



UNITED STATES  
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

# **COACH TOOLKIT**

***QUALITY PARENTING  
FRAMEWORK***



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***QUALITY PARENTING  
FRAMEWORK***

The quality of a young person's sport experience, and the personal assets they are able to develop, are shaped by multiple persons and contexts.

Among these, parents are one of the most salient. The appropriate quality of parent involvement can help youth reach their athletic and human potential while fostering a lifelong love of sport and physical activity.

In creating the Quality Parenting Framework and this **coach toolkit**, we hope that parents can reflect on, and adopt some of these best practices into, their existing parenting styles and consider how they can best serve their children in the context of sport.

Download the Full Quality Parenting Framework



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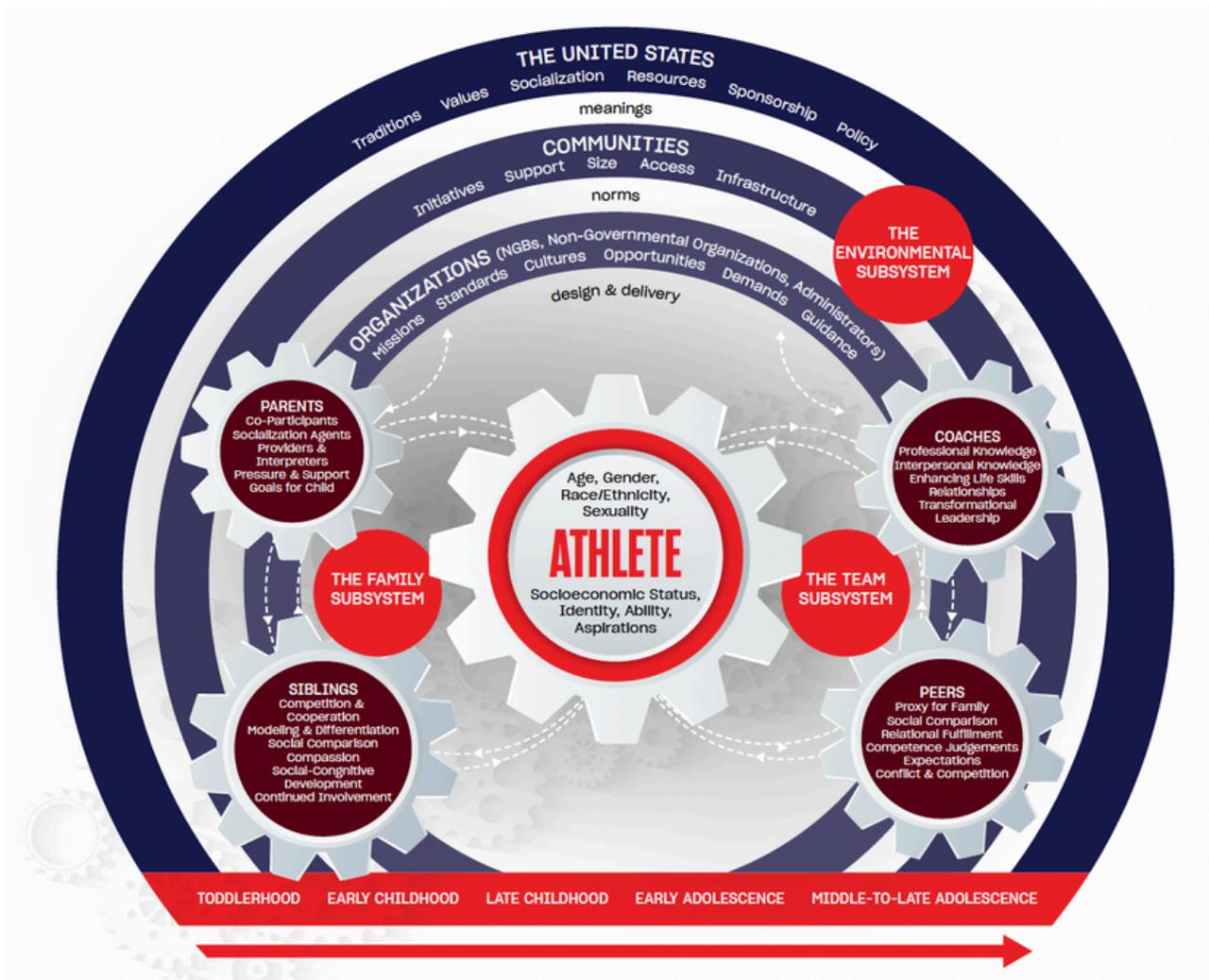


***PART 1:***  
***Building***  
***Relationships***



# PART 1: Building Relationships

The potential for youth athletes to experience positive outcomes in sport depends on the people and environments, such as organizations, communities, and the broader United States systems, that they interact with. The involvement and influence of these will differ as the youth athlete develops and ages.



# ***Building Relationships***

Who are some common people that your athletes interact with outside of sport?

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Who are some common people that your athletes interacts with in sport?

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Who are some common groups of people that you interact with in sport?

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Who are some common organizations that you interact with in sport?

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# ***Building Relationships***

We often refer to this social and cultural environment as the youth sport system. We know that multiple persons (i.e. parents, siblings, peers, and coaches) and contexts (i.e. organizations, communities, and societies) have the potential to influence or be influenced by an athletes' actions, attitudes, experiences, and outcomes.

***PARENTS INTERACT WITH PEOPLE IN ALL CORNERS OF THE YOUTH SPORT SYSTEM***



# ***Building Relationships***

Who do you interact with that forms a part of the youth sport system?

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What organizations do you interact with regarding your athletes' sport participation?

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Who could you interact with more to improve your athletes' sport experience?

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# ***Building Relationships***

Generally, parents adopt three main roles as their children participate and compete in sport:

**1**

**Parents are ROLE MODELS**

**2**

**Parents are PROVIDERS**

**3**

**Parents are INTERPRETERS**



# ***ROLE MODELS***

Parents' attitudes and actions impact athletes' thoughts, feelings, and actions in sport. Youth often see what their parents do and hear what they say which can lead to them imitating these behaviors that can impact their skill learning, social, actions, and performance.

# ***PROVIDERS***

In a gatekeeping role, parents enable or discourage opportunities to participate and/or compete in sports. This includes registering for lessons and teams, transport to and from practice or games, purchasing equipment and clothing, attending sporting events, and paying incidental fees.

# ***INTERPRETERS***

Parents' beliefs and actions convey messages to athletes, such as the importance of excelling in sport, how success is defined, and the appropriateness of activities based on an athletes' gender. Young athletes' perceptions of their parent's appraisal has a strong impact on their own beliefs and self-appraisals of ability.

# **REFLECTION**

How might understanding these roles help me develop better relationships with my athletes' parents?

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What can I do to help parents thrive in fulfilling these roles for their children?

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# **REFLECTION**

How would having parents fulfilling these roles effectively impact my ability to coach and why?

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How could I build better relationships with my athletes' parents to help with this?

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# **GOAL SETTING**

Use this space to write down some goals or an action plan for your coach-parent relationship building related to the questions you just answered in Part 1. Use this space as a 'whiteboard' for drawings, sketches, or doodles as well as your writing.

***PART 2:  
AN ATHLETE-  
FOCUSED  
APPROACH***



# ***PART 2: ADOPTING AN ATHLETE-FOCUSED APPROACH***

Parenting style has received a large amount of attention in mainstream child psychology and is now seen as an important mechanism of parental influence in organized sport.

***"HIGH-QUALITY SPORT  
PARENTING IS  
ATHLETE-FOCUSED"***

Athlete-focused parenting gives youth athletes voice in their athletic experiences along with the autonomy to make decisions related to those experiences. Ultimately, a parent's goals should reflect a child's in sport.

There are a number of ways that parents can maximize positive and minimize negative experiences for their children in sport, while also helping their children develop personal assets.

- 1** Create a safe environment for **COMMUNICATION**
- 2** Listen **ACTIVELY**
- 3** Ask with athlete-focused **INTENT**
- 4** Identify and engage in the best forms of **SUPPORT**
- 5** Explore and engage in **MULTIPLE** sport parenting **ROLES**
- 6** Allow for **AUTONOMY** in athletes **DECISION-MAKING**
- 7** Engage **PURPOSEFULLY**, and with **CARE**

# ***CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNICATION***

Encourage athletes to share openly and freely about their sport participation.

***"ATHLETES MUST KNOW THAT THEY CAN SHARE EXPERIENCES, INSIGHTS, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS WITHOUT JUDGEMENT, CRITICISM, FEAR, OR PUNISHMENT"***

This includes both verbal and non-verbal communication. Parents must communicate that 'we are in this together.' The goal is to make the athlete feel safe and comfortable.

As a coach, how can I act as a role model to parents for how to engage in their child's sporting activities?

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What strategies could I use to promote open communication and an athlete-centered approach in my coaching?

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What strategies could I used to create a safe environment for both athletes and parents?

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How will I make sure that I am creating an environment for my athletes to feel that they can communicate safely with me and their parents?

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# **LISTEN ACTIVELY**

Active listening involves providing full, immersive attention to what is being shared. Some strategies to enhance this are minimizing distractions, allowing the athlete to speak without interruption, showing interest in an athletes' emotions, maintaining eye contact and nodding.

What other strategies could I used to practice active listening?

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How could I be better at active listening? Which strategies could I use more? And how will I do this?

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# **ASK WITH ATHLETE- FOCUSED INTENT**

It is important to acknowledge that athletes are active, autonomous participants in their sport experiences. Parents and coaches should view young athletes as valuable sources of information – treat them as stakeholders in their own sport experiences.

How can you coach your athletes to communicate to their parents about their sport experience?

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What can you do to make sure that you put your athletes first when making decisions as a provider for their sport experience?

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# **EXPLORE AND ENGAGE IN MULTIPLE SPORT PARENTING ROLES**

It is important for parents to ask their children before becoming a coach, team manager, or official/referee. Exploring athletes' thoughts and feelings about taking a dual-role is important to be able to make the best decision for their experience.

How might you approach a parent to help serve in one of these roles in a way that gives their athlete some autonomy?

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What could you do if their answer does not match with what you were expecting?

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# ***ALLOW FOR AUTONOMY IN ATHLETES' DECISION- MAKING***

When parents assume their athlete wants to participate in sport, the parent is denying the child an opportunity to make an explicit choice on their own. This can have huge impacts on an athletes' sense of ownership and may ultimately backfire on the parent, who is trying to be supportive.

***"IT IS THEIR JOURNEY!"***

What questions could you ask your athletes about their sport experience?

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How will you react if they tell you something that you were not expecting? Who might you need to speak to?

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# **GOAL SETTING**

Use this space to write down some goals or an action plan for your involvement as a coach related to the questions you just answered in Part 2. Use this space as a 'whiteboard' for drawings, sketches, or doodles as well as your writing.

***PART 3:  
SUPPORTING  
PHYSICAL  
DEVELOPMENT***



# ***PART 3: SUPPORTING PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT***

Physical development in sport begins at a very young age and parents should consider athletes' physical development from toddlerhood through young adulthood. Physical change is not always linear, fits and spurts in growth, learning, and performance are common and can stem from accommodation to new and ongoing training programs.

## ***"LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT"***

When supporting young athletes' physical development, it is important to consider both growth and maturation. Growth is defined as an increase in body size, whereas maturation refers to the timing of and progress toward a physically mature body.

**On average, females reach their greatest tempo of growth at 12 and males at 14.**

# **SUPPORTING PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

There are three main areas of knowledge related to physical development that parents need to be aware of to best support their children.

**1**

**Foundational motor skill development is important.**

**2**

**Parents don't have to answer the 'sport sampling' versus 'sport specialization' debate.**

**3**

**Training load patterns and progressions should be implemented strategically.**

# ***FOUNDATIONAL MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT***

The key to athletic development is the acquisition of foundational motor skills. These include:

**WALKING**

**SKIPPING**

**THROWING**

**BALANCING**

**KICKING**

**CATCHING**

**RUNNING**

**JUMPING**

**LANDING**

***"PHYSICAL LITERACY  
IS COMPETENCE,  
KNOWLEDGE,  
CONFIDENCE, AND  
MOTIVATION TO BE  
ACTIVE THROUGHOUT  
LIFE."***

# **FOUNDATIONAL MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT REFLECTION**

As children develop, parents should strive to enhance physical literacy by fostering a strong sense of physical self and confidence in their children's physical movements by offering appropriate challenges.

How can you help educate athletes and parents on motor development and how to build foundational skills?

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How might this help your athletes in both the short term and the long term?

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# ***SPORT SAMPLING VERSUS SPORT SPECIALIZATION***

In the past 20 years, research has shown that sampling a wide range of sports during childhood is more likely to result in elite sport performance than early specialization in a single sport.

Participating in multiple sports, positions, or events results in well-rounded motor skills which can transfer across sports when athletes are given adequate rest and recovery.

***EARLY  
SPECIALIZATION IS  
LINKED TO INJURY,  
BURNOUT, AND  
DROPOUT FROM SPORT***

Decisions about specialization may vary across sport types. For example, some 'early entry' sports such as gymnastics, diving, golf, figure skating, and skiing, may necessitate specialization prior to physical maturity.

How could you bring up and engage in discussions around sampling and specialization with your athletes' parents?

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What are the demands of your main sport physically, socially, and psychologically and how might this impact specialization?

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# TRAINING LOAD

As athletes develop, they may be asked to increase their participation.

TRAINING  
COMPETITION



**1**

Athletes should not exceed the "age vs. hours rule." Athletes who are not competing at the national level or higher should not participate in more hours per week than their current age.

**2**

An athletes' acute workload (hours per week) should be between 0.8 and 1.2 times the athletes' chronic workload (the average hours per week over the last four weeks).

**3**

Prior to becoming 'elite,' athletes must be given time and space to discover, learn, play, develop, train, compete, and perform and succeed.

# **TRAINING LOAD REFLECTION**

Athletes' opportunities for physical development in sport begins at a very young age and are shaped by the experiences that parents afford them.

How do you help to manage training load? Is it suitable for their developmental stage, both acute and chronic?

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Have you given your athletes time and opportunities to learn, discover, play, train, etc? How could you provide more opportunities for those developmental activities?

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# **GOAL SETTING**

Use this space to write down some goals for your involvement in your child's physical development related to the questions you just answered in Part 3. Use this space as a 'whiteboard' for drawings, sketches, or doodles as well as your writing.

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a red USA soccer jacket and blue pants, stands on a green field. She has her right foot resting on a white soccer ball with red and black patterns. The background is a blurred stadium with blue seating. The text 'PART 4: SUPPORTING SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

**PART 4:  
SUPPORTING  
SOCIOEMOTIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

# ***PART 4: SUPPORTING SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

There are a range of socioemotional benefits that have the potential to be realized when organized sport participation is designed and delivered in a purposeful way. Parents have the potential to influence this development in four main ways:

- 1** There are pros and cons to participation in organized sport.
- 2** It is imperative to create a mastery-oriented motivational climate.
- 3** There is great value in engaging in parent education and training.
- 4** Parents should contribute positively to the coach-parent relationship.

# **PROS AND CONS**

While sport participation is generally assumed to be beneficial for young people, there are potential negative outcomes. Incidents of bullying and maltreatment, declines in moral development, and increased experiences of stress and burnout have been documented.

***"THOSE WHO SURROUND YOUNG ATHLETES HAVE THE ABILITY TO PRIORITIZE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT"***

One of the underlying issues is the increase in the popularity of 'elite' sport specialization. Most important is the shift from athlete-oriented, holistic, enjoyment focused, and skill development approach to a more professional image for youth sport. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on the development of the most talented athletes.

# **PROS AND CONS REFLECTION**

Those close to the athlete, specifically parents and coaches, have the potential to be able to positively influence the youth sport experience by focusing on enjoyment, development, and fun.

How can you help your athletes have a positive experience in youth sport by prioritizing fun and enjoyment?

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Are there any times that you have emphasized performance over enjoyment and development? How? How can you reframe questions like 'did you win?', to 'did you have fun?' more often?

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# ***MASTERY-ORIENTED MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE***

Designing and delivering a mastery-oriented climate can be challenging. Parents can often judge their success as parents by how successful their children are in domains such as sport.

***"SUCCESS CAN BE  
DEFINED IN MULTIPLE  
WAYS"***

It is important for parents to keep a holistic definition of success and development and focus on how their child is improving rather than how they compare to other children.

This can be difficult to do with the rising costs of youth sports where parents can begin to pressure their children to 'perform.'

# **MASTERY-ORIENTED MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE REFLECTION**

When interacting with your athletes, how do you define success? Do you compare them to their past self and focus on growth, or compare them to the ability of other children?

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What can you do to avoid putting pressure on your athletes to 'perform'? Is there things that you can do to let them know that fun and enjoyment are more important than winning early on?

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# ***PARENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING***

Research has shown that parent education can have significant effects on the positive experiences youth athletes may have in sport.

Parents who engage in active sport education often report having better knowledge and skills related to sport-parenting which results in their child perceiving higher parental support, and lower levels of sport-related stress.

***"PARENTS SHOULD BE  
ENCOURAGED TO  
SELECT  
DEVELOPMENTALLY  
APPROPRIATE SPORT  
SETTINGS"***

# ***PARENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFLECTION***

Think about the athletes that you coach. What other activities do they participate in? Other sports? Arts? How might this impact how you approach their sport participation, needs, and goals for the sport you coach?

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What could you do to begin to learn more about your athletes' sport participation and become more informed?

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What resources could you use to provide parents with more information on your sport? How might this understanding help them, their child, and you as the coach?

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# ***THE COACH-PARENT RELATIONSHIP***

Parents should take it upon themselves to positively contribute to the coach-athlete relationship. Parents, as an integral part of the youth sport system, find themselves in a key role to influence their child's sport relationships.

## ***"PARENTS AND COACHES PLAY DIFFERENT ROLES IN SPORT"***

Parents can enhance their relationship with coaches, and therefore the coach-athlete relationship, by establishing and respecting roles and the demands of each party involved.

# **THE COACH-PARENT RELATIONSHIP REFLECTION**

Take some time to reflect on your relationship with your child's sport coaches. Which are good? Which are bad? What happened to make that the case?

What roles do you play as a sport coach? How are they different to the roles that your athletes' parents plays? What can you do to ensure that they don't overlap and respect those boundaries?

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What can you do to enhance your child's relationship with their parents? How could you influence their relationship for the better?

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# **GOAL SETTING**

Use this space to write down some goals for your involvement in your athletes' socioemotional development related to the questions you just answered in Part 4. Use this space as a 'whiteboard' for drawings, sketches, or doodles as well as your writing.

***PART 5:  
SIX CONTEXTS OF  
SPORT PARENT  
INVOLVEMENT***



# ***PART 5: SIX CONTEXTS OF SPORT PARENT INVOLVEMENT***

**1** Parenting

**2** Communicating

**3** Volunteering

**4** Learning at Home

**5** Decision-Making

**6** Collaborating

# **PARENTING**

Parenting involves the actions and principles that set the context for athletes' sport participation. Below are 13 key indicators of quality parent involvement in sport.

- 1** Provide early exposure to many sports.
- 2** Cover the cost of registration, equipment, and travel.
- 3** Ensure athletes are benefitting from a safe sport environment.
- 4** Attend competitions but leave the coaching up to the coach.
- 5** Show interest in the athletes' talent and progress.
- 6** Set clear standards and expectations of athlete conduct.

# **PARENTING**

- 7** Be purposeful about athlete development.
- 8** Allow athletes to solve their own problems when facing a challenge.
- 9** Avoid coercion and punishment, do not use bribery as a motivator.
- 10** Focus on effort and personal improvement.
- 11** Provide emotional support in times of stress.
- 12** Shift from leading early experiences to a supporter role.
- 13** Avoid viewing sport involvement as an 'investment' in the future.

# **PARENTING REFLECTION**

Spend some time thinking about the 13 points made on the previous two pages. Take a moment to write down which 3 you do the best, and which 3 you could improve on the most.

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How can you help the parents of your athletes succeed in performing these well?

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How could you create a team environment where these actions are the 'norm'?

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# **COMMUNICATING**

Communicating involves the clarification of expectations, provision of feedback, discussion of sport performance, and reinforcement of actions. Below are 9 tips to improve parent-child communication in sport - and outside of sport.

**1**

**Avoid unsolicited sport-specific feedback.**

**2**

**Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement related to participation.**

**3**

**Foster a culture where athletes feel comfortable talking about their sport participation.**

**4**

**Communicate and problem-solve with athletes facing challenging situations.**

# **COMMUNICATING**

**5**

**Create realistic expectations that align with athletes' skill and motivation.**

**6**

**Approach conversations calmly and non-judgementally.**

**7**

**Communicate with sport organizers and coaches about the value of life skills and values.**

**8**

**Keep emotions in check; avoid communicating negatively towards referees, coaches, athletes, or parents.**

**9**

**Foster common values and a sense of community.**

# **COMMUNICATING REFLECTION**

Take a few minutes to think about how you have seen parents communicate. Write about a situation where they could have communicated better with one of those groups.

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Now think about a time where you saw a parent communicate well with one of those groups. Write about what happened.

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As a coach, how could you intervene when communication isn't going well to create a more open communication pathway?

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# ***VOLUNTEERING***

Volunteering is another way parents are engaged in youth sport. Volunteering enables parents to support organizational activities by contributing to management, administration, operations, coaching, and fundraising.

In doing so, parents interact with others to contribute to a broader sense of community and positive team climate.

Below are four key indicators of quality involvement in the context of volunteering.

- 1** **Volunteer as time and resources permit to support the overall system.**
- 2** **Help coaches, administrators, and other parents with logistics, travel, and fundraising.**
- 3** **Participate in telephone trees, parent patrols, and other operations.**
- 4** **Recruit and nurture the involvement of other parents.**

# ***VOLUNTEERING REFLECTION***

Write down some ways in which parents have volunteered in your sport activities in the past year.

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How did this help your experience? Your athletes' experience? Other parents' experiences? Other children's experiences?

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How can you make volunteering in your sport a priority in the next 12 months? What can you do to help get more parents involved?

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# **LEARNING AT HOME**

Learning at home is a tangible way that parents can support athletes' development. Parents may engage in free play opportunities or in more formal skill development with their athletes. Parents can be instrumental in supporting their athletes' at-home learning with in-home learning opportunities. Next are 9 key indicators of quality parent involvement in at-home learning opportunities for their child athletes.

- 1** Support athletes' sport practice by encouraging involvement, participating with them, and setting aside time dedicated to development.
- 2** Assist with athletes' goal setting
- 3** Understand what athletes are learning and help motivate and reinforce that learning.
- 4** Foster interactions with multiple social agents to facilitate motivation.

# ***LEARNING AT HOME***

- 5** Seek out climates that encourage sport and physical activity by watching sport and being active.
- 6** Reinforce 'teachable moments' and acknowledge when athletes demonstrate skills learned in sport outside of the sport context.
- 7** Ensure athletes have a healthy diet and begin to internalize healthy nutritional principles.
- 8** Discuss the value of teamwork, character development, respect for authority, and enjoyment.
- 9** Ensure sufficient rest and recovery as well as time away from sport.

# **LEARNING AT HOME REFLECTION**

Write down some ways in which you have helped your athletes' develop in sport at home in the past.

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In what ways have parents of your athletes helped their children learn at home in the past?

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How did this help? Did it harm or hinder? Was it helpful?  
How could you communicate this to parents and athletes?  
How could you ensure that home learning was beneficial?

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# **DECISION-MAKING**

Decision-making is a primary form of parent engagement during the early years of sport participation. During this time period, parents are instrumental in enrolling their children and in supporting their continued involvement. There are 10 main indicators of quality parent decision-making in sport.

**1**

**Allow for athletes' increased ownership as they enter adolescence.**

**2**

**Engage with athletes in relation to setting goals for their sport involvement.**

**3**

**Assist with athletes adopting time management strategies.**

**4**

**Monitor progress regularly to support learning and motivation.**

**5**

**Provide informational support in relation to decisions about the athletes' choice of club.**

# **DECISION-MAKING**

**6**

Ensure a balance of parent direction and athlete independence.

**7**

Allow teachers/coaches to have more influence as the athlete ages and skill develops.

**8**

Promote a positive culture and focus on holistic development.

**9**

Demonstrate leadership responsibility in addressing negative interactions with spectators, participants, and coaches.

**10**

Support continuing education and professional development for coaches and parents in sport.

# **DECISION-MAKING REFLECTION**

What type of decisions have you seen parents make for their children in sport recently?

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Where could you have offered more or less guidance on a decision, depending on your athletes' age or skill level?

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How could you help guide a parent through the process of giving their child athlete more autonomy in their decision making?

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# ***COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS***

Collaborating with others promotes positive interactions among a variety of stakeholders, including athletes, parents, siblings, coaches, and peers. There are a number of ways that parents can engage positively with others in organized sport. Below are 9 indicators of quality collaboration between parents and others.

- 1 Interact respectfully and positively with other parents**
- 2 Encourage and congratulate other athletes on the team.**
- 3 Encourage friendships and positive interactions among teammates.**
- 4 Create opportunities for families to network and connect to foster a positive climate and build a sense of community.**

# ***COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS***

**5**

Be mindful of sibling interactions and investments and their impact on the family.

**6**

Foster positive relationships and friendships with other parents.

**7**

Work to enhance communication among those engaged in an athletes' life.

**8**

Realize that the sense of community resulting from positive interactions has an effect on parental satisfaction and athletes' continued involvement.

**9**

Foster positive parent-to-parent interactions that add value.

# **COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS REFLECTION**

In what ways have you collaborated with others involved in youth sport?

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How has this changed both your own, and your athletes', and their parents' youth sport experiences?

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How could you collaborate with others more in the future to enhance the sport experience even further?

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# **GOAL SETTING**

Use this space to write down some goals for your involvement in your child's sport related to the questions you just answered in Part 5. Use this space as a 'whiteboard' for drawings, sketches, or doodles as well as your writing.

# ***CONCLUSION***



# CONCLUSION

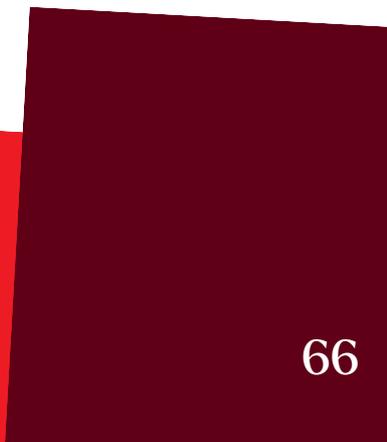
The goal of the Quality Parenting Framework is to inform, not prescribe, how parents can most effectively engage with athletes and other stakeholders in organized sport.

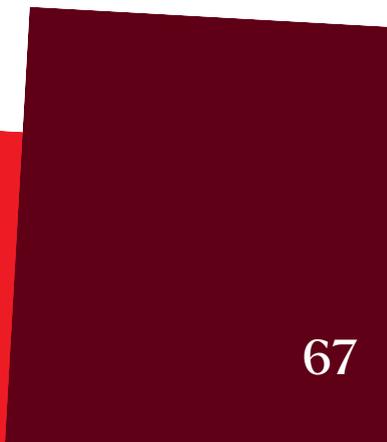
The previous six parts focus on core principles related to high-quality sport parent involvement. The USOPC understands that parenting is complex and acknowledges that there is no single pathway to perfect parenting in sport. However, this toolkit provides an opportunity for you to learn and reflect on evidence-based, informed decisions about how key stakeholders should collectively think of, speak about, and enact high-quality parenting across the full range of Team USA sport contexts

The potential for youth to experience positive social, cognitive, emotional, and physical outcomes through sport depends largely on the social and cultural environment in which their experiences occur. Within this broader environment of the youth sport system, parent involvement stands out as an important contributor to athletes' attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions in the sport domain. Key parenting principles that enhance young people's enjoyment of and confidence about their ability in sport are essential to motivating a lifetime of sport and physical activity participation.

# **NOTES:**

Use this space to make notes of anything to remember or implement once you have completed the toolkit.





***COACH  
TOOLKIT  
QUALITY PARENTING  
FRAMEWORK***



UNITED STATES  
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

