

Public Statement from Gymnastics Canada and our Member Associations

Acknowledgement of our collective responsibility to ensure and advance a safe and positive sport environment free of maltreatment

OTTAWA, ON (August 19, 2020) -- Gymnastics Canada (GymCan), and our provincial and territorial member associations, recognize, value, and take pride in the special responsibility we have to create and maintain a safe and inclusive developmental and competitive environment for our over 350,000 participants who engage annually with the 700 gymnastics clubs across Canada.

Gymnastics is widely recognized as a sport that contributes to physical, psychological, and social health and development, and while we collectively believe in the positive role our sport can play in the development of young people, we must also acknowledge the troubling stories of maltreatment emerging worldwide from current and former participants across all levels and disciplines of the sport, and the significant, detrimental, and long-term impacts of these experiences.

First and foremost, we wish to recognize the immense courage of these participants from across the globe in sharing their voices and speaking out about their difficult experiences in gymnastics. These powerful personal stories illuminate the undue hardship faced by some participants and call us to continue our efforts to ensure and maintain a sport environment free of maltreatment. We encourage all participants to continue using their voice and we are committed to giving you our full attention and support.

In recent years, GymCan and its member associations have made significant strides to advance Safe Sport, including the development of an aligned Safe Sport strategy aimed at the prevention of maltreatment through national, provincial, and club-level Safe Sport policy development, enhanced education and advocacy measures, and neutral, fair, and expert-led policy compliance.

These measures reflect the sensitive environment we operate in and strive to ensure that risk factors such as power imbalances between participants and adults in a position of authority and

trust are minimized, screening is improved, accountability for misconduct regardless of position or status is enhanced, participant well-being is promoted, and safe spaces for concerns to be shared are created.

Our safe sport strategy is supported by a robust National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), increased access to educational training focused on maltreatment (i.e., Safe Sport Training, Commit to Kids for Coaches, Respect in Sport), and the continued commitment of coaches, integrated support staff, and sport leaders to elevate their knowledge and to implement healthy, safe, and positive practices in their work.

Further, we are resolute in our ongoing advocacy for the development of a neutral, independent body to address safe sport issues across all sports in Canada.

The Canadian gymnastics community has come a long way, and there is still work to do. We must maintain our focus, commitment, and drive to influence national and international system-wide change. We strive daily to be better in our collective duty of care and continue to build towards and embrace a culture that puts every participants overall well-being first, champions the rights of all participants, creates joyful experiences, and encourages achievement of personal goals in a developmentally-appropriate, ethical, inclusive, and constructive manner.

If you are a Canadian athlete or adult in a position of trust, please know there are many services available to support you. If you wish to share your experiences confidentially with a neutral party, please do not hesitate to access the Canadian Sport Helpline:

- By e-mail: info@abuse-free-sport.ca;
- Toll-free telephone at 1-888-83SPORT;
- or at <http://www.abuse-free-sport.ca>.

If you wish to share your experiences and/or submit a formal complaint to Gymnastics Canada or a provincial/territorial member association, please visit: <http://gymcan.org/programs/safe-sport/reporting> for more information.

For all other information, including policies, resources, and support services related to the GymCan Safe Sport program, please visit: <http://gymcan.org/programs/safe-sport/overview>.

