

ESTABLISHING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COACH & PARENT

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important relationships in youth hockey is that which exists between parents and coaches. If the relationship is poor, an atmosphere of tension and conflict may develop. This, in turn, may create an unpleasant environment for the coach, the parent and, most importantly, the youth hockey player. If the coach can develop a good working relationship with parents, many problems will be avoided and the entire youth sports experience will be more rewarding and enjoyable for everyone involved.

ORIENTATION MEETING

The most effective method of communicating the goals and objectives of your program is through a Parent Orientation Meeting. A face-to-face meeting will go a long way toward unifying coaches and parents in a cooperative effort that will benefit the players. Many potential problems can be eliminated through good communication that begins before the first day of practice. The following are topics that should be addressed during the Parent Orientation Meeting:

SAMPLE AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Coaching Philosophy & Primary Goals
3. Understanding the Sport
4. Understanding & Minimizing the Risk of Injury
5. Emergency Procedures
6. Equipment Needs
7. The Player's Responsibilities
8. The Parent's Responsibilities
9. The Season Schedule
10. Question & Answer Period

INTRODUCTIONS

At this time, introduce yourself and your coaching staff to the group of parents. If you wish, have an association official make the introductions. As the coach, you should briefly describe your background, coaching experience and your reasons for coaching. The parents should also introduce themselves and indicate how long they have been involved in the program. Explain the meaning and importance of the orientation meeting, which is designed to create good coach/parent relationships for the benefit of the children. Also, it is helpful to distribute handouts of the meeting agenda to the parents. This provides structure to the meeting and a place for parents to take notes.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY & PRIMARY GOALS

Present your goals and objectives for the upcoming season, which should coincide with those of the USA Hockey Coaching Education Program. A coaching philosophy that emphasizes fun, the teaching of fundamental skills, teamwork, sportsmanship and respect for the dignity of the individual athlete is most effective. This is very important for building your credibility as a coach.

UNDERSTANDING THE SPORT

Many times during the course of a season, spectators will question officials, shout instructions to players or contradict the coach because they are unaware of the rules or have only a basic understanding of the sport of hockey. This can be a strain to the coach/parent relationship. By reviewing some basic concepts and rules, you can help avoid these situations.

UNDERSTANDING & MINIMIZING THE RISK OF INJURY

Parents should be told what to expect in terms of possible injuries in hockey. Let them know if a medical examination is required prior to their child's participation, to whom the results must be provided and when it is due. Injury prevention measures that are commonly used for games and practices should be outlined. Parents should be assured that the playing/practice area and protective equipment will be checked to help keep players safe and free from hazards. They should be told of the availability of first aid and who is responsible for its administration. Parents should also be introduced to the Heads Up Hockey program, which was designed by USA Hockey to promote a safer, smarter, better style of play. mission and objectives of USA Hockey, the local association and the coach. Take this opportunity to ask parents for their assistance over the course of the season. Providing refreshments after games, serving as hosts for visiting teams and assisting with travel arrangements to out-of-town games are some of the areas in which parents can be particularly helpful.

THE SEASON SCHEDULE

Provide parents with a complete schedule of games and practices for the upcoming season. Also, inform parents as to when players are expected to arrive at practices and games and when they will be available to leave. You may also wish to provide a complete list of all the players' addresses and telephone numbers.

QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD

Concluding the meeting with a question and answer period will provide parents with an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have.

SUMMARY

Parents play an important role in the success of a positive youth sports program. By inviting them to talk with you about how you perceive your role as a coach, the purpose of the USA Hockey program, and the responsibilities that they and their children have to the team, you are helping create a good coach/parent relationship.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Have parents provide the information necessary for you to handle an emergency (parents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, names and telephone numbers of family doctors and their hospital of preference).

You should also describe the procedures that will be used in case of an emergency.

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Explain what equipment the players need and where it can be purchased. You may also want to offer advice on the quality of skates, sticks, helmets, etc., and indicate how much parents should expect to pay for specific items. If an equipment swap is organized annually, provide information as to where and when it will be held. You should bring an example of the equipment that each player will need and provide tips on the proper care and maintenance of equipment.

THE PLAYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Children must assume certain responsibilities if they wish to play hockey, including good sportsmanship, teamwork and being on time for practices and games. Also, cooperating with coaches and teammates, developing team and individual skills, and abiding by the official playing rules of USA Hockey are responsibilities that players should embrace.

These responsibilities should be discussed so that parents can help reinforce them at home.

THE PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents of young athletes have many responsibilities that should be reviewed at the Parents' Orientation Meeting. They should understand the and objectives of USA Hockey, the local association and the coach. Take this opportunity to ask parents for their assistance over the course of the season. Providing refreshments after games, serving as hosts for visiting teams and assisting with travel arrangements to out-of-town games are some of the areas in which parents can be particularly helpful.

THE SEASON SCHEDULE

Provide parents with a complete schedule of games and practices for the upcoming season. Also, inform parents as to when players are expected to arrive at practices and games and when they will be available to leave. You may also wish to provide a complete list of all the players' addresses and telephone numbers.

QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD

Concluding the meeting with a question and answer period will provide parents with an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have.

SUMMARY

Parents play an important role in the success of a positive youth sports program. By inviting them to talk with you about how you perceive your role as a coach, the purpose of the USA Hockey program, and the responsibilities that they and their children have to the team, you are helping create a good coach/parent relationship.