

**SUGGESTED MINIMUM STANDARDS
FOR
YOUTH SPORTS IN FLORIDA**



**Florida Recreation and Park Association
411 Office Plaza Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2756
(850) 878-3221
www.frpa.org**

Preface

Millions of youth across the country participate in youth sports programs every day. Hundreds of thousands of professionals, parents, guardians, and volunteers also find themselves involved in youth sport programs as administrators, coaches, league parents, spectators, or officials.

At their best, youth sports programs provide young people with a safe environment in which they have fun, build character, learn to practice sportsmanship, and develop skills and traits that help them become responsible citizens and live happy healthy lives. This provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, coaches and sports administrators to positively influence the development and growth of the next generation ([Pursuing Victory with Honorsm Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports](#)).

Never before has there been such a tremendous need for a reform of youth sports across the country. Florida's parks and recreation professionals have stepped forward to develop the enclosed suggested guidelines that will provide youth sports organizations and park and recreation agencies a plan for success. Youth sports can be a positive experience for young people. When leagues are not properly administered and abuse occurs, youth sports can become a very negative, destructive experience. Abuse is not only physical, but can be anything which "damages" a child's self-image or is humiliating. The end result of this is a child who no longer has a desire to participate, and even worse, a child who withdraws from any social setting.

Effective youth sports programs have three objectives: personal development, fun, and safety ([Pursuing Victory with Honorsm Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports](#)). An efficiently run youth sports program fosters an environment in which there exists an ideal setting for the social, emotional, intellectual, moral and physical development of youngsters.

Of primary importance is the philosophy that youth sports are just that – an opportunity for youth to experience sports in a safe and nurturing environment. A very small percentage of children participating in youth sports become professional athletes. Kids play sports to have fun, be with friends, and to learn some of life's many lessons. Those involved in your youth sports programs should understand and foster that interest. Allow the time that your team members spend in your recreational youth sports setting to result in their skill development, understanding of commitment, team building, decision making skills, and encouragement of physical activity.

Protecting children has become a necessary component of any program that has youth as their primary participant. Parents are entrusting the safety of their children to you, during the time you are providing the youth sports program. In order to assure the parent that you have done everything reasonably possible to keep their child safe while engaging in sporting activities, it is incumbent on the youth sports provider to make the best efforts to shield the child from harm. Every layer of the shield assists you in providing a safe environment.

We suggest your shield should begin with selecting and screening the very best staff and volunteers; providing appropriate training and education to those selected; and don't forget the all important, but most often forgotten evaluation of the program and volunteers. And, to keep them coming back, the praise of the volunteers is critical to a consistently well-administered, effective youth sports program.

While the program is the Community's program and is based on what their needs are, the community will look to you to provide them the best advice on the operation of the most effective program for their most precious resource – the kids. You are responsible for not only the delivery of the program, but also the environment in which the program is delivered.

We realize that every city and county may have local policies and regulations for the operation of leagues. Individual leagues may also have policies and procedures to guide their operations. The minimum guidelines suggested by The Florida Recreation and Park Association are not intended to replace those, but are intended to provide information and resources that may compliment existing regulations. The components contained in this document are suggestions. The Florida Recreation and Park Association has no regulatory authority for youth sports program, but has an interest in promoting safe environments in which youth can experience sports. The suggested minimum standards contained in this document are suggestions only, and do not constitute nor should they be construed as, legal advice. References in these guidelines to Florida or other law are informational only and are not intended to offer legal interpretation. The Florida Recreation and Park Association has no regulatory authority for youth sports programs, nor can it establish or otherwise set any binding legal standards; rather FRPA advocates the common interest of its members of promoting the objective of safe environments in which youth can experience sporting activities. With this understanding that these guidelines are not directive or intended to be a substitute for particularized legal advice, it is hoped that the suggested minimum standards described will be thought and action provoking to the processes which all providers of youth sports programs should give due consideration.

SECTION I MINIMUM STANDARDS

Criminal Background Checks

Philosophy: The Parks and Recreation Department should minimally conduct *mandatory* criminal background checks on those citizens wishing to volunteer in youth sports programs and require those volunteers to complete *mandatory* coaching certification classes. Criminal background checks and coaching certification are required and conducted for the following reasons:

- A. To keep the safety of the children a top priority.
- B. To make an unwelcome environment for anyone who does not put the needs of the children first.
- C. To prevent individuals from volunteering in youth sports programs who have a history of inappropriate behavior or who are unfit to work with children.
- D. To select the “best” volunteers to coach and serve in other capacities in youth sports organizations.

While Florida law currently provides for certain minimum standards pursuant to the JL Act to conduct background screenings on youth sport volunteers, and further strengthening of that law has been proposed, sports organizations may wish to consider being more proactive in protecting participants from not only sexual offenders/predators, but also from others whose criminal background is checkered and casts doubt on the prospective volunteer’s ability to be a positive role model for the children.

The City of Jacksonville/Duval County was the first municipality in Florida to implement mandatory criminal background checks on youth sports volunteers. Their policy, implemented in 1999 and recently updated, was followed by Hillsborough County whose policy went into effect in 2000.

There is little consistency among state and local legislatures in requiring criminal background checks for youth sports volunteers. For most youth sports organizations, the decision to mandate screenings of volunteers is a voluntary one. Only two national youth sports governing organizations – Little League Baseball (www.littleleague.org) and Pop Warner (www.popwarner.com) football have implemented mandatory volunteer screenings in their affiliated leagues. Organizations which have become leaders in calling for mandatory volunteer screening are the National Alliance for Youth Sports (www.nays.org) and the Kids Sports Network (www.ksnusa.org).

There are four types of criminal background checks:

1. Local – Information from county where volunteer resides.
2. State – Usually done through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Current cost is \$23 per check.

3. National "B" – Done by one of the companies providing the service. Costs vary as services are packaged a la carte (e.g. sexual predator check, address verification, criminal check). Overall costs can range from \$2 to \$13 per check. These checks usually cover 48 states.
4. National "A" – Also known as a Level II background screening. This is the most expensive (\$64 and up) because it is a fingerprint check. These checks are run through the NCIC (National Crime Information Center) of the FBI.

While option 4 is the most expensive, it is also the most accurate and complete check. Most choose an option based on three factors – number of volunteers to be checked, cost per check, and frequency of checks. Some parks and recreation agencies require annual checks.

Local parks and recreation agencies or independent youth sports organizations in Florida wishing to implement coaching certification and/or background screenings on volunteers may contact any of the organizations/agencies listed in the resource area of this document for information and materials.

All persons directly involved in coaching or supervising organized youth sports activity **MUST** complete an application. The application must contain the following:

- Name
- Address
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Drivers License Number
- Criminal History Check Consent Form
- List of States Resided In and Years Resided There
- Questions Regarding Convictions of a Felony/Misdemeanor
- Youth Sports Experience
- Youth Sports Related References
- References Other Than Relatives

All applicants must have address validation prior to conducting criminal history checks. Address verification must go back a minimum of seven years.

All efforts to comply with the State of Florida's confidentiality laws must be applied. Applications for criminal background checks have vital personal information such as social security numbers, address information, drivers license numbers, etc. The custody of this information should provide the maximum confidentiality. Once it is appropriate, the information should be shredded and discarded so as to protect release of that personal information.

Coaches Education

All managers, head coaches, assistant coaches, or other volunteer assistants who have direct contact with children, should be required to possess valid coaching certifications as a condition of volunteering. Volunteer umpires/referees should be required to possess valid certifications as a condition of their position as well.

Any education program for coaches should be considered an opportunity to assist volunteers in understanding the psychology of coaching children, giving coaches practical skills to help all kids have fun. Coaching certification improves the knowledge and skills coaches have so they may be more successful in teaching children.

Like the third grade teacher, middle school science teacher, or the high school history teacher, all youth sports coaches – even though most are “just” unpaid volunteers – must possess coaching certification, both as a pre-requisite for coaching youth and as proof of basic training in coaching young people. Just as parents trust that their children’s teachers are adequately trained in the classroom (a somewhat controlled environment), they should also be able to trust and believe that their child’s youth sports coach has been properly recruited, properly screened, and properly trained to coach children.

It is therefore incumbent that either the local parks and recreation department or the youth sports organization require certification for each and every coach – whether the coach is an “official” coach (e.g. on the team’s roster of coaches) or just a person who “comes out to help” because they are there. The tacit acknowledgement of these coaches participating without required certification can also open an organization or parks and recreation department to liability should an incident of abuse, neglect, or other negative type occur.

Parks and recreation departments should work closely with the independent organizations to develop policies requiring all youth sport coaches to be certified. In some departments, the requirement for certification extends to “any volunteer who has direct contact with children.” Several national youth sports organizations, including Little League Baseball and Pop Warner Football, mandate background checks. Little League Baseball’s policy requires, “All local Little Leagues...conduct background checks on managers, coaches, board of directors, members, and any other persons, volunteers or hired workers, who provide regular service to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.”

Coaching certification can be developed in one of two different ways. First, the requirement could be for coaches to become certified through a national coaching certification program. There are several excellent programs, all of which meet minimum coaching certification standards.

1. The National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) through their National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA). The NAYS is headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida and their coaching certification clinics must be conducted by an NYSCA certified clinician. There is a charge to take the course and become NYSCA certified and for annual renewal. For more information on forming a local NYSCA chapter, visit the website at www.nays.org and follow the links to the coach’s page or contact NAYS at NYSCA@nays.org or via toll-free telephone (800) 688-KIDS.
2. The American Sport Education Program (ASEP) is another coaching education program. Their clinics are more in-depth than most and can only be taught by ASEP certified instructors. For more information on

- ASEP clinics, visit their web site at www.asep.com and click the “learn about courses” link.
3. The Program for Athletic Coaches Education (PACE) is a program which was begun by the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University. PACE clinics can be taught by PACE certified instructors. Information on the three on-line courses for a graduate certificate in Coaches Education can be found at <http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/ysi/coachesleaders.htm>.
 4. The Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) was begun at Stanford University. PCA has recently opened an office in Orlando and offers clinics around the state of Florida. For more information on PCA and on-line courses, visit their web site at www.positivecoach.org and click on the Double Goal Coach Training link at the top of the page.

Many coaches possess teacher's certification from the State of Florida. This is generally not accepted in lieu of a specific coaching certification class, unless the teaching certificate has the specific “Coaching” endorsement on the certificate.

The second option for parks and recreation departments and youth sports organizations is to develop their own certification program. This is the option that was taken by the Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department when their certification program was implemented in the early 1990's. Since its inception, the program has expanded and now includes three levels of certification, and coaches must recertify every two years. The curriculum is reviewed and updated annually

Certification programs should meet the Standards for Athletic Coaches as established by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE).

Coaches should be required to attend non-sports specific training courses that minimally cover:

- The Psychology of Coaching Youth Sports
- Risk Management
- The Prevention and Care of Athletic Injuries
- Knowledge of Program Philosophy
- Program Policies and Procedures
- Effective Communication
- Practice Organization and Planning
- Signing a Coaches Code of Conduct/Ethics

Coaches should also be taught state laws and legal issues dealing with child abuse reporting, attacking coaches and officials, custodial issues, etc.

Coaches should have training in sport specific rules and regulations.
Coaches should hold parent meetings prior to season, as well as during and after season. These meetings should be mandatory for at least one parent.

Coaches should have a CPR and First Aid certificate through a nationally recognized certifying body.

Term: Coaches completing a coaching certification class should be issued a certification card for the level completed. The certification card should state the dates for which the training is valid. It is suggested that the card be valid for no more than two years.

Coaching Certification Enforcement

Each youth organization holding a valid Facility Use Agreement should make sure each required volunteer has valid coaching certification. The Organization should assure each manager/coach/assistant coach is properly certified prior to their being permitted to coach or act as a coach. This includes "non-official" coaches who just "help out" at practices and/or games. Spot checks should be made during the season to ensure compliance with certification requirements. Properly certified is defined as, "having attended a certification class and in possession of a valid certification card." Uncertified coaches will be removed from their coaching position until they become certified.

Education of Officials

Training provides officials with detailed information on the skills, fundamentals, and common problem areas for officials.

It is recommended that the parks and recreation department and/or youth sports organization meet with the officials prior to the commencement of the season to discuss the requirement to be background checked, as well as overall philosophy of the league. This will assist in guiding the officials and will allow them to work toward the goal of a positive sports experience.

Officials should be required to attend sport specific official training courses that cover:

- a. Knowledge of program philosophy
- b. Policies and procedures of officiating
- c. Effective communication
- d. Rules and their enforcement

A list of organizations that can provide sport specific training is included in the back of this document.

All Officials should read, sign, and adhere to an Officials Code of Conduct. Samples of conduct codes may be obtained from the resources provided in the back of this document.

Education of Professional & Volunteer Administrators

According to the National Alliance for Youth Sports, statistics show that 90% of administrators have received no training on how to manage youth sports programs, yet every day they make decisions and set policies that affect the children in their care. Professional and volunteer administrators who use public and private facilities should be educated on how to properly run their programs prior to being granted use of facilities and they should be held accountable for their actions. Programs serve as preventative measure and can ensure that adult volunteers using public facilities have the appropriate training, thereby reducing risk for facility owners.

Professional Administrators (refers to the salaried parks and recreation staff responsible for the oversight of the youth sports organization) training courses should minimally include:

- a. Understanding and having the authority to implement standards
- b. Knowledge of hiring and firing coaches
- c. Authority to hire and fire coaches
- d. Knowledge of risk management and insurance
- e. Knowledge of evaluating, counseling, and disciplinary process
- f. Knowledgeable in accessing resources
- g. Access to resources and educational tools
- h. Knowledge of contractual agreements
- i. Program specifics

Volunteer Administrators training courses should minimally include:

- a. Developing and enforcing the league philosophy, policies, and procedures
- b. Recruitment of coaches and volunteers
- c. Risk management and insurance
- d. Fundraising
- e. Parent involvement

Each organized youth sports league should designate a representative with the authority to identify the responsible party and oversee the coaches within the program.

Independent groups will work with local community administrators to assure all requirements are met.

Supervision for Independent G

Understanding that the behavior of the coaches, parents, officials, and spectators all contribute to the overall youth sport environment and the positive youth sport experience, it is incumbent on the parks and recreation agency/youth sports organization to train and orient all groups involved. The process does not however end with training. Orientation programs, continuous monitoring and oversight, and post-season evaluation will all contribute to the success of the program.

It is also understood that youth sports take place in a number of varying environments, and the involvement of the parks and recreation agency varies from area to area. In whatever environment the youth sports program is offered, every effort must be made to assure the philosophy of the program is communicated and the appropriate training and support exists to foster that philosophy throughout the program.

Parent Orientation is a necessity to help parents better understand and be aware of their roles and responsibilities in creating a positive experience for all children. The impact of a parent's support or lack thereof, begins before the game, continues through the game, and continues even further off the field after the game. Ideally the child is encouraged to do their best before and during the game and is applauded for doing their best – whatever the outcome of the game – following the game. The encouragement of the very best volunteer coach who works diligently to provide a positive and supportive experience, can be quickly undone by a parent who does not continue that supportive conversation following a game.

Training courses should minimally include:

- a. Questions parents should ask their child's coach
- b. Effective communication and how to work with coaches
- c. How to be a positive supporter
- d. Volunteering to help the team

Parents should be counseled to support their young athlete by:

- a. Attending all parent meetings with coaches
- b. Attending practices, games, and team social events
- c. Signing and adhering to a Parent's Code of Conduct
- d. Volunteering to help the team

Parent involvement can be a critical component in the overall success of a youth sports program. Most such programs could not be nearly as effective without parental involvement; however, organizations must be wary and cognizant of the limitations of deep parental involvement in youth sports programs. Most parents would object to the thought of being fingerprinted and having a criminal background investigation conducted, merely because they want to be supportive of and/or regularly present at, youth sporting activities. Except with their own child, a parent should not be asked or expected to undertake any coaching or other direct activities with youth participants, particularly where such might involve an individual being alone with a child. A situation as simple as asking a parent to take another child to the bathroom facility, while understandable and seemingly innocuous, should simply be avoided. Parents wishing to provide snacks for a team should be encouraged to only bring packaged (that is, not "homemade") products. Carpooling arrangements can be particularly problematic; unless an organization is willing to accept potential legal liability for youth transportation, such active involvement by the organization is best avoided and left to any interested parents to arrange completely on their own. Though perhaps

unfortunate that an organization cannot facilitate and make fuller use of parental involvement, the legal fact of the matter is that unless the organization is prepared to implement the same screening process for parents as those for coaches and like volunteers, and accept some potential legal responsibilities for the actions of a particular parent which may largely fall outside the scope of any official supervision, an organization should, to protect itself, establish a boundary between an involved parent and an active volunteer.

SECTION I Organizational Guideline

The organizational guidelines below represent suggestions for administering your program. We recommend that you carefully review these guidelines and have your own legal counsel review these items to assure that they are appropriate for your community.

1. Organizational Structure

Each Organization should be governed by a written set of by-laws the provisions of which should be executed by a Board of Directors. A copy of the most up to date by-laws (and constitution, if applicable) should be on file with the Department of Parks and Recreation, prior to the execution of a Facilities Use Agreement.

The Board of Directors should be elected at a time determined by the Organization's by-laws. Election of board members should be open and every member of the Organization in good standing should be eligible to vote. It is suggested that the Board have a minimum of four members: President (or other similar title), Vice-President (or other similar title), Secretary, and Treasurer. No individual should serve in more than one board position at any one time.

It is strongly recommended that terms for elected officials be with staggered terms to ensure smooth transitions in the Organization from year-to-year (Example: President and Secretary elected, in even years, Vice-President and Treasurer elected in odd years). An updated list of board members with addresses, phone numbers, and other contact information is required and should be submitted to the Department of Parks and Recreation within 30 days following elections.

2. Organization Annual Meetings

Each Organization should have at least one (1) general membership meeting in a calendar year at a time and place set by the Board of Directors. A schedule of the meeting should be supplied to the Department of Parks and Recreation so the appropriate Youth Sports Coordinator can attend. Appropriate advance notice of the meeting should be made so that the maximum number of members may attend. One agenda item of the meeting should be the election of the Organization's Board of Directors in accordance with the by-laws.

3. Attendance at Meetings

Organizations should send representatives to meetings so their league may be fairly represented in the decision making process.

4. League Finances and Financial Reports

All Organizations should supply the Department of Parks and Recreation with a financial statement at the end of the Organization's fiscal year. The Organization should inform the Parks and Recreation Department its fiscal year (e.g. January 1 - December 31, October 1 - September 30) and the financial statement should be received within 30 days of the end of the fiscal year. Organizations which have two seasons should submit financial information on their annual statement for each season. It is strongly recommended that each Organization secure bonding insurance in the amount of \$50,000 for its treasurer and concession manager.

5. Registration of Participants

All Organizations should have open registration for participants. It is understood that some sports organizations limit registration to a certain geographic zone. In such cases, registration should be open to all within the geographic zone. Children of all abilities should be encouraged to participate in recreation league play.

The dates and times for registration should be set by the Organization and its Board, and those dates should be furnished to the general public through normal publicity means. Each Organization should provide the Parks and Recreation Department's Athletic Office with a list of the dates, times, location, and cost of registration. Once registration is complete for a season, a list of the names, ages, and sex of each participant should be furnished to the Parks and Recreation Department's Athletic Office.

Florida Statute 119.07, requires that information on youth enrolled in local government parks and recreation programs be kept confidential and personal. Information such as name, sex, address, phone, etc., under current law, shall not be released to the public. Regardless of who is the "keeper of the records" the Parks and Recreation Department and the youth sports organization should work jointly to assure the strictest guidelines are implemented to prevent the release of this information. There should be no exception to this policy.

6. Practice and Game Schedules

When the Organization provides a game schedule to its participants, a copy should also be provided to the Parks and Recreation Department's Athletic Office. This schedule should include post-season games and/or tournaments.

7. Registration of Coaches

Prior to the first games of the season, the Organization should also provide to the

Department of Parks and Recreation a list of all managers, coaches, assistant coaches, with team affiliations and phone numbers.

8. Screening and Selection of Volunteers

The Organization should have a written policy which governs the application, screening, and selection of all managers, coaches, coordinators, etc. The Organization may take into account a volunteer's tenure, certification, or other factors in assigning managers, coaches, coordinators, etc. A copy of this policy should be furnished to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Section III Operational Policies of Facility Users

1. Organization Fees and Charges

Organizations should charge reasonable and fair rates in order to safely conduct their program. All proposed fees and charges must be submitted and approved by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to registration.

All revenue received by the Organization should be used solely for operating the program being conducted or toward the facility being used.

An agreement for collection of donations/fees to be collected by the Organization should be negotiated between the Organization and the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to the beginning of the season. Permission to solicit for an admission donation should be approved in advance and in writing, from the Department.

2. Financial Assistance

Youth sports organizations may wish to establish a process for scholarships for participants with financial constraints. The process should be equitably implemented and ensure that no child is denied inclusion based on their ability to pay. Below is an example of a system utilized by the Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department.

Type of Assistance	Proof Required
Family is receiving Medicaid	Medicaid card
Family is part of a City/County healthcare program for low income families	Enrollment card
Family is receiving federal/state food benefits/assistance	EBT card

3. Discrimination

Subject to appropriate classification for the purpose of insuring the health, welfare, and overall safety of participants, each Organization should agree that all persons should be offered the opportunity to participate in the programs of the Organization regardless of race, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap and in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws unless such participation would create a risk to the participant.

4. Safety and Equipment

Youth sports organizations are responsible for operating programs on City/County property in an environment that is as safe as possible for participants, volunteers, and spectators. All sports equipment should meet standards as required by either their governing body (e.g. Little League, Pop Warner, etc.) or the governing body whose rule book they follow. Organizations may make their safety restrictions tougher than their governing body, but they should not be allowed to relax any safety standard.

Equipment should be inspected regularly by the Organization's Safety Officer (or other similarly titled board member) and/or the manager/head coach of each team to determine the effectiveness of the equipment in providing its intended performance. Defective equipment should be either disposed of by the Organization or refurbished so it meets the effectiveness standard.

All fields including game as well as practice areas should be inspected prior to each use. This will assist in providing safe conditions for all participants. Safety issues should be corrected immediately and prior to use. If the condition cannot be immediately corrected, it should be reported the Organization Head, who will in turn report these issues to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Players should not be allowed to participate on an area considered unsafe. Each Organization should develop criteria for determining the safety of the playing/practice facilities, especially in the event of inclement weather. Additionally, a sufficient number of adults should be present to supervise all scheduled activities from the time the players arrive until the final child is picked up by their parent or guardian or other adult, as designated in writing by the child's parent/guardian.

Inclement weather, lightning - Each Organization should have at every game and practice site a working lightning detector. It is suggested that organizations observe the 30/30 rule of lightning safety published by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration which can be found at [www/lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm)

5. Facility Inspections

A peripheral inspection of the playing area should be completed before the commencement of any game. Department of Parks and Recreation staff should

periodically inspect all athletic facilities. The frequency of inspections should be determined by the Parks and Recreation Department, considering the age of the facility, the frequency of the facility use, the intended use of the facility, etc. This should not preclude additional inspections of the facility if deemed necessary.

5. Locks and Keys

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Parks and Recreation Departments should adopt a policy dealing with locks and keys to facilities, and that policy should be adequately communicated to the youth sports organizations.

7. Maintenance Responsibilities

A written agreement should exist between the Department of Parks and Recreation and the youth sports organization, regarding responsibility for the following maintenance responsibilities:

- Field preparation and marking
- Mowing, fertilizing, and maintenance of turf areas
- Litter collection and depository
- Reporting of maintenance emergencies

It should be the responsibility of the youth sports organization to perform daily pick up of litter at the facility after each practice and game. Concession garbage should be placed in proper containers or in dumpsters.

Organizations should submit, in writing, all maintenance requests to the proper Youth Sports Coordinator. Routine maintenance requests should be submitted at the annual president's meeting. Copies of requests should be maintained by the Organization. Requests for maintenance should be submitted by the Organization President (or similarly titled head of Organization) and should specifically state the item(s) which need repair or maintenance. Maintenance, if able to be done by the Department of Parks and Recreation, will be performed on a schedule determined by the Department's Maintenance Unit.

Emergency maintenance requests should be communicated by the President (or similarly titled head of Organization) to the Department of Parks and Recreation. Such requests should be communicated within 24 hours of discovering the need for service. Requests for such maintenance should be written and copies of such should be kept by the Organization.

8. Capital Improvement

No organization should perform or contract to perform any capital improvements without first obtaining permission from the Department of Parks and Recreation. All capital improvements - whether performed by the Department, the Organization or a contractor - are subject to the City/County permitting, codes, and inspection process. Leagues which perform or contract for capital improvements without permission of the Department and bypass the permitting and inspection process should be required to reimburse the Department for removal of the improvement.

9. Signs

All signs at the park should conform to the City/County sign ordinance and the Department's sign policy. Such policy should be communicated to the youth sports organization.

10. Liability and Other Insurance Requirements

It is understood that a variety of sporting environments exist and that they operate in a variety of relationships. It is recommended that the Department and the youth sport organization consult with legal counsel, insurance representation, and other professional counsel to determine what insurance and what insurance limits are best applied to the environment in which your program will be conducted. Below are some suggested guidelines.

The Organization should furnish to the Department a certificate of insurance verifying general liability coverage with limits of no less than \$1,000,000 combined single limits per occurrence. If Organization operates/manages the concession areas, the appropriate insurance should be maintained in the amount of no less than \$1,000,000. The Department should be listed *as an additional insured* on the insurance certificate. Furthermore, the general liability policy should have neither a deductible nor an exclusion for athletic participant injury.

The certificate of insurance should be from a responsible company duly authorized to do business in the State of Florida. The Organization's insurance agent should complete and sign an insurance checklist to insure minimum insurance requirements are met. The insurance certificate must be signed by the authorized representative of the insurance company shown in the certificate. Thirty (30) days written notice by registered or certified mail must be given to the Department of any reductions or cancellations of coverage. The insurance coverage required herein is to be primary to any insurance carried by City/County.

If the Organization owns, hires, uses, or uses on behalf of the youth sports organization, automobiles, then the Organization should carry Business Automobile Liability coverage. Minimum coverage is \$500,000 and should include bodily injury liability and property damage liability. This should be confirmed to the City/County with a certificate of insurance.

Any Organization which has employees paid from the League's treasury should carry worker's compensation insurance on each in compliance with Florida law confirmed to

the City/County with proof of insurance.

Organizations should encourage each participant in its program to be covered by a policy of insurance that will provide coverage for injuries sustained by participation in Organization activities.

Should at any time the Organization fail to maintain required insurance coverage, the Department should immediately terminate the Facility Use Agreement.

11. Contract Compliance

All Organizations which practice or play on City/County owned facilities should be governed by the terms of a Policy and Procedure Manual and the Facilities Use Agreement (if applicable). Compliance should also include the timely submission of all requested information. Non-compliance with the Facilities Use Agreement or any of its forms or exhibits (except the insurance requirement) should be addressed with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the below

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The Department of Parks and Recreation should perform spot checks on coaching certification by having staff visit the facilities on the days and/or nights that practices and/or games are being played. Each organization should be expected to cooperate with this compliance effort and coaches will be expected to produce their valid coaching certification card, upon request.

Section IV

Provisions and Department Policies Governing the Use of Athletic Facilities

It is suggested that a City/County Ordinance be enacted regarding the use of City/County Athletic Facilities and be appropriately communicated to the youth sports organizations. Such ordinance should minimally include the following:

Prohibition of Tobacco Products - All athletic facilities should be designated tobacco and drug-free areas. No person should be permitted to use any tobacco product within any athletic facility. Such use should be restricted to inside a patron's automobile legally parked in the facility's parking area.

Prohibition of Pets/Animals Careful consideration should be given to the allowance for pets or animals of any type, except for service animals. The noises and sounds inherent at sports activities may be such to aggravate even the calmest of pets. The Department and Organization must be diligent in mitigating any area of risk, including those posed by pets or animals.

Loud and Boisterous Conduct - No person or group of persons should be permitted to engage in loud and boisterous conduct at athletic facilities over and above the normal cheering and vocal support for the participants in youth sports activities.

Permits for Loud Speakers - Organizations on County property should be provided a time span when public address systems may be used. Volume should not exceed a

reasonable level, which allows for the immediate listening area. *Permitted uses* of a public address system should include: opening day ceremony announcements, tournament announcements, and team/player introductions.

Signage – Clear and conspicuous posting of policies/regulations/ordinances should be posted and made available to the Organization.

Preservation of Park Property - No person should be permitted to willfully mark, deface, injure in any way, displace, remove or tamper with, any park building, tables, benches, railings, paving, water lines or other public utilities or parts or appurtenances thereof, park signs, notices, or placards, whether temporary or permanent, monuments, stakes, posts or other boundary markers or other structures or equipment, facilities or park property or appurtenances whatsoever, whether real or personal.

Use of Facility - Facilities should be used only for those activities for which the facility was designed unless authorization is given, in writing, by the Department Director or his designee.

Direction should be given to youth sports organizations to refer to local/state ordinances/laws governing the conduct of raffles, or games of chance. Youth Sports Organizations should comply with state law relative to these activities. Once an activity is found to comply with state laws, approval from the Department of Parks and Recreation should be received prior to the activity being conducted to assure the activity is not prohibited by Department policy or City/County ordinance.

No person should be allowed to conduct any activity or use any area on an athletic facility in a manner which will result in financial gain without prior written approval of the Director or his designee.

No person should be permitted to engage in any activity on any athletic facility which is or may be dangerous to the health, safety, or welfare, of himself and/or others/ No person should be permitted to engage in any activity on any athletic facility which interferes with the use and enjoyment of the facility by others.

No person should loiter in or around any athletic facility rest room, dressing room, or bath house nor should any person be permitted to engage in any lewd or lascivious behavior as defined in Chapters 798 and 800 Florida Statutes or any amended or successor Statute.

Firearms and Other Weapons No person should be permitted to bring into, or have in his/her possession, or set off or otherwise cause to explode or discharge or burn in any park area any firecrackers, torpedoes, rockets, toy firearms, cannons, or other fireworks or explosives of or containing flammable material or any substance, compound, mixture, or article which, in conjunction with any other substance or compound, may explode, discharge, or burn unless he/she first obtains a written permit from the Department Director. Parents and/or guardians should be held responsible and accountable for the actions of their minor child(ren) in regards to the prohibitions as stated above as provided by law.

Littering - No person should be allowed to take into, dump, deposit, drop, or place any cans, bottles, broken glass, ashes, paper, boxes, dirt, rubbish, waste, garbage, tobacco products, containers or foil, refuse or other trash upon any park property except in receptacles provided for such disposal; where receptacles are not provided, same should be carried away from park property by the person or persons responsible for its presence and properly disposed of elsewhere. Refuse and trash receptacles should be used only by those persons using the facility for its designated athletic activity. It should be the responsibility of the youth sports organization to perform or arrange for the daily pick up of litter at the facility after each practice and game. Concession garbage should be required to be placed in proper containers and disposed of per the agreement between the youth sports organization and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Failure to perform daily litter pick up, should result in a fine be assessed the league, payable the Department.

Closing Hours - Hours of facility operation should be conspicuously posted at the facility, and communicated to the youth sports organization prior to the commencement of the season.

Concessions - No person, other than the Department or regularly licensed concessionaires acting by and under the authority of the Department, should be allowed to expose or offer for sale, rent, or trade any article or things, or station or place any stand, cart, or vehicle for the transportation, sale, or display of any article or merchandise within the limits of any athletic facility. Concessions should operate under the purview of the local health department and other city/county regulatory bodies.

Advertising - No person should distribute, display, or affix any printed materials or advertisements to or within the athletic facility without prior permission from the Parks and Recreation Department. Any posted material should be appropriate for the users of the facility, and conform to local ordinances. There should be no advertising that promotes the use of tobacco or alcohol at facilities utilized by youth sports organizations.

Alcoholic Beverages - The sale, consumption, and possession of alcoholic beverages as defined in Section 561.01(4), Florida Statutes, should be prohibited.

Authority - It should be the duty and responsibility of law enforcement officers/deputies and Department officials, to enforce all provisions of permits issued by the Department. Department officials should have the authority to establish further rules, regulations, and policies for regulation of facility use pursuant to the preservation of health, safety, and/or welfare of the public.

Penalties – Penalties for non-compliance with Ordinance issues should be established and properly noticed to league administrators, parents, officials, and participants.

SECTION V Child Safety Policy

Criminal Background Checks

Purpose: Background checks will be used to determine if any youth sports volunteer has a criminal history that could jeopardize the safety and welfare of any child participating in any League on any team. Background checks and coaching certification will help to improve the quality of volunteers that serve the youth sports programs.

Description: Criminal Background checks should be conducted annually on all volunteers who have direct contact with youth participants that register in any League and any Team.

Criteria: Criminal Background checks should be conducted on managers, coaches, assistant coaches, program administrators, board administrators, volunteer umpires, and other volunteers in the organization who have contact with children. **Such checks should be done in a manner that allows for the results of the check and any subsequent action to be taken prior to the commencement of the season.** A prospective volunteer, who has been convicted of a criminal offense provided herein, should be disqualified from volunteering in any youth sports organization, not withstanding:

- A. Criminal charges which were subsequently dropped and the applicant was never prosecuted for the crime; or
- B. The criminal charges resulted in a non-conviction, such as probation, deferred adjudication, or deferred disposition; or
- C. The criminal conviction was subsequently expunged from the applicant's record as the result of appropriate legal proceedings.

The following is a list of offenses that would be grounds to disqualify a prospective volunteer from being affiliated with any youth sports organization:

Arson
Aggravated kidnapping
Aggravated robbery
Aggravated sexual assault
Assault
Bigamy
Crimes against children (including abandonment, abuse, endangerment, indecency, sexual assault, pornography, possession or promotion of pornography, enticement, solicitation)
Criminal non-support
Criminally negligible homicide
Deadly conduct
Delivery of marijuana
Domestic violence or abuse

Drug possession*
Injury to elderly or disabled
Intoxication manslaughter
Kidnapping
Manslaughter (voluntary or involuntary)
Manufacture of or delivery of a controlled substance or dangerous drug
Murder
Obscenity
Prohibited sexual conduct
Public lewdness
Prostitution
Racketeering (RICO)
Sexual abuse
Marijuana possession*
Theft*
DWI/DUI*

* Eligibility depends on the severity and length of time passed since the offense occurred.

NOTE: This list of offenses is not intended to be all-inclusive of disqualifiers and does not set limits on the offenses that could disqualify any prospective volunteer from affiliation with youth sports organizations.

Any volunteer who during the season is charged and/or convicted of any of the above crimes is required to notify the Department of Parks and Recreation Athletic Office. The volunteer should be immediately removed/requested to step aside from the volunteer position until such time that the Department head or its designee can (promptly) inquire into the circumstances in order to reasonably determine whether the criminal offense (alleged or proven) creates a situation that could possibly signal danger to youth participants. It may be necessary that the volunteer be excluded from further involvement until the legal case is adjudicated; however, sufficient discretion should be afforded to the Department head, which should err on the side of caution and the best interests of the participating youth, to make an objective determination of the situation as quickly as possible. Volunteers should understand that their participation is appreciated and necessary to the success of the youth sports program, but must also understand that he/she necessarily has to be held to high standards and that the protection and well being of the youth participants is always paramount to the volunteer's much appreciated desire to be involved. Failure on the part of a volunteer to notify the Athletic Office of arrests and/or convictions for any offense listed above will result in the volunteer being removed and declared ineligible to volunteer for any youth sports organization for a minimum period of five (5) years beginning on the date the failure to notify was discovered.

Appeals Process:

1. All background checks should then be returned to the Athletic Office where denied applicants will be notified, by mail, of their denial and given an opportunity to appeal.
2. Appeals should be heard by a Committee, an all-volunteer group made up of current and past heads of youth sports organizations.

Cost: Background check applicants will be assessed a fee, which will be the prevailing rate as charged by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) or other provider used by the Department to conduct the background check.

Position Requirement: As stated above, criminal background checks should be conducted on any volunteer in an organization which involves direct contact with child participants including members of the league's Board of Directors, those adults who are reflected on team rosters and/or registration forms, or are identified in an Organization's or League's by-laws.

Implementation of Background Checks:

Head of leagues and organizations should receive a copy of the volunteer application/background check form at the annual presidents' meeting for distribution to coaches, volunteers, board members, and other identified individuals.

Each applicant should be required to submit a complete form and a clear copy of their current driver's license to the person in the league collecting the information. Applicants may place their form in an envelope for privacy purposes.

The league should collect the forms and return them to the Athletic Office along with payment for each application submitted.

Once received, payment will be processed, background checks conducted, and results will be returned to the Department Director.

All background checks should then be returned to the Athletic Office where denied applicants will be notified, by mail, of their denial and given an opportunity to appeal.

Applicants remain eligible until the appeals committee has made its decision.

Appeals should be heard by a Committee, an all-volunteer group made up of current and past heads of youth sports organizations.

No organization should be permitted to perform its own background checks in lieu of this policy unless granted permission, in advance, from the Athletic Director.

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SECTION VI
Discipline of Players, Coaches, Parents and Spectators

In addition to policies and procedures dealing with disciplining players and coaches, leagues/organizations should also be required to have policies and procedures in writing that deal with the discipline and/or punishment of parents, spectators and other non players or coaches. This policy, as well as the policy dealing with the disciplining of players and coaches, should be in writing and furnished to all parents and coaches at registration. If an organization has a web site, it is recommended that the policy be posted there as well. However, posting the discipline policy on the web site should not relieve the organization from providing a written copy to coaches and parents.

When developing a discipline policy, organizations are reminded that they (the organization) **do not** have the authority to ban, suspend, or otherwise tell a player, coach, parent or spectator that he/she is not permitted on City/County property. It is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department to have any player, coach, parent or spectator trespassed off City/County property.

All players, coaches, parents, and spectators subject to discipline must be afforded due process in the disciplinary process. No youth organization or any member of its Board of Directors should suspend or otherwise discipline without giving the subject of the discipline (or his/her parent) the opportunity to meet with the discipline committee prior to any punishment being handed out.

It should be understood that violent, profane, or unsportsmanlike conduct could result in the ejection of a player or coach from a contest or a parent or spectator from the facility. However, the discipline policy should focus on any further penalty to be handed down. Contest officials have the authority to have any player, coach, parent or spectator removed due to violent, profane or unsportsmanlike conduct *for the remainder of that contest only*.

The Parks and Recreation Department should be informed of any action that results in a coach, player, or spectator being removed from a contest. The Parks and Recreation Department will then advise the Organization if further action should be taken. Further discipline should be in accordance with the written policy of the organization (provided in writing to all coaches and parents at time of registration).

RESOURCES

The resources listed below are included for informational purposes only, and are not recommended or endorsed by The Florida Recreation and Park Association. There may be other organizations with programs and resources. Those listed are those that are known to FRPA at the time of the writing of this document.

American Sport Education Program (ASEP)

1607 N Market Street
PO Box 5076
Champaign, IL 61825-5076
(800) 747-5698
asep@hkusa.com

Kids Sport Network

8206 Roughrider, Suite 104
San Antonio, Texas 78239-2449
(210) 654-4707
www.ksnusa.org

National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS)

2050 Vista Parkway
West Palm Beach, FL 33411
(800) 688-KIDS
www.nays.org

National Youth Sports Institute

www.naysi.com

Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA)

Department of Athletics
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305-6150
(866) 725-0024
www.pca.org

Program for Athletic Coaches Education (PACE)

Institute for the Study of Youth Sports
213 IM Sports Circle
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
(517) 353-6689
ythsprts@pilot.msu.edu

Youth Sport Institute – Rutgers University

<http://youthsports.rutgers.edu/>

OTHER VALUABLE RESOURCES

The resources listed below are included for informational purposes only, and are not recommended or endorsed by The Florida Recreation and Park Association. There may be other organizations with programs and resources. Those listed are those that are known to FRPA at the time of the writing of this document.

Little League Baseball
www.LittleLeague.org

PONY Baseball
www.PONY.org

Cal Ripken Baseball
www.ripkenbaseball.com

Pop Warner Little Scholars Football
www.PopWarner.com

USA Football
www.usafootball.com

Florida Youth Soccer Association
www.FYSA.com

US Soccer Federation
www.ussoccer.com

Amateur Softball Association
www.softball.org

Youth Sports Insurance Information

Bollinger Insurance
www.bollingerasa.com

Sadler Insurance
www.sadlersports.com

Youth Coaching Information

National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)
National Standards for Athletic Coaches
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/1169/COACHING.HTML>

Y-Coach
www.y-coach.com

National Youth Sports Safety Foundation
www.nyssf.org

Youth Sports – Sports Moms
www.momsteam.com

Momentum Media Sports Publishing
www.athleticsearch.com

Background Check Providers

National Association of Professional Background Screeners
www.napbs.com

YOUTH SPORTS TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Scott Burkett, CYSA, CPRP
P. O. Box 19295
Tampa, FL 33686-9295
ScottDBurkett@aol.com

Jere Gunderman, CYSA
Clearwater Parks and Recreation Department
1501 N Belcher Road
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 669-1361 ext 235
Jere.Gunderman@myclearwater.com

Bob Carpenter, CYSA
Clearwater Parks and Recreation Department
1501 N Belcher Road
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 669-1361 ext 244
Robert.Carpenter@myclearwater.com

Suzanne Davis, CPRP
Putnam County Parks and Recreation
PO Box 758
Palatka, FL 32178
(386) 329-1268
sfdavis@putnam-fl.com

Jason Furry, CYSA, CPRP
Suwannee Parks and Recreation Department
1201 Silas Drive
Live Oak, FL 32064
(386) 362-3004
JMFurry@alltel.net

Dean May, CYSA
Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department
1101 E River Cove Drive
Tampa, FL 33604
(813) 264-8983
MayD@HillsboroughCounty.org