

Rules, Regulations and Standards of Athletic Facilities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Field Permits/Applications.....	4
Seasons.....	4
Priority Groups.....	5
City Schools.....	5
Leased/Owned.....	5
Classification of Groups.....	5
Category 1.....	6
Category 2.....	6
Category 3.....	6
Recognition Procedures.....	7
Step One.....	7
Step Two.....	7
Step Three.....	7
Facility Allocation Methodology.....	7
Maintenance.....	8
Liability.....	8
Field Use Rules and Regulations.....	9
Limitations on Use.....	9
Authority/Non Agreement Policy.....	10
Lighting on Field.....	11
Field Hours.....	11
Cancellation.....	11
New Sports League.....	12
Exhibit A: Standards.....	13

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for equitable allocation and use of City athletic facilities and to ensure their proper use. This document is designed to provide a single reference to the policies and regulations governing these facilities. In addition to adhering to these rules, persons using the park and school athletic fields and facilities will adhere to all appropriate City, State and Federal laws

This policy has been established to ensure that the fields are used for recreational, educational, and community service functions that meet the needs of the community, as well as set clear policies, procedures and regulations for such uses

DEFINITIONS

- **Adult Sports:** Groups of players 19 years of age or older, who participate in athletic competition with other adults.
- **Group of Individuals:** Individuals who informally have joined together to play or participate in a sport or activity, who are not associated with an organization, and who do not meet the requirements of an athletic league/organization.
- **In Good Standing:** An applicant (group, organization or individual) that has no outstanding bills from the City of Fairfax; has no pending criminal or court injunctions against the league/organization or organization officials; and/or has no rules violations within the past 12 months.
- **New Organization:** A new sports group independently established for play.
- **New Sports:** Organized sports not previously receiving use allocation from the City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation Department.
- **Not-for-Profit:** Any organization, group, individuals or corporate sport teams using athletic facilities strictly for recreational sports participation without assessing unusual or non-customary fees (as determined by the Director of Parks and Recreation) on the players, club, or team and without charging admission fees for spectators
- **Non-Resident:** Any individual not residing in Fairfax County and/or Fairfax City
- **Youth Sports:** Groups of players whose members are 18 years of age or younger and participate in athletic competition with other youth.
- **Applicant:** Any sports organization, group of teams, or individual formally requesting use of City of Fairfax facilities.
- **Athletic League/Organization:** A local youth or adult athletic group that maintains an organizational structure governing the management of the group. The group registers participants, schedules games, and has sufficient membership to schedule play.
- **Priority Partner/Sanctioned League:** An Athletic League/Organization that has submitted the required organizational documentation (Cat 1, 2 &/or 3).

- For Profit: A sports organization that makes a profit for individual personal gain by charging fees for admission for games; assessing unusual or non-customary fees on the player, club, or team; or using semi-pro or paid players.
- Waiver: Written permission by the Director of Parks and Recreation granting an applicant an exception to the rule.

FIELD USE PERMITS/APPLICATIONS

1. Field use permits are issued for the current season. A permit is issued only after an allocation request has been made, the Parks and Recreation Department has approved all or part of the request, all required documents are submitted, proof of insurance has been shown, and an application has been signed. **A request does not constitute approval.**
2. A field use permit will not be issued if there is any balance due for prior field use.
3. All field users must have the field use permit available for inspection by City staff, police, and security official during each use of a location.
4. Field use permits do not include any other structures or areas within the Park or Grounds (ie: Pavilions, basketball courts, tennis, etc. require separate permit and fee).
5. Applicant is the single POC for all scheduling/concerns with the field use i.e.: additional space requirements for any team must be requested through the applicant on file and consistent with the leagues policy on practices.
6. Applications will be submitted a minimum of 72 hours in advance of your requested date.
7. Applications may only be turned in within 2 months of the deadline for each season. See Seasons below for dates.
8. Applications turned in each season after the application deadline will be considered in the order they were received.

SEASONS

*Season	Fields	Gyms	Application Deadline
Spring/Summer	Mar 1 – July 31	Apr 1 – Last Day of School	January 1
Winter	Dec 1 – Feb 28	Dec 1 – Mar 30	October 1
Fall	Aug 1 – Nov 29	Week after school starts – Nov 29	June 1

*See maintenance number 3 for resting and maintenance between seasons

PRIORITY GROUPS

For City of **Fairfax Public Schools Facilities**, as scheduled by the Parks and Recreation Department:

- A. School Activities
- B. School Affiliations, i.e., PTA, PTO, etc.
- C. Parks and Recreation Internal/Sponsored Programs
- D. Other City of Fairfax Governmental Programs
- E. Partner Organizations/Groups
- F. Non-Profit youth organizations comprised of at least 66 percent City of Fairfax/Fairfax County residents
- G. All other groups, i.e., individuals, for profit, adult, etc

For City of Fairfax Facilities **(Leased or Owned)**:

- A. Parks and Recreation Internal/Sponsored Programs
- B. Other City of Fairfax Governmental Programs
- C. Partner Organizations/Groups
- D. Non-Profit youth organizations comprised of at least 66 percent City of Fairfax/Fairfax County residents
- E. All other groups, i.e., individuals, for profit, adult etc

CLASSIFICATION OF GROUPS/INDIVIDUALS

Category 1: Minimum Requirements for Space Allocations (All Users, Group of Individuals, Leagues, Priority Partners, etc.)

This section applies to all users (Priority Partners, Recognized Leagues/Organizations, individual requests, etc). Any non-profit athletic organization or group of individuals who desires to be allocated school and park athletic fields or community facilities in the City of Fairfax for its use must meet the following criteria

- A. All applications must be made, in writing, on the required forms, to the Parks and Recreation Department, and filed in accordance to the following schedule: prior to January 1 for spring and summer use. Prior to June 1 for fall use and prior to October 1 for winter use. Applications received after these dates will be accommodated if possible.
- B. All applicants must be residents of the City of Fairfax or Fairfax County.
- C. At least two-thirds (2/3) 66% of the participants must reside in the City of Fairfax or Fairfax County. Roster including names, addresses and telephone numbers must be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department upon request.
- D. The organization or group of individuals in question and/or its directors, officers or leaders must have not engaged in violations of the City Parks and Recreation or School Board regulations regarding the use and scheduling of facilities and fields as determined by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- E. Groups must provide liability insurance as noted below (pick up groups must provide indemnification form at a minimum).
- F. All associated fees must be paid as noted on the invoice when applicable.
- G. For Profit organizations will be scheduled when possible and as a last priority. For profits will considered after all other allocations have been assigned to nonprofit organizations

regardless of when the For Profit Organization/League application was received.

Category 2: Priority Partner Organization Requirements

This section refers to organizations who will receive priority scheduling over all other leagues/organizations/groups/individuals in accordance with “Priority Groups” section above. The requirements below are in addition to Category 1 and Category 3 requirements in this document:

- A. The headquarters for the organization must reside within the City of Fairfax or Fairfax County zip code. (unless granted a waiver by the Director of Parks & Recreation).
- B. Should be a financial contributor above the standard permit fees toward the City of Fairfax Parks & Recreation facilities.
- C. Should not conflict/compete with existing Partner offerings (unless granted waiver by the Director).
- D. Should have a Historical Presence of at least 10 years of good standing and use of City of Fairfax facilities.
- E. Fairfax Police Youth Club and Fairfax Little League will be appointed as Priority Partner Organizations based on the long standing financial and maintenance support to the City.
- F. All Priority Partner Organization agreements will be reviewed annually. If a decision is made to no longer support an organization as a Priority Partner the Parks and Recreation Department will notify the Organization in writing 30 days in advance.
- G. Priority Partner Organizations are subject to the same rules, regulations and cancellations as all permitted users.

Category 3: Sanctioned League/Organization Requirements

All leagues wishing to be scheduled by the Parks and Recreation Department must meet the “Minimum Requirements” as described above in addition to this section. Sanctioned leagues will meet and give input for the field allocation process when applicable. In order for a league to be sanctioned and scheduled into public facilities by the Parks and Recreation Department, it must meet the additional requirements below:

- A. League/Organization must consist of no less than five teams. This applies to the entire league, not necessarily to each division in the league.
- B. League must be non-profit in nature, with non-profit identified as all operating funds spent during the year, with a minimal amount of money to carry over for operating expenses and capital outlay. Upon request, the Parks and Recreation Department may require league to produce their financial statement to prove non-profit status to include the 501c3 and Non Profit certificate. Organization will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- C. Each league/Organization will provide at registration, a statement on playing time for the participants, i.e., all participants will play at least six (6) minutes per game; league is set up to win, playing time will be at the coaches discretion with no guarantee of playing time.
- D. Each organization must be governed by a board of directors selected by the membership that manages the operations of the program. Organizations must have a minimum of three board members and include the following officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- E. Leagues will have registration of at least 66% City of Fairfax/Fairfax County residents.
- F. Each league will annually sign and submit a hold harmless agreement via the “Application for Use of Athletic Field” or “Application for Use of Gymnasium” located on the Parks and Recreation website or main office.
- G. Comply with the requirements of this document.
- H. Proposed league shall grant the City the right of refusal for sales of merchandise or

- concessions. Sales are not allowed unless approved by the Recreation Department
- I. The Recreation Department reserves the right of refusal for any group(s) that directly competes with a group(s) that is currently sanctioned by the Parks and Recreation Department or competes/conflicts with City programs.
 - J. Should a `new league,' that is a league not previously allocated space in the City of Fairfax, wish to receive space they will notify Parks and Recreation no later than 6 months prior to the deadline for application. League will provide information as to number of anticipated participants, type of sport, level of sport (i.e., select, starter, etc.) anticipated field request and any other pertinent information.
 - K. Each organization/league must establish, maintain and operate under a set of bylaws. The bylaws must establish the objectives of the program, membership requirements, description of its board of directors, election of officers, and all procedures relative to the program. A current copy of the bylaws must be submitted at the beginning of each Fall Season to the Parks and Recreation Department.
 - L. The organization must require all coaches and board members to complete a criminal background. The City reserves the right to annually verify any and all criminal background checks.
 - M. Meet the standards in Exhibit A.

RECOGNITION PROCEDURES FOR PRIORITY PARTNERS/SANCTIONED LEAGUE

A group or individual wishing to receive recognition as a Sanctioned League/Priority Partner must complete the following steps prior to Parks and Recreation Department recognition.

Step One

Submit the following to the Parks and Recreation Department

- List of Executive Officers/Board members with Contact information.
- Copy of By-Laws.
- Certificate of Insurance Naming the City of Fairfax as an additional insured. The insurance must carry the following limits: \$2,000,000 liability, \$2,000,000 accident and property damage.
- Submit documentation to support compliance with appropriate Category.

Step Two

- Meet with the Parks and Recreation Department to present your Association.
- Meeting with Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) may be required as well.

Step Three

- Await to confirm if approval is granted by the Parks and Recreation Department.

FACILITY ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY

- Priority Partner Organizations will retain the same space allocations from the previous season when possible.
- Priority Partner Organizations will be considered for new space openings over all other groups according to the Priority Classification set forth in "Priority Groups" section above unless otherwise determined by the Parks and Recreation Department.

- Allocation priority and process do NOT supersede MOUs currently existing or subsequently established between the City and an Organization.
- All returned space or unused space will be allocated as follows (in no particular order):
 - Based on the best interest of the City as determined by the Parks and Recreation Department, groups that held permits the previous season will be considered for space of similar time/day when possible.
 - Historical data (years Organization has been assigned space, good standing, etc.).
 - All applicants must meet the “Minimum Requirements” to be considered for allocation.
 - When possible groups that have the higher percentage of City of Fairfax Residents within the 66% minimum requirement will receive priority for space that is turned in from the Priority Partner/ Sanctioned Leagues.

MAINTENANCE

While the City has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of City parks and athletic fields, it is expected that athletic clubs and organizations which, on a recurring basis, use selected fields, will desire to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of those fields. The City will provide to athletic clubs and organizations, on request, a listing of maintenance functions the City will provide on specified sites. Marking base lines, raking and dragging base paths, ensuring basic safety conditions and other aspects of field preparation for a game or event are the responsibility of the user

In order to ensure orderly planning for maintenance, it is requested that clubs/organizations that utilize fields on a recurring basis submit, in writing, a commitment for either capital expenditure or maintenance(donation or in-kind labor) to the Parks and Recreation Department by September 1 of each year for the following fiscal year (July - June). The addition of permanent structures in Parks or Schools must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Department and/or the School Board prior to the structure being built by the group.

The City reserves the right to “rest” fields as deemed necessary for maintenance purposes. In these cases groups will be notified and the field will be removed from allocation for that season(s). Parks and Recreation Department staff will perform all maintenance (excluding lining, etc) on City fields. A field use permit does not authorize an organization to make improvements or perform maintenance on a City field without written approval from the Recreation Department.

When feasible, grass fields will be closed December through February and the month of July for rest and maintenance.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

User shall agree to hold harmless and indemnify the City of Fairfax School Board (where using a school site), the City of Fairfax, its Parks and Recreation Department, the Fairfax City Council and all of their officials, officers, employees or agents, with respect to any claim of loss, injury, or damage incurred from or rising out of or related to use of the field or facility including damage to school board/park property or other public property. A minimum 2 million dollar insurance policy, naming the City of Fairfax and all its staff, is required for all scheduled leagues.

FIELD USE RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Persons shall not be restricted from participation for reasons of race, religion, origin or creed.
- The Parks and Recreation Department shall have the right to deny the privilege of continued use of fields and facilities to any user who does not comply with all the regulations. The Parks and Recreation Department shall have the right to deny the use of a facility to any person or organization.
- The Parks and Recreation Department shall administer and interpret the policies governing the use of the all facilities.
- No recurring athletic type activities, camps, clinics or tournaments will be scheduled at Van Dyck Park except for selected City sponsored events; unless approved by the Recreation Department and reviewed annually by the City Manager.
- The School Board reserves its preemptory rights to use school facilities and may cancel or postpone any non-school use when such is in conflict with a school event.
- Groups are not allowed on fields prior to the start time listed on the permit and are required to have the fields cleaned and cleared by the ending time indicated on the permit.
- The permits times include time for warm ups and preparation of the field. Check the allocation contract for specific times. No subleasing of fields is allowed under any circumstance.
- Subleasing of fields will result in revocation of all permits indefinitely pending an investigation which may end the season.
- Any unauthorized use including using fields without a permit or interfering with another permitted use (squatting) will result in the revocation of any permit indefinitely pending an investigation which may end the season.
- Tarps and material that may damage the grass are prohibited from being placed on the turf. Any turf coverings used must be made of a breathable material and approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. Tarps are prohibited on fencing.
- Parking is allowed only in designated areas. No vehicles are allowed on City fields or property (other than parking lots) without prior written permission noted on the permit issued by the City. User groups must inform their participants and spectators to park in facility parking lots and public parking areas. It is the user's responsibility to alleviate traffic and parking issues.
- Amplified sound is not allowed on any field without City prior approval and must be noted on the permit. Use of artificial noisemakers, horns, rattles, bells, or whistles by spectators is not allowed. Each user group is responsible for picking up trash and debris and depositing it into the proper trash bins at the conclusion of games and practices. Adjoining areas must also be clear of all trash. Organizations should ask players and spectators to pick up litter in dugouts, sidelines, stands and the immediate vicinity of the game or practice.
- User groups will ensure sandbags are located on soccer goals when arriving, during and after play.

LIMITATIONS ON USE

- Use is restricted to areas and times assigned in the approved permit.
- Activities conducted by the users of facilities must be orderly and lawful, and not of a nature to incite others to disorder.
- Immoral or unbecoming conduct, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or gambling are not permitted on or within facilities.
- Parking of vehicles is confined to approved parking areas only.
- No seasonal and/or permanent signs, banners, pennants or the like may be placed in or on public

facilities without the written consent of the Parks and Recreation and Recreation Department..

- Smoking is not permitted in schools or public facilities.
- Food and beverages are not permitted in any part of any building unless such areas are equipped or designated for that purpose. Only plastic water bottles are permitted inside the gyms.
- Failure to abide by limitations of use or sanctioning policies will forfeit the group's opportunity to use the field or facility or to be scheduled for use in the future.
- Playing Fields
 - Users of all athletic fields must abide by “Policies, Rules and Regulations governing use of City of Fairfax Park and School Athletic Fields and Facilities,” available at the City Parks and Recreation Department.
 - Groups or individuals may reserve athletic facilities through the City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation Department. Groups or individuals receiving authorization will be issued an official permit, which they must be able to produce upon request when using the facility.
 - Unless an official permit is produced by a group or individual, athletic facilities are available on a first-come-first-serve basis.
 - Groups of 15 or more people may require a permit to use the Athletic Field even if athletic fields are not in use.
 - Animals are not allowed on athletic fields at any time unless authorized in writing by the Parks and Recreation Department Director or designee.
 - Only the intended field use is allowed.
- Synthetic Turf Fields
 - No smoking allowed on or around any synthetic turf field.
 - No metal cleats allowed.
 - No fireworks, fires or grills allowed on or around any synthetic turf field.
 - No unauthorized vehicles allowed on synthetic turf fields. Only a small tractor is authorized for use on these fields with prior written approval from the Parks and Recreation Department.

AUTHORITY/NON AGREEMENT POLICY

The Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, or his designee, is authorized to grant approval for the use and scheduling procedures of fields and facilities as established through this policy by the City Council. The Parks and Recreation Director, or his designee, reserves the right to deny the use of facilities at any time.

The Parks and Recreation Director or designee will interpret and apply this Field Allocation Policy. A field user or potential field user may appeal any decision or notice of Violation of this policy in writing within 2 days of the decision or notice of violation to the Parks and Recreation Department.

All appeal letters must include the basis of the appeal and will be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Director who will make the final decision. All decisions will be made in the best interest the community as a whole and as related to the City’s Strategic Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the policies and procedures of the Department. The goal of this policy is to provide guidance and consistency in the allocation of sports facilities within the community.

LIGHTING ON FIELDS

All athletic fields equipped with lights are monitored by Department of Parks and Recreation personnel who in conjunction with volunteers control when they are turned on and off in accordance with the policies for each field as set forth below:

- Providence Elementary lights will be turned off by 11:00 pm.
- Thaiss Park lights will be turned off by 9:30 pm.
- FHS turf field lights will be turned off by 10:15 pm.
- Draper Drive Park Fields 1 & 2 lights will be turned off by 8:30 pm.
- FHS softball field lights are not authorized for Recreational use.

FIELD HOURS

All facilities are open dawn to dusk unless noted otherwise in this document. School facilities are not generally available to the public during the school season until 4pm for fields and 6pm for gyms. The facilities below have restrictions for permit play:

- Stafford Drive Park field scheduling start time is 9am- 8pm Monday through Saturday; Sundays 10am-5pm
- Providence Park field scheduling starts at 9:30am on Sundays and 8am on Saturdays
- Green Acres scheduling starts at 8am Saturday and Sundays
- Daniels Run facilities will try to avoid scheduling on Sundays prior to 11am when possible (to avoid parking with St. Leo's church)

CANCELLATION

The Department reserves the right to cancel any reservation or permit for City field/Gym use for any of the following reasons:

- It conflicts with a City-sponsored league, program, activity, or event
- Maintenance needs/issues
- Overuse of a field
- Unsafe conditions (inclement weather, etc.)

In these cases, all attempts will be made to provide advance notice and to schedule an alternate location.

In the event of an emergency, when only short or no notice can be afforded, groups must cooperate with the cancellation so as not to risk loss of rental/allocation privileges. The City is not obligated to provide alternate fields or gyms if none are available.

With regard to activities at school sites, on days when school is normally in session, should the school close early, cancel all after school activities or close for the day, the Parks and Recreation programs inside the building will also be cancelled for that day.

Announcement of Cancellation: Participants wishing to find out the status of activities may call the Parks and Recreation Department cancellation line at 703-385-7976.

All permit holders must notify the recreation office 48 hours in advance of cancellation to be considered for reimbursement. Gym cancellations for weekend use must be made in writing to our

office by the Wednesday prior to the scheduled weekend to be considered for reimbursement or avoid charges.

NEW SPORTS ACTIVITY

The below listed procedures are to be utilized when introducing a new sports activity that would require either indoor or outdoor facility space

- All new leagues must inform the Parks and Recreation Department, in writing, at least six (6) months prior to the start of their season, of the intention to form a new league. The new league must meet all of the previous sanctioning requirements, as outlined in this manual. Field space will be given out in accordance with the Parks and Recreation allocation procedures.
- The new league will attend the meeting for allocation of fields for the appropriate season.

EXHIBIT A

The following standards were provided by NAYS and all Priority Partner/Sanctioned Leagues shall meet these standards.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) is pleased to release this revised edition of the National Standards for Youth Sports. The original version of the National Standards for Youth Sports were released in 1987 to provide direction for parents to follow when developing and administering youth sport for children. Since then, the Standards have served as the blueprint for how thousands of recreation professionals have conducted their youth sports programs through the years in an effort to meet the needs of all their participants.

In December 2007, a dedicated group of professional youth sports administrators convened during the International Youth Sports Congress in Orlando, Florida to re-examine the Standards in relation to the current youth sports environment. This new edition reflects the consensus of this group and addresses a variety of topics that currently affect the delivery of youth sports programs.

The purpose of these Standards is to provide a framework by which youth sports programs are designed and executed. While the previous edition was focused on parents and the role of parents within the youth sports landscape, this new version is directed to the league and program administrators. The National Standards for Youth Sports place in motion a nation policy for youth sports.

In addition to the nine standards, we have included three additional sections that provide information to parents, volunteer coaches and participants to explain what the National Standards for Youth Sports specifically mean to each group.

For more information about the National Standards for Youth Sports
contact:

2050 Vista parkway
West Palm Beach, Florida 33411
561-684-1141
800-688-KIDS
www.nays.org

STANDARD 1: QUALITY SPORTS ENVIRONMENT

Youth sports programs must be developed and organized to ensure, as well as to enhance, the emotional, physical, social and educational well-being of children.

Background:

A wide variety of youth sports experiences are available today. Historically, many programs have been modeled after adult-oriented programs using rules, skill expectations and competitive requirements replicated from high school, college and professional levels. Today, programs must be designed and administered so that every child, regardless of their abilities, has an opportunity to positively benefit from participation.

Rationale:

Youth sports programs should be based on meaningful participation. All children physically and emotionally mature at different rates. In order to have a quality youth sports environment consider the appropriate age range of the participants, the rules of the sport and the proper level of physical and emotional stress.

Implementation:

1. Leagues should be required to abide by written policies and procedures.
2. Leagues should be guided by a written mission statement that provides a foundation for the program's purpose and goals.
3. Leagues should maximize play time for all by establishing a minimum play rule/policy.
4. Leagues should organize programs using the following guidelines, although modifications can be made when total participation numbers are low:
 - a. Developmental Programs for children under 6:
 - * Informal teams
 - * Focus on motor skill development
 - * Scores and/or standings not emphasized
 - * Roster size, rules, equipment and fields modified
 - * Limited uniforms
 - * Post-season tournament or all-star competition highly discouraged
 - * Encourage boys and girls to participate together whenever possible
 - * No travel
 - * Coaches permitted on playing surface
 - b. Instructional Sports Programs for 7 to 8 year olds:
 - * Focus on skill development and rules of the game
 - * Scores and standings not emphasized
 - * Roster size, rules, equipment and fields modified
 - * Limited uniforms
 - * Encourage a variety of position and situational play
 - * Post-season tournament or all-star competition discouraged
 - * Encourage boys and girls to participate together whenever possible
 - * Travel discouraged
 - * Coaches permitted on playing surface
 - c. Organizational Programs for 9 to 10 year olds:
 - * Scores kept but standings de-emphasized
 - * Roster sizes, rules, equipment and fields modified when necessary
 - * Encourage a variety of position and situational play
 - * Out-of-community postseason play only when necessary
 - * No national tournament participation
 - d. Skill Enhancement and Enrichment Programs for 11 year olds and above:
 - * Scores and standings de-emphasized
 - * Proper grouping and selection procedures to ensure fair and equitable teams
 - * Encourage a variety of position and situational play

5. Leagues should develop skill level assessments to establish teams using methods to ensure teams are balanced by considering weight, skill and special needs when grouping children.
6. Leagues should establish a no-cut policy so all children can participate in recreational programs.
7. League standings should be discouraged below the age of nine and de-emphasized below the age of 13.
8. Leagues and coaches should not require sports specialization or year-around participation.

STANDARD 2: SPORTS PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE FUN AND PART OF A CHILDS LIFE

Youth sports are only one portion of a child's life that must be balanced with other social and educational experiences and activities.

Background:

The foundation for human development occurs during the early years of life. Individuals that are exposed to many different learning situations increase their potential for successful development. Youth sports participation is a valuable component to a child's overall healthy development.

Rationale:

Parents, coaches and league administrators need to encourage children to be involved in a variety of programs and activities to experience positive growth and development, while taking great care to ensure that the child isn't overscheduled or that activities don't detract from their academic learning. Parents must respect a child's decision to play or not play, while keeping in mind that commitment is still important for their growth and development. Parents, coaches and league administrators must also realize that a child's involvement in youth sports affects the entire family.

Implementation:

1. Leagues, parents and coaches should encourage participation in a variety of youth activities in addition to sports while not over-scheduling.
2. Leagues should establish rules that limit organized practices and games to no more than one hour a day and three days a week up to age 8; not more than 1.5 hours and four days a week for ages 9 to 12; and not more than two hours and four days a week for ages 13 and above.
3. Leagues should adopt policies that make provisions for excused absences.
4. Everyone involved should understand that positive life skills are learned/gained from participation in youth sports programs.

STANDARD 3: TRAINING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Adults involved with youth sports must receive training and important information about the program and must be held accountable for their behavior.

Background:

Sports participation can lead to physical and emotional harm if those responsible have no training. In many cases, adults involved with youth sports organizations have not received formal training. Adults are an essential component of organized sports programs, whose own motives, morals and beliefs can influence how programs are conducted and their outcomes.

Rationale:

To ensure that everyone involved strives to make the youth sports program safe, positive and fun for all children, all administrators, coaches and parents must receive information about the program's philosophy, policies and procedures, as well as specific knowledge required for each position. By holding everyone accountable for their behaviors, high quality programming can be ensured.

Implementation:

1. Parents, coaches and volunteers should be provided written information that outlines the program's purpose, as well as policies and procedures.
2. Coaches and staff should be trained in the following areas: the emotional needs of children; safety, injury prevention and first aid; conditioning; hydration and nutrition; teaching proper sport techniques; including all children; child abuse prevention; and drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention.
3. Coaches should be encouraged to continually gain general and sport-specific coaching skills.
4. Leagues are encouraged to provide additional educational resources for coaches and parents to assist them in providing the best possible youth sports experience for each child.
5. Adults involved should be provided information about the types of child abuse, recognizing symptoms of child abuse and neglect and understand reporting procedures.
6. Leagues should adopt a positive coaching recruitment policy that encourages the recruitment and selection of qualified women and men regardless of race, creed, sex or economic status.
7. All volunteers should be required annually to sign a code of conduct pledging their commitment to provide enjoyable, healthful youth sports experiences.
8. Leagues should establish an accountability procedure and disciplinary process to remove anyone who does not abide by its policies and procedures.
9. Coaches and parents should encourage and apply proper principles of conditioning.

STANDARD 4: SCREENING PROCESS

To ensure the safety and well being of children in youth sports, individuals with regular, repetitive access or contact with children must complete the screening process.

Background:

Volunteers are crucial to the delivery of youth sports programs. Leagues have a responsibility to protect participants against unsafe individuals by implementing a comprehensive screening system. Screening is a process with many elements that an organization uses to protect participants.

Rationale:

Leagues must be selective when choosing volunteers since parents are entrusting their children to the adults running the youth sports league. Consistent and comprehensive screening strengthens the organization's protective shield. The time, energy and costs invested in screening are much less than what will be necessary if an incident, abuse or neglect occurs in the organization.

Implementation:

1. Leagues must use appropriate and available screening techniques for selecting and assigning individuals to ensure that children are protected.
2. A written screening policy should be included in policies and procedures.
3. A written job description outlining the duties and responsibilities should be available for every position.
4. Job descriptions should be read, signed, dated and kept on file to ensure an understanding of the position and the league's expectations.
5. Volunteers should be required to complete and sign an application form.
6. Leagues should contact references provided by potential volunteers.
7. Leagues are encouraged to interview volunteers.
8. A criminal history background check should be conducted on all volunteers.
9. Leagues are encouraged to develop procedures and disqualifiers to determine what issues make a volunteer undesirable.

STANDARD 5: PARENTS' COMMITMENT

Parents/guardians must take an active and positive role in their child's youth sports experiences.

Background:

Leagues should encourage parents to be caring and active in their child's youth sports experiences by providing positive support as a spectator, coach and league administrator. Many parents do not get involved at all in their child's youth sports experience, while others become overly involved. All parents should be required to demonstrate their positive commitment by signing a code which outlines the opportunities their child should have through participation, as well as the responsibility the parent has in supporting the youth sports experience.

Rationale:

Parents are one of the keys to their child's youth sports experiences. Parents who receive an orientation and who are required to sign a code of conduct are usually more positive and supportive of their children. They need to demonstrate the participation benefits by attending games, practices, or team social events; or by just expressing their positive support. Parents should discuss participation with their child and help in evaluating his/her experiences.

Implementation:

1. Parents should be required to complete a league orientation meeting annually. The orientation should cover the following areas: youth sports philosophy, program goals, expected behaviors and responsibilities, as well as sport specific information.
2. Teams should be required to have a minimum of one team/parents' meeting at the beginning of each sports season.
3. Parents must demonstrate their commitment to their child's youth sports experience by annually signing a parental code of conduct.
4. A child should not be allowed to participate if their parent refuses to sign the parental code of conduct.
5. Parents should familiarize themselves with the specific sport, including the rules of the game.
6. Leagues should encourage parent-child communication about their youth sports experiences.
7. Leagues should maintain open communication channels with parents through newsletters, league meetings and email.
8. Leagues should promote parental involvement in roles such as coach, team manager, fund-raiser, league manager, special assistant and fan.

STANDARD 6: SPORTSMANSHIP

Everyone involved in youth sports programs should exhibit positive sportsmanship behavior at all times.

Background:

Children will follow the example of adult role models, positively or negatively. Children will copy or imitate sports behaviors witnessed, including the development of values based on that behavior. Adults must be a positive role model exhibiting sportsmanlike behavior at games, practices, and at all times while giving positive reinforcement to the children and supporting their coaches, staff and other volunteers.

Rationale:

If the youth sports experience is to be a positive one for each child, adults must demonstrate sportsmanlike behavior as a fan, coach, and/or league administrator. They need to encourage fun, guide with positive reinforcement and give praise for successes along the way. When a child makes a mistake, separate the mistake from the child. Adults need to encourage peer support and give positive verbal support to team members, opponents and coaches of their child.

Implementation:

1. Leagues will develop a sportsmanship/conduct code that includes positive expectations and describes unacceptable behaviors (for example berating players, coaches, officials; use of vulgar language; and intoxication).
2. Leagues will promote fair play, respect for the game and graciousness in losing or winning.
3. Leagues will communicate conduct requirements to administrators, coaches, parents, players and spectators through policies and procedures, newsletters, email, website, telephone calls and announcements.
4. Leagues will develop an enforcement plan for implementing a sportsmanship/conduct code, including disciplinary procedures.

STANDARD 7: SAFE PLAYING ENVIRONMENTS

Youth sports programs must provide safe playing facilities and equipment, healthful playing situations and proper first aid applications, should the need arise.

Background:

Coaches and league administrators have the responsibility to inspect and ensure proper maintenance of facilities; to have knowledge of proper equipment selection and appropriate use; to understand the physical consequence of improper skill techniques; have the ability to modify rules for safe-playing situations; understand the physical need for a proper child-oriented conditioning program; and have knowledge of prevention and first aid for athletic injuries, including the ability to implement emergency procedures.

Rationale:

Children participating in youth sports are exposed to a variety of organized risk-taking opportunities. It is important for programs to take every precaution to protect participants from dangerous situations and in the event of an accident or emergency, everyone must be prepared to respond appropriately.

Implementation:

1. Leagues must implement procedures for inspecting playing facilities for safety hazards before every youth sports activity.
2. Leagues should develop procedures for continual safety inspections of all playing equipment.
3. Leagues must not allow participation during unsafe conditions, such as lightning storms, darkness, playing sites in disrepair, etc.
4. Leagues should develop emergency action plans and these should be communicated to everyone involved at the beginning of the season or program.
5. Leagues should establish procedures to ensure that all teams and events have an emergency first aid plan for administering to injuries, as well as policies in place for dealing with dangerous weather conditions and hazards that pose injury risks. .
6. Leagues should require basic medical and injury treatment forms to be properly completed and signed by parents.
7. Leagues should require that at least one adult trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and basic first aid is always on site at any practice or game.
8. Leagues should require coaches to carry each player's emergency contact and health information at all practices and games.
9. Leagues should demand that teams have a fully equipped first aid kit at all youth sports activities.
10. An AED (automated external defibrillator) should be located in proximity to all fields, courts and rinks.
11. Leagues should remove coaches that knowingly allow a player to play while having a serious injury or knowingly create unsafe play situations.
12. Leagues should enforce a policy that requires written permission from a doctor prior to allowing a child to participate following an injury.
13. Leagues should provide information to everyone regarding proper hydration techniques.
14. Children below the age of 11 should participate in activities that contain limited collision potential and feature modified rules that will significantly reduce the chances of injury.
15. Leagues should mandate that at least two adults are always present during practices, games and any other related activity.
16. Leagues must adopt rules/policies banning rapid weight loss/gain procedures used solely for participation in youth sports.

17. Leagues must select equipment designed to ensure injury reduction for participants, (i.e. baseballs designed to reduce injuries, soccer shin guards, approved protective equipment in contact sports).

STANDARD 8: EQUAL PLAY OPPORTUNITY

Parents, coaches and league administrators must provide equal play opportunity for all youth regardless of race, creed, sex, economic status or ability.

Background:

The cost of participation in youth sports is financially out of reach for some kids. Sports opportunities for girls, minorities and children with disabilities have improved but are still not equal.

Rationale:

All children deserve the opportunity to play regardless of race, creed, sex, economic status or ability. Coaches, parents and league administrators should recognize stereotyping and demand that prejudice of any type be prohibited. Every effort should be made to provide financial assistance to those unable to afford participation, including the cost of safe equipment. Adult youth sports leaders must teach acceptance, tolerance and respect for people of all abilities, sizes, shapes, colors and cultural and economic backgrounds.

Implementation:

1. Leagues must adopt a non-discrimination policy that ensures participation for all children regardless of race, creed, sex, economic status or ability.
2. Leagues should make provisions whenever possible to allow all children to participate regardless of their financial ability to pay.
3. Leagues are encouraged to provide programs that allow boys and girls to participate together whenever possible.
4. Leagues must encourage equal play time for all participants.
5. Leagues must make reasonable accommodations to encourage children with disabilities to participate.

STANDARD 9: DRUG, TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND PERFORMANCE ENHANCER FREE ENVIRONMENT

Parents, coaches, officials, fans, players and administrators must be drug, tobacco, alcohol and performance enhancer free at youth sports activities.

Background:

Sports participation has long been characterized as a means of developing character and positive values. Information indicates that peer pressure, negative peer group associations and unhealthy adult role models may actually increase the use of drug, tobacco and alcohol use among youth participants as well as lead to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Rationale:

Adults involved in youth sports must be educated about all drugs, including performance enhancing drugs. Leagues should have policies to deal with the use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol, emphasizing prevention through education. Parents, league administrators and coaches should be trained to identify signs of usage and know how to access community resources. Healthful role modeling should lead the way for influencing youth participants to avoid drug, tobacco and alcohol use and to promote seeking safe and healthy improvements through proper training methods that don't involve the use of performance-enhancing drugs to gain an unfair advantage.

Implementation:

1. Leagues should adopt rules prohibiting the use of performance enhancing drugs, alcohol, illegal substances and/or tobacco at all youth sports events.
2. Leagues should provide coaches and parents educational information on identifying signs and symptoms of substance use.
3. Leagues should establish written policies and implementation procedures for immediately dealing with substance use by coaches and players and communicate this information to coaches, players, and parents.
4. Leagues should continually encourage dialogue between coaches, players and parents about the need for an alcohol, tobacco and drug-free environment for children.
5. Leagues must ban all forms of tobacco use during any youth sports related activity.
6. Leagues should discourage participants from using caffeine products (pills, gum and drinks).
7. Leagues must not allow alcohol to be sold or allowed to be brought into youth sports games, practices or related events.
8. Leagues should develop an enforcement plan for removing adults and players who appear to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or any illegal substances.

Kids – What the National Standards for Youth Sports Mean to YOU

Participating in organized sports programs is a truly special time in your young life. It's important that you – along with your parents or guardians – are aware that with your involvement in these programs you have rights. Among those are the right to a safe and fun experience and the opportunity to receive the same amount of playing time as your teammates, among many others.

The National Standards for Youth Sports are a great resource to help you gain a good understanding of what your youth sports experience is all about and how you should expect to be treated throughout the season. You should know that the Standards were created with your best interests in mind. They represent what respected professionals around the country believe is the best way to provide top-quality sports programs for children.

Along with your rights comes the responsibility for you to abide by team rules, follow your coach's instructions and, with the help of your parent or guardian, put forth every effort to get to practices and games on time. When coaches, parents and players work together – and do their best to follow the Standards – you'll enjoy participating in a positive environment that will increase the likelihood of you learning new skills, enhancing others and having a safe and fun-filled experience.