

# 2023 RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

## AUDIT AND COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT

**NGB NAME:**

USA Fencing

**EVENT NAME:**

2023 Fencing Junior Olympics

**EVENT SITE:**

Colorado Convention Center, Denver, CO

**EVENT DATE:**

February 17, 2023 – February 20, 2023

## BACKGROUND AND ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

The U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) is working to build a sport community in which everyone can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and misconduct. Federal law 36 U.S.C. §220541 authorizes the Center to develop and enforce abuse prevention policies and procedures that the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and its National Governing Bodies (NGBs) must implement.

In accordance with that law, the Center has been granted authority to annually complete regular and random audits of NGBs and the USOPC. The Center objectively evaluates adherence and level of compliance to the requirements set forth in the SafeSport Code and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP).

## RISK ASSESSMENT SCOPE

The 2023 Risk Assessment covered the following areas:

### > GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- EVENT LAYOUT
- MAAPP AND REPORTING AWARENESS
- CREDENTIAL SYSTEM
- INELIGIBLE PARTICIPATION

### > REQUIRED PREVENTION POLICIES

- ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS
- MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS
- ATHLETIC TRAINING MODALITIES, MASSAGES, AND RUBDOWNS
- LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS
- ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS
- TRANSPORTATION
- LODGING

### > RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

During the assessment, the Center:

- Reviewed policies and procedures relative to MAAPP implementation
- Evaluated processes
- Administered implementation fidelity testing
- Conducted on-site inspections
- Interviewed coaches, staff, parents, and athletes

Some areas reviewed were not applicable to some events or competitions. The Center requested additional information and clarification as needed from organization staff during the assessment.

## SECTION 1: RISK MITIGATION FACTORS

### PURPOSE:

This section describes observations made at the event that may lead to a reduced risk for misconduct, violations of the MAAPP or Code, or participation of a banned or suspended individual.

### PHYSICAL EVENT SPACE LAYOUT:

- The 2023 USA Fencing Junior Olympics venue was the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, Colorado.
- Check-in was located on the street level directly under the competition exhibit halls.
  - Check-in was clearly defined by which category you are checking in for (e.g., athlete, official, coach).
  - Signs directing participants up the escalator to the competition floor were laid out.
- USA Fencing reserved exhibit hall A - E within the convention center.
- The competition area itself was completely open and observable.
- Throughout the competition floor there were multiple fencing strips laid out with metal pipe barriers beyond which only athletes competing, officials and occasionally a coach were allowed.
- The other side of the pipe barrier allowed for spectating and competitors awaiting their turn.
- An open area was left for vendors, all of which were required to be SafeSport trained. Vendors were located within the competition exhibit hall.

### MAAPP/REPORTING COMMUNICATIONS AND AWARENESS:

- At the event, auditor spoke with 2 athletes, 3 coaches, 2 officials, 2 medical personnel, one parent.
  - All individuals auditor spoke with were aware of the MAAPP and how to report.
- USA Fencing had an entire SafeSport table next to the check-in area with one-pager handouts for all MAAPP policies.
- Also next to the SafeSport table, USA Fencing had one large sign indicating who the two SafeSport contacts were at the given tournament.
  - One additional sign was posted outside the first set of restrooms on the competition exhibit hall.

### CREDENTIAL SYSTEM:

- USA Fencing did have a credentialing process for the duration of this event. Coaches were required to check-in prior to being on the competition floor as a coach.
  - USA Fencing would have the individual scan their membership card or manually look them up. The tournament database either flagged green indicating all requirements were met or flagged red showing which requirements were still missing.
  - USA Fencing staff would either provide the credential on a lanyard with a specific colored "wristband" and attach it to their lanyard or direct the individual on how to obtain the missing requirements before they would issue any credentials.
- Auditor observed instances when coaches would walk up to check-in and were missing a requirement. In those cases, USA Fencing instructed the coach what to do for the requirement and stated they could attend the event as a spectator not a coach. Once a coach completed the training, USA Fencing staff instructed the coach to provide proof of completion and then credentials were provided.
- In most instances, once issued, credentials remained around the neck of coach or official making them easily identifiable with the specific-colored wristband.

**INELIGIBLE PARTICIPATION:**

- USA Fencing requires all participants to be USA Fencing members. USA Fencing manually marks individuals on the CDD and OEL as ineligible within their membership system.
- USA Fencing uses the Administrative Hold guidance that the Center provided including that names of individuals who are on Administrative Hold cannot be posted publicly.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

No Recommendations for this section.

**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:**

No Management Response required.

## SECTION 2: RISK INCREASING FACTORS

### PURPOSE:

This section describes observations made at the event that may lead to an increased risk for misconduct, violations of the MAAPP or Code, participation of a banned or suspended individual.

### PHYSICAL EVENT SPACE LAYOUT:

- Restrooms were open to all, including the public. No monitoring was occurring. Auditor did observe numerous occasions when changing occurred in restrooms.
- There was only one entrance into the competition exhibit hall. The Convention Center hired security to stand outside the doors.
  - USA Fencing posted a “Coaches and Officials only” entrance directly next to the public entrance.
  - Security indicated they were told to look for credentials but because doors were so close, they had no way of stopping all the traffic through both doors.
- There was no signage throughout the competition exhibit hall or entrances leading in. No signage at the medical triage area or restrooms etc.

### MAAPP/REPORTING COMMUNICATIONS AND AWARENESS:

- There was a lack of any MAAPP signage in the competition exhibit hall itself. While USA Fencing had SafeSport flyers and a table set up next to check-in, no signage was posted otherwise.

### CREDENTIAL SYSTEM:

- Reference Section 5 (below).

### INELIGIBLE PARTICIPATION:

N/A

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. USA Fencing should consider posting MAAPP-specific signage throughout the competition exhibit hall.

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:

1. USA Fencing currently has an information table set up at all events that has MAAPP information. We feel that this is sufficient signage for our events. We do recognize that at the 2023 Junior Olympics, that table was located at the registration desk which was in a separate area from the competition area. USA Fencing will work to place that table in a more visible space at future events as feasible.

## SECTION 3: MAAPP REQUIRED PREVENTION POLICIES

### PURPOSE:

This section describes observations made at the event in relation to the implementation of the Required Prevention Policies to improve and ensure a safe environment for Minor Athletes.

### ATHLETIC TRAINING MODALITIES / MASSAGES / RUBDOWNS:

- USA Fencing's medical team consistently ensured a second adult participant was present in the area of all athletic training modalities, massages, or rubdowns.
- USA Fencing medical team did not ensure the contact was observable. Blue curtains were draped with pipe creating a "room" for the medical team to treat athletes. The curtains were closed on all four sides.
- Auditor observed the curtains closed while treating individuals. Once auditor announced presence at event, medical team opened up one panel of the curtains making the triage area observable.

### LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS:

- USA Fencing stated they had no locker rooms or changing areas for the event. Auditor observed three major restrooms within the exhibit halls. Only one restroom had a sign in front displaying who the SafeSport contacts were for the tournament.
- The event itself was open to the public and all individuals had access to the restroom / changing area.
- Auditor did observe athletes changing using the restrooms as noted above.

### MAAPP ELEMENTS NOT OBSERVED OR NOT APPLICABLE AT THE EVENT:

#### ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS:

- Did not observe any one-on-one interactions.

#### MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS:

- All coaching observed occurred during competition or in the open area along the sideline of the fencing strip.

#### ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS:

- Auditor did not observe any electronic communications occurring at the event. In speaking with athletes, they must show up to the Fencing Club for scheduled practice and to register for an event. According to athletes, most communication is emailing blasts from the fencing club on which all members are included.

#### TRANSPORTATION:

- USA Fencing did not provide transportation. Auditor observed on occasion athletes arriving with an adult individual. In most instances, it was audibly confirmed the adult was a parent.

#### LODGING:

- USA Fencing did not provide lodging.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. USA Fencing should recognize that restrooms were being and can be used as changing areas and USA Fencing should have a monitoring policy and protocol for all possible changing areas.
2. USA Fencing should create protocols to be effectuated at all sanctioned events that ensures, per the MAAPP, that all athletic training modalities, massages, and rubdowns are observable.

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:**

1. USA Fencing recognizes that restrooms may be used as changing areas at events, however, it is not realistically feasible to implement a monitoring policy for all restrooms. We will however, begin to include signage in the restroom related to locker room policies beginning with our next event starting on April 21<sup>st</sup>.
2. USA Fencing will review with event staff and the on-site medical staff the requirements for all treatments to be observable.

## SECTION 4: RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION

### **PURPOSE:**

This section describes issues and items found during the audit review of the Organization's Response and Resolution policies. Other details related to Response and Resolution requirements can be found in the Final Audit Report.

- Please reference Response and Resolution requirements within the audit report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. While there is no cost associated with reporting, USA Fencing should consider explicitly stating in their policy and on their reporting form that there is no cost for filing a report.

### **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:**

1. USA Fencing feels that it is clear and obvious from our reporting system that there is no cost associated with filing a complaint or report and will not be adjusting our policies.

## SECTION 5: OTHER (OPTIONAL)

- Beginning in October 2022, USA Fencing implemented a new requirement for their national events only, that all event participants that have regular contact with and/or authority over minor athletes are required to complete the sexual harassment course through SafeSport in order to receive credentials for the event.

While this requirement is above and beyond the requirement of SafeSport Training, there were instances where some participants did not know this requirement was added, were turned away from receiving credentials and were told by USA Fencing Staff they could attend as spectators. Although these coaches met all other requirements (current membership, checked against banned/suspended list, current SafeSport training and valid background check), they had not completed the sexual harassment training and therefore did not receive a coaching credential for the event, however, auditor observed some of these coaches coaching at the event and in coaches-only areas.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. USA Fencing should ensure that coaches who have not completed the required sexual harassment course are not coaching at an event without a credential or make the completion of the sexual harassment course a 'best practice' only.
2. USA Fencing should consider having officials/referees check credentials prior to competition for coaching credentials.

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:

1. USA Fencing will continue to keep the Sexual Harassment Training as a required course for our coaches and referees at National events as we feel this is a necessary educational tool to create a safer environment for our community. We will review our processes for tracking completion of that course so that we can ensure a higher completion rate.
2. USA Fencing officials do not have the capacity to police credentials for those near a fencing strip. USA Fencing will be maintaining it's policy of requiring coaches to check in prior to the start of the event and withholding credentials for those who have not met the requirements.