

Harbour City Lakers Ringette Association

Social Media & Electronic Communications Policy

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Definitions

1. The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:
 - a) “Association” – **Harbour City Lakers Ringette Association**
 - b) “Participant” – An individual that is registered in an Association program.
 - c) “Applicable Adult” – Coaches, managers, officials, board volunteers, dressing room monitors, trainers, instructors, evaluators, and any other adults in a position of trust or authority over Participants.

Introduction

As part of the Association’s emphasis on safety, communications involving any Participant, and especially minor Participants, should be appropriate, productive, and transparent.

Effective communication concerning travel, practice or game schedules, and administrative issues among coaches, administrators, players, and their families is crucial. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media, and other forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and may also provide potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to minor Participants. The improper use of social media, mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct. Adherence to this Social Media & Electronic Communications Policy helps reduce these risks.

All electronic communication originating from Applicable Adults to Participants must be professional in nature. Absent emergency circumstances, if an Applicable Adult with authority over minor Participants needs to communicate directly with a minor Participant via electronic communications (including social media), the minor Participant’s parent must be copied (*see Safe Sport Policy: Rule of Two*). If a minor Participant communicates to the Applicable Adult (with authority over the minor athlete) privately first, said Applicable Adult should respond to the minor Participant with a copy to another Applicable Adult or the minor Participant’s legal guardian. When an Applicable Adult with authority over minor Participants communicates electronically to the entire team, said Applicable Adult must copy another adult.

Pursuant to these requirements, all electronic communication between coach and player must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Coaches, players and all team personnel must follow common sense guidelines regarding the tone, volume, and time of day of any allowed electronic communication. All content between coaches and players should be readily available to share with the Association or families of the player or coach. If the player is under the age of 18, any email, text, social media, or similar communication must also copy or include the player’s parents.

Social Media

Social media makes it easy to share ideas and experiences. The Association recognizes, however, that social media, mobile and other electronic communications can be potentially harmful where minor Participants are involved.

Coaches are strictly prohibited from having minor Participants joined to or connected through their personal Facebook page, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, or any other similar social media application, unless the Participant is a direct relation. To facilitate communication, an official organization or team page may be set up and players and parents may join (i.e., “friend”) the official organization or team page and coaches can communicate to the team through that platform. All electronic communication of any kind between coach (and any Applicable Adult) and a minor Participant, including use of social media, must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented purposes.

Email, Text Messaging and Similar Electronic Communications

Coaches, team managers and players may use email and text messaging to communicate. All email and text message content between coaches/team managers and minor Participants must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Emails and text messages from a coach to any minor Participant must include a copy to the player's parents.

Social Media and Group Chats Among Players

Participants often create group chats through texting or other social media applications. Such group chats may be a fun and helpful way of staying connected, however they also present risk because they may be used to engage in bullying behavior, sexual misconduct, harassment, threats, discriminatory and other inappropriate conduct that may violate policies of the Association (see HCL Code of Conduct and Ethics). Team sanctioned group chats among minor Participants should be supervised by an adult to mitigate these risks, and coaches should discuss the risks of group chats with athletes at the beginning of the season.

Abuse and Misconduct

Social media and other means of electronic communication can be used to commit abuse and misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by any coach, volunteer, parent, independent contractor or Participant of an Association program will not be tolerated and are considered violations of Association's SafeSport Policy and Code of Ethics & Conduct.

An Association Participant who violates this Social Media & Electronic Communications Policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

Reporting

Participants are encouraged to inform an adult they trust if they receive any electronic or social media communication that makes them feel uncomfortable or if an Applicable Adult has told them not to tell anyone else about a communication.

The Association should be made aware immediately via the President when there is a complaint of breach of this policy, in which case follow up action shall be taken within 3 business days. Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint it may require review under the HCL Discipline & Complaints Policy. All legal violations should be reported directly to the local police agency.