failing to disclose or intentionally misrepresenting an arrest plea or conviction history in an application or any other information provided by the applicant during the screening process is grounds for non-employment, or revocation or restriction of employment, regardless of when the offense is discovered.

Information that could disqualify an applicant includes, but is not limited to, arrests, pleas of no contest and criminal convictions—especially if the underlying criminal behavior involved sex or violence. No decision will be made on an individual's eligibility for work if they have a pending court case for any of the potentially disqualifying offenses until the pending case concludes.

Each applicant has the affirmative duty to fully disclose his or her criminal history. Failing to disclose or intentionally misrepresenting an arrest plea or conviction history in an application or any other information provided by an applicant during the screening process is grounds for revocation or restriction of employment, volunteer duties and/or UVRF membership, regardless of when the offense is discovered.

Any applicant who has been banned from another sports organization or educational institution, temporarily or permanently, must disclose this information. Failure to disclose is a basis for disqualification from employment with UVRF.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

All UVRF coaches are required to submit a background check with the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) and show clearance on their record every 2 years prior to beginning their coaching responsibilities.

- Visit the website → <http://www.ncsisafe.com/default.aspx>
- Click on the picture tab entitled "START YOUR BACKGROUND SCREENING NOW".
- Enter the 8-digit application ID for UVRF: 10879599

Respond to all the screen prompts and several pages of acknowledgements and waivers. At the successful submission of your screening check you will receive an applicant ID. You will also receive an email confirmation with this number. You can use this ID to check the status of your clearance. UVRF also can check the status of all applicants with an administrative account. A "red light" finding means the criminal background check revealed criminal records that suggest the applicant "does not meet the criteria" and is not suitable for employment or volunteer assignment with UVRF.

**Reporting and Enforcement**

UVRF coaches, club members, and volunteers shall report suspicions or allegations of violations, misconduct, and physical or sexual abuse. Reports should be made to the UVRF President, Vice President, Safety Officer or other UVRF Officers. The current serving officers can be found on the club website under the heading "About UVRF". The URL is:

<http://www.uppervalleyrowing.org/Page.asp?n=64294&org=uppervalleyrowing.net>

UVRF will take a report in the way that is most comfortable for the person initiating a report including an anonymous, in-person, verbal or written report. Regardless of how you choose to report, it is helpful to UVRF for individuals to provide, at a minimum, (1) the name of the complainant(s), (2) the type of misconduct alleged and the name(s) of the individual(s) alleged to have committed the misconduct, and (3) the approximate dates of misconduct.

Please note that anonymous reporting may make it difficult for UVRF to investigate or properly address allegations. All suspicions of child physical or sexual abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**

**UVRF does not investigate suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse or attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

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