

# Athletes As Leaders

AthletesAsLeaders.org

## INFORMATION FOR COACHES

Thank you for your getting your team involved in Athletes As Leaders this season!

### About the Program:

Athletes As Leaders is a leadership program for high school athletes on girls' sports teams. The program aims to empower student athletes to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. It 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. Student athletes will learn to create a welcoming community for their peers and to advocate for equality and fairness. Athletes who have completed the program report that the program improved their teamwork and group bond. The mentor will run the groups and guide the team through a series of discussions, based on the weekly topic.

### Program Goals:

- » Build strong teams and foster healthy relationships among athletes and their peers
- » Build trust, positive team culture, and set norms for behavior within the team, school and larger community
- » Help define healthy and unhealthy behaviors in relationships
- » Challenge harmful gender stereotypes & media messages

### Session Topics:

1. Introductions & Group Agreements
2. Challenging Gender Stereotypes
3. Privilege & Oppression
4. Self-Image & Standards of Beauty
5. Rumor Spreading
6. Relationships
7. Consent
8. Messages About Manhood
9. Promoting Positivity
10. Celebrating our Successes

Fits into the sports season

10 program sessions x 20  
minutes per session

Mentors facilitate the groups

## 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 more 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.