

Social and Electronic Communications Media Policy

Preamble

1. Communication occurs through both face-to-face interactions and electronic interactions. Electronic communication can happen in a social medium (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat) and in a non-social electronic medium (such as texting, virtual meeting platforms and email).
2. Ringette Canada recognizes that communication between all Participants should be guided by principles that ensure the safety of the Participants and that maintain and strengthen effective relationships.
3. Ringette Canada further recognizes that minor athletes, who are Vulnerable Participants, may prefer to communicate through electronic interaction. Ringette Canada strives to ensure that athletes are protected during electronic interactions with Persons in Authority and that they are not placed in a vulnerable situation.

Definitions

4. Terms in this Policy are defined as follows:
 - a) ***Electronic Communication Media*** – Communication media that is primarily for connecting with other users without a content-sharing or social networking purpose. Electronic communication media includes email, texting (SMS), Facebook messenger, video sessions, WhatsApp, virtual meeting platforms, and other similar applications.
 - b) ***Interpersonal Communication*** – Communication that occurs between two or more Participants within a communication medium.
 - c) ***Participants*** – Refers to all categories of individual members and/or registrants defined in the By-laws of Ringette Canada who are subject to the policies of Ringette Canada, as well as all people employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities with, Ringette Canada including, but not limited to, employees, contractors, athletes, coaches, instructors, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, committee members, and Directors and Officers.
 - d) ***Person in Authority*** – A Participant who holds a position of authority within Ringette Canada including, but not limited to, coaches, managers, support personnel, chaperones, and Directors. There is typically a Power Imbalance between Persons in Authority and other Participants.
 - e) ***Power Imbalance*** – A Power Imbalance may exist where, based on the totality of the circumstances, a Participant has supervisory, evaluative, a duty of care, or other authority over another Participant. A Power Imbalance may also exist between an athlete and other adults who are Persons in Authority. Maltreatment occurs when this power is misused.
 - f) ***Public Communication*** – Communication that is or was posted publicly, such as on a Participant's social media platform.

- g) **Responsible Coaching Movement** – A call to action for sport organizations, parents, and coaches to enact responsible coaching across Canada – on and off the field (<https://coach.ca/responsible-coaching-movement>)
- h) **Social Media** – Communication media that permits users to create or generate content, share that content, and network with other users. Social media includes YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tumblr, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, and other similar websites and applications.
- i) **True Sport Principles** – A values-based approach to participation in sport (<https://truesportpur.ca/true-sport-principles>)
- j) **Vulnerable Participants** – Includes children/youth (minors) and vulnerable adults (people who, because of age, disability or other circumstance, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by people in positions of trust or authority).

Context

- 5. The type and nature of Interpersonal Communication depends on the context in which the communication occurs. Interpersonal Communication may change when different stakeholders are involved and, in the sport sector, may depend on the competition stream (e.g., community sport or high performance sport). For example, expectations surrounding adult-adult communication are different than adult-teen communication (which carries the most risk of maltreatment) and are also different than adult-child communication (which is almost always interceded by parents/guardians).
- 6. Further, a primary goal of the coach-athlete relationship in the high performance stream is to create a positive and healthy training and competition environment. Whereas the main goal of the coach-athlete relationship in the community sport stream is often administrative or casual – to ensure the athlete arrives to the competition on time and has fun.

Principles

- 7. The following principles reflect Ringette Canada's values and guide this Policy:
 - a) Ringette Canada is committed to the Responsible Coaching Movement and to making sport safer for everyone, particularly Vulnerable Participants.
 - b) Ringette Canada is committed to the True Sport Principles and to ensuring that these Principles are reflected by Persons in Authority who interact with Participants.
 - c) Conduct and behaviour that occurs in Electronic Communication Media and Social Media – both Public Communication and Interpersonal Communication – is subject to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
 - d) Persons in Authority must use Electronic Communication Media and Social Media that are appropriate for the context in which the communication occurs.
 - e) Regular communication is an important requirement for nourishing effective and healthy relationships.
 - f) An open and observable environment facilitates healthy exchanges among the coach, athlete, and parent/guardian triangle which is necessary for communication with Vulnerable Participants.

8. The table below has been developed to guide Persons in Authority in their interactions with athletes of various ages in two separate coaching contexts – community sport and competition (high performance). The table assesses the vulnerability of the athlete due to their age, the frequency of contact needed with the athlete due to their context, and their risk of maltreatment. The final column of the table determines whether (and how) the Person in Authority should be communicating with their athletes on Electronic Communication (“ECM”) and/or Social Media (“SM”).
9. In the table below, the ‘Community Sport’ stream is for Participants who are participating in sport for their personal enjoyment whereas the ‘Competition (High Performance)’ stream is for Participants who want to develop their competitive abilities. The streams are described further by the Coaching Association of Canada (<https://coach.ca/nccp-streams-and-contexts>). It is expected that the contact needed between Persons in Authority and athletes in the Competition stream would be more frequent than in the Community Sport stream because there is more information to convey to further the athlete’s development and a closer relationship between athlete and coach would be beneficial. It is also expected that athletes who are 12 years old or younger will have less direct communication with a Person in Authority because their parent/guardian will be more involved in their athletic experience – regardless of stream – which reduces the risk of maltreatment. Maltreatment includes physical, psychological, and sexual maltreatment, as well as other types of misconduct such as neglect, grooming, retaliation and other behaviours that are described in the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

AGE OF ATHLETE	COMMUNITY SPORT STREAM			
	<u>Vulnerability Due to Age</u>	<u>Frequency of Contact Needed</u>	<u>Risk of Maltreatment</u>	<u>Communicate on ECM or SM?</u>
Athletes 12<	High	Low	Low	No – with few exceptions (Level 1)
Athletes 13-18	Moderate	Low – Moderate	High	No – with few exceptions (Level 1)
Athletes 19+	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Yes – with few conditions (Level 4)

AGE OF ATHLETE	COMPETITION STREAM (HIGH PERFORMANCE)			
	<u>Vulnerability Due to Age</u>	<u>Frequency of Contact Needed</u>	<u>Risk of Maltreatment</u>	<u>Communicate on ECM or SM?</u>
Athletes 13-18	Moderate	Moderate - High	High	Yes – with many conditions (Level 2)
Athletes 19+	Low	High	Moderate	Yes – with some conditions (Level 3)

Guidelines

10. The following guidelines (**Appendix A**) have been developed:

- Leading Practice – Leading practices for Persons in Authority when they communicate with athletes of different ages and in different sport contexts.
- Guide for Persons in Authority – Specific tips for Persons in Authority (primarily coaches) to assist them with their communication in Electronic Communication Media and Social Media.
- Guide for Athletes – Specific tips for athletes to assist them with their communication in Electronic Communication Media and Social Media.
- Guide for Parents – Specific tips for parents/guardians to monitor, participate in, and/or be aware of the communication between Persons in Authority and their children.

Implementation Plan

11. A sample implementation plan (**Appendix B**) has been developed to assist Ringette Canada and its coaches and teams with applying the guidelines described in this Policy.

General

- An individual who believes that a Participant's Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media activity is inappropriate or may violate Ringette Canada's policies and procedures should report the matter to Ringette Canada in the manner outlined in the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
- Removing content from Social Media after it has been posted (either publicly or privately) does not excuse the Participant from being subject to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

This Policy is subject to review at least once every three years

Date of last review: September 2021

The publication of Ringette Canada policies will be in the English and French languages. In the case of conflicting interpretations, the English version will prevail.

Appendix A – Leading Practice and Guidelines

Leading Practice – Community Sport Stream

Medium	Athletes 12<	Athletes 13-18	Athletes 19+
	Level 1		Level 4
Email	Do not email athletes unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.		Email athletes when necessary.
Text	Do not text athletes unless requested. Communicate directly with parents/guardians.		Text athletes when necessary.
Facebook	Do not add athletes to Facebook. Block friend requests.		Consider accepting or initiating friend requests. Monitor your own content.
Instagram	Do not follow athletes on Instagram. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
Twitter	Do not follow athletes on Twitter. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
Snapchat	Do not add athletes to Snapchat. Block follow requests.		Avoid using this medium.
TikTok	Do not follow athletes on TikTok. Block follow requests.		Consider accepting or initiating follow requests. Monitor your own content.
Team Communication Platforms (e.g., TeamSnap)	Do not initiate adding athletes to team communication platforms. Consider parent requests to add athletes.		Add athletes when necessary.

Leading Practice – Competition Stream (High Performance Sport)

Medium	Athletes 13-18	Athletes 19+
	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>
Email	Email athletes when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Email athletes when necessary.
Text	Text athletes when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Text athletes when necessary.
Facebook	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Instagram	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Twitter	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public. Inform parents/guardians.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Snapchat	Do not follow athletes on Snapchat. Block follow requests.	
TikTok	Do not follow athletes on TikTok. Block follow requests.	Avoid initiating contact. Accept requests if necessary. All communication must be public.
Team Communication Platforms (e.g., TeamSnap)	Add athletes when necessary. Stick to non-personal communication. Alert or copy parents/guardians.	Add athletes when necessary.

Conditions and Exceptions

Level 1 – No Communication with Few Exceptions

Under no circumstances should a Person in Authority initiate communication over an Electronic Communication Medium or a Social Medium. Contact initiated by a Participant should be rejected and/or blocked. If a Participant asks a Person in Authority why they have blocked them or rejected their communication, the Person in Authority should explain that communication is preferred either through their parent/guardian or face-to-face. At times, the Person in Authority may wish to report to the parent/guardian that their Participant is using a Social Medium that carries more risk because of the nature of the medium (such as TikTok or Snapchat), in case the parent/guardian is not aware that the Participant is using the medium.

Parents/guardians may request that a Person in Authority communicate directly with their Participant via an Electronic Communication Medium such as texting, email, or TeamSnap. The parent/guardian may rationalize that their child is old enough to communicate on such a medium and/or should become accustomed to doing so as part of their personal development. In most cases (especially with children younger than 13 years old), the Person in Authority should reject the request to communicate in this manner. Optionally, the Person in Authority can consider accepting the request with additional safeguards (such as copying the parent/guardian on sent communication and actively sending a log of received communication to the parent/guardian at regular intervals).

Level 2 – Communication with Many Conditions

Communication at this level is the riskiest. Because of the frequency of contact needed with high performance athletes, and recognizing that regular communication promotes more effective relationships, Persons in Authority may communicate with athletes on Electronic Communication Media and Social Media but must take several precautions when they do so. Communication should be open and observable whenever possible. If it is not possible to have open and observable communication on a particular medium, Persons in Authority should maintain a log or record of the communication and make it available to Ringette Canada or to the athlete's parent/guardian whenever requested.

To communicate non-personal information, Electronic Communication Media should be used by Persons in Authority to inform athletes and their parents/guardians at the same time. For example, any emails should be copied to a parent/guardian and team communication on WhatsApp should include parents/guardians. In some circumstances, non-personal communication can occur on these media without including a parent/guardian (such as an athlete informing a coach that they will be late for practice) but parents/guardians must be aware that this communication may occur and they should know that they can ask for it to cease.

Persons in Authority can be available to the athlete to receive messages about personal issues on the athlete's preferred communication medium – but these messages must be logged and available to Ringette Canada and/or to the athlete's parent/guardian. Persons in Authority should avoid initiating contact on Social Media but may accept 'friend' or 'follow' requests provided any communication that occurs on Social Media is restricted to content and material that furthers the development of the athlete's athletic goals or experience (such as training videos or comments about the sport). These interactions must be Public Communication (not private messaging) and parents/guardians must know that it may occur. A social medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period (such as Snapchat) cannot be used.

Level 3 – Communication with Some Conditions

At this level, communication on Electronic Communication Media and Social Media is permitted but Persons in Authority should take some precautions. All communication should be Public Communication, whenever possible, and should be open and observable. However, recognizing that Persons in Authority and athletes at this level are adults, communication that is of a personal nature may occur on an Electronic Communication Medium and it is not necessary to copy a second adult. This communication should be logged and available to Ringette Canada if requested.

To protect the integrity of the coach-athlete relationship, Persons in Authority should avoid initiating contact on Social Media but can be available to the athlete to receive messages about personal issues on the athlete's preferred communication medium. Persons in Authority may accept 'friend' or 'follow' requests provided any communication that occurs on Social Media is Public Communication (not private messaging). A social medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period (such as Snapchat) should be avoided.

Level 4 – Communication with Few Conditions

Communication on Electronic Communication Media and Social Media is permitted. A social medium that defaults to automatically deleting content after a set time period (such as Snapchat) should be avoided. At this level, both the Participant and the Person in Authority are adults and are expected to interact in a positive, professional manner with few restrictions on the nature of their communication. Conduct, messages, and posted content must still adhere to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

Guidelines for Persons in Authority

General – All Levels

- a) You must model appropriate behaviour befitting your role and status in connection with Ringette Canada.
- b) Ensure you host a parents and athlete information session at the beginning of your season that clearly outlines communications standards and how you will be communicating with the athletes throughout the season.

- c) Ensure all electronic and social communication is professional, unambiguous, and on-topic. Avoid emojis and unspecific language that can be interpreted in multiple ways.
- d) Be aware that you may acquire information about an athlete that imposes an obligation of disclosure on your part (such as seeing pictures of underage athletes drinking during a trip).
- e) Athletes will search for your Social Media accounts. Be prepared for how you will respond when an athlete attempts to interact with you on Social Media.
- f) Annually review and update the privacy settings on all your Social Media accounts.
- g) Consider creating separate Social Media accounts for the express purpose of communicating with Vulnerable Participants. Access should be provided to other Persons in Authority and to Ringette Canada so that the accounts are open and observable.
- h) Consider monitoring or being generally aware of athletes' public Social Media behaviour to ensure compliance with the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and this Policy.
- i) Persons in Authority may not demand access to an athlete's private posts on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook.
- j) Avoid adding athletes to Snapchat and do not send snapchats to athletes.
- k) Do not post pictures or videos of athletes on your private Social Media accounts.
- l) Keep selection decisions and other official team business off Social Media.
- m) Never misrepresent yourself by using a fake name or fake profile.
- n) Avoid association with Facebook groups, Instagram accounts, or Twitter feeds with explicit sexual conduct or viewpoints that might offend or compromise your relationship with an athlete.
- o) Do not delete your communication history with Vulnerable Participants in any medium.
- p) Be prepared to accept that Ringette Canada (or parents/guardians) may request logs or records of your communication history. Become familiar with some of the methods to save and download messages:
 - a. [Saving and Printing Instagram Messages](#)
 - b. [Download Instagram Messages \(chrome plugin\)](#)
 - c. [Saving Chat History \(WhatsApp\)](#)
 - d. [Transferring iPhone Messages](#)
 - e. [Saving Text Messages](#)

Level 2

- a) Ensure that parents are aware if some interactions may take place on Social Media and Electronic Communication Media and the context for those interactions.
- b) Attempt to make communication with athletes in Social Media and Electronic Communication Media as one-sided as possible. Be available for athletes if they initiate contact – athletes may wish to have this easy and quick access to you – but avoid imposing yourself into an athlete's personal media space.
- c) Never accept communication from one athlete while blocking another athlete. Be consistent in your use of Social Media to communicate with all athletes.
- d) Consider using TeamSnap or another league and team management application that allows non-personal communication to occur through the application/website and be directed at both parents/guardians and Vulnerable Participants at the same time.

- e) Do not initiate “friend” or “follow” requests with athletes on Facebook. Never pressure athletes to “friend” or “follow” you.
- f) Consider managing your Social Media so that athletes do not have the option to follow you on Twitter or Instagram or send you a “friend” request on Facebook.

Level 3 & Level 4

- a) Choosing not to engage with Social Media is an acceptable strategy. Be prepared to inform athletes (and/or parents/guardians) why you will not engage in this space and explain which media you will use to communicate with them.
- b) Do not use Social Media to ‘trap’ athletes if they say one thing to you in person but their Social Media activity reveals they were doing something different.
- c) Never require athletes to join Facebook, join a Facebook group, subscribe to a Twitter feed or Instagram account, or join a Facebook page about your team or organization.
- d) Exercise appropriate discretion when using Social Media for your own personal communications (with friends, colleagues, and other Persons in Authority) with the knowledge that your behaviour may be used as a model by athletes.
- e) If you use a Social Medium to communicate, do not make the Social Medium the exclusive location for important information. Duplicate important information in Electronic Communication Media (like on a website or via email).

General – Video Sessions

- a) Video sessions should be recorded, when possible. Recording video sessions documents the interaction and serves to ‘open’ the environment. Your sport organization, the athlete and/or a minor athlete’s parent/guardian (when applicable) should be permitted to view the recording.
- b) Video sessions with groups of athletes (such as a team) should be attended by at least two adults (preferably coaches). One-on-one video sessions should be either recorded with permission and/or attended by another adult and/or the athlete’s parent/guardian (when applicable). No one-on-one video session with a minor athlete should take place without a parent/guardian’s knowledge.
- c) Provide a clear statement of professional standards expected of all attending individuals prior to any video session. Provide an outline and agenda of the video session to athletes and to the athlete’s parent/guardian (when applicable) prior to the session. Any breaches of professional standards that occurred during the session must be communicated to parents/guardians of minor athletes after the session.
- d) Sessions should avoid overly personal communication and focus on training/coaching.
- e) Video sessions should be held in a professional setting. Your video stream must show a neutral background (avoid bedrooms and bathrooms).
- f) Dress professionally (to the point of over-dressing) and reduce socialization.
- g) Inform your sport organization that you intend to communicate with athletes via video session. If you intend to provide instruction or skills training, your organization may need to sanction the session and/or parents/guardians of minor athletes may need to sign an agreement or a waiver.

Guidelines for Athletes

General – All Levels

- a) Set your privacy settings to restrict who can search for you and what private information other people can see.
- b) Coaches, teammates, officials, or opposing competitors may all add you to Facebook or follow you on Instagram or Twitter. You are not required to follow anyone or be Facebook friends with anyone.
- c) Avoid adding Persons in Authority to Snapchat and do not send snapchats to Persons in Authority.
- d) If you are under the age of 18, make sure that your parent/guardian is aware of any Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media interactions that you have with your coach or another Person in Authority.
- e) If you feel harassed by someone in an Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media interaction, report it to your parent/guardian, a Person in Authority, or to Ringette Canada.
- f) You do not have to join a fan page on Facebook or follow a Twitter feed or Instagram account if you do not want to.
- g) Content posted or shared on Social Media, relative to your privacy settings, is considered Public Communication. In most cases, you do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy for any material that you post or share.
- h) Content posted on Social Media is almost always permanent – consider that other individuals may take screenshots of your content (even snapchats) before you can delete them.
- i) Avoid posting pictures of, or alluding to, participation in illegal activity such as: speeding, physical assault, harassment, drinking alcohol (if underage), and smoking marijuana.
- j) Model appropriate behaviour in Social Media befitting your status as a) an athlete, and b) a participant within Ringette Canada. As a representative of Ringette Canada, you have agreed to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and must follow that Code when you post material and interact with other people through Electronic Communication Media and Social Media.
- k) Be aware that your public Facebook page, Instagram account, or Twitter feed may be monitored by your coach or another Person in Authority, or by Ringette Canada. Content or behaviour on Social Media may be subject to sanction under the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.
- l) If you attend a video session, your video stream should show a neutral background (avoid bedrooms and bathrooms).

Guidelines for Parents / Guardians

General

- a) You can request copies of any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication Media between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant.
- b) You can request that any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant be logged and available to you.
- c) You can inform Persons in Authority that they are not permitted to contact your Vulnerable Participant on any (or a specific) Social Medium.
- d) Inform Ringette Canada if a Person in Authority interacted with your Vulnerable Participant in an Electronic Communication Medium or Social Medium without your knowledge.
- e) Inform Ringette Canada if a Person in Authority initiated an interaction with your Vulnerable Participant on a Social Medium.

Level 1

- a) Accept that Persons in Authority may not feel comfortable communicating with your child on an Electronic Communication Medium. Respect their decision not to communicate with your Vulnerable Participant in this way.

Level 2 & Level 3

- a) Be aware that Participants between the ages of 13 and 18 often prefer to discuss personal and non-personal matters on Electronic Communication Media or Social Media rather than face-to-face. Permitting your Vulnerable Participant to have this option (with certain conditions) to connect with a Person in Authority may improve their athletic experience and personal development.
- b) Consider joining any Public Communication that occurs on a Social Medium between a Person in Authority and your Vulnerable Participant (such as by tagging a coach and your athlete on a Twitter thread or by adding a comment to an Instagram post).

Appendix B – Implementation Plan

The following implementation plan describes how Ringette Canada can adopt the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy*. A sample script related to communication and a communication consent form are also provided. Ringette Canada may need to modify the implementation plan with their teams and coaches to match the sporting context of the Event or activity (e.g., age of athletes, competition level) and align with the organization's values.

Ringette Canada: **Approving the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy***

Once Ringette Canada has reviewed the Policy and made any modifications (subject to approval, if necessary), it should be formally approved by the Board of Directors.

The Policy is also intended to align with the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*. Also, this Policy replaces any Social Media-related policy currently in use by Ringette Canada.

Ringette Canada: **Communicating the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy***

Once the new Policy is approved, Ringette Canada will want to communicate it to the individuals that it affects. Primarily, these groups will include coaches, athletes, and parents/guardians of minor athletes. It is not sufficient to simply post the Policy on the website.

As part of the registration process, all coaches and athletes (and their parents/guardians) must be informed of the policies that apply to them – such as screening, conduct, privacy, and now the new *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy*. Ideally, these documents should be attached to a registration email and links should also be provided. If Ringette Canada approves the Policy mid-season, it should be added as an attachment to an email that is sent to everyone registered with Ringette Canada.

For some individuals, content in this Policy may be contentious or controversial. Ringette Canada may want to have a feedback form or assign an individual to be contacted to address questions. A meeting could be hosted with all coaches to discuss how each team or coach will implement the new Policy. The new Policy may disrupt the way some of Ringette Canada's coaches communicate with athletes – so a training session may be required as well.

Coaches and Teams: Adhering to the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy*

At first, it may be a struggle for some coaches and teams to adhere to the new Policy. All stakeholders should be reminded of the value of the new Policy and its overall intention to protect athletes and safeguard coaches, while continuing healthy relationships. If certain challenges persist – or if there are some guidelines that are not being followed by anyone – Ringette Canada may want to host a training session with a communication consultant or with someone from the Coaching Association of Canada. Alternatively, Ringette Canada could consider modifying the Policy to address the main challenges (provided any modifications continue to align with the intent of the Policy).

Coaches and Teams: Modifying Pre-Season Briefing Script and Communication Consent Form

This basic script can be used by coaches at a meeting with athletes and parents/guardians (when applicable) at the beginning of each season or when the new Policy is implemented:

“Ringette Canada has approved a *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy* which has been communicated to you in advance of this meeting. The overall intention of the Policy is to protect athletes and continue to develop healthy communication strategies between athletes and coaches. As a certified coach, it is important to me that we all communicate effectively and safely.

The Policy describes several ‘Levels’ of context that inform the guidelines for communication between Persons in Authority and athletes. Our context would be considered a [insert level] because we are a [competitive or recreational] team consisting of athletes who are [age of athlete] years old.

The coaching staff has reviewed the guidelines for our level. We have decided that we will [describe whether coaches will accept certain contact on which media + which media they will be used to communicate]

Sample: We will not accept friend or follow requests from athletes on social media – but I will accept athletes who follow me on Twitter because I ‘like’ and ‘retweet’ content that can assist with athlete development. Parents are encouraged to follow me too. Primarily, we will use TeamSnap to communicate team information but parents should text me in emergencies or if the athlete will be late to a game or practice.

Sample: Since the athletes are 17 years old, we have decided that we will accept friend and follow requests on Instagram and Twitter. But please do not send us direct messages on these accounts because we will not respond. We also have a YouTube channel where we post skills videos and athletes are encouraged to follow that channel. If a parent does not want us interacting with your athlete in these spaces – please let me know. I prefer to use email to send team messages but I will also text athletes or parents if I need information quickly. I do not delete text messages and I provide my communication history to our High Performance Director at the end of the season or when requested.

Sample: Since you are all older than 19 years old, and you all have high performance competitive goals, we intend to communicate with you like adults. We have therefore decided to accept communication in your preferred medium – you can reach me on Facebook messenger, Instagram messenger, text, email, or WhatsApp and I will respond quickly. But recognizing that we are not friends – the coaches are still your coaches – I will be using WhatsApp as my primarily communication medium and I would encourage everyone to join our team WhatsApp group. For those who do not use WhatsApp, I will be duplicating all important team information in regular emails.

If anyone has any questions about our approach to Electronic Communication Media and Social Media, or about this new Policy, please let me know and I will set up a meeting with you and ask someone else from our organization to join us.”

This communication consent form can be used by Persons in Authority to acquire consent from parents/guardians of Participants who are younger than 18 years old:

Communication Consent Form

Name of Participant (print): _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): _____

Date: _____

1. I, being the parent or legal guardian of the minor Participant, hereby grant to **[insert names of Persons in Authority]** (“Persons in Authority”) the permission to contact the Participant as follows:

[insert nature of contact]

Sample: Through TeamSnap, Email, and Text for all types of communication and through direct messages on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and through Public Communication posts on any Social Medium.

Sample: Through Text, only in emergencies

2. I understand that I may request to see a log or record of any communication that occurs on Electronic Communication Media and/or Social Media.
3. I understand that I may request that the Person in Authority cease communicating with the Participant on any Social Medium.
4. **I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE** that I have read and understood the terms and conditions of this document and that I have been provided with the *Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy*. On behalf of myself, my heirs and assigns, I agree that I am signing this document voluntarily.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____