



Safe Sport FAQs
Updated 9/23/13

General Safe Sport Questions

1. Why was the Safe Sport policy adopted?

USA Fencing, along with other leading youth sports groups, national governing bodies and the U.S. Olympic Committee, is committed to taking a proactive, multi-faceted approach to creating a positive and safe environment for all of our athletes. In addition, the new policy brings us in line with industry standards, USOC requirements, and insurance guidelines.

2. Why was the Safe Sport policy adopted without discussion from the membership?

The policy, though in development over the past three years, was passed at an Emergency board meeting on July 17, 2013. A recent change in insurance companies meant that the matter became urgent for USA Fencing to meet insurability guidelines for the 2013-14 season which began on August 1, 2013.

3. Do all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) have to adopt the Safe Sport policy?

Yes, per the direction of the USOC, all NGBs are required to adopt and implement a Safe Sport Policy by December 31, 2013. There are differences in policies and background screen requirements dependent on the sport, governance, insurance, and other issues.

4. What is the penalty(s) to USA Fencing for not adopting the full Safe Sport policy?

All NGBs are required to adopt the Safe Sport Policy by December 31, 2013 with the following components, at a minimum:

- a. Prohibits and defines the following misconduct: bullying, hazing, harassment, emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct.
- b. Criminal background checks
- c. Education and training program developed –by January 1, 2014
- d. Reporting
- e. Enforcement

Failure to adopt a Safe Sport Policy may result in disciplinary action by the USOC, including, without limitation, the withdrawal of high performance funding.

In addition, USA Fencing was required by our insurance carrier to enact the policy by August 1, 2013 in order to meet insurability guidelines.

5. Why did USA Fencing need to adopt a Safe Sport policy with some stricter guidelines?

In addition to implementing the best practices of existing NGBs programs, USA Fencing needed to meet insurability guidelines. The guidelines specifically address prevention policies, including limiting one-on-one contact with athletes and expanded background screens to include volunteers. USA Fencing would not have been able to secure general liability insurance without the adoption and implementation of the Safe Sport Policy.

General Safe Sport Policy Questions

1. What types of misconduct are reportable offenses under the Safe Sport Policy?

The six primary types of misconduct are reportable under the USA Fencing Safe Sport Policy: Sexual Misconduct, Emotional Misconduct, Physical Misconduct, Bullying, Harassment, and Hazing. Best practices policies that are included in the policy manual are not considered reportable offenses.

2. Why was the travel policy added to the Safe Sport document?

During travel, athletes may be away from their families and support networks, and the setting is less structured and less familiar. Athletes may be more vulnerable to abuse or misconduct during travel, particularly overnight stays. A travel policy provides best practices guidelines so that care is taken to minimize one-on-one interactions between minors and adults while traveling.

3. Why does the social media and electronic communications policy limit coaches' ability to communicate directly with the athlete?

USA Fencing understands the need for effective communication with athletes and their families. The best practices policy does not state that a coach can't communicate directly with an athlete, simply that parents should be included in the communication which can be accomplished as a group text or Facebook message, including parents on the cc lines of e-mails, etc. The improper use of mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct or the appearance of misconduct. Adherence to the social media and electronic communications best practices policy helps reduce those risks.

4. Will there be Safe Sport education material, information and online seminar provided to the membership?

Yes, USA Fencing will be developing educational materials and a training seminar by January 1, 2014. Additional details will be available by November 1, 2013. While the educational program will be developed by January 1, 2014, we anticipate a gradual roll-out of the training material and requirements.

5. How will divisions and local clubs be involved with Safe Sport in the future?

USA Fencing will be asking divisions and clubs to take a larger role in administering the program

in the future.

6. How will USA Fencing respond to Safe Sport violation reports?

Section VI of the policy addresses the organization's response to violations. As appropriate, and at its discretion, USA Fencing may institute a formal investigation and hearing procedure to address serious allegations of misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual misconduct). However, USA Fencing anticipates that an investigation and hearing will be undertaken to address only the most serious allegations and patterns of behavior that warrant significant sanctions. Accordingly, USA Fencing anticipates that this disciplinary procedure will be used rarely.

If a report is received, the Athlete Protection Officer (APO) can review and recommend to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the General Counsel, to call for a Disciplinary Panel, with approval from the Board of Directors.

7. I have noticed that some committee members, division officers, and other volunteers are not on the list of individuals with a current background screen. Why are they allowed to still serve in their volunteer roles?

No one is automatically disqualified from acting on a committee or serving as a division officer merely because he or she has not been screened. They "may be" disqualified, but it is not automatic. Because the background screen policy is newly adopted, the committees and USA Fencing must continue to operate during the transition period. However, USA Fencing can take action if an individual refuses to consent to background screening.

General Background Screen Questions

1. What company does USA Fencing utilize for the background screens?

USA Fencing has a contract with the National Center for Safety Initiatives (<http://www.ncsisafe.com/>) to serve as the background screen provider for the organization.

2. What criminal offenses does the criminal background check look for?

USA Fencing currently uses the following criteria:

Automatic Disqualifiers ("Red Light"): Convictions of, disclosure of convictions of, and pending dispositions for any of the following crimes will prompt a determination that an applicant "does not meet" the criminal background screening criteria and a red light determination will be issued:

- a. Any felony
- b. Defined on the basis of the offense for which the defendant was convicted, pled guilty, or pled nolo contendere. If pled down, then the crime to which the defendant ultimately pled. Defined as any crime punishable by greater than one year in jail or prison, regardless of how characterized by jurisdiction. If range, alternate sentencing, or indeterminate sentencing, outer range > one year.

- c. Any lesser crime involving force or threat of force against a person
 - d. Any lesser crime in which sexual relations are an element, including “victimless” crimes of a sexual nature
 - e. Any lesser crime involving controlled substances (not paraphernalia or alcohol).
 - f. Any crime involving cruelty to animals
- 3. Is USA Fencing completing a credit check when processing the background check information?**
No, a credit check is not completed on anyone going through the background screening process.
- 4. How is NCSI conducting the background screen?**
NCSI searches the following database in order to obtain information.
- a. Two independent national databases
 - b. Sex offender registries of all available states
 - c. Social Security number and address verification
 - d. Federal terrorist database search
 - e. Non-database (county courthouse runner) searches of county criminal records of all jurisdictions of residence in the prior seven years and any names used in the past 7 years.
- 5. What information from the screen does USA Fencing have access to?**
USA Fencing receives a “Green Light” or “Red Light” notification, but does not see additional information unless a specific request is made.
- 6. How long is the background screen valid?**
Background screens are currently valid for two years.
- 7. What are the costs to USA Fencing for the background screens?**
The costs of the screens vary and are dependent on a number of factors, including number of addresses in the past seven years, and cost of county screens.
- 8. Can I submit a screen from another source?**
No, NCSI is the only background check accepted by USA Fencing. While USA Fencing respects the background check policies of other organizations, we cannot as a matter of policy accept background checks from other agencies. Any one exception would mean we would have to accept checks from a variety of organizations, thus diluting the consistency and value of the NCSI system.

Background Screens – Individual Questions

- 1. Who must complete the background screen process?**
The following persons must complete the background screen process: (1) All USA Fencing directors, staff members, division officers, committee/task force members and national team

staff. (2) Officials and volunteers at all USA Fencing sanctioned events that have direct access to minors participating in such events. This includes persons who interact directly and frequently with athletes as part of their duties, e.g., event administrators, referees, bout committee members, armorers. It does not include volunteers who have incidental interaction with athletes, e.g., at registration or lost and found booths. (3) All affiliate and member club coaches, independent contractors, owners, board of directors members and administrators.

2. Are minors required to have a background screen on file?

No, individuals under the age of eighteen (18) are not required to complete a background screen. This applies to minors who are acting as coaches, officials, volunteers or other roles that would otherwise be included in the background screen category.

3. Can a non-citizen of the United States without a social security number complete the background check requirement?

Yes, please contact the National Office, information@usfencing.org, for additional information. The cost of completing a foreign background screen will vary.

4. Are foreign guest coaches or referees required to have a background check?

Yes, the Safe Sport background screen policy applies to all coaches and referees participating in USA Fencing sanctioned events or activities, including guest coaches and referees.

5. I am a foreign tournament official and have Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI or equivalent status. Do I still need to complete a background screen?

For the 2013-14 season, foreign officials who have Global Entry or an equivalent status will not need to submit additional information if appropriate documentation is on file at the National Office.

6. If I am a tournament organizer, how can I find a complete listing of background screened individuals?

The National Office will post an updated list of screened individuals on our website weekly.

Background Screen Instructions

1. What membership type is needed to complete a background screen?

Currently, USA Fencing is managing the background screen process through the membership type of Professional or + Professional for the 2013-14 season. The membership types include the cost of the background screen.

If you have a current background screen on file from a previous year, you will only need to add +Professional if you are serving as a coach. As long as you have a current screen on file, you will show up on the list of members with a current background screen.

2. What is the cost of Professional membership or the +Professional upgrade?

The 2013-14 cost of the Professional membership is \$105 and the +Professional upgrade is \$35. Both membership types include the cost of the background screen.

3. Can I add the +Professional to any membership type?

Yes, you can add the +Professional, which includes the cost of the background screen, to any membership type for \$35 in addition to the cost of the original membership type (e.g., non comp membership for \$5 and the +Professional for \$35 = total cost of \$40).

4. Who is responsible for the cost of the Professional membership or the +Professional upgrade?

The individual member is responsible for the cost. This includes officials and division officers.

5. How do I complete a background screen?

After completing the process to become a Professional or +Professional member, please follow the steps below:

- a. Log-in to your USA Fencing profile
- b. Scroll down to the background and international section
- c. Click on the link "Launch Background Screen"
- d. Link will take you directly to the NCSI website where you will complete the screening information
- e. When the screen is complete (typically 3-10 working days), "Green Light" screens will report directly back to your profile with an expiration date and will change your membership type from "Professional (pending)" to "Professional".

Additional Background Screen Questions

1. Are referees who are training at events required to complete the screening process?

Yes, all referees – both those who are already certified and those in training at USA Fencing sanctioned tournaments – must be screened because of the access they have to athletes.

2. Our club is a college affiliate club and does not work with minors. Are we required to have the club contact or coach successfully pass a background screen?

Yes, the Safe Sport policy covers all athletes and participants; therefore, all clubs and coaches affiliated with USA Fencing must adhere to the background screen policies.

3. Is “self-refing” at local tournaments allowed without background screens?

Members who are over 18 and “self-refing” in an open tournament are not required to be Professional/ Professional +members or have a background screen on file.

- 4. My club contracts with a company to provide athletic trainers for events. If the company has already screened the trainer, can the individual work at a sanctioned event?**

Yes, as long as the screen is current and the club has documentation of the current screen on file.