



Forza Soccer Academy Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Children and Adolescents

Note: This document is not exhaustive and should not replace legal consultation. It provides a framework for adults to exercise common sense and good judgment when interacting with children in sports. In this document, "coach or adult" refers to any person working, volunteering, or interacting with children in sport. "Children" refers to anyone registered as a player or involved in Forza Soccer Academy programming, excluding parents.

Introduction

Sport offers children and adolescents valuable experiences that foster growth and development. Positive experiences are rooted in wholesome relationships between coaches and athletes, within safe environments where adult behavior is held to a high standard of accountability. The purpose of these guidelines is to set clear expectations and understanding for adults interacting with children/adolescents in sports, creating a safe space for those who wish to report misconduct towards children.

Coach and Athlete Relationships

When taking on the role of a coach, you also assume a position of trust from the athlete. This trust is established through professional boundaries inherent in the coach-athlete relationship. If trust is broken, the foundation of this professional relationship is compromised. The coach-athlete relationship involves a power balance, where athletes are taught to respect and listen to their coaches, relying on them for knowledge and training to improve their skills and development in their chosen sport. The responsibility of maintaining a professional relationship with appropriate boundaries always lies with the adult.



Age of Protection in Canada

The age of protection (also called the age of consent) is the age at which a young person can legally consent to sexual activity. The age of protection in Canada is generally 16 years old, but the *Criminal Code* increases that age to 18 in the context of certain relationships. If the child is:

Under 12 years old	No person can engage in sexual activity with the child under any circumstance.
12 or 13 years old	The age difference <u>must</u> be LESS THAN 2 years AND the relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*
14 or 15 years old	The age difference <u>must</u> be LESS THAN 5 years AND the relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*
16 or 17 years old	The relative positions of the parties <u>must</u> be such that a child is able to give consent.*

* For all children aged 12-17: If the other person is in a position of trust or authority over the child (e.g., a coach, teacher, etc.), the child is dependent on the other person or the relationship is exploitative of the child, the child is NOT able to give consent, making sexual activity in the context of such relationships illegal. In these situations, only a person aged 18 or older is capable of consent. The increased age takes into account the inherent vulnerability of the child and is meant to protect the child in situations that involve a power or other imbalance.

This chart is adopted from the Commit to Kids Program, Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Children in Sport published by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection

Roles of Parents and Coaches

If a coach-athlete relationship appears to be compromised, it can be challenging to process and address the situation. However, reporting any suspected inappropriate behavior creates accountability and allows for appropriate actions to be taken to restore and re-establish expectations. Regular age-appropriate discussions about personal safety and boundaries should be conducted by parents and coaches. Some examples of topics to discuss include qualities and attributes of a healthy relationship, the importance of personal boundaries, and whom to approach for help.

For more information on these topics, visit: kidsintheknow.ca/safetysheets. If there are concerns about sexual images that have been shared, please visit: Cybertip.ca. For further information on reporting inappropriate conduct and child sexual abuse, visit: commit2kids.ca/safesport.

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior

Individuals working or volunteering in sports are expected to exemplify behavior that builds public confidence and fosters healthy relationships with children and families. The examples provided below are not exhaustive but illustrative.

Examples of appropriate behavior in coach-athlete relationships:

- Use respectful language, tone, and attitude towards others.
- Respect personal, emotional, and physical boundaries.
- Respond to children's needs rather than the adult's needs.
- Interact with children in a manner that maintains reasonable boundaries, as observed by a reasonable onlooker.
- Keep practices and games open to observation by parents.
- Maintain transparent and accountable communication with children/adolescents, including electronic communication.

Examples of inappropriate behavior in coach-athlete relationships:

- Use inappropriate or disrespectful language.
- Humiliate or intimidate children/adolescents.
- Engage in improper touching or physical contact with children/adolescents (e.g., massaging, stroking, caressing, roughhousing, tickling).
- Divulge or share overly personal information with a child.
- Ask or tell children/adolescents to keep secrets.
- Engage in personal electronic communication with children/adolescents that is not directly tied to coaching duties.
- Engage in sexual or flirtatious communication.
- Take pictures with personal devices or in change rooms.

Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries: Standards of Measure

All interactions and activities with children/adolescents, including electronic communication, should adhere to the following principles:

- Be accountable.
- Be responsive to meeting the child's needs.
- Be related to coaching/volunteer duties.
- Be transparent.

These guidelines are designed to ensure the well-being and safety of all children and adolescents involved in our soccer academy. We expect all adults to uphold these standards and create a positive and supportive environment for young athletes to thrive.