



# Safe Play

A guide for tournament directors,  
organizers, and participants

● [new.uschess.org/us-chess-safe-play-hub](https://new.uschess.org/us-chess-safe-play-hub)



*"US Chess is committed to providing a safe environment for all chess players."*

**Safe Play is a comprehensive player safety program consisting of education, screening, reporting tools, and policies for appropriate conduct in chess.**

US Chess has zero tolerance for abuse and misconduct.





# History Of Safe Play

*2019*

US Chess adopts Safe Play guidelines. (effective 9/1/2019).

*2020*

Background screening requirement is expanded to include all third-party events awarded through the bidding process (effective 9/1/2020).

*Feb. 2022*

The first investigation under the new Safe Play guidelines is conducted and closed.

*June 2023*

Safe Play Advisory Group is established.  
Executive Board publishes sanctions list.



# History Of Safe Play

*Aug. 2023*

US Chess enters into a partnership with the U.S. Center for SafeSport, requiring all US Chess-certified Tournament Directors (TDs) to take the authorized SafeSport core training to remain or become certified.

The Executive Board unanimously votes to amend the US Chess Invitational Rules to require Team Captains and Coaches to meet both FIDE and US Chess requirements.

*Jan. 1, 2024*

Safe Play Policy is adopted.

*June 1, 2024*

Deadline for all Tournament Directors to complete the required training in order to direct US Chess rated tournaments.

# How to Respond to an On-Site Incident

- Protect the complainant. Take all reasonable measures to ensure they are safe from further abuse. Complainant safety is paramount.
- Isolate the alleged perpetrator and determine if local authorities and venue leadership should be contacted.
- If the complainant is a minor, follow mandatory reporting requirements [for the state](#).
- Report the incident to US Chess. If US Chess is hosting the event, a Safe Play representative will be onsite to take the complaint. For other instances, report using the [online webform](#), emailing [abuse@uschess.org](mailto:abuse@uschess.org), or calling 314.661.9500 ext. 8.

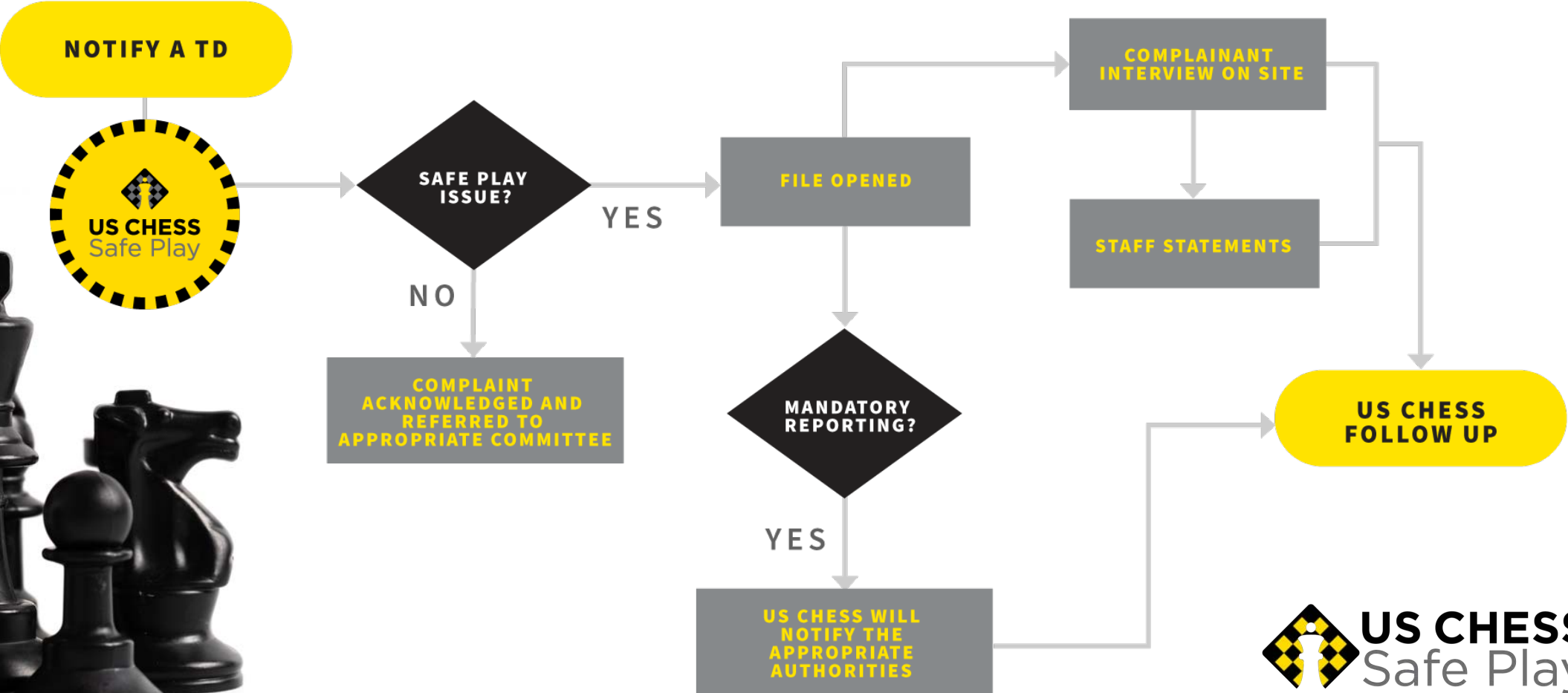
See the [Safe Play Policy](#) for additional details.



# Mandatory Reporting

- Mandatory reporting is required by law if child abuse or neglect is suspected or observed. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have state-specific laws delineating who must report. Find state-specific laws here: [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#)
- There is no liability for making a good faith report.

# How to Report During A Chess Event



# How to Report Outside a US Chess Event

**Online:**  
[Safe Play Misconduct  
Report Form](#)

**Email:**  
[abuse@uschess.org](mailto:abuse@uschess.org)

**Phone:**  
314.661.9500 extension 8

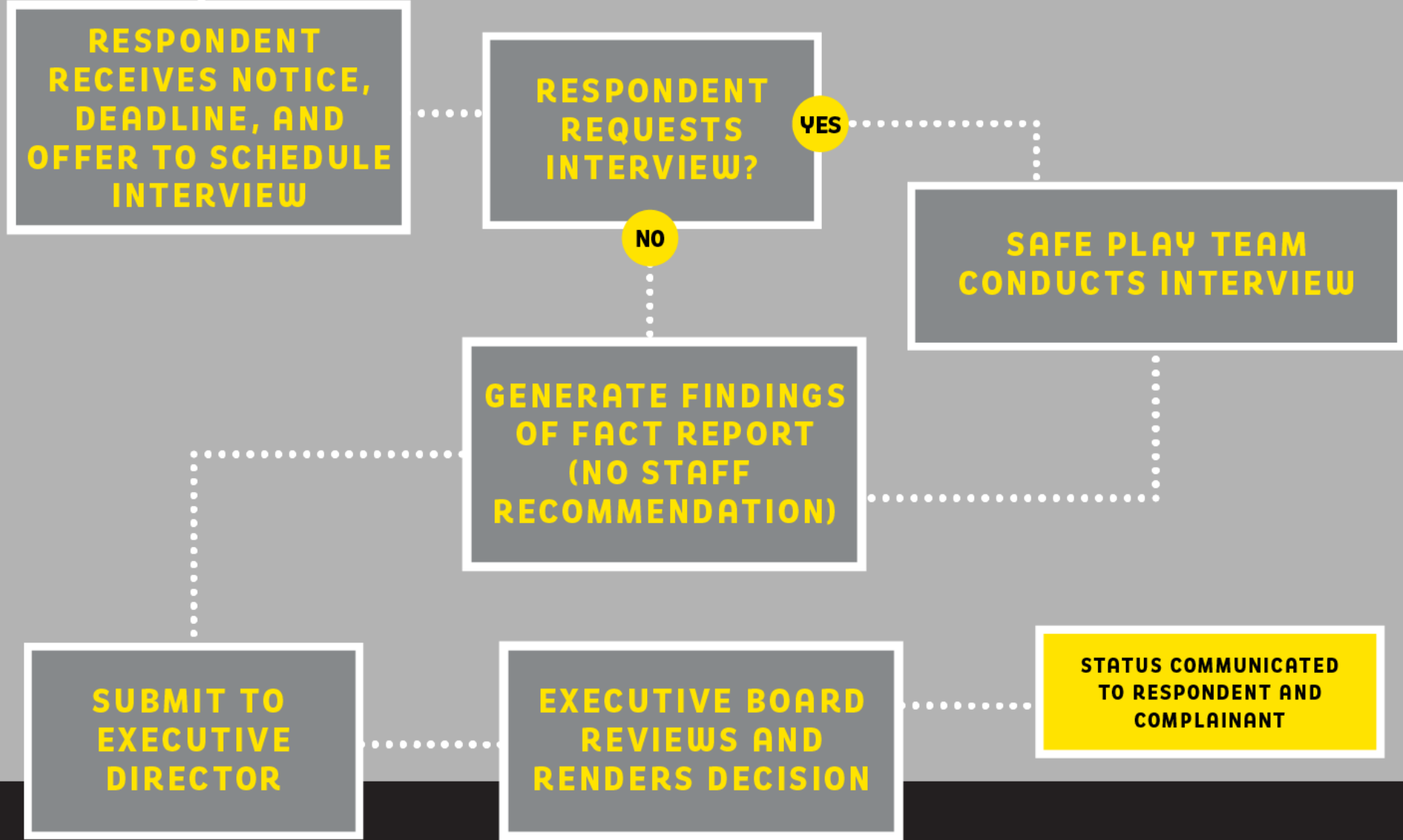
Complaints can be filed anonymously, but the extent of the investigation will be dependent on the level of anonymity requested.



# After A Complaint is Received



*Continue next slide*





# Possible Sanctions for Safe Play Violations

Written Warning

Probation

Temporary  
Suspension

Suspension

Permanent  
Revocation of  
Membership

Other  
discretionary  
sanctions



# What is the ED Temporary Suspension?

A temporary suspension prevents a respondent from participating in any US Chess-rated/sanctioned events prior to a final decision by the Executive Board. The Executive Director can impose a temporary 90-day suspension when a complaint is filed if it is determined that:

1. The temporary suspension is appropriate based on the seriousness of facts and circumstances of the complaint.
2. The temporary suspension is necessary to maintain the safety or well-being of the complainant.
3. The respondent's continued presence could be detrimental to the best interest of the chess community.

[Article III, Section 11 of the US Chess Bylaws](#)





# Who Benefits From SafeSport Training?

# A: More than just TDs!

- TDs are required to take SafeSport training because they're on the front lines at tournaments. Trained TDs will not only learn how to approach potentially difficult situations, but they may even be able to prevent them. TDs must be 13 years old before taking SafeSport training.
- Organizers, volunteers, parents, spectators, coaches, and others benefit from training by understanding and learning to recognize signs of harassment or abuse.

It takes a community to ensure safe and welcoming spaces for all. Everybody benefits from SafeSport training!



# Myth

*It's an insult to experienced TDs to have to take SafeSport training. We're not the problem.*

# Fact

SafeSport training arms our tournament staff with **resources and knowledge** on what to do. TDs are our front line, but others who work with events should also take the training.



# Myth

*If I take the SafeSport training, I will increase my liability.*

# Fact

SafeSport training helps you **understand your obligations** and provides resources on what is required in each state. Burying your head in the sand doesn't reduce your liability.





# Myth

*US Chess has gone “woke” with this Safe Play stuff.*

# Fact

Keeping chess **safe and accessible** to all players reflects basic standards of decency.



 **US CHESS**  
Safe Play

# SafeSport Core Training Requirements

- SafeSport Core training must be completed by June 1, 2024. TDs who have not completed their training by this date will have their certification changed to inactive.
- SafeSport Core training is required as part of TD certification for new TDs.

Cost: \$19 with coupon code **FSCheSSDisSST1972723**

Instructions on how to [access the core course](#).

# SafeSport Refresher Training

- Required annually to maintain TD certification.
- Must be completed by the one-year anniversary of the previous training completion date, with a 30-day grace period. (For example, if you completed your Core training on March 1, 2024, your Refresher 1 course will need to be completed by March 31, 2025.)
- TD certification will be changed to inactive if deadlines are not met.

Cost: \$9 annually with coupon code **FSCheDisR1972723**

Instructions on how to [access Refresher 1](#).





# Safe Play Vignettes

*The state affiliate conducts a state championship event where a competitor is sending text messages to another competitor's mom, propositioning her. The mom complains to state chapter officers at the event and is concerned for her safety at the event.*

**Q:**

Can the state affiliate address the Safe Play complaint of the parent at the state or local level?

# A: Absolutely!

- Parents and players are “covered individuals” under the Safe Play Policy.
- Nothing in the Safe Play Policy prohibits local and state affiliates from applying and enforcing these rules to keep all players safe.

*During the High School Nationals, a 16-year-old male chess team member tells a 15-year-old male chess team member that since it's his first national tournament, he must undergo a "new player orientation" to earn his place on the team. He must violate curfew and run across the street to the 7-Eleven after midnight to bring back slushies for the rest of the team. If he fails to do this, the rest of the team will not accept him and will ignore him for the rest of the tournament.*

**Q:**

Is there a Safe Play violation?

# A: Yes!

- This is considered hazing and violates Section III, C of the Safe Play Policy. Hazing is any conduct that subjects another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a group, team or organization.
- 21% of abuse comes from minors on minors (*CAC statistic from 2022*)



*A player at an open chess tournament walks around and uses his cell phone to take photos of female participants to upload on his webpage, “Hot Girls Who Play Chess.” The parent of a photographed female participant complains to the Organizer and Chief TD.*



**Q:**

Can the parent (on behalf of the daughter) get relief for the daughter under the Safe Play Policy at this event?

# A: Yes!

- This potentially violates multiple areas of Section III of the Safe Play Policy, including sexual misconduct, cyber-bullying, and harassment.
- In addition to any actions taken locally, the parent or player can file a Safe Play complaint with US Chess.

*A male US Chess member gets drunk and physically grabs a female at a bar and tries to force himself on her.*

**Q1 & 2:**

What should you do?

Is there a Safe Play violation?

# A1:

- Be safe and find assistance.
- Be loud and draw attention to the inappropriate behavior.
- Call the police!

# A2: Maybe

Facts that might make a difference:

- The bar was rented out by a US Chess affiliate as part of the closing ceremony of a rated chess event.
- It was a private event, unrelated to any chess activity.

*Sam and John are the top two players on their elementary school chess team. Sam is the highest rated member, and John is very competitive and wants to be the top player. While competing at Elementary Nationals and finding seats for round one, John comes up to Sam's board, walks over to Sam's opponent, and says where both could hear, "Sam opens with the Scotch; don't take the knight." John then smirks at Sam and walks off to find his board. When he reaches his board, John yells across the playing room, "Hey Sam, you suck!" John's dad hears the exchange and just laughs. Sam's mom is at his board, hears everything as well, and is upset. Sam loses his game and returns to the team room to report his results. John jumps up and down and celebrates Sam's loss in front of their teammates.*

**Q:**

Does John's conduct violate the Safe Play Policy?

# A: Yes!

This is Bullying and violates Section III, B of the Safe Play Policy. Bullying is repeated and/or severe aggressive behavior between two or more people that is intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish another person emotionally, physically or sexually. Bullying can occur between Minors, between Adults, and between Minors and Adults. What constitutes bullying is based on the perception of the victim, bystanders, or witnesses, but not the alleged perpetrator of the bullying activity. ***Continued ...***

This behavior is not considered Rude, Mean and Conflict because it is deliberate and did not arise out of a conflict.

Rude, Mean and Conflict is defined as rude, hurtful behavior that is inadvertent, or that arises out of conflict or struggle where no power imbalance is present. Rude, Mean and Conflict behavior might not rise to the level of bullying.



# US Chess Resources

- [Safe Play Policy](#)
- [SafeSport Core training sign-up instructions](#)
- [SafeSport Refresher training instructions](#)
- [Reporting abuse to US Chess](#)

Find all of these resources and more at the US Chess [Safe Play hub](#).



# Other Resources

- [Mandatory Reporting by State](#)
- [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)
- [National Safe Place](#)
- [RAINN](#)
- [CDC](#)
- 24-hour National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

# Questions?

For more information visit  
the [Safe Play hub](#) or  
contact Safe Play Manager  
Melinda Matthews at  
[mmatthews@uschess.org](mailto:mmatthews@uschess.org).



● [new.uschess.org/us-chess-safe-play-hub](https://new.uschess.org/us-chess-safe-play-hub)