



UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE

QUALITY PARENTING FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

The quality of a young person's sport experience, and the personal assets they are able to develop, are shaped by multiple persons and contexts. Among these, one of the most salient is parents. The appropriate quality of parent involvement can help youth reach their athletic and human potential while fostering a lifelong love of sport and physical activity. However, when parent involvement lacks appropriate quality, maladaptive outcomes such as dropout, injury, and burnout are more likely to occur.

The engagement of sport parents must therefore be supported by the individuals, organizations, and communities that serve American youth. Despite research and practice efforts toward sport parent education, there remains a noticeable gap between what is known about high-quality engagement and what is practiced on a daily basis across the country. To that end, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee in consultation with an esteemed team of US-based sport researchers, has created a framework that outlines core values and best principles for guiding youth sport parenting in the United States.

This *Quality Parenting Framework* highlights how to involve parents effectively across a range of organized sport settings in the United States. The document serves as a carefully crafted, evidence-based resource that establishes

a common language and principles of high-quality parenting for those who work with families of recreational, competitive, and elite athletes in Team USA sport contexts. The USOPC defines these contexts as any sport activity conducted and/or endorsed by one of its partner National Governing Bodies. These contexts include everything from grassroots and community-sponsored sport activities, to performance-focused clubs and teams, to national teams that compete in international competitions.

The framework consists of five parts, each focused on a core principle of high-quality sport parenting. In line with the USOPC's *Quality Coaching Framework*, the term "best principles" instead of "best practices" is utilized in this document. Prescribing best practices implies that there are universal strategies that work for every parent in every context. Conversely, the phrase "best principles" acknowledges that parent involvement must be adapted to the child, their developmental stage, and the sport context in which their participation occurs. On the whole, this framework was crafted to provide key sport stakeholders an overview of information about high-quality parent involvement in the contexts they oversee.

The USOPC understands there is not one "correct" way to parent that affords thriving in *every* athlete across *every*

context. Instead of mere proscription, this document provides evidence-based, informed principles on how stakeholders can collectively think of, speak about, encourage, and enact high-quality parenting across a range of participatory, developmental, and competitive Team USA sport contexts.

In this document, we draw from previous descriptions of *organized sport*, defining it as individual and team athletic opportunities (e.g., play, training, and competition) that are organized and administered by adults for young people. We define *parents* as the biological, adoptive, or otherwise regular caregivers of a child. This can include, but is not limited to, mothers and fathers, step parents, aunts and uncles, godparents, and foster parents. Because more than 57 million people in the United States live in multi-generational households, we also include grandparents who serve as primary or secondary caregivers in our definition. Finally, we define *athletes* as the young people who participate in organized sports across the full range of Team USA sport contexts. We acknowledge that there are cultural differences in many of these terms and our use of "sport," "parents," and "athletes" is meant to be inclusive throughout the QPF.



Part 1:

UNDERSTANDING PARENT ROLES

The potential for youth to achieve positive psychosocial and behavioral outcomes through their sport participation depends largely on the social and cultural environment in which experiences occur. We refer to this social and cultural environment as the *youth sport system* and acknowledge that multiple interdependent persons (i.e., parents, siblings, peers, and coaches) and contexts (i.e., organizations, communities, and societies) have the potential to influence or be influenced by an athlete's actions, attitudes, experiences, and outcomes. Importantly, parents interact with all of these persons and across all of these contexts as primary socialization agents across each young athlete's development.

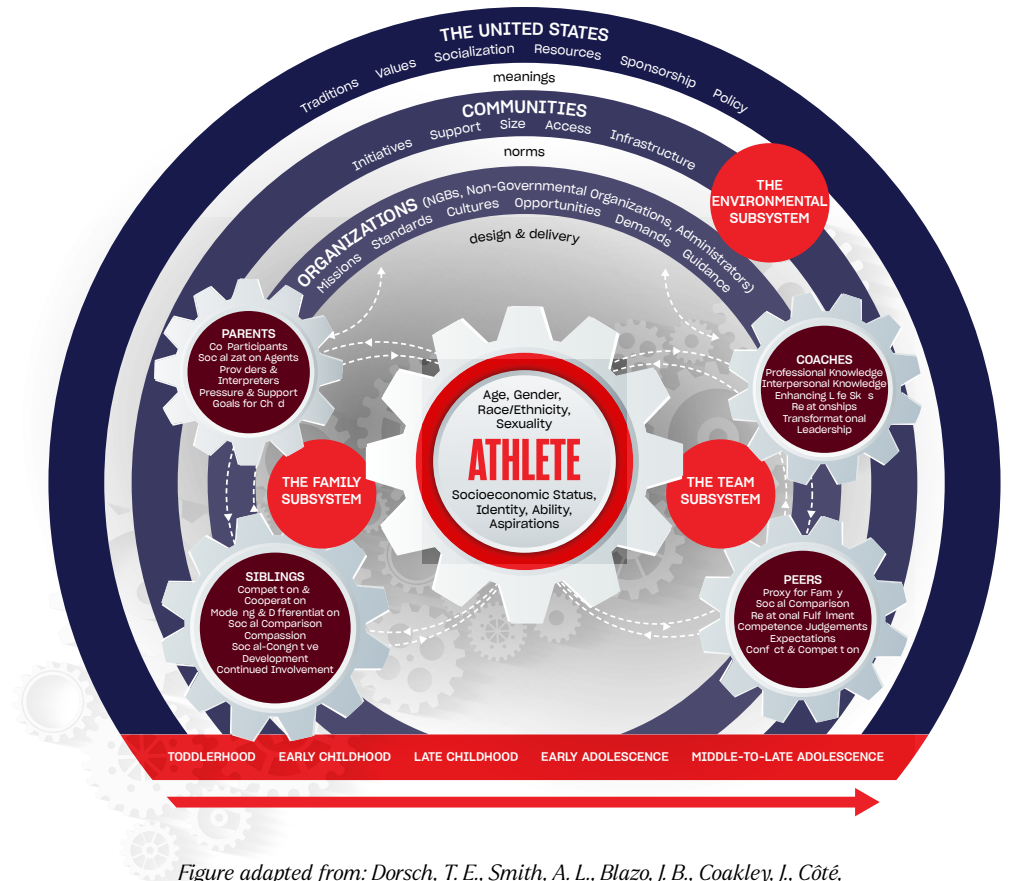


Figure adapted from: Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., Blazo, J. B., Coakley, J., Côté, J., Wagstaff, C. R., Warner, S., & King, M. Q. (2022). Toward an integrated understanding of the youth sport system. *Research Quarterly in Exercise and Sport*, 93, 105-119.

Applying an integrated lens to the youth sport system affords an understanding of the dynamic influence of parent-athlete interactions as an important contributor to the social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development that takes place in organized sport. Importantly, athletes' personal attributes and the families, teams, organizations, and communities of which they are a part shape their experiences and actions, as well as the personal assets they develop through sport over time. The family is a primary social subsystem that impacts athletes' attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions in the sport domain (see model above).

The ways in which parents influence (and are influenced by) their athletes' development are informed by research identifying bidirectional processes of interaction that occur across individuals and contexts over time. Key parenting principles that enhance young people's enjoyment of and confidence about their abilities in sport are essential to motivating a lifetime of physical activity. Young people initiate and sustain involvement in sport for three primary reasons:

1. to develop and demonstrate physical competence.
2. to attain social approval and acceptance from adults and peers, and
3. to enjoy their experiences.

Parents' beliefs about sport as an achievement domain impact their actions, and therefore have the potential to influence athletes' self-esteem, affective outcomes, and participation motivation. Parents' attitudes and values stem from their educational background, socioeconomic status, and cultural traditions, among other factors, and impact their parenting style. Importantly, parenting style is strongly associated with athletes' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and connectedness to others.

Over the past 30 years, studies guided by developmental, social psychological, and educational theories have yielded consistent and applicable findings about the types of parent actions that positively or negatively impact athletes' experiences in sport. Parents positively or negatively impact their athletes' ability, beliefs, enjoyment, participation motivation, and performance in many ways.

Generally, parents adopt three roles as their children participate and compete in sport:

1. Parents are ROLE MODELS. Indeed, parents' attitudes and actions impact athletes' thoughts, feelings, and actions in sport. Specifically, youth see what their parents do and hear what their parents say. Thus, parental modeling includes verbal and non-verbal actions that affect athletes' skill learning, social actions, and performance. Youth who view their parents as positive role models show favorable sport-related

attitudes and actions. By contrast, parents behaving badly — such as making disparaging remarks, reinforcing aggressive actions, and disrespecting the rules or spirit of the game — are associated with youth who legitimize such actions and are more likely to engage in unsportsmanlike actions themselves. Overall, parents should strive to be positive role models, and to demonstrate a healthy, balanced, sports-oriented culture within the family.

Children who are raised in families where sports and physical activity are prioritized tend to have more opportunities to develop and to improve their sport experiences and outcomes, while developing a number of personal assets through their sport participation.

- 2. Parents are PROVIDERS.** In this gatekeeping role, parents enable or discourage opportunities to participate and/or compete in sports. This includes registering for lessons and teams, transporting to training and games, purchasing equipment and clothing, attending sporting events, and paying incidental fees. Parents also provide instruction, feedback, encouragement, and emotional support as their children attempt to improve skills and maximize performance outcomes. Athletes who view their parents as providing opportunities, feedback, and social support report more favorable beliefs about their own ability, higher enjoyment and intrinsic motivation, and are more likely to continue participation over time. However, the extent to which parents can adequately "provide for" organized, non-play-based experiences is greatly affected by the broader sociocultural context, such as economic or employment status, community type (urban, suburban, rural), and cultural beliefs. Disparate and often unequal opportunities also exist among males and females, children of single-parent families, families with low-income levels, and those who live in rural communities that lack facilities and other resources.
- 3. Parents are INTERPRETERS.** Parents' beliefs and actions convey messages to athletes, such as the importance of excelling in sport, how success is defined, and the appropriateness of activities based on an athlete's gender. Young athletes' perceptions of how favorable their parents appraise their ability are strongly related to their own self-appraisals of ability. This is particularly important during middle and late childhood (ages 7 to 11 years) because youth rely heavily on feedback

Part 1: Understanding Parent Roles

and reinforcement from parents as a source for judging their own ability. In turn, perceptions of competence strongly predict motivation to continue participating; youth with high ability beliefs report greater intrinsic motivation and effort and persistence. It is important to accentuate that an athlete's *perceptions*, rather than parents own reports of actions, are most strongly related to youths' confidence in their ability, emotional outcomes, and participation actions. This is important because there can be a discrepancy in how youth discern their parents' actions compared to what parents indicate to be their intended actions. Strategies to minimize parent-child differences and promote high-quality relationships entail family-based approaches that include collaborative goal setting, open communication, and shared decision-making. In early-to-middle adolescence (ages 12 to 16 years), perceived ability tends to decline because youth make more frequent use of comparison to and evaluation by peers, such as teammates and classmates, to judge their own sport competence.

It is important to consider how parents define "ability" in and around the sport context. Many parents clearly have what Dweck referred to as *fixed mindsets*. They believe ability is static and that a child is born with a propensity to succeed or not. Other parents possess what Dweck refers to as *growth mindsets*. They believe ability is malleable and that a child has the potential to succeed based on factors such as motivation, dedication, and training. Whether a parent has a fixed or growth mindset (or some combination of the two) can readily be seen through the feedback they give to their children and the conversations they engage in with their children's coaches.



Part 2:

ADOPTING AN ATHLETE-FOCUSED APPROACH

Parenting style has long received attention in mainstream child psychology and is now seen as an important mechanism of parental influence in organized sport. High-quality sport parenting is athlete-focused, meaning it honors young peoples' autonomy to make decisions and have a voice in their athletic experiences, while providing for and supporting them in pursuit of their sport goals. Sport parents can assess how athlete-focused they are by asking whether they are supporting their child's goals or their own. The answer may not fit neatly into one category or the other; sport parents may discover their responses are mixed, depending on the circumstance or context. And it is of course true that a parent's goals should reflect a child's in sport. Regardless, answering this question can be a positive form of introspection for identifying the motivation source for sport parents' thoughts and behaviors.

Practically, there are a number of ways parents can maximize positive and minimize negative experiences for their athletes in sport, while also helping their children develop personal assets through their participation. Although parents are especially influential during the early and middle childhood years, those who facilitate participation opportunities, support and encourage sons *and* daughters, and create a task-involving climate that values skill mastery and improvement over favorable peer comparison, are associated with athletes who exhibit the competence, confidence, and motivation to remain active in sports throughout their lifetime. Sport leaders can help shape quality parenting by eliciting the following seven engagement behaviors:

1. **Create a safe environment for communication** by encouraging athletes to share openly and freely about their sport participation. Athletes must be assured that they can share experiences, insights, ideas, and feelings without judgement, criticism, fear, or punishment from parents. Creating a safe communication environment also involves parents being mindful of the manner in which bi-directional communication is delivered, verbally and non-verbally, by the athlete and the parent. The strategies discussed in this section are developmental and parents should be sensitive to an athlete's age and readiness to discuss certain topics. Athletes communicate in many ways, some of which are non-verbal. When speaking with athletes, it is important for parents to use a tone of voice that conveys care and to include gentle touching to demonstrate understanding and empathy. These strategies create and affirm an emotionally and psychologically safe communication space. When coupled with mindful positioning and posturing, they enable sport parents to non-verbally communicate that "we are in this together." For very young athletes, this can be done by getting down to their eye level when speaking; for adolescent athletes, speaking with them at eye-to-eye level is also helpful. Altogether, the goal should be to make

every young athlete feel that they have a safe space to engage in substantive, meaningful conversations.

2. **Listen actively** in an effort to understand the realities of a child's sport experiences. This involves providing full, immersive attention to what is being shared. Strategies to help sport parents engage in active listening, while fostering a sense that the young athlete is being heard include: minimizing distractions in the communication space, allowing the athlete to speak without interruption, showing interest in the athlete's experiences and emotions, maintaining eye contact and nodding, and summarizing their own interpretation of what the athlete has said, and checking for accuracy. Being observant of an athlete's non-verbal expressions and acknowledging and responding supportively to the feelings they express about their sport participation outcomes are important strategies parents can employ to fully comprehend an athlete's experiences and their implications for the development of their personal assets.
3. **Ask with athlete-focused intent** to acknowledge athletes as active, autonomous participants in their sport experiences. Unfortunately, athletes are rarely consulted in matters that shape their own experiences in organized youth sport. However, there is a growing body of research and practice dedicated to asking athletes important questions and leveraging their input and ideas in sport. Doing so allows parents (and coaches and administrators too) to make evidence-based decisions that meet young athletes' needs, while providing a more enjoyable context for participation and competition. As sport scientists continue to engage and listen to young athletes, knowledge about how best to optimize sport experiences for young people will continue to expand. For now, parents should be encouraged to participate in this process by viewing young athletes as valuable sources of information that can be leveraged to positively impact the development that occurs in sport. In short, it is important to treat athletes as stakeholders in their own sport participation experiences and outcomes.
4. **Identify and engage in the best forms of support** by asking, "How can I best support you in your sport?" invites young athletes to share their vision for what supportive sport parenting looks and feels like for them. If their response(s) are not specific enough to act on, parents can follow up with questions such as, "Do you want me to vocally encourage or cheer for you at games/competitions?" This will provide parents useful information about how to act on the sidelines in a manner that is perceived by the athletes as supportive rather than pressuring. Also, parents should be encouraged to ask questions such as, "What kinds of questions do you want me to ask you after your practice/training and/or game/competition?" and

"When do you want to talk about your practice/training and/or game/competition?"

These questions permit the young athlete to shape the content and timing of conversations (e.g., immediately after the event, during car rides or meals, or hours or days later) and evoke communication that the athlete perceives as supportive.

5. **Explore and engage in multiple sport parenting roles**, especially at younger ages of a child's participation. It is important for parents to ask their athletes before becoming a coach, team manager, or official/referee. Exploring athletes' thoughts and feelings about a parent taking on dual-roles provides valuable information about how to handle multiple sport roles in ways that are most likely to positively impact everyone's sport participation experiences and outcomes.
6. **Allow for autonomy in athletes' decision-making** about their sport participation. It is their journey! When parents assume their athlete wants to participate in a sport, the parent is denying the child an opportunity to make an explicit choice on their own. This has the potential to negatively impact the athlete's sense of ownership and may ultimately backfire on a parent who is only trying to be supportive. In light of this, parents should ask questions such as, "*Are you excited to play again next season?*" and "*What activities do you want to do to be active and have fun?*" The and other similar questions honor an athlete's autonomy to have a voice in their own participation and can be a valuable precursor to fostering athletic identity and an intrinsic motivation to continue participating.
7. **Engage purposefully, and with care** when initiating conversations with children (and other athletes, parents, coaches, and officials) about youth sports. Being sensitive increases parents' ability to provide meaningful support and encouragement for their children. Demonstrating empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard when interacting with an athlete can be challenging for parents; however, doing so successfully is likely to foster healthy communication about the child's perceptions of their sport experiences and outcomes. When parents engage purposefully, and with care, it affirms that the athlete is in control of their own sport experiences.

Sport parents are an important part—perhaps *the most* important part—of a young person's network of social resources. Therefore, it is imperative that parents' attitudes, actions, and decisions serve as a catalyst to an athlete's ability to thrive. Greater sport parenting awareness, and a deeper understanding of what sport parents do, and why they do it, allows key stakeholders to more thoughtfully engage them while fostering an athlete-focused approach among the parents who care for the physical, psychological, and socioemotional needs of their children.

Part 3:

SUPPORTING PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



Physical development in sport begins at very young ages and parents should consider athletes' physical development in sport from toddlerhood through young adulthood. An underlying feature of physical development is systematic change to the body. Although change is continual, it is important for parents to consider that it is not always linear. Fits and spurts in growth, learning, and performance are common and can stem from accommodation to new and ongoing training regimens or adaptation to emerging physical, cognitive, and socioemotional capacities.

When supporting young athletes' physical development, it is important to consider the separate but related concepts of growth and maturation. *Growth* is defined as an increase in body size, whereas *maturation* refers to the timing of and progress toward a physically mature body. On average, females reach their greatest tempo of growth at around 12 years of age and growth tapers off at around 14 years. Conversely, males reach their greatest tempo of growth at around 14 years of age and it tapers off at around 17 years. The longer period of growth for male youth accounts for the average height difference in adulthood. An important consideration for parents is the timing of maturity, which can influence factors such as sport selection and deselection, motivation, enjoyment, and performance. Athletes who mature earlier tend to be more successful in sports that require speed and strength such as soccer and basketball. Females who mature later tend to be more successful in artistic sports such as gymnastics and figure skating, or endurance sports such as Nordic skiing or running.

The concept of long-term athlete development, as incorporated in the [American Development Model](#), provides an age-appropriate basis for the development of foundational skills in all Team USA sport contexts. High-quality sport parenting involves basic understanding of the model's core areas of knowledge:

1. Foundational motor skill development is important. The key to athletic development is the acquisition of foundational motor skills. These skills include walking, running, skipping, jumping, balancing, kicking, throwing, and catching, and encompass locomotor, stability, and manipulative movement competencies. However, the discourse surrounding motor skills and motor competence has evolved to one that includes the more holistic concept of physical literacy. Rightfully so, as young people's motor competence, and certainly their athletic development, resides in a constellation of interdependent emotional, motivational, social, and behavioral components. Though there are several definitions of physical literacy, it is synonymous with the competence, confidence, knowledge, and motivation to be physically active through one's life course. As children develop, parents should strive to enhance physical literacy among youth by fostering a strong sense of physical self and confidence in their children's physical movements, while supporting physical

learning and affording children the opportunity for physical challenges. There are multiple environmental contexts in which athletic movement can occur. This might be at home through free play, or in an organized sport setting. The child's emotional state also matters, and parents should guide their children toward contexts in which they can experience satisfaction and enjoyment. Ultimately, parents are the first socializing agents of their children in sport; therefore, one important task for parents is to help develop physically literate youth. No matter the child's intended pathway, a successful sport experience is dependent on a strong foundation of physical literacy.

2. Parents don't have to answer the 'sport sampling' versus 'sport specialization' debate. Sport participation among younger athletes has shifted from child-controlled activities to adult-directed training and focused performance enhancement. Until recent decades, there has been very little published evidence to support one pathway or the other. Essentially, youth sport became a laboratory for the evaluation of two competing hypotheses: (a) single-sport, specialized training is necessary to achieve elite skill level and performance, and (b) single-sport, specialized training increases the risk of overuse injury.

In the past two decades, research has clearly demonstrated that developing elite skills in most sports is more likely to be associated with early exposure and a broad strategy of sport sampling during childhood rather than early specialization in a single sport. The physical benefits of multi-sport participation, and position or event sampling within those sports yields a transfer of motor and developmental skills, psychosocial benefits, and affords necessary periods of rest and recovery.

Large studies of specializing athletes aged 7 to 18 years from a variety of sports demonstrated a risk for deleterious effects in athletes who were highly specialized (i.e., choose one primary sport to pursue and trained and competed in that sport for more than eight months per year). Subsequent research has confirmed this association and it is now clear that sport specialization is linked to a greater risk of outcomes such as overuse injury, burnout, and sport discontinuation (i.e., dropout).

Decisions about sport specialization may vary significantly across sport types. For example, much of the research to-date has been conducted in team-oriented sports such as football, basketball, baseball, softball, ice hockey, and lacrosse. Findings from this literature suggest that the majority of elite and emerging elite (i.e., college, Olympic, Paralympic, professional) athletes participated in multiple sports – many through high school. That finding doesn't appear as consistently when individual sports are considered. As such, there are different "rules-of-thumb" young athletes and their parents should consider when committing to a sport specialization pathway. "Early entry" sports such as gymnastics, diving, golf, figure skating, and alpine skiing may necessitate specialization prior to physical maturity; however, even in these

contexts, parents should be warned that early specialization is more likely to lead to maladaptive outcomes than it is to elite performance and world-class achievement.

3. Training load patterns and progressions should be implemented strategically.

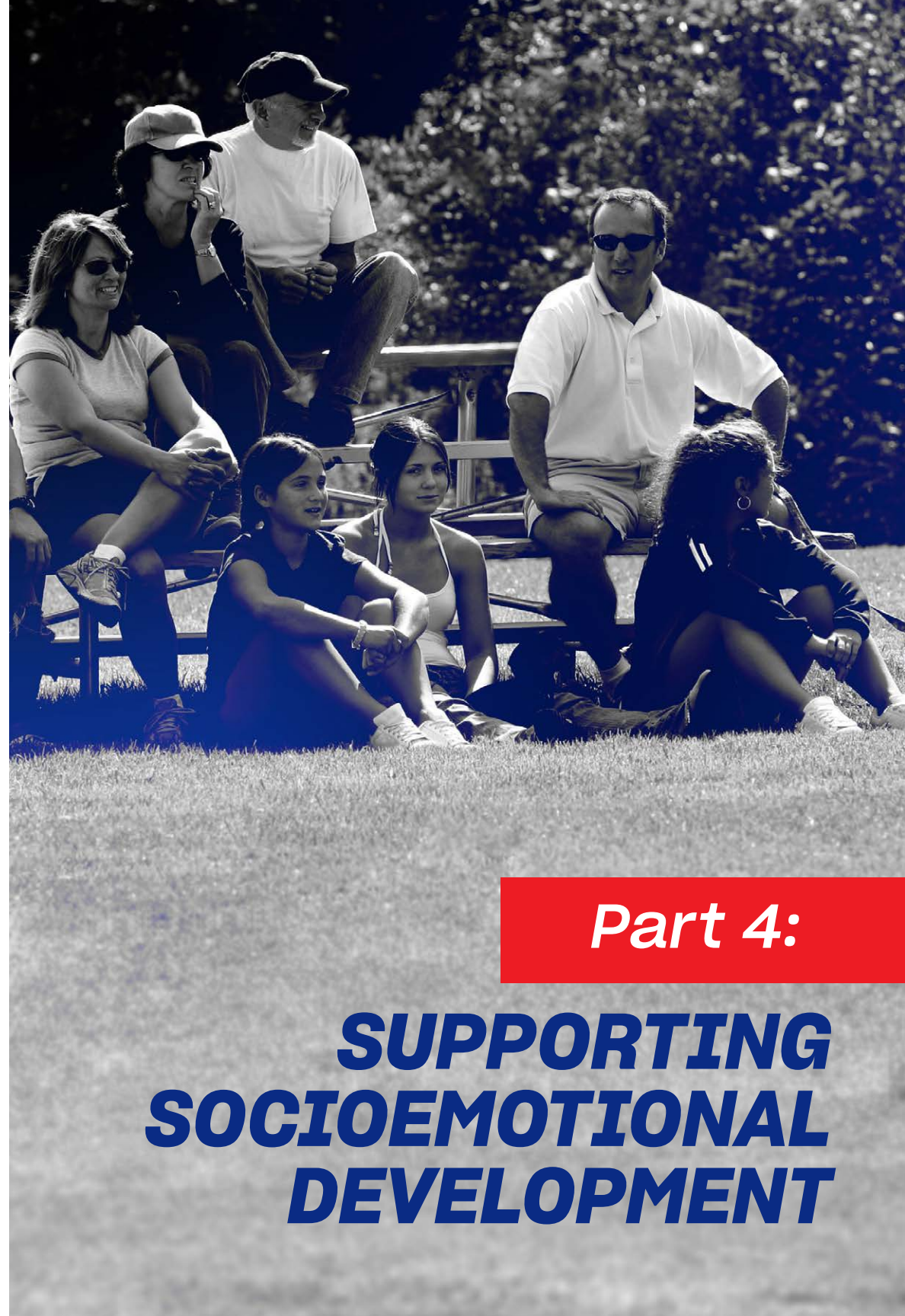
As athletes develop, they may be asked to increase their participation (e.g., training and competition) to bolster their chances of success. This is a common and *expected* transition, as athletes often show interest in pursuing more elite levels of participation. However, the question remains, how much training and competition are necessary to be successful, and at what point can they become detrimental? Training loads should ideally be age- and developmentally appropriate, as well as individualized. A couple of simple rules-of-thumb exist for parents to decide how much training is appropriate for their children in sport.

First, athletes should not exceed the "age vs. hours rule." Namely, athletes who are not yet national- or international-level competitors should participate in less hours per week than their age. For example, an eight-year-old alpine ski racer should not be spending more than eight hours per week in focused training and drills.

The second concept has to do with the ratio of acute to chronic workloads during a seasonal training progression. To optimize development, an athlete's acute workload (training hours during the current week) should be between 0.8 and 1.2 times the athlete's chronic workload (average hours per week over the last four weeks), and should never exceed 1.5.

Prior to becoming "elite," athletes must be given time and space to (1) discover, learn, and play, (2) develop and challenge, (3) train and compete, and (4) excel for high performance *or* participate and succeed. The initiation of a generational cycle will enable parents to effectively mentor the next generation of athletes in sports. This is important, as it will ultimately be these athletes who become parents, coaches, and sport administrators in the decades to come.

Athletes' opportunities for physical development in sport begins at very young ages and are in many ways shaped by the experiences parents afford them. In providing such opportunities, parents should consider athletes' growth and maturation, as well as their overall readiness and motivation for sport participation and competition. It is important for parents to consider that these factors do not always change in a linear fashion. Asymmetrical growth, learning, and performance are common and can stem from accommodation to new and ongoing training regimens or adaptation to emerging physical, cognitive, and socioemotional capacities. By offering parents a basic understanding of the American Developmental Model's core areas of knowledge, key sport stakeholders can promote sport parents' high-quality engagement across all Team USA sport contexts.



Part 4:

SUPPORTING SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are a range of socioemotional benefits that have the potential to be realized when organized sport participation is designed and delivered in a purposeful way. For this reason, parents should be encouraged to help initiate and support athletes' sports involvement. In doing so, four core areas of knowledge will help parents to become high-quality sport parents:

- 1. There are pros and cons to participation in organized sport.** While sport participation for young people is generally assumed to be beneficial, there are potential detriments as well. Incidents of bullying and maltreatment, declines in moral development, and increased experiences of stress and burnout have been documented. A growing number of professionals have also voiced concern that the culture of organized sport is changing in such a way that could foster more detrimental effects among participants in the future. If critical issues are not considered and managed, they have the potential to increase detrimental effects. Three underlying issues are the increasing costs of sport participation, the growth in popularity of "elite" sport specialization, and a lack of targeted education for coaches. Most important is a shift in the organized youth sport culture from a holistic, athlete-focused orientation with a primary emphasis on enjoyment, physical literacy, and skill development to a more structured approach, designed in the image of professional and college sport. The (unintended) consequence of this shift has been a greater emphasis on the development of the most talented athletes. The good news is that those who surround young people in organized sports (i.e., parents, siblings, peers, and coaches) and the organizations and communities that design and deliver sport opportunities to athletes have the ability to prioritize the many beneficial outcomes that can result from sport participation. Sport parents, in particular, have the potential to foster mastery-oriented motivational climates, where the focus is on self-improvement.
- 2. It is imperative to create a mastery-oriented motivational climate.** Designing and delivering mastery-oriented motivational climates is challenging. Societal expectations for parents have changed in recent years so that evidence of "parenting success" is often viewed through a prism of a child's athletic achievement. Because outcomes in organized sport are publicly visible and easily quantified via records and rankings, it is tempting for sport parents to abandon a holistic definition of development in lieu of a more professionalized conceptualization of success. Organized sports are also becoming costlier for parents, and the more families invest in the sport participation of their children the more pressure young athletes perceive. While being a sport parent can be rewarding, it involves challenges. In fact, parents often experience stress when trying to understand and negotiate their children's

sport experiences. As a result, parents may become over-involved, preventing many coaches from forging strong relationships with the parents of their athletes.

- 3. There is great value in engaging parents in education and training.** Evidence suggests that parent education and intervention can have positive effects across a number of Team USA sport contexts. Sport parents who engage in active education report increased knowledge and skills; more importantly, their child's experience enhanced perceptions of parental support, lower perceptions of parental pressure, greater sport-related competence, and lower levels of sport-related stress. First and foremost, parents should be encouraged to choose developmentally appropriate sport settings for their children, then encourage and support their participation. Parents should also become educated about how their time and commitments, financial expenditures, beliefs about their knowledge of sports, and goals of participation may influence their and their children's attitudes and actions. At the same time, it is important to understand how their child's sport organization functions, and how this does or doesn't align with the developmental and competitive needs of their child. Don't forget, a great way to enhance enjoyment and motivation is to understand what *children* enjoy about sport participation. To do so, all stakeholders should be committed to developing constructive strategies for communicating with athletes, parents, and coaches.
- 4. Parents should be expected to contribute positively to the coach-athlete relationship.** Parents play a very important role in the social and emotional aspects of young athletes' organized sport experiences and outcomes. Parents are well-intended but can sometimes parent in developmentally inappropriate ways, either because they lack knowledge about organized sport or the ways to optimize it for athlete development. Parents, though, are an integral part of the youth sport system. As such, they should work to align themselves in a supportive way with their children's coaches, peers, organizations, and communities to produce a positive and rewarding sport experience for their athlete and themselves. This means allowing athletes to have developmentally appropriate input into their sport participation, forging good working relationships with the athlete's coaches and teammates by understanding and respecting each other's roles, recognizing the demands placed on them as a sport parent, and providing a mastery-oriented motivational climate when they have the agency to do so. It is also important to consider that coaches and parents can and should, play different roles in the development of an athlete. For example, at higher competitive levels, coaches may purposefully set up a mostly performance-oriented climate where their emphasis is more on sport-related outcomes than skill mastery. In these settings, parents can buffer potential losses in intrinsic motivation by adopting a mastery-oriented approach, emphasizing enjoyment and skill-development more than personal achievement.

Part 5:

SIX CONTEXTS OF SPORT PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A primary aim of this framework is to offer key sport stakeholders an understanding of effective parent involvement in organized sport. Effective involvement is more likely to elicit successful sport experiences, the development of personal assets, continued involvement in sport and physical activity settings, enhanced well-being, and prosocial interactions with significant others (including parents, siblings, coaches, and peers). In line with an integrated understanding of the organized sport system, parents should be viewed as key social agents, responsible for nurturing their athletes' sport experiences. One commonly used framework for understanding parent involvement is Epstein's six contexts of parenting. These contexts include:

1. Parenting involves the actions and principles that set the context for athletes' sport participation. Parent actions can vary depending on the athlete, family, team, organization, and community in question. An autonomy-supportive or authoritative parenting style positively impacts athletes by increasing self-determined forms of motivation and enhancing well-being, enjoyment, and continued participation. This approach allows athletes to feel empowered and have a sense of control over their sport-related experiences and outcomes. Conversely, controlling, strict, coercive and/or authoritarian parenting styles are more likely to be associated with negative experiences and outcomes in organized sport, such as decreased self-esteem and discontinuation of sport involvement. Further, a young person's perception of parent pressure may have a negative impact on continued involvement, enjoyment, and sportspersonship. Below, we offer 13 key indicators of quality involvement in the context of parenting.

- Provide early exposure to a range of sports
- Cover the cost of registration, equipment, and travel
- Ensure athletes are benefiting from a physically and psychologically safe sport environment
- Attend competitions but leave coaching up to the coach
- Show interest in the athlete's talent and progress
- Set clear standards and expectations for athletes' conduct
- Be purposeful about athletes' development of personal assets
- Allow athletes to solve their own problems when confronted with challenges in sport
- Avoid coercion and punishment, and do not use bribery or guilt as a motivator
- Focus on effort and personal improvement
- Provide emotional support in times of stress
- Shift from leading the athlete's early sport development to more of follower/supporter in later adolescence
- Avoid viewing sport involvement as an "investment" in the future

Parent involvement that demonstrates involvement, interest, and concern have the potential to foster athletes' enjoyment and continued participation. Those actions should vary depending on individual and contextual factors, including the skill and developmental stage of the athlete and competition level of the sport.

2. Communicating in sport involves the clarification of expectations, provision of feedback, discussion of sport performance, and reinforcement of actions. Parent-child communication impacts the relationship between parent and athlete and can also "spill over" into other family relationships. Certainly, a primary way in which parents communicate with their athletes about sport is through encouragement and reinforcement. As part of an autonomy-supportive approach, parents should regularly praise and cheer on their athletes while they are participating in sports. These frequent positive comments from parents communicate support to their athletes and can increase athletes' motivation, effort, and perceptions of competence. Through verbal and non-verbal means, parents also communicate expectations to athletes. There are many reasons parents want their children to participate in sports. They may value sport for the structure it provides, for its socialization potential, for the way the context fosters achievement goal orientations, for its ability to catalyze the development of life skills, for its ability to control kids' time, and/or for health reasons. Unfortunately, parents' goals for involvement do not always align with their athletes' goals, even though parents often believe they do. There is great value in open, two-way channels of communication between parents and athletes. Below, we offer nine key indicators of quality communication in the context of organized sport.

- Avoid unsolicited sport-specific feedback, especially if you don't have sufficient knowledge or experience
- Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement related to your athletes' sport participation
- Foster a culture where athletes feel comfortable talking about their sport participation or asking for feedback/input
- Communicate and problem-solve with athletes about how to resolve challenging sport situations
- Create realistic expectations that align with athletes' skill and motivation

- Approach conversations calmly and non-judgmentally
- Communicate with sport organizers and coaches about the value of life skills and values developed through sport
- Keep emotions in check; avoid communicating negatively towards referees, coaches, athletes, or parents
- Foster common values and a sense of community

3. Volunteering is another way parents are engaged in youth sport. Volunteering enables parents to support organizational activities by contributing to management, administration, operations, coaching, and fundraising. In these roles, parents interact with others to contribute to a broader sense of community and positive team climate. This helps their athletes by fostering enjoyment and other desired outcomes in sport. A primary way for parents to become engaged is through volunteer coaching. Volunteering in a supportive capacity at training and competitions builds a stronger sense of community within the sport setting, increases parent involvement and satisfaction. Coaching one's own athlete in sport also has the potential to increase the parent's sport participation, self-efficacy, and well-being. However, it should be noted that coaching can also be used as a means to control an athlete's schedule and/or set limits on involvement. Below, we offer four key indicators of quality involvement in the context of volunteering.

- Volunteer as time and resources permit to co-create the club/league and to support the sport system overall
- Help coaches, administrators, and other parents with logistics, travel, fundraising, and other needed tasks
- Participate in telephone trees, parent patrols, safety protocols, and other operations to maintain oversight
- Recruit and nurture the involvement of other parent volunteers to support the organization's sustainability and infrastructure

4. Learning at Home is a tangible and instrumental way parents can support athletes' development. They may engage in free play opportunities or in more formal skill development with their athletes. Parents initially support and encourage their athlete's acquisition of basic physical and social skills. As the child becomes more competitive, they may go over game tactics, assist with enrichment activities, ensure proper nutritional and dietary principles, and reinforce what is being learned in training and competition. Parents can be instrumental in supporting their athletes' at-home learning with in-home learning opportunities (e.g., Zoom video sessions with a coach or teammate). They should also be engaged by supporting opportunities for mindfulness training and the development of skillsets for psychological skills training.

Below, we offer nine key indicators of quality involvement in the context of learning at home.

- Support athletes' sport practice at home by encouraging their involvement, participating with them, and setting aside dedicated time for their development
- Assist with athletes' goal setting
- Understand what athletes are learning and help motivate and reinforce that learning
- Foster interactions with multiple social agents (i.e., parents, siblings, coaches, peers, etc.) to facilitate motivation, especially as athletes move into the adolescent years
- Seek out climates that encourage sport and physical activity by watching sport and being physically active
- Reinforce "teachable moments" and acknowledge when athletes demonstrate skills learned in sport outside of the sport context
- Ensure athletes have a healthy diet and begin to internalize healthy nutritional principles
- Discuss the value of teamwork, character development, respect for authority, and enjoyment
- Ensure sufficient rest and recovery as well as time away from sport

5. Decision-Making is a primary form of parent engagement during the early years of sport participation. During this time period, parents are instrumental in enrolling their children and in supporting their continued involvement. Parents of younger athletes play a prominent role in sport decision-making processes by gathering info about programs, making enrollment decisions, and purchasing services. These actions are crucial to ensure positive developmental experiences in sport. Later, parents help athletes make decisions about sampling, specialization, and continuation. Ultimately parents get more involved in the governance of sport organizations. When this remains a positive experience for parents, it is more likely to improve their purchase satisfaction, customer loyalty, and commitment to an organization. The sustainability of sport organizations depends on parents' leadership and engagement. Below, we offer ten key indicators of quality involvement in the context of decision-making.

- Allow for athletes' increased ownership as they enter adolescence
- Engage with athletes in relation to setting goals for their sport involvement
- Assist athletes with adopting time management strategies to provide balance and protect the athlete from over-involvement
- Monitor progress regularly to support learning and motivation
- Provide informational support in relation to decisions about the athlete's choice of sport club/organization
- Ensure a balance of parental direction and athlete independence

- Allow teachers/coaches to have more influence as athletes age and grow in skill
- Promote a positive culture and a focus on holistic development
- Demonstrate leadership and responsibility in addressing the negative interactions of spectators, participants, coaches, and other supporters
- Support continuing education and professional development opportunities for coaches *and* parents involved in organized sport

6. Collaborating with others promotes positive interactions among a variety of stakeholders, including athletes, parents, siblings, coaches, and peers, among others. The quality of these relationships has been shown to impact athletes' experiences and outcomes. There are a number of ways parents can engage positively with others in organized sport. Consideration must be given to varying family systems types, paying attention to the goals, needs and cultures of multigenerational and non-traditional families. Below, we offer nine key indicators of quality involvement in the context of parents' collaboration with others.

- Interact respectfully and positively with other parents; negative exchanges lead to athletes' embarrassment and anxiety
- Encourage and congratulate other athletes on the team
- Encourage friendships and facilitate positive interactions among athletes and their teammates
- Create opportunities for families to network and connect to foster a positive climate and build a sense of community
- Be mindful of sibling interactions and investments and their impact on the family
- Foster positive relationships and friendships with other parents to enhance commitment and enjoyment among stakeholders
- Work to enhance communication among those engaged in an athlete's life and facilitate a coordinated system of support aligned to the athlete's goals
- Realize that the sense of community resulting from positive interactions ultimately has an effect on parental satisfaction and athletes' continued involvement
- Foster positive parent-to-parent interactions that add value to the sport experience

Conclusion

Conclusion

The quality of athletes' sport experiences, and the development of their personal assets, is shaped by multiple persons and contexts, of which parents are perhaps be the most salient. Guided by high-quality principles, parents can help athletes reach their athletic and human potential while fostering a lifelong love of sport in all its forms. When parent involvement lacks quality, however, maladaptive outcomes may occur. Therefore, the appropriate engagement of parents in sport must be supported by key stakeholders across the many organizations and communities that serve American athletes. In the pursuit of this goal, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee and its constituent National Governing Bodies have taken the initiative to create a framework that outlines core values that should guide and align collective sport parenting principles in the United States.

The goal of the *Quality Parenting Framework* is to inform, not prescribe, how parents can most effectively engage with athletes and other stakeholders in organized sport. This writing is a carefully crafted and evidence-based resource that establishes a common language and sets forth principles of high-quality parenting that apply across the full range of Team USA sport contexts.

The previous six chapters focused on core principles related to high-quality sport parenting. Namely, the chapters defined and described these principles, and provided a broad overview of the literature associated with high-quality parent involvement. The USOPC understands that parenting is complex and acknowledges that there is no single pathway to perfect parenting in sport. However, this framework provides a common rubric for making evidence-based, informed decisions about how key stakeholders should collectively think of, speak about, and enact high-quality parenting across the full range of Team USA sport contexts. We hope and trust readers will find it helpful in their work with parents across a variety of participatory, developmental, and competitive sport contexts in the United States.

The potential for youth to experience positive social, cognitive, emotional, and physical outcomes through sport depends largely on the social and cultural environment in which their experiences occur. Within this broader environment of the youth sport system, parent involvement stands out as an important contributor to athletes' attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions in the sport domain. Key parenting principles that enhance young people's enjoyment of and confidence about their ability in sport are essential to motivating a lifetime of sport and physical activity participation. We hope this *Quality Parenting Framework* gives organizations, communities, and families a toolkit to catalyze the good that can be accomplished through parents' involvement in their children's organized sport participation.

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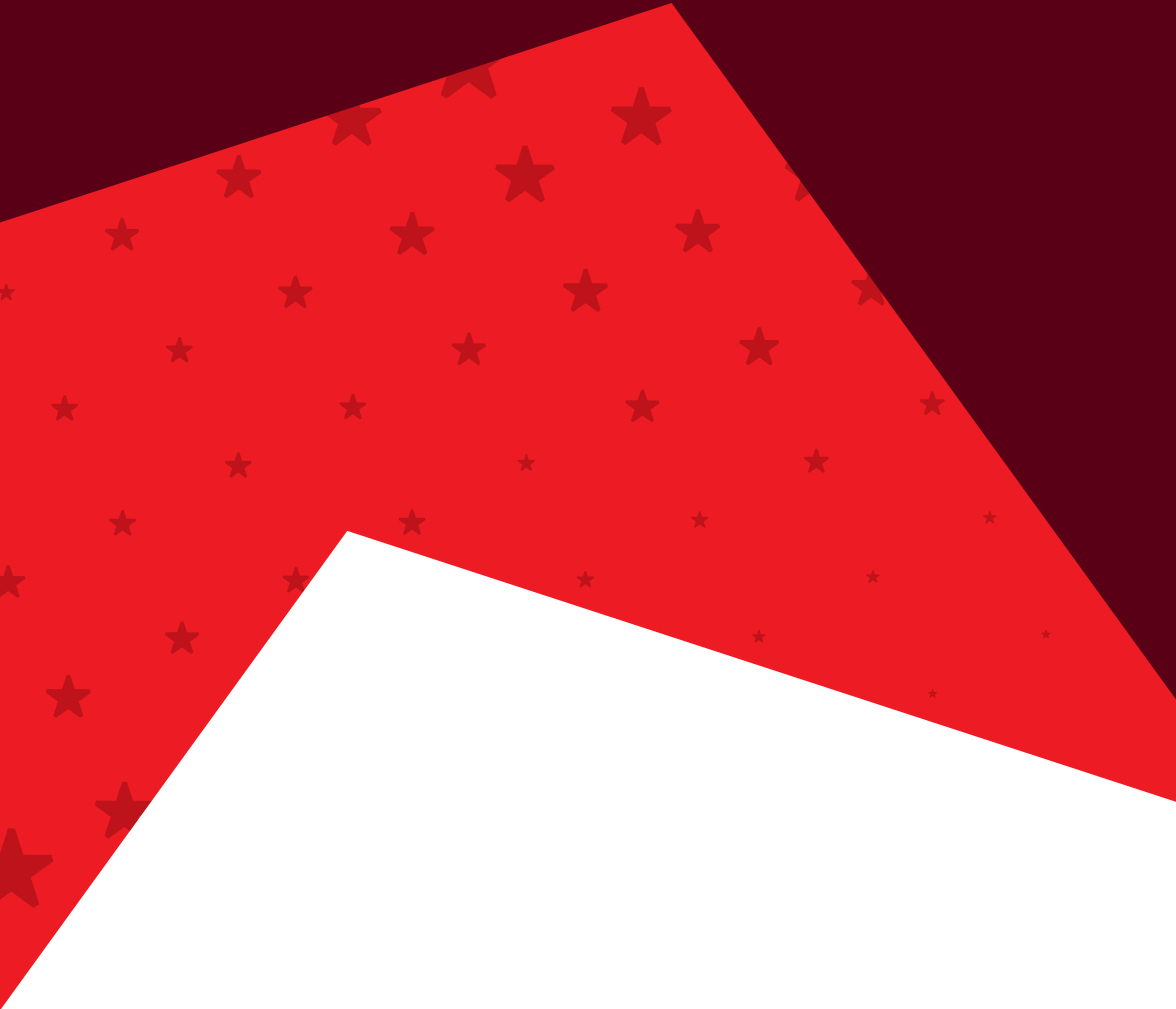
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