



## PLC Coach Note: Safe Environment the PLC Way

Partners,  
Today's coach note is the finale of our three part series on Safe Environment Practices the PLC Way. The previous two weeks we've discussed what is considered appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior and the prospect of grooming by child sexual predators. We close our series with: "*Reporting a Suspected Problem.*"

Why would this be a topic of contention? Doesn't everyone report problems when they suspect and observe them? Truth is, if everyone did report *suspected* problems that ended up in abusive action there wouldn't be a need for safe environment education. In some cases, abusive acts have been witnessed by third parties but not reported. Why is this? What would make someone not report a serious issue such as child sexual abuse?

As coaches, regardless of the sport, we are in a fraternity of sorts. There's a brotherhood/sisterhood associated with being a coach and in some cases loyalties that last a lifetime (much like that of the armed forces, police or firefighters). Coaching becomes an essential part of our lives just as much as the basic necessities for food and water. In some cases, our coaching friendships are forged by an opportunity to coach. Perhaps the reason we are coaching is because someone on our current staff, be it the head coach or an assistant coach, gave us an opportunity to begin coaching...a true selfless act in itself.

But what happens when the coach who gave



**"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you and I hope I have that desire in all I am doing."**

~ Thomas Merton

you the original opportunity is the one in violation of safe environment practices? At what point does loyalty lose out to the common good? Is it really betrayal if there is justification for reporting the action?

No. Our job as coaches is to glorify the Kingdom of God through our sports ministry. Taking advantage of the very souls we are entrusted to mentor hardly qualifies. If you see or hear one of your colleagues exercising any of the following behaviors, consider having a private conversation with them first. If the actions continue you have no other option than to act in the best interest of the child... no matter how difficult your action may be.

Be mindful of coaches who:

- Take an unusual interest in athletes or seek to be alone with them.
- Use sexual language or call children sexual names (i.e. sexy, tease, etc.)
- Buy athletes expensive goods.
- Touch athletes inappropriately (e.g. hugging , wrestling, tickling)
- Be aware of your own as well as others' overly affectionate relationships with athletes and remove yourself and ask others to remove themselves from such relationships.

PLC realizes that reporting a suspected misbehavior may be a difficult thing to do; but we are our sisters' and brothers' keepers. We are obligated to report any suspicious activity that we notice. Doesn't it make sense to err on the side of caution where our children are concerned? Just as there is an "unspoken" code of honor, loyalty and integrity for coaches there is also a code of conduct that must be adhered to when mentoring our young people.

### **Play Like a Champion Today® Coaches Code of Conduct**

- Respect young people at all times.
- Promote young people's physical and emotional well-being.
- Promote all athletes' competence through positive strategies and refrain from practices that belittle and humiliate young people.
- Promote healthy relationships among players and a commitment to the values of the team.

- Foster in athletes a sense of ownership and autonomy proper to their age.
- Avoid all forms of intimidation and exploitation of players.
- Be aware of bullying/hazing practices on your team and stop them.
- Maintain a proper physical and emotional distance with athletes.
- Communicate and contact athletes following express electronic guidelines.
- Be aware of signs of abuse.
- Report suspected abuse or improper behavior and attitudes by another coach.

PLC is reaching out to you as coach ministers in an attempt to keep our children safe. Observe and report any questionable behavior to the appropriate law enforcement agency in your area. If you are an Athletic Director, please ensure your coaches know where to report suspicious behavior in your area. It may be difficult to do, but which is more difficult... doing what's right or allowing the wrong thing to continue? Ultimately, it is our responsibility to be vigilant in protecting the ones who cannot protect themselves.

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