



INFORMATION FOR COACHES

About the Program:

Athletes As Leaders (AAL) is a program for high school athletes on girls' sports teams. The program aims to empower youth to take an active role in challenging stereotypes, promoting healthy relationships and creating a safe and welcoming community for all. AAL is based on research and best practices in the field of sexual assault prevention. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in changing peer norms and school climate to a culture of safety and respect. Team mentor(s) facilitate the groups and guide the team through a series of discussions, based on the weekly topic. The program has been evaluated nationally. Athletes who completed the program had an improved ability to identify abusive behaviors, and improved belief in gender equity, and an increased self-image and confidence in their leadership.

Athletes As Leaders Principles:

These are common themes throughout the program. Student athletes are encouraged to model and promote these as social norms with their peers.

[**Health & Safety**]

[**Inclusive & Welcoming Community**]

[**Empathy**]

[**Consent**]

[**Gender & Racial Equity**]

[**Youth Leadership**]

Fits into the sports season

10 weekly program sessions x
20 minutes per session

Mentors facilitate the groups

Program Sessions:

1. Introductions & Group Agreements
2. Understanding Privilege & Oppression
3. Challenging Harmful Stereotypes
4. Addressing Misinformation & Bias
5. Unpacking Beauty Standards
6. Ending Rumor Spreading & Shaming
7. Promoting Consent
8. Fostering Healthy Relationships
9. Building Community
10. Celebrating Our Successes

Key Concepts from the Program and Tips for Coaches

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

- » Avoid terms that reinforce negative stereotypes such as 'girl push-ups,' 'run like a girl,' 'man up,' or 'girls are so dramatic.'
- » Praise athletes on their strength, character, teamwork, effort, dedication, skill, level of improvement, and their accomplishments.
- » Use gender-inclusive terms such as 'Huddle up, team,' 'Listen up, [team mascot],' or "Okay, wrestlers!"
- » Nurture a supportive team culture for girls & non-binary* athletes, regardless of how they choose to dress or express themselves. The goal is for all athletes to feel welcome and included on the team.

Boundaries With Athletes

- » You play a key role in showing what appropriate boundaries should look like with an adult, and with someone in a position of power.
- » Avoid comments about an athlete's physical appearance unless it relates to performance/ uniform standards.
- » Practice consent. Beyond high fives, ask before you touch. For example, "Is it ok if I move your arms to correct your position?"
- » Give everyone the same level of support and attention.
- » Contact athletes outside of the program only as necessary and related to the sport.
- » Avoid one-on-one contact and special privileges for certain athletes.
- » Communicate with parents and have an open-door policy.

Promoting Gender Equity

- » Advocate for girls' teams to get the same recognition (i.e. assemblies, announcements) and resources (i.e. fundraisers, facilities) as the boys.
- » Speak up about unfair rules that put a certain group of athletes at a disadvantage or exclude athletes (such as girls, non-binary* youth, low income students, youth of color, etc.).
- » Encourage the leadership of girls & non-binary* student athletes.
- » Hire, promote & advocate for a diverse coaching staff.
- » Learn about Title IX and how you can prevent gender discrimination.

Supporting Survivors

- If an athlete reports that they have experienced abuse or trauma:
- » Listen to them. Believe them. Thank them for telling you, and let them know you are there to support them.
 - » Refer to community resources, such as a hotline, school counselor, or local sexual assault program.
 - » Follow the reporting requirements for your school or organization.
 - » Sports & exercise can help provide stress relief and regular routine, both of which are recommended for trauma survivors.

* Non-binary = outside of the binary ("either/or") of male or female. Non-binary identities can include expressions of masculinity, femininity, both, or neither.