



## PLC Coach Note: Safe Environment Practices the PLC Way

Today, we officially begin the first of our three part series on safe environment practices. Let's begin by asking:

- What is appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior?
- Do we have a clear picture of what is allowed and what isn't?
- Where do we draw the line?

Coaches today must be more cautious than ever when mentoring student-athletes and coaches must be watchful of behaviors from fellow coaches that seem inappropriate.

First, we must examine the boundaries associated with coaching our youth. Here are some things to consider:

1. Athletes have the right to their physical and psychological integrity.
2. Coaches and all adults assisting them should maintain very strict boundaries in relating to younger athletes and avoid compromising physical and verbal actions.
3. Avoid any appearance of impropriety or improper socializing between adults coaches and younger athletes

Play Like a Champion Today® cites sports as "play" and an opportunity for our young people to GROW morally and spiritually. Character and moral development extend far beyond just saying a prayer before the game and shaking hands after... coaches are expected to model the behavior that they desire their student-athletes to execute. Much like taking reps in practice, taking "moral reps" is a good way to



"Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."

~ Nelson Mandela

start.

Our second examination consists of a list of “no-no’s” for you to consider:

1. Being alone with a young person in private areas such as cars, locker rooms or bathrooms
2. Treating athletes as peers and violating an appropriate emotional and physical distance
3. Making sexual jokes, using sexual slang or sexual innuendo
4. Mocking athletes (even jokingly)
5. Berating athletes

The final thoughts for consideration are some simple precautions that coaches should take when working with student-athletes. These precautions may seem like common sense, but they must be reiterated them.

1. When a coach is alone in a room with a minor, the door must be open or there must be clear visibility through windows.
2. Coaches who plan a team event in their homes with minors must have the permission of the school administration or athletic organization. In addition, coaches may never have any minor in their homes without the knowledge of the minor's parent or guardian.
3. Coaches may not drive minors unless it is to or from a school-sponsored or organization-sponsored activity and may never drive alone with a minor. Driving minors requires parental permission slips that indicate the transportation is by personal vehicle.

Being aware of your decorum as a coach is of the utmost importance when creating a nurturing and safe environment for student-athletes. At the end of the day, if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. For generations coaches have gone with their gut feelings in critical game situations. Play Like a Champion Today® is asking you to listen to your gut as it pertains to the safety and well-being of our young people. Until next week remember to Play Like a Champion Today®.