

Team Code of Conduct: *For Sports Programs*

It can be difficult for coaches to integrate athletes who struggle with social interaction, exhibit challenging behavior, and may be delayed in their development of sport skills. Under these circumstances, it is important for coaches to have something they can fall back on to remind everyone of the values of sport and the right to play.

There are a number of resources available to address bullying prevention within the sport sector that may be useful for coaches who are facing challenges integrating an athlete on the autism spectrum (see viaSport's Erase Bullying campaign). Beyond those resources, it can be important to work with your local sport organization/club to create a Code of Conduct for players and parents (if one does not already exist). It may be particularly effective to co-create your Code of Conduct with your players.

Here are ideas about what might be included in your Team Code of Conduct:

Respect - Everyone deserves it.

Respectful Language: Using polite language when interacting with your teammates, coaches, officials and other players. Encouraging teammates.

Respectful Actions: Good sportsmanship: Listening to the coach and trying your best. Supporting teammates and giving everyone a chance to do their best.

Note: Some Autistic athletes may struggle with appropriate language, speech and social interaction. In those cases, it is important they are held to the same standard as their teammates, with the understanding that they may need additional support in learning what is appropriate, and specific feedback/reinforcement when appropriate behavior is displayed.

Effort - Teammates commit to trying their best and support their teammates to achieve to the best of their abilities.

Teamwork - Working as a group to achieve goals. Depending on the context, that might mean learning to make plays as a team or cheering for each other.

Right to Play - Regardless of ability, all athletes should be welcomed and supported so they can participate.

