



THE TOKYO 2020  
MEDIA GUIDE ON

# SAFETY IN SPORT

CREATED BY THE SPORT  
INFORMATION RESOURCE  
CENTRE (SIRC)

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Sport is a part of our culture. It gives us joy, it brings us together, provides us with opportunities to learn and excel, and from the grassroots to the highest levels of competition, sport gives us a chance to celebrate. Sport is a vehicle that unites us and can help us to grow.

Those of us who participate in sport accept that as with any physical activity there are inherent risks associated. However, it's how we manage those risks that's important. Unfortunately, we know that injuries can occur if we push ourselves beyond our physical or mental limits and situations can arise where accidents can happen (equipment malfunctions, grooves in the ice, intense competitors, fatigue, etc.) The goal is to focus on what is preventable. The goal is to prevent it from happening in the first place. And at the same time, to acknowledge and importantly to be prepared, so that if something does happen, there is a process in place to manage and care for the athlete or the affected participant.

The safety of athletes and all participants in sport is a priority for Canada. Whether it be creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment free from abuse and harassment for all participants or preventing injuries such as concussions, the sport sector, athletes and Canadian governments have collaborated to develop policies and protocols that put safety first.



*At its core, the Safe Sport movement is about optimizing the sport experience for all—athletes, coaches, sport administrators, officials, support staff, and others in the sport environment.*

**Gretchen Kerr, Professor,  
Athlete Maltreatment,  
University of Toronto.**



*At the end of the day: the [concussion] protocol will be there to ensure that you can walk away from that moment with the feeling you can tell an athlete you made the right decision for their health.*

**John Herdman, Men's National  
Team Head Coach, Canada Soccer.**

Calls for a system-wide change in Canada's approach to handling abuse and harassment in sport prompted the government of Canada and the national sport community to take action. The resulting Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) has laid the foundation for better systems and accountability at all levels of sport.

A national strategy, that included the development of the Canadian Concussion Guideline created by Parachute, has seen concussion protocols and policies mandated in all federally funded national sport organizations. SIRC has worked closely with partners to raise awareness with parents, coaches, athletes and administrators, regarding concussion safety and share the latest research, policies and resources. The We Are Headstrong concussion awareness campaign was created by the community for the community.

The contents of this Tokyo 2020 Media Guide on Safety in Sport will explore these advancements in greater detail: including timelines, resources, case studies and quotes from national athletes and sport leaders.

Canada is leading by example with its actions, policies and approaches towards safe sport. At the core, is the realization we need to look out for each other. This is the mindset that will help create positive change for all Canadians

**DEBRA GASSEWITZ**

**PRESIDENT AND CEO**

**THE SPORT INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE  
(SIRC)**





## PART 1:

# CONCUSSIONS IN SPORT

## Timeline of Progress

Concussion safety in Canadian sport has advanced significantly in recent years. Evolving research, evidence and knowledge have helped inform better protocols, tools and practices for managing concussions at all levels of sport in Canada. The collaboration of key national partners has helped facilitate a successful “harmonized” approach to concussion management and prevention from coast-to-coast.

### INITIAL SUPPORT FOR CONCUSSION STRATEGIES

#### NOVEMBER 2015

In the Minister of Health Mandate Letter, and the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities Mandate Letter, the federal government identified the need to support a national strategy to raise awareness for parents, coaches, and athletes on concussion treatment.

### EVIDENCE INFORMED

#### OCTOBER 2016

The 5th International Consensus Conference on Concussion in Sport took place in Berlin, Germany. A series of specific clinical questions were developed for global experts, and the consensus question was the subject of a specific formal systematic review. The result is the new Consensus statement on concussion in sport, published in 2017. This reflects the current state of knowledge among concussion experts globally.

#### JULY 2017

Developed by Parachute and its Concussion Expert Advisory Committee, the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport is based on a

review of the current scientific evidence and Berlin consensus statement on best practices for the evaluation and management of Canadian athletes who sustain a concussion during a sport activity.

### HARMONIZATION

#### AUGUST 2017

Equipped with up-to-date evidence and knowledge, SIRC, alongside other key national sport partners, sought to achieve consistency in guidelines and protocols across Canada through the Harmonization initiative.

“  
YOU CAN'T EXPECT A  
CONCUSSED ATHLETE TO  
KNOW THEY ARE CONCUSSED.”

Karolina Wisniewska,  
eight-time Canadian Paralympic  
medalist, alpine skiing

Photo credit@Canadian Paralympic Committee/bogetti



## JUNE 2018

SIRC kicked off numerous initiatives to begin mobilizing the evidence and sharing learnings:

- ▶ The inaugural **Canadian Sport Concussion Workshop** brought together key partners including Parachute Canada, the national sport bodies, medical experts, PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) and Sport Canada, to begin mobilizing the evidence and sharing learnings.
- ▶ A new campaign was launched to begin reaching the public and changing Canadian sport: **We Are Headstrong**. This knowledge mobilization effort focused on engaging national sport bodies, provincial & territorial, local clubs as well as schools. The campaign includes credible resources available in a toolkit – a one-stop shop equipping the sector with the knowledge and tools necessary to properly manage concussions
- ▶ We Are Headstrong also includes the 4 R's, a four-step process that guides concussion management in Canada:
  - **Recognize** the signs and symptoms;
  - **Remove** the athlete from the field of play;
  - **Refer** to a licensed healthcare professional;
  - **Return** to school and then to sport.

## MARCH 2019

Canada adopts a new national concussion strategy specifically for high-performance athletes and para-athletes. The guidelines build on the existing framework set out in the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport.

### FOCUSING ON PREVENTION

## JUNE 2019

June 2019: Up to this point, much of the discussion has been focused on concussion management—what to do when a suspected concussion occurs. The Canadian Concussion Prevention Workshop helped advance the conversation. More than 80 decision makers and technical directors including 26 national, 12 multi-sport and nine community sport organizations joined in to share and learn various strategies focused on prevention.

### SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

## FEBRUARY 2021

With new research emerging, the sport community came together virtually to share new learnings, strategies, and knowledge from the sector. The 2021 Canadian Concussion in Sport Virtual Symposium explored new data and inspired



A HEALTHY BRAIN  
IS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN ANY MEDAL  
& ANY SPORT

Danielle Lappage,  
two-time Olympian and 10-time  
National Champion, wrestling

sport organizations from all levels – national, provincial/territorial and community – to take further action on concussion management and prevention in sport.

## JUNE 2021

The updated Concussion in Sport Research Hub is live, including the latest tools, protocols, policies, research, as well as success stories from athletes and organizations.



## CASE STUDIES

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of organizations across Canada and the harmonized guidelines, Canadian athletes are better protected from the long-term risks of concussions than ever before. Here are a few of the success stories from sport organizations in Canada:

### RUGBY ONTARIO



To protect players' safety and wellbeing, Rugby Ontario has implemented an innovative system of concussion management known as the Blue Card. This program has elevated the safety of the sport of rugby in many ways and has introduced a formal structure to the process of concussion prevention & management.

As part of this process, a player of any age group who is suspected to have a concussion on the playing field is issued a Blue Card by the match official. Once a player receives a Blue Card, they are required to leave the field and are not permitted to return in the same match. Furthermore, the official submits a "Blue Card Report" to the governing bodies, thereby initiating a process of ensuring the player's return to play follows all proper protocols. Players who have been issued this card cannot return to play until they have

(a) obtained a written medical clearance, (b) met the World Rugby Return to Play Protocols requirements, and (c) obtained a written clearance from Rugby Ontario. By following this system, Rugby Ontario ensures that any further accumulation of head trauma can be prevented before it happens.

[Learn more](#)

### BOCCIA CANADA



Boccia Canada has dedicated a substantial amount of time and resources to studying sport concussions and its impact on athletes' safety and wellbeing. To do so, the organization partnered up with Dr. Francois Prince - and his team in the Faculty of Medicine at University of Montreal - to explore the prevalence of concussions in Boccia and guide the design of appropriate treatment systems. As a result of this partnership, the two parties were able to develop a sport-specific concussion policy, propose a return-to-play protocol, and manage pre-existing brain injuries in athletes.

[Learn more](#)



Photo credit @Canadian Paralympic Committee/  
Scott Grant

## FREESTYLE CANADA



The dangerous nature of the sport, combined with athletes' courage to push the limits of performance, pose a substantial risk for concussions in the sport of freestyle skiing. However, Freestyle Canada has been proactive by getting ahead of injuries before they occur. Not only has the organization created its own training module for coaches and officials, but it has also invested in a variety of resources to combat head trauma. Such investments include airbags to soften the landing of athletes performing tricks, softer helmets that cushion the blow in case of contact, as well as courses that enhance the awareness and mindfulness of athletes to avoid injuries before they even occur.

[Learn more](#)

## SKATE CANADA



Effective concussion management can be achieved through many mechanisms, such as altering the rules of competition to make the sport safer. This is one of the ways Skate Canada has tackled concussion risk in figure skating. Under the newly implemented rules, the official has the authority to stop the program if they suspect the athlete has sustained a head injury. The official then may instruct the athlete to be assessed for concussion by a qualified medical examiner. Should the athlete be cleared, the official can continue the program with no point deduction to the skater's score.



IF WE KNOW ONE THING ABOUT CONCUSSIONS, IT'S THAT THERE'S STILL SO MUCH TO LEARN. WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO SHARE AND ENSURE THAT INFORMATION IS GETTING OUT THERE TO PARENTS AND ATHLETES. ALTHOUGH WE ARE MAKING GREAT PROGRESS ON PREVENTION, I KNOW THAT WE CAN DO BETTER."

The hon. Adam van Koeverden,  
Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister  
of Heritage and Sport

These rule changes have made athletes and coaches, who were inclined to downplay the severity of head injuries in fear of losing points in competition, feel more comfortable and safer in putting their health first; thereby preventing any avoidable accumulation of head injury that may have resulted otherwise.

[Learn more](#)

Additional resources and success stories can be accessed at [sirc.ca/concussion](https://sirc.ca/concussion).



## PART 2:

# ADDRESSING MALTREATMENT

## Timeline of Progress

### Development of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)

For the first time in Canada, the national sport sector and leading experts from across the country have worked together to develop a Code to protect participants against maltreatment. The UCCMS and its development process will provide a model for other

countries and organizations, and demonstrate leadership, within Canada and internationally, to prevent and address maltreatment.

### Support for a Universal Code of Conduct

#### FEBRUARY 2019

At their February 2019 meeting at the Canada Winter Games in Red Deer AB, federal-provincial territorial sport ministers signed the Red Deer Declaration, committing to the elimination of abuse, discrimination and harassment in sport.

#### MARCH - MAY 2019

The Coaching Association of Canada hosted a series of Safe Sport Summits in every province and territory, carried out with financial support from Sport Canada and conducted in partnership with Provincial/Territorial Coaching Representatives and the Canadian Sport Institutes.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SAFE SPORT

- ▶ Focuses on the prevention of physical, psychological, and social harms (e.g., concussions; physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; neglect, discrimination, bullying, and harassment).
- ▶ Extends beyond the prevention of harm to include the promotion of rights- and values-based sport—sport that is inclusive, welcoming and fulfilling for all.
- ▶ Applies to all stakeholders in sport: athletes, coaches, sport administrators, officials, support staff, and others.
- ▶ Attends to healthy, evidence-based approaches to achieving performance outcomes.

Source: SIRCuit article by Gretchen Kerr, April 2021



The hon. Kirsty Duncan, former Minister of Science and Sport

- ▶ The series culminated with a two-day National summit that shared insight from provincial/territorial discussion and built consensus on the need for a Universal Code of Conduct to stop abuse in sport.
- ▶ Discussion at the Summits was complemented by a study of the prevalence of maltreatment among current and former national team athletes led by Gretchen Kerr at the University of Toronto in collaboration with AthletesCAN and supported by the federal government.



► The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) was asked by Sport Canada to draft key components of a Universal Code of Conduct, including a set of guiding principles, definitions of misconduct, defined prohibited behaviours including all forms of abuse (sexual, physical, and psychological), and related sanctions for misconduct. CCES then partnered with SIRC to lead the consultation and engagement process.

#### SEPTEMBER 2019

At the end of September 2019, the national sport community was invited to review version 4.0 of the Code and indicate their support. Results indicated unanimous support in principle for the components of the Code of Conduct.

#### DECEMBER 2019

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) v. 5.1 was submitted to and accepted by the Government of Canada, who recognized it as a strong, evidence informed, foundational document. For the first time in Canada, the national sport sector and leading experts from across the country worked together to develop a Code to protect participants against

maltreatment. The Code and its development process will provide a model for other countries and organizations, and demonstrate leadership, within Canada and internationally, to prevent and address maltreatment. The UCCMS can be found at [www.sirc.ca/safesport](http://www.sirc.ca/safesport).

#### APRIL 1, 2021

The Government of Canada mandates integration of the UCCMS into federally funded national sport organization policies and procedures by April 1, 2021.


#### JULY 2021

The Government of Canada announced that the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) has been selected to establish and deliver a new Independent Safe Sport Mechanism.

## National Safe Sport Training Launched

#### APRIL 2020

The Coaching Association of Canada launches free online Safe Sport Training to help all participants in national sport organizations recognize maltreatment in sport and take



**ENGAGING (ATHLETES) AND TREATING THEM AS THE IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS THAT THEY ARE WILL NOT ONLY BE GOOD FOR THE ATHLETES BUT ALSO GOOD FOR THE VIABILITY AND THE LONG-TERM LONGEVITY OF SPORT.**

informed action to address it. The training is designed to meet the needs of national-level sport organizations, but its principles apply at any level of sport. Participants in the training learn about three primary areas:

- Acknowledgement that everyone has a role to play in keeping sport safe, how the misuse of power leads to maltreatment, and the principles of the Universal Code of Conduct.
- Awareness of the various types of maltreatment, the conditions that enable them, and how to recognize signs that they may be happening.
- Action to take if maltreatment is suspected, and how to create a culture that protects all participants.



## Implementing the Code

Sport Canada has made the inclusion of the UCCMS into organizational policies and procedures of federally funded sport organizations by April 1, 2021, a condition of funding. The following case studies representing some of those organizations' growing efforts in optimizing the sport environment for all.

### GYMNASTICS CANADA

In efforts to being among the Safe Sport and inclusion leaders, Gymnastics Canada has developed an extensive framework that guides the formulation, interpretation, and application of its Safe Sport practices. At its core,

Gymnastic Canada's approach prioritizes current – and past – individuals' well-being above all.

This framework is founded on three major pillars:

- ▶ **Policy** – principles that guide behavior, decision-making, and accountability of individuals associated with the organization.
- ▶ **Education** – Knowledge enhancement activities that develop reasoning and judgement, and create a positive environment.
- ▶ **Advocacy** – Actions to raise awareness and inspire associated organizations to commit to the Safe Sport vision.

These pillars are reflected in continuous conversations and behaviors, centered around abuse prevention & response, equity & inclusion, health & wellness, and risk management.

View [Gymnastics Canada's Safe Sport hub](#).

### SWIMMING CANADA

Swimming Canada recognizes that the responsibility of protecting the wellbeing of athletes – particularly, children – falls on each and every individual involved in the swimming community. To that extent, the organization carries out its mission in accordance with the following Safe Sport Operational Statement:

*The Swimming Canada Safe Sport program will focus on three key areas: education, prevention and response, all of which will be supported by strong governance, policies and procedures. The goal is to ensure that all members and registrants of Swimming Canada, at all levels, have the resources to provide and access a fun, healthy, inclusive and safe environment.*





THERE'S A SHIFT HAPPENING, FOR SURE,  
AND YOU CAN SEE IT AROUND KEY DECISIONS.  
AS ATHLETES, WE'RE BEING TAKEN MORE  
SERIOUSLY AND SENIOR LEADERS ARE  
ASKING FOR OUR OPINIONS – NOT BECAUSE  
THEY FEEL THEY HAVE TO CHECK A BOX, BUT  
BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WE HAVE SOMETHING  
IMPORTANT TO BRING TO THE TABLE.

**Seyi Smith**, former Chair of the COC's Athletes' Commission, and two-time Olympian in athletics (London 2012) and bobsleigh (PyeongChang 2018)

To help guide the execution of the aforementioned statement, Swimming Canada has developed a thorough framework, which explicitly details the steps needed to promote a safe and positive swimming environment.

View [Swimming Canada's Safe Sport hub](#).

maltreatment can also occur from people not associated with the athlete via social media. Thus, the organization has worked diligently to present contemporary and comprehensive policies aimed at educating, training, and managing allegations of abuse.

View [Tennis Canada's Safe Sport hub](#).

## SOFTBALL CANADA

To ensure Safe Sport practices are being followed to the highest standards, Softball Canada, in addition to its guiding framework, has developed an independent review in partnership with Sport Law and Strategy Group (SLSG). Subsequently, the organization adopted an updated Safe Sport Policy Suite, containing 12 different policies related to maltreatment and abuse. Topics that fall under this suite include, but are not limited to, social media behaviors, whistleblower process, dispute resolution procedure, screening policy, and more.

View [Softball Canada's Safe Sport hub](#).

## TENNIS CANADA

Promoting strength, resilience, and self-confidence, while protecting athletes' holistic wellbeing is the essence of Tennis Canada's Safe Sport mission. In addition to possible maltreatment from people around athletes (trainers, other athletes, etc.), Tennis Canada recognizes that in the modern world, athlete





## Supporting Resources

### UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS MALTREATMENT IN SPORT, V5.1 (2019)



The UCCMS document provides the foundation upon which National Sport Organizations (NSOs), Multisport Service Organizations (MSOs), and Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute (COPSI), have built their coordinated strategy to prevent and address maltreatment across all levels of the Canadian Sport system. It is the result of a rigorous consultation process with experts within the sport system, as well as external subject matter experts.

### SAFE SPORT TRAINING – COACHING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA



This valuable training module – created by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) – helps all individuals involved in sport to recognize, identify, and prevent the occurrence of maltreatment in sport.

### CANADIAN SPORT HELPLINE – 1-888-83SPORT (77678)



This webpage, and associated helpline, were created for the purpose of offering a safe space for victims and witnesses of maltreatment in sport, and enables them to share their concerns and receive advice on next steps.

### PREVALENCE OF MALTREATMENT AMONG CURRENT AND FORMER NATIONAL TEAM ATHLETES (2019)



Prevalence of Maltreatment Among Current and Former National Team Athletes  
Gretchen Kerr, PhD, Erin Wilton, B.Sc., and Ashley Stelling, PhD  
University of Toronto

This study, conducted by researchers from University of Toronto in partnership with AthletesCAN, assessed the prevalence of numerous forms of maltreatment reported by current and retired National Team members. In addition to providing a snapshot of the current state of athletes' experiences, it also provides a baseline on which future progress against maltreatment in sport can be measured.

### MALTREATMENT IN CANADA: A FOCUS ON PARA ATHLETES



Maltreatment in Canada: A Focus on Para-Athletes  
Prepared for: The Canadian Paralympic Committee  
Gretchen Kerr, PhD, Erin Wilton, PhD, & Ashley Stelling, PhD  
In Partnership with: AthletesCAN

This study, conducted by researchers from University of Toronto in partnership with AthletesCAN, investigates Para Athletes' experiences of maltreatment throughout their sports journey, and offers unique insights on how maltreatment issues occur in Para Sport.

### SAFE SPORT HUB



This extensive resource hub, developed by SIRC, gives sport organizations access to key background & research; best in class policies & practices; and tools & resources for promoting safety in sport.

### SIRCUIT ARTICLE



Next Steps in the Safe Sport Journey: From Prevention of Harm to Optimizing Experiences, by Gretchen Kerr, University of Toronto (April, 2021)

**Additional resources and success stories can be accessed at [sirc.ca/safesport](https://sirc.ca/safesport).**