



AOA Responsible Coaching Movement Open & Observable Environments Policy

Approved: February 9, 2020 by AOA Board of Directors

The [Coaching Association of Canada's, Responsible Coaching Movement](#) includes the [Rule of Two](#), which refers to open and observable environments regarding AOA policies.

OPEN & OBSERVABLE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

Open and observable environments are in reference to the Coaching Association of Canada's [Rule of Two](#).

This reference has been created by [Swim Canada](#) and adopted by AOA to assist individuals in understanding and creating open and observable environments. Thank you for the generous offer from Swim Canada to share their resources.

At the provincial level, AOA is committed to creating open and observable environments at all AOA sanctioned events, including training, meetings, camps and competitions.

For the purpose of this page, the following terms have these meanings:

- *"Representative"* – All individuals employed by or engaged in activities on behalf of their Organization/Club. Representatives include, but are not limited to, coaches, staff, administrators, officials, club directors and officers, committee members, and volunteers.
- *"Open and observable environments"* - means **making meaningful and concerted efforts to avoid situations where a coach, official or other representative might be alone with an athlete and/or vulnerable individual. All interactions between an athlete and an individual who is in a position of trust should normally, wherever possible, be in an environment or space that is both "open" and "observable" to others.**

What is an 'open' environment?

- An open environment is an environment that is not closed or concealed from others.
- Interactions should not take place behind closed doors or in secluded locations.
- Others should be aware of the interaction that is taking place.

What is an 'observable' environment?

- An observable environment is a space where others can see or take note of the interaction.

Before interacting with an athlete, ask yourself:

- Is this an open interaction?
 - Are we in a closed or secluded place?
 - Who knows this meeting/interaction is taking place?
 - Does the athlete (or individual in a position of lesser power) have an easy and accessible exit path?
- Is this interaction observable?
 - Is anyone else with us?
 - Can anyone see us?
 - Can anyone hear us?

Note: To ensure the open and observable environment, special considerations must be applied for shadowing practices.

SHADOWING MINORS - BEST PRACTICES

- A shadower is a mentor who accompanies a young or novice participant on a course or training activity. Shadowing can provide a safe environment and prevent a negative experience of getting disoriented or lost. It can help educate a beginner and provide a basis for conversation later on.

Recommendations:

- If possible, a parent/guardian should be assigned to shadow their own children.
- **If a coach or program volunteer shadows minors**, they should perform the activity at a minimum ratio of two minors to one adult, or in small groups. If an adult shadower is following a single athlete, they must have a current PIC (Police Information Check) on file and the parent/ guardian of the minor must be aware of the activity and give permission to do it.



- Shadowing happens in an **open environment** and the participant must give verbal consent before each activity to more than one witness (e.g. Group, coaches, parents) and must be fully comfortable to be shadowed.
- Verbal consent can be obtained before each practice e.g. with a team recap, stating that there will be shadowing activity and asking permission from parent(s) and participant(s). **Consideration for shadowing at events:**
- If shadowing happens at a competition it must be approved by the event director.
- Shadowing at a competition is usually allowed for small children, total beginners and special needs participants. The event sanctioning body must outline the rules regarding results.

For the shadower:

- Stay several paces behind the competitor.
- Do not communicate with the competitor about his or her course, except as a matter of safety.
- If the competitor makes a major mistake, we suggest two levels of assistance:
- Ask the competitor "Where do you think we are on the map?", or
- "Would you like to know which way I would go?"
- If the competitor is new to the sport, the entire course may consist of a conversation with the shadower regarding techniques.

References:

<https://www.swimming.ca/en/safe-sport/prevention/responsible-coaches-movement/open-observable-environments/>

<http://baoc.org/wiki/Juniors/Cool/Shadowing>

