



# A CALL TO ACTION

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FOR YOUTH PROTECTION IN COLLEGE AND  
UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC PROGRAMS



September 2022



## STATEMENT OF NEED and SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

*Just like traditional summer camps, institutions of higher education are committed to providing fun, safe, high-quality experiences for youth in a campus setting that encourages a sense of community and in which all participants are treated with dignity and respect. Camps on campus take advantage of university expertise to provide youth with positive experiences that increase knowledge and skills and develop connections to specific disciplines—whether they are educational, recreational, or athletic. The end result is lasting changes that positively impact the youth participants while also instilling a lifelong desire for learning (Riddle et al., 2016).*

Millions of youth under the age of 18 participate in college- and university-run or affiliated camps and other programs each year, including, among many others, camps, community service projects, youth clubs, and precollege visits by prospective students. Looking specifically at athletics departments, one finds many examples. To name but a few, consider: student-athletes' mentoring of youth; coaches' camps and clinics; booster clubs for youngsters; community use of pools, rinks, fields, and locker rooms; facility rentals to outside sport camps; and sanctioned events hosted by sport national governing bodies on college campuses.

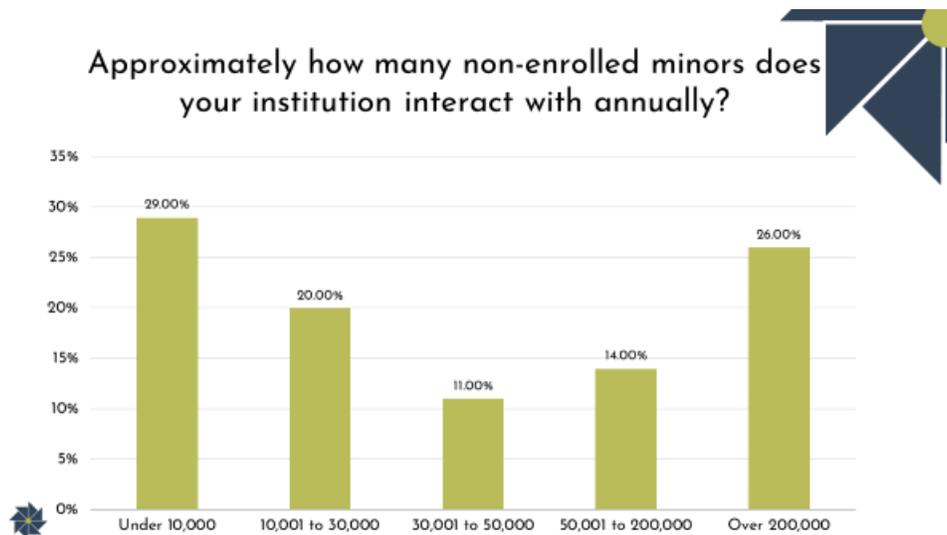
College and university athletics staff and student athletes have regular contact with hundreds of thousands of children and teens. And while these experiences can instill a sense of confidence in participants; improve social-emotional skills critical to resiliency, happiness, and success in adulthood; and grow healthy friendships among peers, they also leave children and youth vulnerable to negligent supervision; injuries; and mental, physical, and sexual abuse if hosting institutions do not follow and consistently maintain strict safety standards.

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The leadership would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals to the development of this report: Katie Hanna (SafeSport), Brian Curtin (SafeSport), Marcia Ellett (American Camp Association), and Ruthi Hernandez (American Camp Association).

A large university may have more than 100,000 youth participating in sports camps alone. In 2022, the Higher Educational Protection Network (HEPNet) represented over 125 institutions serving over 6 million children and youth. Over 70% of respondents to their 2022 Salary Survey reported that their institution serves over 10,000 minors annually. The breakdown was as follows:

## Numbers of Minors Served Annually



The sheer number of youth being served through activities and programs in higher education represents a significant undertaking in promoting their safety. Even when these policies are in place, the biggest challenge is often compliance, with lack of communication, accountability, awareness, and adequate resources all presenting hurdles to running safe and effective programs. Colleges and universities themselves recognize that their current policies are often insufficient. In fact, less than 50 percent of respondents to HEPNet's November 2021 Operational Survey felt their institutions' current policies/efforts were adequate.

Inconsistent policies and standards compound the issue. In this new and emerging field of youth protection on college campuses, it is important for the NCAA to lead the way on campuses and join leaders in youth serving organizations to support industry standards and best practices.

## THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION

Research tells us that one in four girls and one in six boys will be the victim of sexual abuse before they reach age 18.<sup>2</sup> Institutions of higher education providing space for and hosting camps and other youth programming should be aware of these statistics and know that the environments they provide can either help or hinder the effort to reduce these sad numbers. There are legal repercussions for those colleges and universities that do not safeguard youth/students in their care.

According to research published in the *Journal of Youth Development*, "There is evidence that some adults in organized programs act in ways that promote inappropriate behavior or have a negative influence on young people's sense of self and faith in others" (Dworkin & Larson, 2007). This is a severe understatement when it comes to the largest sexual abuse case in sports history.

In September 2016, the news of the sexual abuse perpetrated by Larry Nassar within USA Gymnastics and at Michigan State University (MSU) broke. National team doctor Larry Nassar, who also ran a clinic and gymnastics club at Michigan State University where he worked as an osteopathic physician, had sexually abused female athletes—many of whom were minors at the time. The U.S. Department of Education fined MSU \$4.5 million for a failure to protect students from abuse<sup>3</sup>, and MSU reached a \$500 million settlement with abuse survivors.<sup>4</sup> Additional lawsuits were also filed against USA Gymnastics and the FBI.

Unfortunately, Michigan State University is not alone in its failure to protect minors or offer appropriate support to abuse victims. From Pennsylvania State University to Ohio State University and beyond, there are countless examples<sup>5</sup> of sexual abuse perpetrated by individuals employed or associated with a university sport program serving youth and adults. [This historical chart](#) shows selected claims of child abuse, child neglect, and child

<sup>2</sup> Finkelhor, D., Hotelling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors. *Child abuse & neglect*, 14(1), 19-28.

<sup>3</sup> [Michigan State fined \\$4.5M by feds for 'complete failure' in protecting students from Larry Nassar \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Michigan State University Reaches \\$500 Million Settlement With Nassar Abuse Victims : The Two-Way : NPR](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.higheredprotection.org/assets/docs/Copy%2Bof%2B2014.09.29%2BAbuser-Molester%2BChart.pdf>

pornography involving people associated with American colleges and universities. This chart represents only a sliver of these countless examples because it has not been updated since 2014 as HEPNet now provides members with a monthly update.

We also know that some higher education campuses have historically failed to protect or offer appropriate support to abuse victims. A Know Your IX survey<sup>6</sup> of more than 100 student survivors of sexual violence who reported the crimes to their schools found that those schools often did not fulfill their obligations under Title IX and, sadly, 39 percent of those individuals who reported sexual violence to their institutions “experienced a substantial disruption in their educations.”

In a recent athlete survey published by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, more than half of athlete participants who indicated having unwanted sexual experience said that some or all of those experiences happened when they were under 18.<sup>7</sup>

When Congress passed the landmark 2018 law, *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act*, it designated the U.S. Center for SafeSport as the national safe sport organization for those organizations under its jurisdiction and required certain amateur sport organizations (those within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement and those whose programs participate in interstate or international travel) to follow abuse prevention policies and practices. While many organizations, coaches, and youth are impacted by this law, there are far more individuals that are not, leaving a glaring gap in policies and accountability.

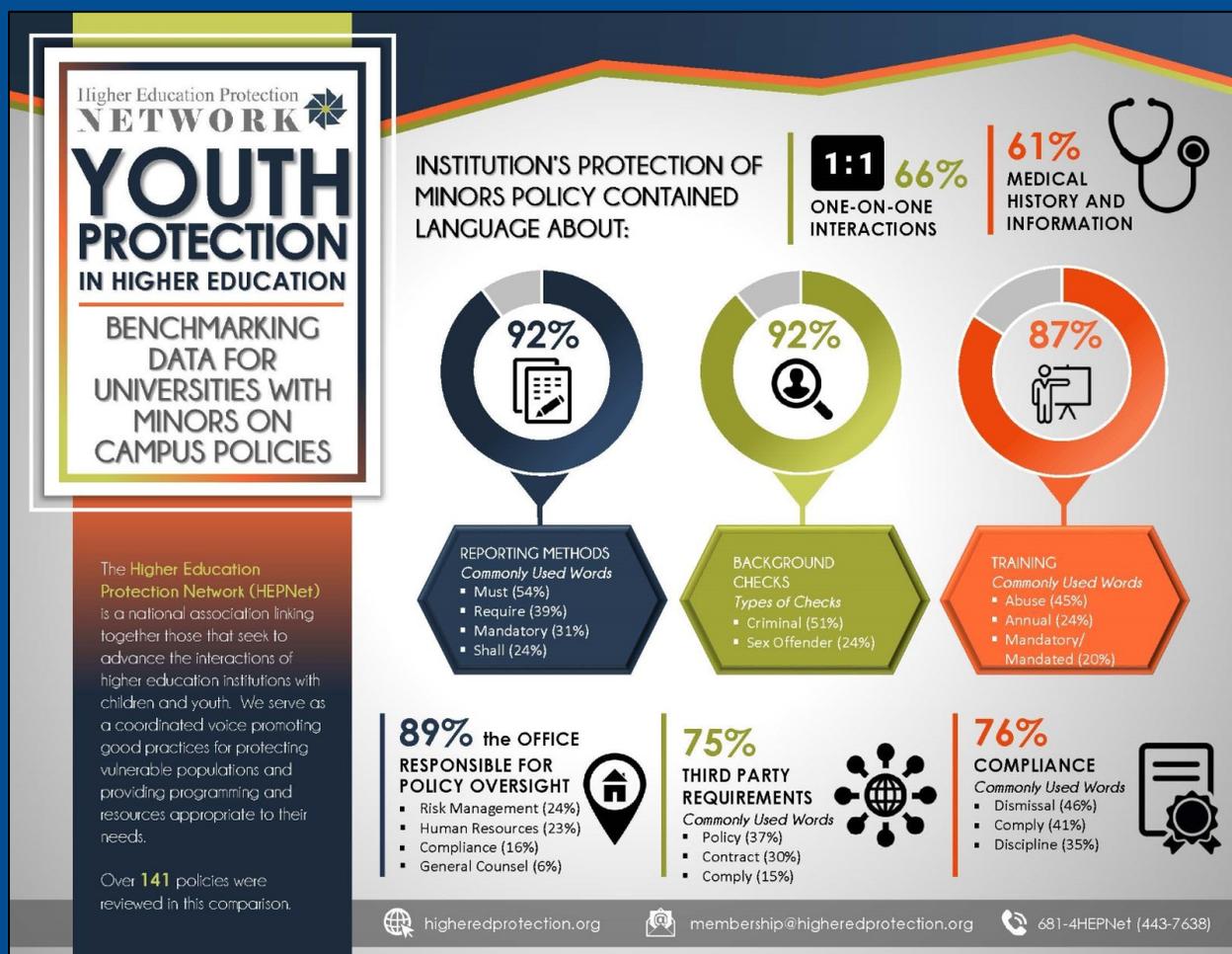
This gap in safeguarding requirements gives parents a false sense of security assuming their child’s program is safe, and also creates loopholes for individuals sanctioned by the U.S. Center for SafeSport to continue coaching under a different umbrella without such requirements. For example, the Center publishes the names of certain adults who have been found in violation of the SafeSport Code as ineligible or temporarily suspended from participation in U.S. Olympic and Paralympic sport. That ineligibility does not attach to other sport programs (at college campuses, other youth serving organizations, etc.) if the other entity does not screen against or enforce sanctions from the Center’s [centralized disciplinary database](#). In fact, there have been multiple instances where coaches have been permanently barred from participation only to move to a college or university and repeat the behavior.

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<sup>6</sup> Know Your IX. (n.d.). Clery Act. <https://www.knowyourix.org/college-resources/clery-act/#:~:text=Clery%20Act%20The%20Clery%20Act%20was%20named%20after,Crime%20Statistics%20Act%20%28Clery%20Act%29%20in%20her%20memory>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Center for SafeSport 2020 Athlete Culture & Climate Survey, <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/survey-results/>

An additional gap includes sport programs operating at schools and universities, particularly when private businesses and individuals operate youth sports programs on collegiate campuses without any required abuse prevention policies in place to safeguard youth. It could be presumed that with the introduction of the NCAA name, image, and likeness policy that many more collegiate athletes may start hosting youth programs and camps, and there may or may not be institutional oversight. As evidenced by the graphic below, not all institutions have the same oversight in place.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> [2019 HEPNet Operational Survey.](#)



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Abuse is preventable. Thirty years ago, it was not widely known how sexual abusers behaved. We now have the research, solutions, and support organizations to prevent abuse.

### Prevention

Leaders across the country and at American Camp Association (ACA), HEPNet, and the Center work with other youth-serving organizations in prioritizing prevention recommendations and comprehensive approaches. From the ACA's [13 Core Competencies](#), which guide youth program professionals, to the CDC's [guidance in preventing child sexual abuse in youth serving organizations](#), leading researchers and practitioners across the country have developed models and standards to support prevention efforts.<sup>9 10 11</sup> Adults working with children need knowledge in various competency areas to provide safe, high-quality, and developmentally appropriate experiences.

A wealth of knowledge is available to support institutions of higher education camps and youth programs and activities in their work to provide safe and nurturing environments for youth participants. ACA, HEPNet, and the Center recommend the following components for

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<sup>9</sup> Letourneau, E. J., Assini-Meytin, L.C., Kaufman, K. L., Mathews, B., & Palmer, D. (2020). Preventing and addressing child sexual abuse in youth serving organizations: A desk guide for organizational leaders. Baltimore, MD: Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

<sup>10</sup> Praesidium Report 2022, <https://praesidium.lpages.co/praesidium-report-2022>

<sup>11</sup> <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/violence-prevention-practice/#!>

a youth program or activity hosted, directed by, or otherwise affiliated with a college or university, including external youth programs using athletic facilities as well:

- Code of conduct that includes addressing retaliation
- Abuse prevention training
- Reporting process
- Hiring and screening practices, including but not limited to criminal background checks and screening against the Center's centralized disciplinary database and past collegiate and youth-serving organizations
- Monitoring and supervision plans, and implementation of the same
- Prevention policies, including identification of roles and responsibilities
- Staff to camper ratios, including limiting one-on-one interactions between adults and youth
- Risk identification, including those related to your environment (e.g., locker rooms)
- Accountability, including addressing policy violations and requiring that components are met as a contract or facility-use condition of youth sport programs

## ACTION PLAN

Child abuse and neglect is not a comfortable discussion topic. Not everyone knows how to prevent it. We do not expect college and university leaders, coaches, staff, and students to be experts.

We know how to talk about this, how to make an impact in this area, and how to support you. Your call to action is as simple as 1, 2, 3.

1. Look for the youth protection policy at your institution. This policy can be called different names—protection of minors, minors on campus, etc. Reach out to your policy person to see what you need to do to comply. See if there is a HEPNet or ACA member at your institution. If you have a policy, follow it and become acquainted with the policy owner.
2. If you do not have a youth protection policy, write your own departmental policy using the above guidelines. This could be daunting for some, which is why there is a step 3. The offices of general counsel, risk management, and compliance are also helpful partners within the college or university.
3. Let us help you—no catch.
  - American Camp Association (ACA) contact: [Ruthi Hernandez](#)
  - Higher Education Protection Network (HEPNet) contact: [Lindsay Bond](#)
  - U.S. Center for SafeSport (Center) contact: [education@safesport.org](mailto:education@safesport.org)

## ABOUT US



### American Camp Association (ACA)

**Description:** The American Camp Association® (ACA) is a national organization serving the more than 15,000 youth programs in the U.S. who annually serve 26 million campers. ACA provides advocacy, evidence-based education, and professional development, and is the only independent national accrediting body for the organized camp experience. ACA accreditation provides public evidence of a camp's voluntary commitment to the health, safety, risk management, and overall well-being of campers and staff. For more information, visit [ACAamps.org](http://ACAamps.org) or call 800-428-2267. ACA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit professional education association.

**Who is a good fit:** Anyone who runs youth programs or oversees risk management and compliance processes for camps or youth programs on college campuses is a good fit for ACA. ACA's members come from traditional and all types of nontraditional camps, including those operated on college and university campuses.

#### **The top 3 ways ACA can help you today:**

1. Comprehensive risk management and programming resources, training (in-person and virtual), template documents, nationally recognized accreditation, and networking
2. Private all-member online community and resource repository regarding issues facing youth camps and programs on college campuses
3. Ongoing in-person and virtual professional development opportunities with discussion of relevant issues in the field and matters related to policy



### Higher Education Protection Network (HEPNet)

**Description:** We are a professional association that seeks to advance the interactions of colleges and universities with the children and youth they serve. Members receive a [wealth of resources](#) through programming, professional development, services, and

resources, such as discussion board interactivity, networking, benchmarking, and access to a robust resource library. While anyone supporting our mission is eligible to become a member, non-members are welcome to peruse our site and view our public resources. Membership and conference fees are extremely reasonable and provide a high value to our members, as evident by high retention numbers.

**Who is a good fit:** Anyone who wants to help prevent abuse and neglect in higher educational programming. We have many members who work in athletics and direct programming. The majority are youth protection professionals and work with athletic departments at their colleges and universities.

**The top 3 ways HEPNet can help you today:**

1. Access to a vibrant discussion board where others can assist with the issues you are having, give feedback on policies and procedures, and keep you in the loop on the latest trends, issues, legislative updates, etc.
2. Access to a robust resource library with trainings, registration systems, model policies, and more.
3. A side-by-side breakdown of around 200 youth protection policies in higher ed so that you can align easily with common practices.



## U.S. Center for SafeSport (Center)

Established in 2017, the U.S. Center for SafeSport is the independent and exclusive authority charged by Congress with responding to and preventing all forms of abuse and misconduct within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement. The Center is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The Center receives, investigates, and responds to reports of abuse and misconduct from individuals affiliated with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and its National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The Center ensures that the USOPC and NGBs properly apply policies and procedures to govern abuse prevention and maintains a database of individuals sanctioned from participation in their sport. Throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Movement, the Center trains athletes, parents, coaches, volunteers, and organizations at all levels on best practices and principles for preventing abuse in sport settings. In doing so, the Center advances its mission of making athlete well-being the center of our nation's sports culture through abuse prevention, education, and accountability.



## RESOURCES

[ACA Camper Supervision & Ratios](#), American Camp Association

[Child Abuse Recognition & Prevention](#), American Camp Association

[Camp Safety Trainings](#), American Camp Association

[Child Abuse Prevention—Further Resources](#), American Camp Association

[Dos and Don'ts for Universities & Colleges Hosting Summer Youth Camps](#), American Camp Association

[Customized Staff Training Packages](#), American Camp Association

[Abuse Prevention Training](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[Audit Reports of National Governing Bodies in the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[Centralized Disciplinary Database](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[SafeSport Code of Conduct](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[Sport Situational Prevention Approach](#), U.S. Center for SafeSport

[Community Resources](#), Higher Education Protection Network

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# APPENDIX A: LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CAMPS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Many states have laws related to working with youth, but they differ greatly. [Childwelfare.gov](https://www.childwelfare.gov) has a helpful breakdown by state on laws pertaining to reporting and responding to child abuse and neglect, maintaining records, protecting children from domestic violence, and related issues.

The following represents key laws and principles that program directors should be familiar with, however, this list is not exhaustive. It is recommended that personnel consult with the college or university's general counsel as to how these laws may or may not apply to athletic programming.

## **Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA)**

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides federal funding and guidance to states in regards to child abuse and neglect, including a federal definition of child abuse and neglect.

## **Child Only Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)**

COPPA aims to protect children's safety and privacy on the internet by imposing regulations as it relates to collecting information of children under age 13. This could apply to program registrations and more where personal identifiers are collected.

## **Child Protection Improvements Act (CPIA)**

While CPIA was signed into law years ago, it has not been implemented yet. Once operationalized, this law will provide youth-serving organizations the ability to more efficiently and effectively screen staff. According to the American Camp Association<sup>12</sup>, this Act should expedite the amount of time in which results are obtained, lower costs, and increase accuracy.

## **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

While most individuals in higher education are familiar with FERPA and how it applies to educational records, it can be a gray area when it comes to youth programming in higher education. Some experts assert that FERPA applies to participants in noncredit programs while others do not.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.acacamps.org/news-publications/news/child-protection-improvements-act-passed-senate>

## **In Loco Parentis**

Those overseeing children and youth in college and university camps/programs serve *in loco parentis* (in place of the parents) and may be legally required to contact the proper authorities when allegations of abuse are revealed.<sup>13</sup>

## **Safe Sport Act**

The [Protecting Youth Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017](#) codified the U.S. Center for SafeSport, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, as the nation's safe sport organization. This Act gave the Center the scope and authority to resolve abuse and misconduct reports for more than 11 million individuals throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

The Act also charged the Center with developing and enforcing policies, procedures, and training to prevent abuse and misconduct. The Center's [SafeSport Code](#) governs all participants in the Movement, and this oversight authority helps the Center ensure all Olympic and Paralympic national governing bodies (NGBs) adhere to [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies \(MAAPP\)](#) that support athlete safety.

The Act also includes abuse prevention requirements for amateur sport organizations outside of the Center's jurisdiction.

## **The Clery Act**

The Clery Act is a federal law that requires colleges to report school safety policies and crimes that occur "on campus." Under the Clery Act, schools must also send timely warnings to the school community when there are known risks to public safety on campus.

## **Title IX**

Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities that receive federal assistance. Reports of abuse in youth programming whether it occurs on university-owned property or not, can have Title IX implications and should be reported accordingly.

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<sup>13</sup> Bickel, R.D., & Lake, P.F. (1999). *The Rights and Responsibilities of Modern Universities: Who Assumes the Risk of College Life?* Durham: Carolina Academic Press.