



An Open Letter to the USRowing Community:

Last spring, seven junior rowers drafted a letter to their club's board of directors detailing [years of misconduct](#) at the hands of their rowing coach. I want to commend these young women for the courage they showed in coming forward. They are braver than most adults I know. I hope we can all learn from their actions — and that we will truly listen and take action when young athletes tell us that something is wrong.

This was not an isolated incident; the reality is that abuse occurs at all levels of sport. I have been on the receiving end of too many calls from distraught parents and athletes to stay silent on this issue. Young rowers are looking to the collective “we” — their clubs, administrators, colleges, schools, coaches, parents, USRowing, and the U.S. Center for SafeSport — to keep them safe. When they are abused (verbally, emotionally, or physically) and we do *nothing* in response, we're sending a strong message that this abuse is to be tolerated. And this lack of response only normalizes the behavior and often leaves youth and young adults assuming that *they* must be the ones reading the situation incorrectly, perhaps even inviting the abuse.

Rowing gives young people the opportunity to be coached and mentored in a unique and powerful way. The vast majority of coaches and other adults at boathouses are upstanding individuals whose only intentions are to coach well and show support for their athletes. They should be applauded for their commitment to mentoring and training rowers. To preserve this experience, we need to change our response when misconduct occurs. When there are patterns of abuse and when misconduct takes place, we must collectively respond, and USRowing is prepared to lead on this. We will work to educate young rowers, as well as adults, about what is appropriate, who to call for help, and how to identify misconduct. We also have recently hired a new full-time staff member who is responsible for Safety and Well-Being.

In conjunction with coaches, parents, SafeSport administrators, and leaders in other sports, USRowing is putting together an updated code of conduct that spells out expectations of how rowers in the United States are expected to treat each other — especially focusing on adult and minor interactions. We will share this updated code broadly, as well as the implications of violations of the code by May 30. We will continue to work with the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#) and report cases of abuse and misconduct for them to investigate. We also will provide more updates on resources, training, and actions USRowing will be taking to safeguard young people in our sport.

These challenges are not unique to rowing; we are simply shining a light on an issue that exists in all sports and committing to increasing awareness and a collective response to safeguard young athletes. Guidelines and codes of conduct are only effective if rowers, parents, and community members enforce

them together with USRowing. I am fully committed to effecting change on this front, and I am hopeful that all of you will join us in the important work ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alvin Kwas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alvin" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kwas".

USRowing CEO