



CHILD PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

What can your organization do to protect children?

Acknowledgments

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Child Protection Recommendations



Our children are our future. Therefore, careful attention must be taken when attending to their needs. Children globally suffer from child abuse practices from every aspect of society and organizations providing youth sports and sport and development programs are not exempted from this practice. It is important that organizations providing such programs guard against these horrendous injustices to children/youth.

Any organization involved in sport and development programs targeting children/youth should take every necessary measure to ensure that its administrators, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, spectators and the children themselves understand their role in the program. All child-serving organizations want to ensure that the best interest of the child is gained, which in turn leads to the wholesome growth and development of the child. To guarantee this happens, all those involved must understand their responsibilities.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide information to assist with the planning and implementation of a practical child abuse prevention policy for your organization. This will not only help with the prevention of child abuse but will also serve as a preventative measure for possible negative consequences that your organization may encounter if child abuse were to occur through your programs.

A proactive approach is always better than a reactive one.



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International Alliance for Youth Sports

The International Alliance for Youth Sports (IAYS) is a non-profit organization formed in 2003 by the U.S.-based National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS), which is America's leading advocate for positive and safe sports and activities for children. NAYS offers programs and services for everyone involved in youth sports experiences, including professional administrators, volunteer administrators, volunteer coaches, officials, parents and young athletes. The goal of NAYS is to make sports and activities safe and positive by providing programs and services that add value to youth sports.

IAYS was created by NAYS to provide children around the world with opportunities to learn life skills and develop as individuals through participation in sports. IAYS believes that sports are the outdoor classrooms for children, fostering their overall physical, psychological, emotional, mental and social development. IAYS seeks to reduce the barriers to participation in sports in disadvantaged communities, including lack of trained volunteers, lack of programming, nonexistent facilities and poor equipment.

IAYS is driven by the belief that sports have great value in the physical, social, and moral development of children. IAYS is focused on convincing all child-minded organizations throughout the world that sports can play a major role in the overall development of children.

As an organization that assists millions of children, one of its aims, apart from encouraging youths to participate in a variety of sporting activities in a fun -filled environment, is to ensure that the learning is free from abuse. This is made possible by providing training and working with organizations to develop and implement accepted method of sport and development practices.



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Introduction

Child abuse and youth sport and development are subjects that are not usually thought of together, but they often have more in common than you might think. Unfortunately, child abuse and inappropriate behaviors occur in many youth sports and sport and development programs. When a caregiver fails to acknowledge his/her child because the child's performance was not as pleasing as he/she had expected or hoped for, that is a form of child abuse (emotional abuse). Physically disciplining a child for a missed opportunity for the team to win the game - such as making him run a lap as punishment or performing some other type of physical activity as a penalty for his or her performance - is a form of child abuse (physical abuse). Failing to praise the child for his/her efforts in the game and commenting on the errors made or some other negative aspect instead is also a form of child abuse as it affects the child's self esteem and confidence. These are just a few examples of abusive and inappropriate behaviors that occur in youth sports and sport and development programs.

A comprehensive risk management program to address and help prevent child abuse in youth sports is necessary because your organization has a responsibility to provide safe sports experiences for every child. It is necessary to develop a risk management program for administering youth sports and sport and development programs to reduce the chances of abuse, injury, discrimination or negligence occurring. This can be done by implementing a comprehensive approach that includes Protection, Promotion and Prevention. No amount of procedures, training or supervision can make any organization 100% safe from all forms of abuse, accidents and inappropriate behaviors, but it can go a long way toward safeguarding all who participate and significantly reduce the chances of any of these types of negative behaviors affecting a child.

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International Rights of the Child

The *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that the child, by right, should enjoy special protection and be given opportunities that enable them to develop mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. This document outlines the level of responsibilities societies have for their children.

A child is regarded as a human being below the age of 18 years, unless national or state laws recognize the age of majority earlier. The responsibilities associated with a child may vary among societies, especially those deeply rooted in culture.

Societies worldwide have varying laws that govern their children. In general, the rights of the child fall under the categories of Provision, Protection and Participation. The *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* recognizes that certain basic protections must exist to ensure a degree of equal treatment and basic services for all children. The *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* serves as a source to support the state's duty and power to act on behalf of a child/youth when their parents are unwilling or unable to do so. This duty and power arises from the state's right of guardianship of minors.

For more information please visit: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

To view the Convention on the Rights of the Child please visit: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Benefits of Child Participation in Sport

Children have an inherent nature to play and have fun. This play helps them to develop not only physically, but through interaction with others it also helps them to develop socially, mentally and emotionally.

Properly planned youth sports and sport and development programs also facilitate the development of basic skills needed to participate in sports. These programs also teach life skills and self concepts which provide children with the necessary tools to become positive, functional individuals of their communities and, by extension, societies.

Youth sports and sport and development programs also assist in enhancing the overall health and fitness of the participants, as their bodies are kept in shape through the activities. These activities further widen the participants' scope, giving them avenues for use of leisure time and of possible career directions. Participation in youth sports and sport and development programs also provide children living in deprived conditions with a safe haven to experience the joys of childhood.

It is important for organizations to provide children with a fun, safe and meaningful experience in their early sports life.

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Definitions of Child Abuse

Abuse is any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual behavior or lack of care (neglect) that causes physical injury or emotional damage to a child. It can affect a child directly or indirectly.

Common characteristics of all forms of abuse against children and youth are an abuse of power or authority and/or breach of trust.

Abuse occurs due to several reasons such as substance abuse, poverty, economic strains, stressful situations or insecurities. Abuse and neglect have no boundaries as they occur without regard for ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location and/or occupation.

Child abuse and maltreatment have many forms and include non-accidental physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse and/or sexual abuse.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse is non-accidental injury which is inflicted by another person and may include severe beatings, burns, human bites or serious internal injuries.

Neglect is the withholding of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene or supervision needed for optimal physical growth and development.

Emotional Abuse is a chronic attack on a child's self-esteem; it is a psychologically destructive pattern of behavior by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. Examples of emotional abuse are terrorizing, corrupting, ignoring, isolating, degrading, rejecting and exploiting.

Sexual Abuse is any form of behavior that relates to or infers sexual connotations. It is exploitation of a child for sexual gratification. Sexual abuse can occur with or without contact

- **Contact** - includes fondling, kissing, having vaginal, anal or oral intercourse with a child or the use of the child for pornographic materials.
- **Non-contact**- includes exhibitionism, speaking or communicating sexually or seductively with a child.

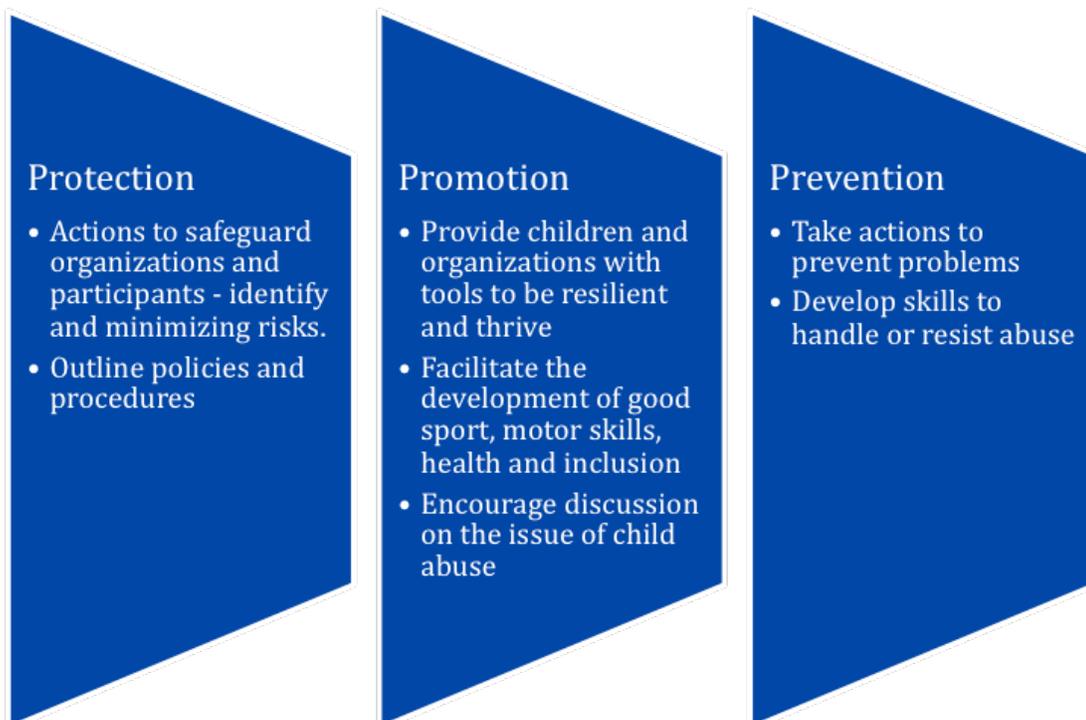
Child Abuse can come from any source such as family, relatives, friends, coaches, teachers, leaders or from sport and development organizations set up to improve the life of the child. A person is considered a child below the age of 18 years. However in some countries the age may vary depending on territorial legislation.

Source: Prevent Child Abuse America - <http://www.preventchildabuse.org/index.shtml>

Take Action

It is extremely important to take a proactive approach to dealing with the issue of child abuse in youth sports and sport and development programs. It goes far beyond just keeping the known criminal elements out of the program. The possibility of accepting assistance from someone with undesirable intent would be reduced - if not eliminated - if a thorough selection process is conducted. All this is done in an effort to safeguard the children from the risk of experiencing any form of abuse and/or neglect. Therefore, it is important for sport organizations to develop a policy that addresses the issue of child abuse.

Areas to consider in developing a plan to deal with the issue of child abuse and neglect:



Each of these areas are important when providing a safe environment for children/youth involved in sport and development programs. However, emphasis should be placed on prevention. The humane approach would be to prevent an incident from occurring rather than to deal with one that has traumatized a child. If an incident of child abuse is prevented then the implications surrounding its effects will not be experienced. Although it may take time and money to develop an acceptable document that does not infringe on anyone's rights, the end result would be less costly. An action against a child that is avoided altogether will be more than worth it.

Creating a Vision

Every good organization has in mind what it hopes to offer its community. It is therefore necessary that the organization create a vision that clearly defines the type of conditions under which the program should be conducted. The vision should state the organizations philosophy of play and organizational ideals, including the organization's commitment to take action to prevent child abuse and neglect in youth sports.

The vision should be developed with contributions from a wide cross section of individuals involved in the program (participants, community leaders and administrators). This vision should be communicated to all persons involved in the program.

Also needed is a comprehensive mission statement that outlines the organization's position on the following:

- Rationale for the youth sport/sport and development program.
- Benefits to participants in the program.
- Protecting the participants in the program.

It is important to have written documentation of your organization's position on child abuse in youth sports. This sends a clear message to participants and the community at large on the standards by which your organization is built.

Developing an Organization's Policies on Child Abuse

It is vital to develop your organization's policy on child protection within the guidelines of your country/state. Laws governing child protection/abuse may vary and as such a thorough knowledge of your country's procedures is essential. All agencies or trusted personnel of your organization, community or country that are responsible for handling or recording reported cases should be included in the policy and be known by all involved in the youth sport and youth sport and development programs.

Concerns and complaints are not new to youth sport and sport and development organizations. However, in the event that it does occur, it is critical to distinguish the severity of the complaints, concerns and /or allegations and address them appropriately.

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The following are some suggestions for consideration in developing your policy:

- 👤 Community members, volunteers and staff need to be aware and involved in the development of your child protection policy.
- 👤 Clearly define your organization's position on child abuse and neglect
- 👤 Develop fair, unbiased and confidential reporting procedures. These procedures need to be documented.
- 👤 Identify agencies or community support systems that handle reports of child abuse and neglect within your community and make it known to your volunteers and staff.
- 👤 It is vitally important for your organization to develop a plan of action to address the way forward for victims and their families. Victims of child abuse and their families need to be reassured into continued positive growth and development for their children and therefore should feel safe to rejoin the program.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- 👤 What to do if child abuse happens.
- 👤 Who to confide in.
- 👤 What procedure to follow.
- 👤 How to handle the matter.

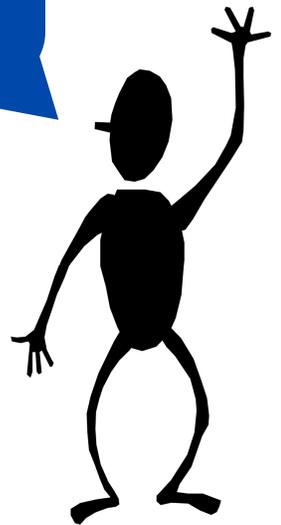
ALL SHOULD KNOW THESE STEPS

Managing Human Resource Support

All sport and development and youth sports program around the world would not survive without a supporting network of individuals. People want to enjoy their experience and be successful. Despite the good intention of most staff and volunteers, organizations cannot afford to place children in their care without proper screening, training and supervision. When staff and volunteers have the necessary screening, training and supervision they are more likely to ensure an enjoyable experience and this is likely to reduce the chances of abuse or neglect.

Screening

Quality screening should be conducted for all staff and volunteers of a youth sport and sport and development organization. This is to safeguard the organization and children against the possibility of abuse or neglect. The willingness of an organization to accept that their sporting program is not immune to incidents of child abuse is the first step in safeguarding participants. Screening helps to reduce the risk of enlisting assistance from individuals with inappropriate intentions.



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Purpose of Screening:

- ☞ To discourage participation of individuals who do not put children's needs first
- ☞ To select the "best" volunteers and workers for positions
- ☞ To keep people who have a history of inappropriate behavior or who are unfit to work with children out of your organization
- ☞ To clarify to the prospective staff/volunteer what your standards and expectations are in terms of child abuse within your organization.

The most important aspect to ensure a quality program for the children involved is to BE SELECTIVE.

Steps of Screening Staff and Volunteers

| DOCUMENT | DESCRIPTION | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|--|---|
| Develop a Policy on Screening Applicants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Complete list of the screening process. ☞ Standards of the organization on child abuse should be included. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Document should be in writing, read and signed. ☞ The organization's policy and procedures should be included. ☞ Define unwanted characteristics. ☞ Develop a selection committee. |
| Job Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Should be detailed and job specific (administrator/coach/official). ☞ Policy on child abuse. ☞ Title of position, responsibilities, qualifications, duration of commitment, training provided and name of supervisor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Should include code of ethics for specific area read, signed and dated. |

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| DOCUMENT | DESCRIPTION | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|--|---|---|
| Application | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ An application form must be filled out dated and signed. ☉ Ask questions about their background. ☉ Application should include identification, address, work history, youth sport background, first aid training and references. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Prospective volunteer/staff should present at least two forms of identification. ☉ Letter of character from law enforcement. ☉ Original copies of qualifications. |
| Consent/ Release Form Request Permission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Must be signed and dated. ☉ Should inform the volunteer or staff of inquiries on references. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Should be explained when receiving the application form. |
| Review Application, Verify References and Employers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Identify self and organization when conducting checks on references. ☉ Prepare a list of questions. ☉ Be prepared to supply the employer with relevant information. ☉ Take note of inconsistencies. ☉ Document all efforts and findings with confidentiality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Conduct a pilot test with the list of questions to see if it addresses the organization's needs. |
| Interview Applicant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Develop a standard interview plan. ☉ Ask questions that will reveal the volunteer's motives. ☉ Inquire about youth sport experiences. ☉ Ask questions to determine if they understand your policy on child abuse and youth sport and development programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Conduct a pilot test on the list of questions. ☉ Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal impressions. ☉ Be specific but polite. |

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| DOCUMENT | DESCRIPTION | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Background Checks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Inform volunteer/staff of the type of background checks to be conducted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Background checks can be obtained from community council members, community leaders, through news paper ads, soliciting community response or law enforcement agencies (if available). |
| Evaluating Results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Document what is an unacceptable/ unsuitable list of offenses that discredit/eliminate candidates. ☉ Review comments from references. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Make no compromises to the list formulated. ☉ Document reasons for unsuitability of candidates. ☉ Hold another interview if there are additional questions that need answers. ☉ Be consistent with selections. |

Training of Staff and Volunteers

Parents would not think of placing their children in a school with a teacher who is not trained to teach. However, after school many parents are willing to have their child participate in a program without any knowledge of his/her training in the areas of coaching and supervision of children. In general, volunteer coaches are insufficiently prepared for this experience. It is quality volunteers that will ensure quality programs. One of the main challenges administrators face is providing quality training for volunteers, peer leaders, parents and staff. These are the people that our children will look up to, therefore we need to ensure they have the technical skill and embrace our philosophies and understand their position as a role model. However, most important, we need to ensure our children are in the hands of leaders who are informed and knowledgeable about the UN International Rights of a Child.

The International Standards for Youth Sports developed by the International Alliance for Youth Sports recommends that all adults involved in youth sports must receive training and important information about the program and must be held accountable for their behavior. It is recommended that a training program not only focus on the technical skills needed to coach your program, but also on the psychological, physical and emotional development of children. When developing a training program the following criteria should be considered:

- ☉ Is your training program in compliance with any coaching standards developed within your region, or is it in compliance with the International Youth Sports Standards developed under the leadership of the International Alliance for Youth Sports (IAYS)?

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- Does your training program offer education in the following areas?
 - Psychological and emotional needs of children
 - UN International Rights of a Child
 - Safety, first-aid and injury prevention
 - Conditioning and nutrition
 - Teaching proper sport techniques
 - Drug and alcohol awareness
- Do you require all volunteers and staff to sign and adhere to a strict Code of Ethics?
- Do you have in place recourse or procedure to revoke certification if the Code of Ethics is violated?

Training may seem a little overwhelming and too time consuming to even consider; however, by informing and holding each person accountable for their behaviors, high quality programming can be ensured.

Code of Ethics

Codes of Ethics are essential requirements for all volunteers and staff to be guided by. All trained volunteers and staff who are successful applicants now joining your organization should be fully aware of, and agree to, your Codes of Ethics.

Having Codes of Ethics in your program lays the groundwork for what is acceptable and expected, and what is not. The purpose of having Codes of Ethics is to maintain a level of order that will produce appropriate behavior among those involved in any youth sports and sport and development program.

These codes provide a powerful enforcement tool and those who do not abide by them can face disciplinary measures. Any good organization involved with youth/children sport and development programs should create an environment where standards of behavior are built on respect and maintained. This shows the organization's commitment to providing safe and positive sport and development experiences for the participants.

While it is important to be knowledgeable on the Code of Ethics by which your organization's policy is rooted, it is equally important for the parties involved to show their willingness to comply with the method of operation in the program by affixing their signature to a worded document. This document should be revisited annually to remind members of the standards that the youth sport organization is intent on maintaining (for example of various Codes of Ethics refer to Appendix).

Supervising

Supervision of staff and volunteers is one way of minimizing the occurrence of child abuse. Your organization's policies outlining the method of supervision and enforcement procedures help the program to be suitably managed. Emphasis should be placed on the positive, acceptable qualities that the organization wants displayed by both staff and volunteers. It is also important to have an adequate number of trained supervisors to monitor staff and volunteers.

Purpose of Supervision is to:

- Provide support and on-going "coaching" needed for staff and volunteers to improve their skills, to adjust and to do their best.
- Provide the guidance needed to make sure the values and standards of the organization are upheld.

Evaluation

Spending time training individuals to support the youth sport and sport and development program is of no effect if your organization does not develop a plan for evaluating those individuals. Periodic evaluations facilitate both the assessing of the individuals on their delivery of the program and also help maintain the organization's standards for the program, thus keeping the quality of the program intact.

Purpose of Evaluation is to:

- Allow opportunities for the organization to review the actions of the volunteers and staff.
- Allow for the participants and their families to review their experiences.
- Allow for the volunteers and staff to understand how they have been reviewed.
- Provide feedback in a positive and constructive manner.

Evaluation can be done by self, parents, participants, other role model volunteers, community members and/or trained staff.

Conclusion

The youth sports and sport and development programs exist to help children in the development of positive life skills and self-concepts. These programs also help build communities into strong cooperative societies. It is with this in mind that we should try to provide safe, enjoyable recreation opportunities for participants. A clear understanding of the relationship between providing youth sports opportunities and the prevention of child abuse will allow your organization to reduce the chances of abuse from occurring during your program.

Child abuse can and does happen in youth sports and sport and development programs. Taking a proactive approach will not only protect the organization, but also prevent child abuse and its negative impacts. It is important to address child abuse in youth sports and sport and development programs and state that your organization has actively taken a stand in protecting young children. Doing something about the problem involves more than just screening and background checks.

A comprehensive approach involves the following:

- 🎯 Protecting participants and organizations
- 🎯 Promoting the positive benefits of sports participation
- 🎯 Preventing abuse and problems before they occur

Involvement in youth sports can be a positive, skill building, life changing experience for young athletes that help them to not only improve their athletic techniques, but also to build on their strengths to be good sports and citizens. Our job is to keep youth sports safe and fun.

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Appendix: Sample Codes of Ethics

Administrators' Code of Ethics

I hereby pledge to provide positive support to all youth/children in sport and development programs, to administrate these programs with professionalism and in the best interests of the youth/children involved.

As an administrator:

- I will run our youth sports programs for the children involved, not the adults.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing area for all participants.
- I will provide support for coaches, officials and parents to provide a positive and enjoyable experience for all.
- I will require all volunteers and staff to be trained in the responsibilities of being a role model for children.
- I will implement and enforce the International Youth Sports Standards.
- I promise to keep informed and knowledgeable about all current issues facing youth sports and sport and development programs.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

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Coaches' Code of Ethics

I hereby pledge to perform my duties to the best of my abilities and honor the guidelines set by the organization.

As a coach:

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of the children ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each child as an individual, keeping in mind their developmental differences.
- I will do my best to provide a FUN and SAFE playing situation for all children
- I will do my best to organize activities that are challenging, yet FUN for all children
- I will lead by example and take advantage of teachable moments to demonstrate fair play, sportsmanship and, most importantly, life lessons to all children.
- I will provide a playing environment that is free of drugs, tobacco, alcohol and negative influences.
- I will be sure to implement the International Youth Sports Standards in my program.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of the sport I teach and share this with my players.
- I will remember that the rules and the game are for the children and not the adults.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

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Participants' Code of Ethics

I hereby pledge to be positive about my sports experience and accept responsibility for my participation.

As a participant:

- I will practice and encourage good sportsmanship from all involved at every game.
- I will attend every practice possible and give notice when that becomes impossible.
- I will do my best in school and to listen and learn from my peers, teachers and coaches.
- I will treat all involved with respect regardless of their differences and expect the same.
- I will inform parents or coaches if the sporting experience is no longer fun.
- I will encourage my parents to be involved in some capacity because it is important to me.
- I will remember that sports are an opportunity to learn and have fun.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

Officials' Code of Ethics

I pledge that I will follow the guidelines set for officials and perform my duties in a professional manner with the best interests of the child at heart.

As an official:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support of all involved in the program.
- I will ensure that I am knowledgeable of the rules of each sport I officiate, and apply those rules fairly to all participants, teams and coaches.
- I will not allow personal friendships and associations to influence my decisions during a contest.
- I will refrain from the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in a youth sport environment.
- I will remember that youth sports is an opportunity for children to learn and have fun and will place their safety above all else.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

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Parents' Code of Ethics

I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care and encouragement for my child while participating in this sports program.

As a parent:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all involved at every game, practice or other youth sports event.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my child ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will support volunteers, coaches and officials working with my child in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable experience for all.
- I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will remember that the game is for youth NOT adults.
- I will do my best to make youth sports fun for my child.
- I will ask my child to treat others with respect regardless of differences.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

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