



INTERNATIONAL ORIENTEERING FEDERATION

IOF Policy on Preventing Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Orienteering

Preventing Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Orienteering

Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are completely incompatible with the values of orienteering and there is zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment irrespective of gender, ethnic background, religious faith, sexual orientation and disability in our sport.

By sexual harassment we mean unwelcome sexual attention that is offensive to the **subject** of such attention. By sexual abuse we mean to coerce any person or persons into a sexual relationship the person does not want, is not sufficiently mature to consent to, or feels placed under unreasonable pressure to consent to.

To develop tolerance and understanding and to establish recognition of people's equality in order to avoid discrimination, harassment and bullying are important goals within the IOF. Everyone within orienteering should seek to establish secure settings and a secure atmosphere for children, youth and adults alike. Adults must respect the athlete's personal space and never overstep the limits for acceptable behaviour.

The following guidelines apply within IOF:

1. Treat everyone with respect, and refrain from all forms of communication, action or behaviour that may be perceived as offensive.
2. Avoid any non-consented or not agreed body contact other than that necessary in a medical or other emergency situation.
3. Avoid all types of verbal intimacy that may be perceived as sexually charged.
4. Avoid expressions, jokes and opinions that relate to the athlete's gender or sexual orientation.
5. Seek to have all sexes represented in the support network.
6. Show respect for the athletes', coaches' and leaders' private life.
7. Do not offer any form of reward with the purpose of demanding or anticipating sexual services in return.
8. Take action and give notice if a breach of these guidelines is experienced.
9. Federations are encouraged to appoint their own welfare officer as a safe, confidential contact.

The support network (coaches, managers, representatives, functionaries, judges, parents etc.) have the main responsibility for letting these guidelines be known in their sports environment, and that they are adhered to.

General background

Sustainable, Inclusive and Ethical are the core values of orienteering. Living our values in practice means that children, youngsters and adults are happy and can feel safe in their orienteering activity. The IOF seeks “to develop tolerance, understanding and to establish recognition of people’s equality in order to avoid discrimination, harassment and bullying”.

Zero tolerance requires that sexual harassment and sexual abuse must not take place. Therefore, the whole orienteering community within the auspices of the IOF have a responsibility to hinder sexual harassment and sexual abuse. It is a prerequisite that both the employees and volunteers within our sport follow the guidelines regarding sexual harassment and abuse, and that suspicion of sexual harassment and abuse is notified and/or dealt with if a situation should occur.

Everyone within our sport has a responsibility to identify and counter harassment and abuse and to develop a sports culture characterised by respect and safety. Individuals in orienteering, as elsewhere in society, may have different opinions as to what harassment and abuse constitute, and how it can be countered. This is especially so because to show emotion, often in the form of physical body contact, when someone wins or loses, is part of sports behaviour. The same applies to body contact when learning new movements and techniques.

It is therefore important to be open regarding the issue and to discuss and agree between the parties involved on “where the limits” should be for what is termed acceptable behaviour, as well as to develop guidelines to prevent discrimination, harassment, bullying and abuse.

What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual abuse?

Harassment in general

A common denominator for harassment is that the behaviour is unwanted, offensive, threatening or annoying for the person subjected to it. Annoying or threatening behaviour may therefore be words or actions that make the person exposed to them feel offended, scared or in other ways upset. This means that such experiences are irrespective of whether the person responsible for the harassment does it on purpose or not. This is important because both women and men may have varying perception of what is unwanted or offensive. IOC's guidelines ban harassment as do various national legislations (typically laws covering gender equality, anti-discrimination and working environment.)

IOF has a responsibility to prevent and seek to preclude harassment from occurring within orienteering.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment may be verbal, non-verbal and physical. Verbal sexual harassment may be unwanted intimate questions relating to body, clothes or one’s private life, “jokes” with a sexual

innuendo, and proposals or demands for sexual services or sexual relationships. These may also be in the form of unwanted telephone calls, text messages or letters with a sexual content. This includes posting of comment or images on any social media.

Non-verbal harassment may be for instance staring, showing of pictures or objects with sexual allusions. Physical harassment is for instance unwanted or unnecessary physical contact of a sexual nature, such as “pinching”, pressing oneself onto the body of others or attempting to kiss or caress another person. The common denominator for all types of sexual harassment is that they are felt as offensive for the individual person’s integrity.

Sexual abuse

Abuse implies that a person offends another person’s rights. By sexual abuse we mean to trick or coerce a person into a sexual act the person does not want or is not sufficiently mature to consent to. Such abuse may be punished in accordance with the applicable criminal code, which also defines sexual abuse in varying stages of seriousness.

Grooming/persuasion

Grooming/persuasion is a tool the abuser may employ to gain a position from where to carry out the abuse. This may continue for years, without the person who is object of the attention being aware that an ever-stronger bond is being tied between her/him and the “abuser”, until she/he is “caught” in a kind of net and unable to withstand the abuser’s sexual wishes. Research ¹ has shown that this especially occurs in a relationship between young athletes and coaches who are a bit older, or other persons the athletes trust and who have built up a relationship with the athlete that may be compared to a child/parent relationship. These guidelines are primarily concerned with sexual harassment, but because the transition between sexual harassment and abuse is rather fluid, all measures that include prevention of sexual harassment will also be able to counter sexual abuse that are subject to the applicable criminal code.

Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse

An open, sound and safe sporting environment will best serve as a protection against harassment, and also against false accusations. But it may be difficult to put this in place if knowledge is lacking as to what constitutes harassment and which consequences it may have both for athlete, club and associations. Understanding of harassment and sexual abuse should therefore be

¹ Brackenridge, c. H. (1997) “He owned me basically”: women’s experience of sexual abuse in sport, *international review for the sociology of sport*, 32(2), 115-130.

included in the education of all managers, coaches and active athletes.

A condition for maintaining and strengthening a sound sporting environment is that the management agrees on what constitutes a sound environment. A discussion as to which attitudes and values should characterise a club is therefore important. This concerns questions on how to interact with one another, which expectations and requirements one places on parents, coaches and managers, how the club should be managed, etc.

IOFs guidelines should be referred to in employment contracts for coaches and managers if national guidelines do not exist. The boundaries for acceptable behaviour should thus be apparent from the ethical guidelines, and it is important that this is discussed openly in the board, the support network and with the active athletes.

The management, with the support network play an important role in the development of the athlete, either at the level of club or association. They are the ones responsible for creating safety and preparing the conditions for health and welfare, and for the development of the athlete's independence. Athletes should be aware of which boundaries are acceptable to them and be able to make others aware of what their boundaries are, and last but not least, be able to adhere to the limits and speak out when someone oversteps them (negotiation). This is difficult for children and young people, but also for young adults if they do not find themselves in a secure environment. This is especially the case if a respected adult person, for instance the coach, is the one committing the violation. Adults must therefore respect the athlete's personal space and never overstep the limits for acceptable behaviour

What is the procedure when sexual harassment and sexual abuse occur?

If you are the object of sexual harassment or sexual abuse

- Get in touch/seek help from someone you trust.
- Contact the management (welfare officer, if appointed) of the club, Federation or the IOF.

If you have a suspicion of sexual abuse or sexual harassment

To achieve a better sports environment and prevent sexual harassment and abuse it is important that the person who is the object of this is able to raise the matter. It is therefore important to emphasise that if anyone within the sports environment has a suspicion of sexual harassment or sexual abuse, they should give notice of this, either as a parent, part of the support network or athlete



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