



**2025**

# **TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, & CONSULTATION REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Executive Summary**

In January 2025, the U.S. Center for SafeSport (Center) reached out to The Athlete Survivors' Assist (The Assist) for trauma-informed training, technical assistance, and consultation in regards to the termination of Jason Krasley, a former Center investigator that was charged with multiple sex crimes that occurred while working as a police officer in Pennsylvania and prior to his being hired by the Center in 2021.

The Assist entered into an agreement with the Center in January 2025 to provide trauma-informed and athlete survivor-centered expertise regarding the Krasley matter and, more generally, for Center staff and partners. This report and series of recommendations include The Assist's learnings during this time, as well as reflections on successes and challenges the Center faces as they seek to become more trauma-informed.

This Executive Summary provides a summary of the recommendations from The Assist, and the full report that follows allows for deeper analysis and discussion of the recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Assist suggests several strategies for the Center's continued growth in trauma-informed organizational practice. The Assist believes that through an articulated and long-term commitment to being trauma-informed, the Center will build better trust with both athletes and sport governing bodies, as well as create the conditions that not only interrupt abuse in sport, but also prevent abuse from happening. These recommendations include:

- Increase work on organizational trauma-informed processes and approach.
- Set clear boundaries for investigators.
- Incorporate trauma-informed hiring and promotion practices.
- Consider the needs of diverse voices and disciplines when hiring.
- Make leadership decisions that are trauma-informed, and ask applicants about their experiences working in a trauma-informed way.
- Increase transparency in communication, media responses, and engagement.
- Expand and provide resources for trauma-informed consultation in the design of materials and conferences and other in-person engagements.
- Continue to collaborate regularly on code changes and amendments with various allies, stakeholders, athlete survivors, and advocacy groups.
- Develop both formal and informal feedback mechanisms for people in contact with the Center to share their experiences and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Increase and codify board development and staff engagement on trauma-informed strategies at all levels of the organization.

In conclusion, The Assist witnessed the Center taking critical first steps in transforming a system to better interrupt and prevent abuse in sport throughout 2025. The Assist applauds the institutional courage demonstrated by the Center in resourcing a trauma-informed external review of cases Jason Krasley impacted. The Assist is hopeful that our recommendations will be acted on and that the Center will continue its journey toward trauma-informed practice to make sport safer and athlete-centered throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

## **BACKGROUND & HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIP**

The Assist is the only national organization advocating for survivors of sexual assault in sport. Founded and led by athlete survivors, The Assist’s mission is to bring awareness, accountability, and transparency to sexual violence against athletes at all levels. This mission is supported by three pillars: advocacy, education, and resource creation.

A 2021 study by World Players Association indicated that 13% of student athletes experience sexual violence through their participation in sports, yet this number is believed to be much higher. Athletes face extreme vulnerability to sexual abuse because of their complex and sometimes isolating schedules, the intimate nature of coaching and development of sporting skills, the increased physical care and scrutiny, the pressures and stressors of athletic competition, as well as concerns about career opportunities in a finite time frame. In 2018, the Center was codified by Congress as an independent safe sport organization to shepherd in abuse prevention, education, and accountability in sport throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement. The organization is charged with responding to and preventing sexual, physical, and emotional abuse of athletes. Since its inception, there have been positive indications of the impact of this attention and systemic reforms.

In 2021, The Assist was contacted by survivors of sexual abuse, witnesses, and whistleblowers who had re-traumatizing experiences with the Center. Given these widespread trends, in May 2022, The Assist conducted a series of interviews with a diverse group of athletes across several different sports, genders, ages, regions, and levels of competition regarding their experiences with the Center. Through these discussions with athlete survivors and witnesses of sexual abuse in sports regarding how their cases were handled, it became clear to The Assist that reforms and guidance are needed to ensure accountability of individuals and institutions, best practices on trauma-informed training and support, and more transparency. In concert with athlete survivors, The Assist developed several recommendations on how the Center could improve safety, promote wellness, and prevent sexual violence and harassment. Those recommendations included:

- Increase transparency and communication,
- Increase clarity and shorten timelines of the investigation process,
- Reduce the use of non-disclosure agreements,
- Increase and formalize trauma-informed training and support,
- Prevent conflicts of interest,
- Promote confidentiality,
- Treat all forms of sexual harassment and sexual abuse seriously, and
- Provide clarity in jurisdiction and enforcement.

The Assist shared the recommendations with the Center staff in February 2023. In April 2024, the Center provided a written response to the recommendations, and in September 2024 The Assist provided its first in-person training for Center staff during their all-staff meeting. After extensive internal discussions and conversations with survivors, The Assist entered into a formal training and technical assistance agreement with the Center, citing that the Center is too important to fail, and The Assist is dedicated to improving this system for all athlete survivors. The Assist believes that survivors deserve a system that works – one that believes them, prioritizes transparency, supports healing, prevents harm, and delivers justice. Though imperfect, the Center does provide an avenue to justice and accountability, keeps known abusers out of sport, and is a pathway to healing for athlete survivors and others impacted by abuse in sport.

The Assist remains committed to both reforming the Center from the inside and continuing our work across the ecosystem – from training arbitrators and investigative teams, to shaping legislation that protects survivors, to demanding transparency at every level. The following report details feedback specific to support around the audit and outreach on the Krasley matter, feedback around other forms of trauma-informed technical assistance provided by The Assist, and recommendations for continued trauma-informed practice.

## **SPECIFIC FEEDBACK FROM KRASLEY MATTER:**

The Assist worked with the Center to improve the initial engagement on trauma-informed responses and support for cases handled by Jason Krasley. The Assist advised the Center on its handling of responses to these cases and on best practices for reopening cases that Krasley may have impacted. This included reviewing and providing comment on messages being released to witnesses and survivors regarding the auditing of cases handled by Krasley, as well as strategies for support resources for persons impacted. Many of these consultation points provided space for the Center to better understand and put into practice a trauma-informed approach. The Assist shares the following feedback and recommendations specific to our engagement on the Krasley matter:

### **Trauma-informed messaging and communication**

Trauma-informed review and drafting of communications to survivors about the situation was a successful and central feature of the partnership between the organizations. This included ensuring communications listed meaningful support resources, including access to The Assist, which has an understanding of the Center's procedures and the audit process. There were also clear and consistent trauma content warnings throughout all communications.

### **Resourcing trauma-informed support for people impacted**

Through the practice of trauma-informed messaging and a strong partnership with The Assist, the Center was able to connect persons impacted by the audit to advocates that understood the process and had knowledge of specific US sports systems and the experiences of athletes. The Center also ensured it was available and open to hearing feedback from survivors and others affected by the audit.

## **Timeliness**

It was essential that communication to survivors and others affected by Krasley be timely and clear, and include specific information about a systematic audit of his cases. The Center was open to balancing both the needs of timely responses with the requirements of making the responses trauma-informed and thoughtful.

## **Direct referrals and engagement of trauma-informed confidential advocates/crisis interventionists**

Confidential trauma-informed advocates were central to building trust. Providing multiple ways for individuals interested in contacting The Assist was essential. Seven survivors reached out for support. The Assist provided individuals impacted with the opportunity to speak with advocates who were disconnected from and independent of the Center.

## **Collaboration with a private non-profit with decades of experience in trauma-informed approach and ending gender-based violence**

Partnering with The Assist, an organization that has been actively advocating for reforms to the Center and for trauma-informed approaches to make sport safer, was a demonstration of institutional courage and the centering of athlete survivor voices. It was also an opportunity to bring in learnings from the wider fields of gender-based violence and child abuse, so that sports safeguarding could be connected with these larger experiences and learnings.

## **Team and consultant training**

Trauma-informed training for the audit team and external firms created shared language and practice, as well as opportunities for skill-building in trauma-informed investigation and engagement strategies. These training sessions discussed how to reinvestigate cases through a trauma-informed lens, which enabled greater consistency in trauma-informed practice and appeared to improve the organization's connection with survivors during the process.

## **Response and resolution team training on Krasley audit**

Audit-specific training for the Center Response and Resolution team served two purposes. It allowed for frank discussions of the impact of the audit and Krasley matter on athlete survivors and participants navigating the Center's process, and provided framing on individuals' own sense of the Center's handling and accountability for Krasley, including but not limited to the impact of his hire on Center staff and the Center's reputation more broadly. The training response was positive, with many attendees sharing that they felt it was a needed conversation within the Center.

## **Greater accountability**

The Center was open to changing how they communicated about Krasley and the audit of the cases he was involved in. Their communication acknowledged the impact this could have on others and acknowledged the Center's part in hiring and supervising Krasley. It was critical that the Center did not deny or shut down the process or possibility of having to revisit this issue and its long-term impact. Having the Center directly engage with and address the issue was an important step in building trust in the sports world and is a demonstration of practicing institutional courage.

## **Trauma impacts organizations**

People who have been impacted by trauma work in every setting. It is important that the Center understands there will always be people impacted by trauma working for the Center, including individuals abused in sport specifically. Many people are interested in working for the Center because of their connection to the issue of abuse in sport and their dedication to making sport safer. This should be acknowledged and an important part of how the Center internalizes, operationalizes, and practices trauma-informed approaches within the organization itself.

## **Hiring process and trauma-informed practices**

Regarding the Krasley matter, adaptations need to be made to hiring verifications, including increasing background checks for hired employees. Also, more generally, trauma-informed hiring practices need to be implemented. This includes, but is not limited to, adding trauma-informed questions into the interviewing protocol and reference check questions. The Assist offered to provide additional materials and consultation on hiring practices across all levels of the organization (including the then open CEO and CFO positions), but was not directly consulted. The Assist recommends continued work on enhancing background checks, reference interviews, trauma-informed interviewing, and special care when vetting employees.

## **Clear boundaries for investigators**

The Assist further recommends implementing and monitoring enhanced boundaries regarding how investigators contact witnesses, complainants, and respondents, so that private and informal mechanisms are not used. Not having concrete boundaries in place erodes essential ethical boundaries in investigations and can lead to grooming (a deliberate, deceptive process used by persons who cause harm to build trust and an emotional connection with another person).

# **GENERAL FEEDBACK FOR THE CENTER:**

## **Training has impacts**

The general and targeted training that The Assist provided during the project period had real effects on the staff's work. Many participants in these training sessions shared that the information was relevant and helped them do their job more effectively. Trauma-informed training is a critical first step in impacting practice and improving the experience for survivors and others that are subject to the Center's processes.

## **Trauma-informed needs to go beyond lip service**

The Assist saw significant changes in tone and culture stemming from the Center's discussions about trauma and its impacts. Importantly, this was coupled with making actual changes in how the Center does business. There has been a visible adoption of trauma-informed strategies within the teams that The Assist engaged with and trained. For instance, the communication teams are incorporating content warnings in their media and email correspondence, and the audit and compliance team provided a support room with a confidential advocate during the 2025 NGB summit. There is growing recognition within the Center that a trauma-informed approach is important to the work. This is further evidenced by ongoing discussions to extend a contract with The Assist for ongoing consulting on trauma-informed practice.

## **Collaboration is key**

The Assist has seen the Center take on a more leadership and collaborative role in the larger anti-violence and anti-gender-based violence movements. The Center can continue to learn from anti-violence work and the field of gender-based violence. While not always sports-specific, resources are available and should be incorporated into the Center's work. The fields of responding to and preventing gender-based violence, sexual violence, domestic violence, and child abuse provide a rich history and important learnings to safeguarding in sport, as well as being critically connected to local, state, and national safeguarding resources. Collaborating with these voices is critical, and the Center has begun to engage with not only The Assist but also other experts in anti-violence work.

## **Be proactive about the possibility of Center staff including survivors of trauma**

Much like the larger field for response to and prevention of gender-based violence, the Center staff have come to the Center for many personal reasons. The issue of safeguarding is closely related to healing and recovery from trauma. Primary and secondary survivors of trauma often seek out opportunities to help others heal from trauma through their careers. There is also a general high prevalence rate of 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men being survivors of sexual abuse during their lifetime, which we believe is compounded at the Center due to the nature of its work. With likely a large segment of staff identifying as survivors of abuse and particularly sexual abuse, it is more important than ever that the Center continue to dedicate resources and practice trauma-informed care in its public-facing and external roles when working directly with athlete survivors navigating its processes, as well as within the organization.

## **Bring trauma-informed practice to all levels and areas of the Center's work**

Being comprehensively trauma-informed is a dedication to creating an environment that recognizes, responds, and resists retraumatization while centering the athlete-survivor voice in the most supportive way. Trauma-informed goes beyond having a support room. While having a dedicated space is helpful and signals a commitment to a trauma-informed approach, it is not "solving" trauma. It is a piece of the puzzle that makes the most sense when there is an organizational-wide understanding of trauma-informed practices and open conversations about how to make the work more trauma-informed, including considerations around scheduling, meeting tone and cadence, communication expectations after hours and on weekends, personal leave, etc.

## **Accountability and apologies matter**

It may seem like a small thing, but taking accountability and saying "I'm sorry" as both individuals and as an institution are sometimes exactly the remedy people are seeking. The Center has improved its accountability and apology communication, and this can be reflected in the greater trust and reputation we believe the Center is receiving, even in the face of disappointing outcomes in individual cases and despite the Krasley matter.

## **Transparency and communication remain critical to the Center's ongoing relationship with survivors of abuse and sports more broadly**

It is important that the Center continues to engage with trauma-informed experts around their messaging, timing, and communications strategy. Being transparent, even when the news is not good, showcases a commitment to transparency that builds trust and confidence in the safe sport system.

## **Clearly articulate mandatory reporting interpretation and responsibilities to all (survivors, athletes, NGBs, collaborators, allied organizations, etc.)**

Clear and accessible communication about limits of confidentiality is critical. This allows survivors to knowingly share and understand the possibility that information may be reported under mandatory restrictions. It is crucial to share this information clearly with all collaborators, stakeholders, and speakers prior to a disclosure, whenever possible.

## **Positive trends in the adoption of a trauma-informed approach**

The Assist saw many positive gains and changes at the Center over the past year. There were notable shifts in openness and awareness of trauma-informed practice, including buy-in from the leadership team. Planning to respond proactively and with trauma-informed practice in the Krasley manner was a major step in increasing transparency and building relationships with athletes with lived experience of abuse in sport.

## **Collaboration is critical, and collaboration with several agencies, stakeholders, and diverse expertise is needed**

Seeking regular feedback and collaboration with allied sport-safeguarding organizations builds trust across the broader anti-violence community, nationally and internationally, and strengthens the system by implementing best practices informed by diverse perspectives and lived experience.

## **Successful initial arbitration training was held over two months through four learning workshops**

Fifteen arbitrators attended the sessions and reported that they were informative and important for their work on Center cases. Arbitrators also asked for a feedback mechanism to the Center about cases, timelines, and other impacts of the work. The group was interested in more ways to engage with one another and continue learning in a facilitated peer-learning environment. The Center has acknowledged a shift among arbitrators toward implementing unbiased, trauma-informed methods in their practices.

## **Athlete survivor participation in the National Governing Bodies (NGB) Summit**

Collaboration and centering of athlete survivor voices at the NGB Summit in October 2025 was a milestone and appeared largely successful. Having the opportunity to center the experiences of athlete survivors in front of nearly all the US sports in the movement will likely have ripple effects in the future, as NGBs continue to define and engage in safeguarding.

## **NGB communication and engagement**

The Center needs to continue to push for trauma-informed approaches and more training/education at the NGB leadership and staff levels. There have been several conversations about messaging and engagement with the NGB leadership that have benefited from a trauma-informed approach and perspective. This includes how to discuss the weaponizing of the Center process, NGB investigation best practices, and how to build community around safeguarding as critical to NGB organizations.

## **Providing support during in-person gatherings**

Support rooms were used effectively during the NGB summit and are a recommended best practice for future convenings that address difficult subjects such as abuse and safeguarding. The Assist provided a trauma-informed confidential advocate throughout the 2-day event. Over 10 individuals utilized the support room, and many more reached out to The Assist staff for support via other means. Having access to confidential advocacy in those spaces allows for trust building and frank discussions, which are critical to the best mental health care practices.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

As a general review of the recent technical assistance and training provided by The Assist to the Center, we have the following recommendations:

## **Increase work on organizational trauma-informed process and approach**

Considering that many primary and secondary survivors of abuse in sport are interested in working in this area because of their personal connections to the issues, increasing and continuing work on organizational trauma-informed process and approach is crucial to staff retention. The workplace has a lot of survivors of abuse within it, and organizational trauma-informed practice is important to stability, morale, and sustainability.

## **Set clear boundaries for investigators**

The Assist further recommends more boundary-setting regarding how investigators contact witnesses, complainants, and respondents. Communication procedures must actively prevent opportunities for informal and inappropriate contact. This is essential to disrupt potential grooming behavior—the deliberate and deceptive process used by individuals who cause harm to build trust and an emotional connection with another person.

## **Incorporate trauma-informed hiring and promotion practices**

The Assist recommends continued work in background checks, reference interviews, and special care around vetting applicants and employees. The interview process at all levels, from front desk to CEO, needs to include questions about trauma-informed approaches and individuals' experience working in areas that intersect with trauma.

## **Consider the needs of diverse voices and disciplines when hiring**

We recommend continuing to hire outside law enforcement and criminal legal systems experience to bring in multidisciplinary work experience and to ensure the Center remains within the administrative law sector.

## **Make leadership decisions that are trauma-informed, and ask people about their experiences working in a trauma-informed way**

This is critical when making resource-allocation decisions, as well as at every stage of the Center's hiring and promotion process. This needs to extend to contractors, collaborators, and stakeholders that partner with the Center.

## **Increase transparency in communication, media responses, and engagement**

The Center has a history of releasing information before and during major holidays (such as the administrative closing of many cases between Christmas and New Year's). As part of a commitment to a trauma-informed approach, communication needs to be clear and transparent. The Center should be aware of the impact the information has on survivors and others impacted. It is important that the Center continues to communicate important responses and outcomes in an institutionally courageous way that is accessible to all. A practice of transparency requires the courage to share important information rather than hide it to protect the organization's public image. These communications must be coupled with meaningful connections to resources. The Assist saw marked improvements in communications messaging from a trauma-informed perspective during the contract period.

## **Expand and provide resources for trauma-informed consultation in the design of materials and conferences/in-person engagements**

Trauma-informed practice works best when the collaboration is part of the design, not a last-minute addition. The Assist helped with some items on an ad hoc basis, such as joining the NGB summit fairly late in the planning process. Earlier collaboration would help create a better experience and encourage shifting from operating in stress and crisis to operating with thoughtfulness and spaciousness.

## **Continue to collaborate on code changes and amendments regularly, including seeking feedback from various allies, stakeholders, and advocacy groups**

The Center's SafeSport Code for the US Olympic and Paralympic Movement dictates the Center's authority and jurisdiction within sport and applies to all participants in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. This feedback process is one way other allies and stakeholders can drive change at the Center outside the legislative process. The Assist urges the Center to continue this practice of soliciting feedback on the code.

## **Develop both formal and informal feedback mechanisms**

Develop both formal and informal feedback mechanisms for people in contact with the Center to share their experiences and offer suggestions for improvement. A critical part of effective feedback mechanisms is having a plan for reviewing, how often, and how to respond to feedback. Once the mechanism is established, the Center needs to create a formalized, consistent plan to review/respond to, and incorporate the feedback they receive.

## **Increase and codify board development, athlete engagement, and staff engagement in trauma-informed strategies at all levels of the organization**

This can include continued collaboration with experts to create training that links to existing safety supports and to the history of work to end violence and safeguard both in and out of sport. The Assist recommends team-specific training targeted to leadership and board responsibilities, as well as continuing education and new-hire orientation.

# **CONCLUSION**

Overall, The Assist believes the working relationship and formal partnership with the Center helped to improve the Center's trauma-informed response and benefited the relationship the Center has with athlete survivors of abuse. As discussed in the recommendations, The Assist urges the Center to continue prioritizing trauma-informed strategies and to engage external collaborators to ensure that these gains are sustained and growth continues. On-call and ad hoc consultations have been invaluable during this contract, providing a space for The Assist to share insights and feedback, as well as supporting the Center in more thoughtful engagement with athlete survivors of abuse. While more work remains to be done in this regard, there have been solid gains in building the Center's trauma-informed capacity. The prioritization of leadership time and resources has been critical to this success, and The Assist urges the Center to continue this important work. A trauma-informed approach and the engagement of athlete survivor voices are essential to making sport safer for all. And with continued dedication to collaboration, the Center's role in safeguarding prevention, investigation, and compliance can be an even stronger mechanism for future sports systems that are trauma-informed, and ensure athletes and their well-being is centered.