



Electronic Communication and Social Media Guidelines of the Arizona Interscholastic Cycling League

The following guidelines have been developed to aid League coaches and the League community in complying with existing NICA [Athlete Abuse Prevention Program](#) policies and to maintain League core values while using e-communication and social media.

The League recognizes that League leaders, coaches, staff and other adults use electronic communications and social media to convey information to student-athletes. The League also recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world as many of our student-athletes use these means as their primary method of communication.

As a youth sport and youth development organization, the League expects leaders to communicate with student-athletes, online and otherwise, in a manner aligned with our core values of fun, inclusivity, equity, respect and community and that communications maintain our culture of athlete-abuse awareness and prevention and risk management.

These guidelines should be reviewed with and agreed to by all student-athletes, parents, coaches and other adults affiliated with the Leagues and its teams.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

What types of communication are appropriate between a Coach and student-athlete?

All communications between a coach or other adult and a student-athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about national, league or team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications and social media must adhere to the League's code of conduct and policies, especially those limiting 1:1 interaction between coaches and student-athletes.

Whether one is a student-athlete, coach, league staff, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other student-athletes?"

How to manage communications between coaches and student-athletes

All electronic communication with student-athletes should be Transparent, Accessible and Professional or "T.A.P." If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with student-athletes will be appropriate.

Transparent : All electronic communication between coaches and student-athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct but also free of hidden meanings, innuendos, and expectations.

Accessible : All electronic communication between coaches and student-athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the team and League’s records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional : All electronic communications between a coach and student-athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the team and the League. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a League staff member, League Director or licensed coach.

Social media or electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- The adult’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems;
- Drugs or alcohol use;
- Sexually oriented conversation, sexually explicit language or sexual activity;
- Inappropriate or sexually explicit images
- Communication concerning a student-athlete’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.
- Any and all hate speech, including but not limited to: racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and religious discrimination
 - The League has adopted [Facebook Hate Speech Community Standards](#) (tier 1-3)
 - Posting hate speech and connecting this speech to the League may be grounds for disciplinary action through the League Director.

All photos, posts and content should reflect the League’s core values of fun, inclusivity, equity, respect and community. Only post photos and/or content that show positive behavior and sportsmanship, riding with respect, and of activities and behavior that are allowed at League practices and events per the League handbook and League code of conduct.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MOST-USED ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

Facebook

Coaches and League staff may have personal Facebook pages, however should not be friends with any student-athletes. Coaches should remind student-athletes this is not permitted. Coaches and League staff should not “private message” or “instant message” each other through Facebook, Facebook chat or other IM methods. Private chats or messaging leaves adults open to accusations of abuse.

The League and teams are encouraged to have official Facebook pages that student-athletes and parents can “Like” or “Follow” for information and updates on team-related matters. Pages should have a minimum of three administrators to ensure any communication that may occur between team pages and any student-athletes adheres to the T. A. P. criteria outlined above. If coaches or League staff have concerns about student-athletes accessing their personal information, it is recommended that personal pages are set to “private.”

Instagram, Twitter Snapchat, YouTube, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WhatsApp and others not specifically mentioned

The League and teams are encouraged to have official Instagram and Twitter accounts that coaches, student-athletes and parents may follow for information and updates. Coaches and League staff should not follow student-athletes from their personal accounts. Student-athletes should not follow coaches and League staff

personal accounts. Coaches and League staff should not “direct message” student-athletes from their personal Instagram accounts as private chats or messaging leaves adults open to accusations of abuse.

Instagram and Twitter and any social media accounts for the League and teams should have a minimum of three individuals with administrative access to ensure any communication that may occur on an official League or team account adheres to the T.A.P. criteria. It is acceptable for official League or team accounts to “Follow” student-athletes as long as the official account is accessible by a minimum of three administrators.

Strava

The Leagues and teams may have Strava accounts that coaches, student-athletes and parents may follow for ride information and route tracking. It is recommended that coaches and League staff do not follow student-athletes from their personal accounts. Coaches and League staff should not message or comment on student-athletes from their personal Strava accounts.

Official League and team Strava accounts should have a minimum of three individuals with administrative access to ensure any communication that may occur on an official League or team account adheres to the T.A.P. criteria. It is acceptable for official League or team accounts to “Follow” student-athletes as long as the official account is accessible by a minimum of three administrators.

Virtual Meetings, Zoom, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, etc.

Generally, the League doesn’t recommend or expect coaches to host virtual meetings or practices. However, the League also recognizes a virtual meeting may help student-athletes and coaches stay connected with teammates if in-person practices or events cannot happen.

Anytime League community members connect online, our primary safety concern is one-on-one contact between coaches and student-athletes. One-on-one is not allowed as it presents an opportunity for grooming and abuse of a student-athlete by a coach. Having a one-on-one video chat with a student-athlete is a violation of League policies. Virtual meetings are no different than in person practices, meetings and events and must comply with normal League preseason, in season and offseason rules.

If a coach or an adult does choose to host an online meeting, all the same abuse prevention rules apply. Meetings should always have at least two coaches on the call and coaches should log in 5 minutes before the meeting. Parents should also be invited to attend or at the minimum get an invite to the meeting. No meeting should occur before 8 AM or after 8 PM and all interaction should be Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

Should a coach or team choose to have a virtual meeting, coaches should first assess the value of video conferencing while also considering equal access. Is this really necessary? Is this adding value to my team and team culture? Do all my student-athletes have an internet connection and a computer/phone so they aren’t excluded? Ask yourself these important questions before you host virtual meetings.

Texting, Email and TeamSnap Text/Email Messages

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and student-athletes during the hours from 8 AM until 8 PM local time. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team or League activities. When communicating with a student-athlete through email, a parent, another coach, League staff or League board member must also be copied.

Request to Discontinue All Electronic Communications

The parents or guardians of a student-athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Media / Photo Release

Unless otherwise noted by the League, all registered student-athletes sign a media waiver that authorizes the League, NICA, sponsors and outside media agents (newspapers, television, etc.) to take photographs, videos and otherwise document student-athletes involved in the activities of League programs. Permission is granted for any photographs or video material of the student-athletes to be used in publicity about the program and organization (website, promotional materials, newspaper/magazine articles, etc.).