Guidelines for children's and youth sports

“The world’s best children’s sport is that which captures the interest of every single child and lays the foundation for what will become a lifelong relationship with sport.”

The vision of Swedish sports, “Idrotten vill” – the Swedish sports movement’s policy programme

Swedish children's and youth sports - best in the world!

A significant portion of the sports we are used to today has been shaped by adults, for adults, and it developed in a society that was different from today's. To ensure that the Swedish sports movement conducts activities on the terms of children and youth, we need to review these activities and make necessary changes.

Things that previously attracted children and youth to sports may not be attractive to young people today. The sports movement therefore needs to continuously review the activities conducted to ensure that they are attractive and accessible to the current generation of children and young people. In other words, the world's best children's and youth sport is curious and constantly evolving.

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Swedish sports aim to enable participation in sports for everyone throughout their entire lives, regardless of age, background, or level of ambition. This requires that everyone lives and leads according to the core values of Swedish sports in clubs that provide good opportunities to engage in sports and get involved. If we succeed in this, Swedish sports and Sweden as a nation will both become stronger.

The Role of these guidelines within Swedish sports

The Swedish Sports Confederation's (RF) guidelines for children's and youth sport (the guidelines) serve as a guide for applying chapter 1, section 1 of RF's statutes, which describe the common mission, vision, and values of the Swedish sports movement.

According to RF's statutes, sports adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The guidelines should therefore be read as RF's way of considering the UNCRC in the practical application of sports. In addition to being based on RF's statutes, the guidelines rest on current research and proven experience.

This document serves as a support for activities within children's and youth sports and is primarily aimed at the special Sports Federations (SF). SF are encouraged to produce and/or review guidelines, educational materials and and development models adapted to their specific sport, with this document as support.

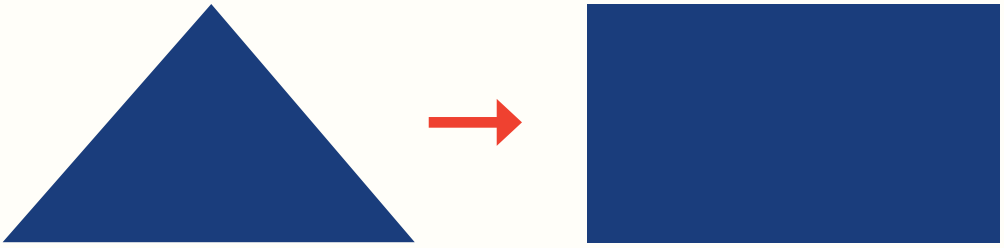
The vision of the Swedish sports movement is to become the best in the world, for everyone at all levels. The guidelines are therefore intended to guide the work towards the goal of achieving more sports successes internationally as well as towards the challenge of reaching more and new children and young people and getting as many as possible to want to participate in sports throughout their lives.

The ambition of the guidelines is not to describe the specific requirements of a particular sport or how they should be met. Producing a development model that considers both the decisions made within the sports movement and the specific characteristics of each sport – including what is required for world-class performance – is an assignment for each SF.

Although the guidelines are primarily intended as support for SF, they can also serve as a basis for clubs and their members in discussions regarding the activities that the club wishes to conduct.

"We engage in sports within clubs to have fun, feel good, and grow throughout our entire lives."

The mission of Swedish sports
Chapter 1, section 1 of RF's statutes



One way to describe the vision of Swedish sports is through the illustration "from triangle to rectangle", which represents a shift towards a future where everyone has the opportunity to engage in sports within clubs throughout their entire lives, regardless of age, background, or level of ambition.

Guiding principles

Based on the content of RF's statutes and the Swedish sports movement's commonly decided strategy, this section sets out a number of clarifications regarding the points of departure for the guidelines.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Swedish sport's core values

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been Swedish law since 1 January 2020 and is a fundamental document within public international law, listing children's right. The purpose of the UNCRC is to influence and improve the situation for children worldwide, and it stipulates that the term child means every human being below the age of 18 years. In 2009, the Swedish sports movement made a joint decision to incorporate children's specific rights into its common statutes. Since then, all activities for children and youth within the Swedish sports movement are subject to the UNCRC.

The UNCRC's core principles

- **2** All children have the same rights and are of equal worth.
- **3** The best interests of the child must be taken into account in all decisions concerning children.
- **6** All children have the right to life and development.
- **12** All children have the right to express their views and have them respected.

The UNCRC contains 54 articles that establish a comprehensive framework outlining the rights and protections entitled to children. Four articles, known as the fundamental principles, provide guidance on how the document as a whole should be interpreted.

These four fundamental principles are also the foundation for the view on children and youth that RF's guidelines for children's and youth sports are based on. This view means 1) that we shall work on the basis that all children are of equal worth and should be protected against all forms of discrimination, 2) that every decision made within the Swedish sports movement shall be based on the best interests of the child and shall reflect the principles 3) that sport should aid the development of every child and 4) that children should be involved in how sports are designed and in decisions that affect them.

> **"Sports adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child."**
>
> **The mission of Swedish sports**
> **Chapter 1, section 1 of RF's statutes**

The Swedish sports movement's core values consist of four basic principles: Joy and community, democracy and participation, everyone's right to participate, and fair play. These fundamental principles are described in RF's statutes and in Swedish sport's policy programme "Idrotten vill."

The UNCRC's fundamental principle of non-discrimination is strongly linked to the core value of sports, which emphasizes everyone's right to participate. Similarly, children's right to participation and influence is largely aligned with the Swedish sports core value principle of democracy and participation.

In addition to the UNCRC's fundamental principals, there are other articles that can also be linked to the core values of Swedish sports. For example, Article 19 emphasizes that children should be protected from all forms of physical or psychological violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. This right to protection and the importance of a safe environment are in the core value principles of fair play and joy and community.

Another example is Article 31, which addresses children's right to engage in play and recreational activities. This article can complement and strengthen the core values of Swedish sports, particularly the principle of joy and community, by emphasizing that children need rest, sleep, and free time to feel good and develop.

The policy programme of Swedish sports emphasizes that sports are not just about physical performance and development but also contribute to the psychological, social, and cultural development of participants. This holistic perspective is also reflected in the UNCRC, which is further clarified in general comments by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, on how the UNCRC should be interpreted and applied. It is repeatedly mentioned that children should develop physically, mentally, and socially, and that other abilities, such as emotional, cognitive, and cultural capabilities, are also important to develop.

The vision of the world's best children's and youth sports, combined with the core values and mission of Swedish sports, and the UNCRC, makes it clear that sports activities for children and youth should be inclusive and safe, characterized by development and participation, and guided by what is considered best for the child.

The core values of Swedish sports

1 Joy and community

2 Democracy and participation

3 Everyone's right to participate

4 Fair play

The UNCRC applies to everyone below the age of 18 years. RF's guidelines, however, apply to everyone up to and including the age of 19, in order to include the upper secondary school years. In other words, if no specific age is stated, all texts in this document apply to children and young people below the age of 20 years.

Organising sport and categorising participants

Research shows that the operational forms of sports risk negatively affecting the wellbeing of children and youth. Sports' training and competition systems, as well as the methods of categorizing children and youth, may hinder their desire and ability to participate in sports. Below are clarifications and positions on some of the writings found in RF's statutes regarding the classification of sports.

At first glance, it may seem easy to categorize young people within sports since the classification is based on age and ambition level. However, it is crucial not to group children by birth year or assumptions about ambition automatically. Instead, the classification should be done with great awareness, should not be seen as permanent, and the aim of adults must be to organize sports activities based on the best interests of each child and young person.

Age-based categorisation

The basic idea of grouping individuals into age groups by birth year (chronological age) is based on the idea that the level and rate of development are roughly the same among individuals in the same age group. However, development is a much more complex process. The degree of physical, cognitive, and emotional maturity can vary significantly in a group of athletes, even if they were born in the same year. Therefore, classifying children and young people by birth year requires flexibility in the competition system and understanding and flexibility from coaches, as biological age (the child's maturity age) can vary. Selecting children and young people for national or district teams primarily rewards early maturity and says nothing about their development potential.

Ambition-based categorisation

Regarding children's and youths expectations and ambitions with their sports activities, they need to be allowed to vary over time. Every child and young person need the opportunity to find new motivations and goals but also has the right not to be able or willing to formulate any sporting goals at all.

When categorising by ambition level, there is a risk that adults will take on the role of categorising children and young people based on the estimated potential to become future elite athletes. Besides being impossible to predict which children and youth

"We categorise sports by age and level of ambition"

The mission of sports
Chapter 1, section 1 of RF's statutes

will become future stars, it is not the role of adults to decide which of all children and youth should be given, or not given, the conditions to develop.

"Categorising by ambition level" should not be interpreted as permanent level grouping or in terms of selection. Permanent level grouping and early selection has been shown to negatively impact both the sense of belonging and competence, regardless of the level at which the athlete is placed. Furthermore, such systems and leadership within children's and youth sports have been linked to dropouts and various health issues.

Even in cases where selections do not result in direct exclusion, those selected tend to receive more attention and resources. Collectively, those selected have better conditions for development, which tends to increase the gap further between those who have been selected and those who have not. Such sports systems contribute to an unequal distribution of opportunities and increased stress related to performance, fragmented communities, and reduced intrinsic motivation for many children and youth. Therefore, it is necessary to review all forms of selection processes and attempts at talent identification during the growth years.

Elite-oriented youth sports

RF's statutes state that elite-oriented activites are allowed within youth sports (from the age of 13). This means that there should be no elite-oriented activities for children below the age of 13. However, RF's statutes should not be read as suggesting that at the age of 13, athletes should be divided into "recreational sports" and "elite-oriented" sports. On the contrary, during the early teenage years, it is of utmost importance to protect the cohesion of the group and actively counteract all forms of selection and exclusion. This requires flexible activities that are concerned with meeting the needs of each individual athlete.

In their teenage years, some who still, or for the first time, dream of pursuing elite sports need sufficient knowledge of what it means to make an high-performance commitment in the relevant sport. An elite commitment involves demanding, specialized, and well-organised sports activities, requiring a high level of dedication from athletes. The primary focus is on achieving top performance. It is to these requirements, and what they entail, that the teenager who still (or for the first time) carries a dream of a sports career at elit level, and their guardians need to relate.

All sports activities for athletes up to and including 19 years old, elite-oriented or not, should be characterized by long-term goals and conducted in line with RF's guidelines for children's and youth sports.

Gender-based categorisation

RF's statues do not say anything about categorising participants based on gender, even though this is a approach often used in practice. It is of utmost importance that children's and youth sports are not divided by gender out of habit. Instead, the categorisation should be based on an assessment of each child's and young person's best interests and the ambition to create an equal and inclusive environment.

Co-training, also known as mixed-gender training, is not a guarantee of equality. However, it can help young people of different genders see each other as equal training partners by meeting in the common identification as "athletes." However, this requires that sports are organized and led in a way that breaks down rather than builds up boundaries and differences between young people of different genders.
The coach's attitude and competence are therefore crucial in creating equal relationships.

FIVE GUIDELINES

The world's best children's and youth sports

In this section, five main guidelines are presented along with several concrete actions to develop activities. The guidelines provide guidance for applying the sports movement's common mission, vision, and core values and are intended to support activities within children's and youth sports. The guidelines should also be read as RF's way of considering the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in practical sports applications and in working towards the vision of the world's best children's and youth sports.

Of the five we have chosen to consider as main guidelines, guideline one (safety) and guideline two (participation) serve as a foundation for the others. Guideline three (joy) and guideline four (versatility) address various aspects of a positive sports experience and successful sports development. Guideline five (health) describes, as a complement to the other guidelines, what is crucial for the athlete to stay healthy, injury-free and well over time. The five main guidelines are:

1. Safety: Create safe and welcoming environments

2. Participation: Offer participation and influence

3. Joy: Promote intrinsic motivation and long-term development

4. Versatility: Enable versatile and playful sports activities

5. Health: Contribute to health and wellbeing over time

GUIDELINE 1

Safety

Create safe and welcoming environments.

The Swedish sports movement should be a place where all children and youth feel welcome and safe. This requires everyone within the sports movement to actively work to promote the sports movement's view of humanity and show respect for the unique and equal value of all individuals. It also necessitates other types of measures aimed at preventing and addressing insecurity.

A safe environment is a place where children and youth have the opportunity to develop physically, mentally, socially, and culturally, at their own pace and according to their own conditions. A safe environment is also an inclusive one, where all children and young people are allowed to be, dress, and express themselves as they wish, as long as it does not infringe on or limit others.

Safe sports are free from discrimination. Every individual, club, and federation within Swedish sports is expected to recognize and counteract any child or young person being disadvantaged or treated poorly based on the seven grounds of discrimination: gender, gender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, and age. It is also crucial to work towards ensuring that the social background and economic conditions of guardians do not hinder children's and young people's participation.

A safe sports environment is also free from unhealthy training methods, insults, harassment, violence and abuse. Safety means that all environments are sober and drug-free.

Within the Swedish sports movement, everyone is expected to treat others with respect. A prerequisite for this is to work within each activity to translate the core values into concrete behaviors. A safe environment is created through conscious work with coach and leader culture, as well as relationships with parents, guardians and other adults in children's and youth activities. It is important to bear in mind that many coaches, leaders and referees themselves are not yet adults and thus need extra guidance and support against vulnerability.

All adults, regardless of their role in sports, are responsible for the children and young people around them and the activities they are part of or oversee. Every adult is therefore expected to take action when a child och young person signals that something is not right. In order to be able to act when a child or young person does not feel well or when something has happened, the work involving routines and follow-ups is crucial. Children and young people, as well as adults, need to know who to turn to, and should receive support and help. Criticism and warnings about misconduct within children's and youth activities should always be met with respect and taken seriously.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 2
All children are of equal worth and have the same rights and must be protected against all forms of discrimination.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 19
Children must be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 34
Children must be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

ACTIONS AIMED AT CREATING WELCOMING, SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENTS

Governing documents and overall development initiatives

- Perform an assessment of the best interests of the child/young person in connection with decisions that directly or indirectly concern children and young people, and involve the children and young people in the assessment process.
- Produce/update and disseminate guidelines for safe, secure and inclusive environments. Make sure that the guidelines cover risk zones and grey areas as well as concrete situations and behaviours, for example:
  – the number of adult leaders present in connection with activities for children and young people.
  – occasions on which an individual leader/adult is together with one or several children and young people in situations that could be perceived as sensitive or inappropriate from an integrity perspective.
  – how private contact takes place with individual children and young people.
  – sexual grey areas (for example, behaviours in relationships of power and dependency).
- Produce/update an action plan for when someone breaches the guidelines for safe, secure and inclusive environments, and practice using it.
- Produce/update a plan for reaching children and young people who themselves do not attend the sports activities.
- Identify norms within the specific sport (for example by identifying underrepresented or over-represented groups of children and young people).
- Identify the sport's specific risk zones and obstacles to security and inclusion.
- Review the forms of competition, the competition rules and other regulations from a perspective of security and inclusion.
- Review the allocation of resources to ensure that resources are being allocated equally.

Education and information

- Review educational materials aimed at anyone with some form of leadership assignment (coaches, elected representatives, referees, officials, etc.) to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on security and inclusion.
- Review educational materials aimed at parents and guardians to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on security and inclusion.
- Offer continual skills and knowledge development in the area of security and inclusion to everyone with some form of leadership assignment.
- Produce/update guidelines on accessibility regarding the content of educational materials, popular education activities and information (for example, information texts, courses and physical meeting places).
- Inform, educate and engage children and young people regarding their rights, including when it comes to issues that may be sensitive (for example, issues regarding boundaries, consent and bodily integrity, exclusion and discrimination).
- Inform children, young people and adults about where to turn if something doesn't feel right and/or to report unhealthy training methods, offensive behaviour, harassment, violence and abuse.
- Inform adults – regardless of their role in sport – about how they should act if they feel concerned about a child or young person (for example, by submitting a notification of concern to the social services).
- Highlight participants, role models, coaches and leaders from underrepresented groups.

Support and guidance for clubs in the work to:

- Produce/update a plan to enable everyone to participate in the sports activities, regardless of their background and circumstances (for example, gender and the financial status of parents/guardians), and make sure that the plan does not stigmatise and/or single out individuals (who, for example, have poorer financial conditions).
- Produce/update a plan for collaboration with relevant parties (for example, the local municipality and schools) aimed at reaching children and young people who themselves do not attend the sports activities.
- Produce/update action plans that aim to deal with perceived/suspected insecurity in the sports activities, and practice using them.
- Produce/update routines for preventive measures relating to security (for example, obtaining references and requesting and checking extracts from the criminal record register for people who will be working with or will otherwise have close contact with children and young people).
- Identify risk zones and obstacles to security and inclusion within the sports activities.
- Identify possible ways to keep costs down for participants.
- Review the categorisation of participants in sports activities based on gender, and avoid the casual use of gender-based categorisation due to old habits. If gender-based categorisation of participants is deemed to still be appropriate, also prepare, if possible, a mixed gender training structure and make sure that the categorisation is performed based on an assessment of the best interests of each child and young person.
- Review the allocation of resources to ensure that

no one is disadvantaged (for example, due to gender) and everyone has access to equal conditions for training and competition, including access to facilities, training times and equipment.

- Compile/update and disseminate contact details for external support functions (for example, social authorities, children's rights organisations and healthcare providers).

GUIDELINE 2

Participation

Offer participation and influence.

All children and youth within the sports movement should be given the opportunity to express their views and have them respected. This applies especially on issues concerning the individual child or youth. To become truly involved, each child and youth, based on their age and maturity, should have the chance to shape and take responsibility for the activities they are part of. Contributing to the activities can be a way to influence and take responsibility.

A prerequisite for meaningful participation is to begin with what young people themselves identify as relevant and important. Therefore, the starting point should be the reality and problem formulation of the youth. This, in turn, requires adults who listen actively, in the way young people want to be listened to. Participation must also be voluntary. No children or youth should be forced to express opinions against their will.

It's important for adults to acknowledge that children and youth possess knowledge and experience that they themselves may lack. Valuing and including the skills and knowledge of young people and viewing them as experts on their own lives, is essential.

Key components of democracy are openness and transparency, and all members should have the opportunity to form their own opinion about the activities, make their voices heard, and influence the direction of the activities. A prerequisite for young people's participation is that each child and youth have access to information that has been adapted to be relevant for them.

By offering participation and influence, the sports movement can help prepare young people for a responsible life in a spirit of friendship, freedom, and solidarity. Just as sports lead to physical activity, participation in sports can lead to increased knowledge about the organization of clubs and the foundations of democracy. The work for young people's participation thus also becomes part of a conscious strategy to develop and recruit future coaches and leaders within sports.

ACTIONS AIMED AT OFFERING PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

Governing documents and overall development initiatives

- Perform an assessment of the best interests of the child/young person in connection with decisions that directly or indirectly concern children and young people, and involve the children and young people in the assessment process.
- Produce/update and disseminate guidelines for participation and influence among children and young people.
- Produce/update an action plan for when someone breaches the guidelines for participation and influence, and practice using it.
- Produce/update a plan for recruiting and developing future coaches and leaders.
- Identify obstacles to participation and influence among children and young people.
- Review the forms of competition, the competition rules and other regulations from a perspective of increasing the right of children and young people to participation and influence in the competition activities.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 3
In all decisions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 12
Children have the right to express their views and be heard in all matters affecting the child. The views of the child shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 13
Children have the right to freedom of expression; to seek, receive and impart information and ideas and express their opinions, with respect for the rights of other people.

Education and information

- Review educational materials aimed at anyone with some form of leadership assignment (coaches, elected representatives, referees, officials, etc.) to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge in the area of participation.
- Review educational materials aimed at parents and guardians to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge in the area of participation.
- Offer continual skills and knowledge development in the area of participation to everyone with some form of leadership assignment.
- Inform, educate and engage children and young people regarding their rights.
- Inform, educate and engage young people in issues that concern their own body and sports development.
- Offer and encourage children and young people to get involved as leaders and to receive access to educational materials and courses for coaches, leaders and referees.

Support and guidance for clubs in the work to:

- Produce/update routines and methods for utilising the opinions of children and young people.
- Produce/update a plan for developing and recruiting future coaches and leaders.
- Formulate and communicate a clear description of how their children's and youth activities are conducted and why.
- Identify obstacles to participation and influence among children and young people.
- Provide children and young people in the sports activities with access to information about the activities they are part of. Such information should be adapted so as to be relevant for them.
- Implement measures to minimise the risk of young people suffering negative consequences due to making their voice heard.

Important questions

In this guideline, it is of extra importance to ask questions based on the four fundamental principles:

- Which children and young people are being heard?
- Which groups of children and young people are we listening to?
- Have we considered the best interests of the child/young person?
- What do we, as adults, do with the information and knowledge we receive from children and young people?
- Are we prepared to change our view of how the sports activities should be conducted based on the opinions of children and young people?

GUIDELINE 3

Joy

Promote intrinsic motivation and long-term development.

All children and youth within the Swedish sports movement should experience sports as joyful, engaging, and challenging. To achieve this type of experience, the athlete's own intrinsic motivation should be central. The participant's will to master a skill should guide their development. Promote learning and development by allowing the participant to experiment with what works and what doesn't, encouraging effort and attempts to learn something new and challenging.

According to many children and youth, an important part of sports is the opportunity to strive hard, use their bodies, and be challenged both in relation to themselves and others. However, it is the present effort that is important for the sense of fun, rather than achieving long-term. The excitement of wondering how it will turn out, overcoming nervousness, and experiencing feelings of joy and disappointment is, for many, a crucial part of the experience. Therefore, the immediate result is important and should be acknowledged. However, it is essential not to let the immediate result have long-term consequences or affect the individual child's or youth's opportunities for sports development.

Instead of striving for short-term results and wins, even matches and balanced competition should always serve as a guiding principle. Competing should remain important in sports, but it is the positive experience of the competitive event that should shape the future competition systems and rules, rather than the systems and rules shaping the participants. In this way, "competition" becomes a method to contribute to joy and development as well as long-term sports development.

Sports should be a source of enjoyable and a safe haven, not a cause of stress in the lives of children and young people. Activities for children and youth should not be characterized by worries about being selected or not, or fears of losing their place in the group. Instead of comparing or pitting young people against each other, children and youth should receive help from adults to see their own progress and be encouraged to take pleasure in others' achievements. The aim should be to offer a lasting context where there is warmth and empathy for each other and for others. Another aspect of showing consideration for each other is to adhere to the rules of sports and respect the referee's decisions, where adults need to set a good example.

Failures and setbacks should be seen as a natural part of practice and learning includes understanding how to handle setbacks so that success may come next time or in the future. Children and young people should not be blamed, punished, or controlled; instead, coaches should offer influence, provide concrete and constructive encouragement, and be ready to answer curious questions about why each training session is structured the way it is.

Regarding children's and young people's expectations and ambitions with their sports activities, it is essential to remember that these can vary over time. Every child and youth should have the opportunity to find new motivations and goals but also have the right not to be able or willing to formulate any goals at all.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 6
All children have the right to life, survival and development.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 19
Children must be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 31
All children have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities.

ACTIONS AIMED AT PROMOTING INNER DRIVE AND MOTIVATION AND LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

Governing documents and overall development initiatives

- Perform an assessment of the best interests of the child/young person in connection with decisions that directly or indirectly concern children and young people, and involve the children and young people in the assessment process.
- Produce/update and disseminate guidelines that help promote long-term development rather than short-term results. Make sure that the guidelines cover:
  – The use of ranking and result lists.

– The minimum age limit of 13 years for participation in national championships, national competitions requiring qualification, selection for national teams (or equivalent) and for international competitions sanctioned by SF.
– Elite-oriented activities for young people.

- Produce/update an action plan for when someone breaches the guidelines for promoting long-term development, and practice using it.
- Identify the obstacles to promoting long-term development that exist within the specific sport.
- Review the forms of competition, the competition rules and other regulations from a perspective of promoting long-term sporting development rather than rewarding short-term results and early maturity. The competition structure as a whole should actively counteract the cutting of individuals.
- Review the selection criteria for elite programmes, national teams and equivalent to ensure that they promote long-term development. Also review how the information and decisions are communicated to the young people concerned.

Education and information

- Review educational materials aimed at anyone with some form of leadership assignment (coaches, elected representatives, referees, officials, etc.) to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on learning and motivation.
- Review educational materials aimed at parents and guardians to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on learning and motivation.
- Offer continual skills and knowledge development in the area of learning and motivation to everyone with some form of leadership assignment.
- Review internal and external communication relating to activities for children and young people (for example, images, type of reporting and questions) to ensure that the communication signals that effort, learning and development are valued more highly than short-term results.

Support and guidance for clubs in the work to:

- Design the activities in a way that actively promotes social development and strengthens the feeling of community and fellowship.
- Design the activities in a way that makes them inclusive, even for the children and young people who don't want to compete.
- Encourage leadership and concrete behaviours that promote long-term development rather than short-term results.
- Communicate the activities for children and young people (for example, images, type of reporting and questions) in a way that signals that effort, learning and development are valued more highly than short-term results.

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ICA Supermarket
Mattsbo
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TRIMTEX

GUIDELINE 4

Versatility

Enable versatile and playful sports activities.

All children and youth within the Swedish sports movement should have the right to engage in versatile and playful sporting activities. Playfulness and diverse training are key aspects of sporting development. Regardless of the amount of training and type of sport, activities should be characterized by variety and diversity and should contribute to a desire to be physically active. As children grow older and develop, sports-specific training can take up more space, but playfulness continues to be central to successful sports development.

Play is a form of creativity, a typ of problem-solving, and exploration of abilities. "To play" should not be seen as the opposite of "to compete"; on the contrary, play often includes some element of competition. In playful competitions, one tests their skill, their courage or cleverness in relation to themselves or others. Through play, limit testing, risk taking and competition can take place on young people's terms and contribute to developing bodily judgment.

Good basic motor skills and all-round training increase physical competence and enable participation in a wide range of activities and environments. This, in turn, leads to positive experiences of using one's body and success in both sports-specific development and building an active and sustainable sporting life. A solid foundation in training does not require advanced equipment or complex training methods. More cucial is access to sports facilities and appropriate equipment, along with the flexibility that allows for extended training time for those who wish. With creative solutions, sports facilities and equipment can be used optimally to promote innovation in training. New opportunities and variety are also created through a non-prestigious and collaborative approach among coaches and between organisations.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 6
All children have the right to life, survival and development.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 31
All children have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities.

ACTIONS AIMED AT ENABLING VERSATILE AND PLAYFUL SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Governing documents and overall development initiatives

- Perform an assessment of the best interests of the child/young person in connection with decisions that directly or indirectly concern children and young people, and involve the children and young people in the assessment process.
- Produce/update and disseminate guidelines for versatile and playful sports activities, and make sure that the guidelines, for example, encourage collaboration between clubs and different sports.
- Produce/update an action plan for when someone breaches the guidelines for versatile and playful sports activities, and practice using it.
- Identify the obstacles to versatile sports activities for children and young people that exist within the specific sport.
- Review the forms of competition, the competition rules and other regulations from a perspective of promoting versatile and playful sports activities for children and young people.

Education and information

- Review educational materials aimed at anyone with some form of leadership assignment (coaches, elected representatives, referees, officials, etc.) to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on the importance of versatile and playful sports activities (as well as knowledge on the importance of sport-specific training).
- Review educational materials aimed at parents and guardians to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on the importance of versatile and playful sports activities.
- Offer continual skills and knowledge development in the area of versatile and playful sports activities to everyone with some form of leadership assignment.
- Inform and educate children and young people about the importance of all-round training.

Support and guidance for clubs in the work to:

- Design the activities in a way that enables versatile and playful sports activities, regardless of the amount of training and type of sport.
- Design the activities in a way that minimises travel for children up to 13 years of age and enables the activities to be conducted in the local area.
- Design the activities in a way that ensures that competition does not take place at the expense of training.
- Design the activities (training, play, competition and exhibition) so that each child and young person is able to participate as much as possible on each separate occasion.
- Collaborate with other clubs.
- Organise the activities for children and young people in a way that enables active participation within different recreational activities, and encourage children and young people to try out different activities both within and outside the organised sport.

GUIDELINE 5

Health

Contribute to health and wellbeing over time.

The best interests of the child/youth should must be taken into account and used as guidance in all decisions concerning children and young people within the Swedish sports movement. This includes making decisions based on what leads to the best possible health over time for each child and young person. Sports can be a strong contributing factor to a good and healthy life. However, the health benefits depend on considering the individual's capacity, social situation, and biological and psychological maturity.

Daily physical activity has positive effects on health, but the higher the overall physical, mental, and social load on the individual, the greater the demands on the quality of recovery and the competence and support available. The optimal load for sustainable sports participation needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis. This requires high sensitivity from the adults involved, and they need to remind themselves that they only see parts of the child's/young person's life and that they must always respect the right to rest.

Attentiveness to expressions of pain is crucial, as is awareness that growing bodies are at increased risk of overuse injuries. It is equally important to be alert to signs of mental health issues.

For the benefit of young athletes, the relationship between diet, body, and weight needs to be monitored healthily. Coaches should not comment on children's and youths' weight and body shape or encourage weight loss. Avoid discussing the connection between body weight and performance. Focus on training, diet, optimal recovery, and wellbeing as performance-enhancing factors.

As athletic development progresses, the number of stakeholders (sports high schools, national teams, more training groups/teams) involved in the participant's sports activities may increase. In such cases, adults should collaborate and decide who, together with the child/young person, is responsible for the overall picture. Having well-functioning relationships between leaders/coaches, school, and parents/guardians are crucial factors for the health development of young athletes.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 3
In all decisions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 24
All children have the right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare and rehabilitation.Traditional practices that are prejudicial to the health of children shall be abolished.

THE UNCRC: ARTICLE 31
All children have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities.

ACTIONS AIMED AT CONTRIBUTING TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVER TIME

Governing documents and overall development initiatives

- Perform an assessment of the best interests of the child/young person in connection with decisions that directly or indirectly concern children and young people, and involve the children and young people in the assessment process.
- Produce/update and disseminate guidelines for promoting health and wellbeing, and make sure that the guidelines cover, for example, the right to rest and a private life, measures aimed at preventing injuries among children and young people, and measures aimed at preventing behaviour indicative of a training-related eating disorder.
- Produce/update an action plan for when someone breaches the guidelines for promoting health and wellbeing, and practice using it.
- Identify risk zones and the obstacles to the health and wellbeing of children and young people that exist within the specific sport.
- Review the forms of competition, the competition rules and other regulations from a perspective of promoting health and wellbeing among children and young people.

Education and information

- Review educational materials aimed at anyone with some form of leadership assignment (coaches, elected representatives, referees, officials, etc.) to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on the importance of promoting health and wellbeing and how to do so.
- Review educational materials aimed at parents and guardians to ensure that all such educational materials and courses include knowledge on the importance of promoting health and wellbeing and how to do so.
- Offer continual skills and knowledge development in the area of health and wellbeing to everyone with some form of leadership assignment.
- Inform, educate and engage children and young people regarding the connection between strain, recovery, health, wellbeing and performance.
- Inform children, young people and adults about where to turn regarding their own or someone else's ill health (for example, physical pain or mental illness).

Support and guidance for clubs in the work to:

- Strive to increase the opportunities for young people to be physically active on a daily basis.
- Design the activities in a way that increases the opportunities for children and young people to be physically active on a daily basis.
- Design the activities in a way that safeguards the right of children and young people to rest and recovery.
- Design the activities in a way that ensures that they can be combined with primary, secondary nd upper secondary school education.
- Counteract doping.
- Produce/update action plans that aim to manage and support children and young people in connection with ill health (for example, mental illness or physical injury), and practice using them.
- Produce/update guidelines and routines to ensure that relevant equipment does not represent a safety risk.

GLOSSARY

Important terms within children's and youth sport

Swedish sport The Swedish sports movement organised in clubs and federations.

Vision A desirable future state.

Core values A set of values and approaches that you would like to govern the activities.

Mission Statement Describes the organisation's mission and the people it serves.

Training Activities that aim to enhance and/or maintain one or several capacities, both physical, mental and social. Can be both organised and unorganised.

Competition Activity where several individuals or groups measure their skills against each other within a defined area of skill, such as a sport.

Play Activity undertaken for fun and pleasure. Can be organised or spontaneous. Play helps develop physical, mental and social abilities that are also important for the individual in other contexts.

Performance An activity performed to demonstrate one's skills, usually following a predetermined routine. A performance takes place in front of spectators and lacks a competitive element.

Age Most commonly stated in reference to chronological age, which is measured in the number of years and months. However, chronological age is not always a relevant measure of development and maturity, and in sport you should take account of biological age and psychosocial maturity.

Age-appropriate training The right training at the right age, with training activities that are adapted to the participant's biological age and psychosocial maturity.

Co-training Mixed gender training. Training together regardless of gender.

Versatile training Training that is rich in variation and involves aspects such as coordination, mobility, strength, speed and endurance, both physically and mentally.

Non-varied training The opposite of versatile training, meaning training that is largely focused on one or a few exercises or aspects, or on the development of one or a few characteristics or detailed skills.

Specialisation Means focusing solely and fully on one type of sport or discipline.

Selection Selecting the best individuals at this point in time – or those who are expected to be the best in the future – for matches, training camps, teams or training groups.

De-selection That the individual, against his or her will, no longer may/can be part of the team/training group.

Toppning A form of selection which means that the best players at a particular point in time receive one or more of the following advantages in a competition context: A guaranteed place in the team, more playing time or a position in the team/group that is considered more attractive.

High-performance programs Demanding, specialized and organised sports activities, requiring a high level of dedication from athletes. The primary focus is on achieving top performance.

Level grouping When teams or training groups are divided up based on participants' level of skills and knowledge.

Level adaptation Training where, for certain exercises, the group is divided up based on participants' level of skill and knowledge.

Individualisation Training adapted to each individual participant based on their level of skill, knowledge and maturity. Can be implemented regardless of how the training group or team is composed.

Riksidrottsförbundet

Box 11016 • 100 61 Stockholm • Tel. 08 699 60 00
riksidrottsforbundet@rf.se • rf.se