

Physical Contact with QAS Supported Athletes

Physical contact and high performance sport

Appropriate physical contact with QAS supported athletes is a normal and required part of high-performance sport through varying support services (medical, physio, massage, strength and conditioning etc). Therefore, extra precautions are required to ensure athletes feel safe.

This may seem subjective, and the boundaries around physical contact may differ from person to person, however these guidelines should provide direction to ensure your own behaviour is appropriate and the behaviours and actions you observe in others are too.

Play by the Rules define appropriate and inappropriate physical contact as:

Physical contact is appropriate if it:

-  is used to assist in skill development
-  is required for the athlete's safety and/or health
-  occurs with the athlete's understanding and permission
-  is for the athlete's benefit, not adult gratification
-  occurs in an open environment.

DEFINITIONS

-  **Child:** a person under the age of 12
-  **Young Person:** a person aged between 13-18
-  **Athlete:** any QAS supported athlete (any age / any category)
-  **Safeguarding:** having active measures in place to *prevent* institutional harm and abuse of athletes and *respond* to any safety concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm and abuse of any athlete.
-  **QAS Staff or Contractor:** any person engaged by the QAS

How do I know what is ok and what is not ok?

If you are still unsure, ask yourself the following questions to help navigate you in good practice when interacting with QAS supported athletes. If you answer no to any of the following questions you must reassess your actions.

- Is it **relevant** to the athlete's sport and my **role**?
- Do I have their consent?
- Is the athlete **aware** of what I am doing, and why? Could they explain it clearly to someone else?
- Is the athlete showing any signs of **distress** or **discomfort**? If so, stop.
- Would I do this if **another adult** or **professional** was watching?



BEHAVIOUR OR CONTACT THAT IS PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE

Physical contact is inappropriate if it:

- ✘ is aggressive, dangerous or causes physical harm or injury
- ✘ involves wrestling, sparring, pushing and shoving, even if intended as fun
- ✘ makes an athlete feel threatened or uncomfortable.

Physical abuse

- ✘ Physical abuse includes any deliberate and unwelcome act – such as punching, beating, kicking – that causes physical trauma or injury to a QAS supported athlete.
- ✘ Such acts can also consist of forced or inappropriate physical activity (e.g., age-, or physique- inappropriate training loads; when injured or in pain), forced alcohol or drug consumption, or forced doping practices.
- ✘ Additionally, an athlete does not need to be physically hurt for these behaviours to be harmful. These behaviours can be observed as aggressive, controlling, and an unreasonable exertion of power, resulting in feelings of shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and fear and are not acceptable toward athletes.



STRATEGY: Whenever you have physical contact with an athlete ask yourself, would I be ok if someone else interacted this way with my own child? This is the ‘my own child’ rule.

BEHAVIOUR OR CONTACT THAT IS OF A SEXUAL NATURE

Inappropriate contact behaviours of a sexual nature include, but are not limited to:

- sexual intercourse
- sexual penetration
- kissing
- touching of the genital, buttocks or breast areas or
- inappropriate and unnecessary physical touching of any kind.

Inappropriate non-contact behaviours of a sexual nature include but are not limited to:

- flirting
- sexual innuendo
- inappropriate communication online or in person
- nudity
- exposure to pornography or
- requests to observe sexual acts.

Sexual harassment

“Sexual harassment” means any verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature toward a QAS supported athlete, which is unwelcome, or where consent is coerced, manipulated or cannot be given. Sexual harassment can take the form of sexual abuse.



Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, or a person in authority (i.e. older, or younger but more physically or intellectually developed) involves a QAS supported athlete in any sexual activity.

A child cannot provide consent, therefore even if 'consent' is given, it still constitutes sexual abuse. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority, or position over the child for their own benefit.

It can include making sexual comments to a child, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse with a child.

Intimate relationships

In your role, you will likely hold a position of power and authority over the QAS supported athletes that you work with.

Under no circumstances are you, as a person in a position of authority, to engage in an intimate relationship or any behaviour of a sexual nature with an athlete, even if they are above the age of consent, while working for or with the QAS.

Reporting concerns

If you have concerns about the safety of an athlete, someone's behaviour, or have seen or heard something that just doesn't feel right, you can REPORT it to the QAS. We will take it seriously.

You can:

-  Speak directly with your Line Manager, our messaging to staff is your Line Manager or the CEO.
-  Send an email to QAS.Safeguarding@dtis.qld.gov.au
-  Complete the [QAS Safeguarding Report Form](#) online or via the QR Code.



As always if anyone is in immediate danger contact the police on 000.

For external reporting or additional support:

- Sport Integrity Australia (SIA):
Hotline 1300 027 232
- AIS Be Heard:
Hotline 1800 565 965