

Vancouver Fastpitch Association Code of Conduct, effective as of 1 January 2025

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Code is to ensure a safe and positive environment within the programs, activities, and events of Vancouver Fastpitch Association (“VFA”) by making individuals aware that there is an expectation, at all times, of appropriate behaviour consistent with VFA’s core values. VFA supports equal opportunities, prohibits discriminatory practices, and is committed to providing an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect.

Application of this Code

2. This Code applies to all individuals’ conduct during VFA activities and events including, but not limited to, tournaments, games, practices, tryouts, clinics, social events, travel associated with VFA activities, and at any meetings. An individual who violates this Code may be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary measures by the VFA Board of Directors.

Individuals’ Responsibilities

3. Individuals have a responsibility to:

- 3.1 Maintain and enhance the dignity and self-esteem of VFA members and other individuals by:

- 3.1.1 Demonstrating respect to individuals regardless of body type, physical characteristics, athletic ability, age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 3.1.2 Focusing comments or criticism appropriately and avoiding public criticism of athletes, coaches, officials, organizers, volunteers, employees or members.

- 3.1.3 Consistently demonstrating the spirit of sportsmanship, sport leadership, and ethical conduct.

- 3.1.4. Acting, when appropriate, to correct or prevent practices that are unjustly discriminatory.

- 3.1.5. Consistently treating individuals fairly and reasonably.

- 3.1.6 Ensuring adherence to the rules of the sport and the spirit of those rules.

- 3.2 Refrain from any behaviour that constitutes harassment, where harassment is defined as comment or conduct directed towards an individual or group which is offensive, abusive, racist, sexist, degrading, or malicious. Types of behaviour that constitute harassment include, but are not limited to:

- 3.2.1 Written or verbal abuse, threats or outbursts.

- 3.2.2 The display of visual material which is offensive or which a reasonable person ought to know is offensive in the circumstances.

- 3.2.3 Unwelcome remarks, jokes, comments, innuendo, or taunts.

- 3.2.4 Leering or other suggestive or obscene gestures.

- 3.2.5 Condescending or patronizing behaviour which is intended to undermine self-esteem, diminish performance or adversely affect working conditions.
- 3.2.6 Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endanger a person's safety, or negatively affect performance.
- 3.2.7 Any form of hazing.
- 3.2.8 Retaliation or threats of retaliation against an individual who reports harassment.
- 3.2.9 Bullying.
- 3.2.10 Offensive or intimidating phone calls or emails.
- 3.2.11 Displaying or circulating offensive pictures, photographs or materials printed or electronic form.
- 3.2.12 Psychological abuse.
- 3.2.13 Discrimination.
- 3.2.14 Words or actions which are known or should reasonably be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning or intimidating.
- 3.2.15 Behaviours such as those described above that are not directed towards a specific individual or group but have the same effect of creating a negative or hostile environment.
- 3.3 Refrain from any behaviour that constitutes violence, where violence is defined as the exercise of physical force that causes or could cause physical injury, an attempt to exercise physical force that could cause physical injury, or a statement or behaviour that is reasonable to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force. Types of behaviour that constitute violence include, but are not limited to:
 - 3.3.1 Verbal threats to attack.
 - 3.3.2 Sending or leaving threatening notes or emails.
 - 3.3.3 Making threatening physical gestures.
 - 3.3.4 Wielding a weapon.
 - 3.3.5 Hitting, pinching, or unwanted touching which is not accidental.
 - 3.3.6 Throwing an object.
 - 3.3.7 Blocking normal movement or physical interference, with or without the use of equipment.
 - 3.3.8 Any attempt to engage in the type of conduct outlined above.
- 3.4 Refrain from any behaviour that constitutes sexual harassment, where sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual comments and sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or conduct of a sexual nature. Types of behaviour that constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:
 - 3.4.1 Sexist jokes.
 - 3.4.2 Sexual violence.

- 3.4.3 Display of sexually offensive material.
- 3.4.4 Sexually degrading words used to describe a person.
- 3.4.5 Inquiries or comments about a person's sex life.
- 3.4.6 Unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions.
- 3.4.7 Inappropriate sexual touching, advances, suggestions or requests.
- 3.4.8 Unwanted physical contact including, but not limited to, touching, petting, pinching, or kissing.
- 3.4.9 Unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, requests, or invitations.
- 3.4.10 Physical or sexual assault.
- 3.5 Refrain from consuming alcohol, tobacco products, or recreational drugs while participating in VFA competitions, practices, tryouts, clinics or other VFA programs.
- 3.6 In the case of adults, avoid consuming alcohol in situations where minors are present and take reasonable steps to manage the responsible consumption of alcohol in adult-orientated social situations associated with VFA events.
- 3.7 Respect the property of others and not willfully cause damage.
- 3.8 Promote the sport in the most constructive and positive manner possible.
- 3.9 Adhere to all federal, provincial, municipal, and host country laws.
- 3.10 Comply at all times with VFA bylaws, policies, procedures, rules and regulations, as adopted and amended from time to time.

Coaches' Responsibilities

- 4. The coach-athlete relationship is a privileged one and plays a critical role in the personal, sport, and athletic development of the athlete. Coaches must understand and respect the inherent power imbalance that exists in this relationship and must be extremely careful not to abuse it, consciously or unconsciously. Coaches will:
 - 4.1 Ensure a safe environment by selecting activities and establishing controls that are suitable for the age, experience, ability, and fitness level of the athletes involved.
 - 4.2 Prepare athletes systematically and progressively, using appropriate time frames and monitoring physical and psychological adjustments, while refraining from using training methods or techniques that may harm athletes.
 - 4.3 Avoid compromising the present and future health of athletes by communicating and cooperating with sport medicine professionals in the diagnosis, treatment and management of athletes' medical and psychological treatments.
 - 4.4 Support the coaching staff of a training camp, provincial team, or national team, should an athlete qualify for participation with one of these programs.
 - 4.5 Provide athletes, and the parents/guardians of minor athletes, with the information necessary to be involved in the decisions that affect the athlete.
 - 4.6 Act in the best interest of the athlete's development as a whole person.

- 4.7 Respect other coaches.
- 4.8 Meet the highest standards of credentials, integrity and suitability, including but not limited to such considerations established by VFA.
- 4.9 Report to VFA any ongoing criminal investigation, conviction, or existing bail conditions, including those for violence, child pornography, or possession, use or sale of any illegal substance.
- 4.10 Under no circumstances provide, promote or condone the use of drugs (other than properly prescribed medications) or performance-enhancing substances or in, the case of minors, alcohol and/or tobacco.
- 4.11 Respect athletes playing with other teams and, in dealings with them, not encroach upon topics or actions which are deemed to be within the realm of 'coaching' unless after first receiving approval from the coaches who are responsible for the athletes.
- 4.12 Not 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 coach is in a position of power, trust, or authority over the athlete.
- 4.13 Recognize the power inherent in the position of coach and respect and promote the rights of all participants in sport. This is accomplished by establishing and following procedures for confidentiality (right to privacy), informed participation, and fair and reasonable treatment. Coaches have a special responsibility to respect and promote the rights of participants who are in a vulnerable or dependent position and less able to protect their own rights.
- 4.14 Dress professionally, neatly and inoffensively.
- 4.15 Use inoffensive language, taking into account the audience being addressed.

Athlete Protection

- 5. VFA seeks to maintain a safe sport environment for athletes consistent with the strong recommendations of Softball BC and Softball Canada that participants adhere to the Rule of Two, which is a directive that says that an athlete must never be alone one-on-one with an unrelated Person In Authority.
- 6. VFA recognizes that fully implementing the Rule of Two in all circumstances may not be possible. Consequently, in an effort to foster safety, enhance protection, and help reduce vulnerability for all, at a minimum all interactions between athletes and Persons In Authority, where a Person In Authority is defined as a coach, trainer, team manager, VFA Board or Executive member, or other VFA volunteer or employee, must:
 - 6.1 Encourage parents to appropriately support their child's involvement.
 - 6.2 Allow the environment to be open and observable and avoid private or one-on-one situations unless they are open and observable by another adult or athlete, where:
 - 6.2.1 An open environment is defined as an environment that is not closed or concealed from others, behind closed doors, or in a secluded location and others are aware the interaction is taking place; and

6.2.2 An observable environment is defined as a space where others can see or take note of the interaction.

6.3 Ensure athletes do not find themselves in a situation where they are alone with a Person in Authority unless prior written permission is obtained from the athlete's parent or guardian.

7. VFA strongly recommends that:

7.1 Teams or groups of athletes always have at least two Persons In Authority with them at a practice or competition.

7.2 A Person In Authority should never be alone with an athlete prior to or following a competition or practice, unless the Person In Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian. If the athlete is the first athlete to arrive, the athlete's parent should remain until another athlete or Person In Authority arrives. Similarly, if an athlete 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 or guardian of another athlete) to stay until all the athletes have been picked up. If an adult is not available, then another athlete should be present in order to avoid the Person In Authority being alone with a single athlete.

7.3 Group messages, group emails or team pages should be used as the regular method of communication between Persons in Authority and athletes.

7.4 Persons in Authority may only send personal texts, direct messages, or emails to individual athletes when necessary and only for communicating information related to team issues and activities (that is, non-personal information); any such texts, messages, or emails shall be professional in tone. Parents and guardians have the right to request that their child not be contacted by Persons in Authority using any form of electronic communication.

7.5 No Person In Authority should drive an athlete alone unless the Person In Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian.

7.6 Interactions (i.e., conversation) between Persons in Authority and athletes should not occur in any room where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as the locker room, restroom or changing area. A second adult should be present for any necessary interaction between an adult and an athlete in any such room (e.g., adhering to the Rule of Two).