



Policy Name: Athlete Protection

Date Approved: September 29, 2025

Next Review Date: January 2026

Purpose

1. This *Athlete Protection* Policy describes how Persons in Authority as defined in the *Code of Conduct, Harassment and Ethics* Policy, shall maintain a safe sport environment for all Athletes.

Interactions Between Person in Authority And Athletes – The ‘Rule of Two’

2. The Northern Ontario Curling Association (NOCA) and strongly recommends the ‘Rule of Two’ for all Persons in Authority who interact with Athletes. The Coaching Association of Canada describes the intention of the ‘Rule of Two’ as follows:
 - A coach must never be alone or out of sight with a minor athlete.
 - Two NCCP trained or certified coaches should always be present with an athlete, especially a minor athlete, when in a potentially vulnerable situation such as in a locker room or meeting room.
 - All one-on-one interactions between a coach and an athlete must take place within earshot and in view of a second coach except for medical emergencies. One of the coaches must also be of the same gender as the athlete.

Should there be a circumstance where a second screened and NCCP trained or certified coach is not available, a screened volunteer, parent, or adult can be recruited.

3. NOCA recognizes that fully implementing the ‘Rule of Two’, as described above (and modified accordingly for Persons in Authority), in all circumstances, may not always be possible.

Consequently, at a minimum, interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes must respect the following:

- i. The training environment should be open to observation so that all interactions between Persons in Authority and athletes are observable.
 - ii. Private or one-on-one situations must be avoided unless they are observable or within earshot of another adult or athlete.
 - iii. Vulnerable Individuals must not be in any situation where they are alone with a Person in Authority without another athlete or screened adult present unless prior written permission is obtained from the Vulnerable Individual's parent or guardian.
- 4. In addition to respecting the minimum requirements described above, it is strongly recommended that:
 - a) Teams or groups of athletes always have at least two Persons in Authority with them;
 - b) For mixed gender teams or groups of athletes, there will be one Person in Authority from each gender;
 - c) Screened parents or other volunteers will be available in situations when two Persons in Authority cannot be present.

Practices and Competitions

- 5. As it relates to practices and/or competitions, the following shall be respected:
 - a) If the Vulnerable Individual is the first athlete to arrive, the athlete's parent should remain until another athlete or Person in Authority arrives.
 - b) If a Vulnerable Individual 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 of the athletes have been picked up. If an adult is unavailable, another athlete, who is preferably not a Vulnerable Individual, should be present in order to avoid the Person in Authority being alone with a single Vulnerable Individual.

Communications

- 6. Communications between Persons in Authority and athletes should respect the following:
 - a) Group messages, group emails or team pages are to be used as the regular method of communication between Persons in Authority and athletes;

- b) Persons in Authority may only send personal 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., nonpersonal information). Any such texts, messages or emails shall be professional in tone.
- c) No personal texts between Vulnerable Individuals and Persons in Authority are to be sent; however, if this is necessary, it should include one other adult person on the message.
- d) Parents and guardians of Vulnerable Individuals may request that their child not be contacted by a Person in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or to request that certain information about their child may not be distributed in any form of electronic communications
- e) All communication between a Persons in Authority and athletes must be between the hours of 6:00am and midnight unless extenuating circumstances justify otherwise
- f) Communications concerning drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is not permitted
- g) No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation is permitted, nor may such items be communicated by any medium
- h) Persons in Authority are not permitted to ask athletes to keep a secret for them
- i) A Person in Authority should not become overly involved in an athlete's personal life

Travel

7. Any travel involving Persons in Authority and athletes shall respect the following:

- a) Teams or groups of athletes shall always have at least two Persons in Authority with them
- b) For mixed gender teams or groups of athletes, there will be one Person in Authority from each gender
- c) Screened parents or other volunteers will be available in situations when two Persons in Authority cannot be present
- d) No Person in Authority may drive a vehicle with an athlete alone unless the Person in Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian - if it cannot be avoided, the athlete must ride in the back seat.
- e) A Person in Authority may not share a room or be alone in a hotel room with an athlete unless the Person in Authority is the athlete's parent or guardian
- f) Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two Persons in Authority

- g) For overnight travel when athletes must share a hotel room, roommates will be age appropriate (e.g., within two years of age of one another) and of the same gender identity

Locker Room / Changing Areas

8. The following shall apply to locker rooms, changing areas, and meeting rooms:

- a) 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 a 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 must be respected).
- 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 if required, including but not limited to team communications and/or emergency.

Photography/Video

9. Any photograph or video involving athletes shall respect the following:

- a) Photographs and video may only be taken in public view, 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 of any kind in rooms 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
- d) If any photographs or videos will be used on any form of public media, an Image Consent Form (**Appendix A – Image Consent Form**) must be completed before any images are taken and used.

Physical Contact

10. It is recognized that some physical contact between Persons in Authority and athletes may be necessary for various reasons including, but not limited to, teaching a skill or tending to an injury. Any physical contact shall respect the following:

- a) Unless it is otherwise not possible because of serious injury or other justifiable circumstance, a Person in Authority must always clarify with an athlete where and why any physical contact will occur prior to the contact occurring. The Person in Authority must make clear that he or she is requesting to touch the athlete and not requiring physical contact
- b) Infrequent, non-intentional physical contact during a training session is permitted
- c) Making amends, such as an apology or explanation, is encouraged to further help educate athletes on the difference between appropriate and inappropriate contact
- d) Hugs lasting longer than five (5) seconds, cuddling, physical horseplay, and physical contact initiated by the Person in Authority is not permitted. It is recognized that some athletes may initiate hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as crying or celebrating after a performance), but this physical contact should always be limited to circumstances where the Person in Authority believes it is in the best interest of the athlete and when it occurs in an open and observable environment.

Enforcement

11. Any alleged violations of this *Athlete Protection* Policy shall be addressed pursuant to NOCA's *Discipline and Complaints* Policy.

Appendix A – Image Consent Form

1. I hereby grant the Northern Ontario Curling Association (the “Organization”) on a worldwide basis, the permission to photograph and/or record the Participant’s image and/or voice on still or motion picture film and/or audio tape and/or through electronic media (collectively the “Images”), and to use the Images to promote the sport and/or the Organization through traditional media such as newsletters, websites, television, film, radio, print and/or display form, and through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. I understand that I waive any claim to remuneration for use of audio/visual materials used for these purposes. This consent will remain in effect in perpetuity.

2. I hereby fully release, discharge, and agree to save harmless the Organization, for any and all claims, demands, actions, damages, losses or costs that might arise out of the collection, use or disclosure of the Images or taking, publication, distortion of the Images, negatives, and masters or any other likeness or representation of the Participant that may occur or be produced in the taking of said Images or in any

subsequent processing thereof, including without limitation any claims for libel, passing off, misappropriation of personality or invasion of privacy.

3. **I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE**, that I have read and understood the terms and conditions of this document. On behalf of me, my heirs and assigns, I agree that I am signing this document voluntarily and to abide by such terms and conditions.

Signed at this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian (if Participant is younger than the age of majority):
