

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. FSL will abide by written policies and procedures.
2. FSL will be guided by a written mission statement that provides a foundation for our program's purpose and goals.
3. FSL will organize programs using the following guidelines, although modifications can be made when total participation numbers are low:
 - a. **Developmental Programs for children in grades K-2nd:**
 - Informal teams
 - Focus on motor skill development
 - Scores and standings not emphasized, left up to coaches & parents to track
 - Roster size, rules, equipment and fields modified
 - FSL will maximize play time for all by establishing a minimum play rule/policy.
 - No playoffs, post-season tournaments, or all-star competitions
 - Encourage boys and girls to participate together whenever possible
 - Coaches permitted on playing surface
 - b. **Instructional Sports Programs for children in grades 3rd-4th:**
 - Focus on skill development and rules of the game
 - Stats and standings kept
 - Roster size, rules, equipment and fields modified
 - Encourage a variety of position and situational play
 - No post-season tournament or all-star competitions, only playoffs
 - Encourage boys and girls to participate together whenever possible
 - c. **Organizational Programs for children in grades 5th-8th:**
 - Stats and standings kept
 - Roster sizes, rules, equipment, and fields modified when necessary
 - Encourage a variety of position and situational play
 - No national tournament participation



Standard #2 Sports participation should be fun and a portion of a child's 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. Parent and coaches should encourage participation in a variety of youth activities in addition to sports while not over-scheduling.
2. 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.
3. Coaches should be encouraged to continually gain general and sport-specific coaching skills.
4. FSL will provide additional educational resources for coaches and parents to assist them in providing the best possible youth sports experience for each child.
5. FSL will 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.
6. FSL will encourage schools to have all volunteers sign a code of conduct pledging their commitment to provide enjoyable, healthful youth sports experiences.
7. FSL will establish an accountability procedure and disciplinary process to remove anyone who does not abide by its policies and procedures.
8. Coaches and parents should encourage and apply proper principles of conditioning.

Standard #4 Screening Process

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in youth sports, individuals with regular, repetitive access or contact with children must complete the screening process. FSL will encourage all schools to follow the screening process regarding volunteers. FSL understands that not all schools volunteer policies are the same. Schools are required to administer their own policies. Additionally, FSL requires all of their staff members and outside contractors to undergo an extensive background check.

Background:

FSL understands that volunteers play a crucial role in youth sports. FSL encourages schools to take responsibility in protecting 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:

Schools 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.

Implementation:

1. FSL uses a national 13-point background check for local and federal records to ensure that children are protected.
2. FSL will encourage schools to interview volunteers.
3. FSL will educate schools on the importance of the screening process.

Standard #5 Parents' Commitment

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

Background:

FSL will 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 are required to demonstrate FSL's Parent Code of Conduct.

Rationale:

Parents are one of the keys to their child's youth sports experiences. Parents who receive an orientation and who are required to demonstrate the parent 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 are strongly encouraged to attend an FSL parent orientation (Sports Night) meeting per season. The orientation should cover the following areas: youth sports philosophy, program goals, expected behaviors and responsibilities, as well as sport specific information.
2. FSL encourages coaches to hold a team/parents' meeting at the beginning of each sports season.
3. Parents should familiarize themselves with the specific sport, including the rules of the game.
4. FSL will encourage parent-child communication about their youth sports experiences.
5. FSL will maintain open communication channels with parents through league meetings and email.

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. FSL 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. FSL will promote fair play, respect for the game and graciousness in losing or winning.
3. FSL will communicate conduct requirements to administrators, coaches, parents, players and spectators through policies and procedures, email, website, and announcements.
4. FSL will develop an enforcement plan for implementing a sportsmanship/conduct code, including disciplinary procedures.



Standard #7 Safe Playing Environment

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. FSL will implement procedures for inspecting playing facilities for safety hazards before every youth sports activity.
2. FSL will develop procedures for continual safety inspections of all playing equipment.
3. FSL will not allow participation during unsafe conditions, such as lightning storms, darkness, playing sites in disrepair, etc.
4. FSL will develop emergency action plans and these should be communicated to everyone involved at the beginning of the season or program.
5. FSL will 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. FSL will require that at least one adult trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and basic first aid is always on site at any practice or game.
7. FSL will require coaches to carry each player's emergency contact and health information at all practices and games.
8. FSL will require that teams have a fully equipped first aid kit at all youth sports activities.
9. FSL will remove coaches that knowingly allow a player to play while having a serious injury or knowingly create unsafe play situations.
10. FSL will enforce a policy that requires written permission from a doctor prior to allowing a child to participate following an injury.
11. FSL encourages coaches and schools to inspect equipment designed to ensure injury reduction for participants, (i.e. baseballs designed to reduce injuries, soccer shin guards, approved protective equipment in contact sports).

What the Standards mean to parents and coaches

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

Participation in youth sports provides children with an opportunity to gain many valuable life skills and develop an appreciation for physical fitness, all of which can lead to a lifetime of healthy activity. This can only occur, though, when organized sports programs are designed and administered to ensure a safe, positive and fun environment for everyone.

The National Standards for Youth Sports place in motion a national policy for children's sports. These Standards serve as a blueprint for all youth sports programs and must be incorporated into the delivery of every youth sports experience to best ensure that the needs of every child are met.

Remember, you have the right to expect and demand that the recreation agency and/or youth sports program understands the Standards. You also have the right to ask that these Standards are incorporated into their programs so that all children are given the best opportunity for a memorable season that they'll look back on for years to come for all the right reasons.

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

As a coach you are commended for stepping forward to work with a group of children because there are few endeavors in life more worthwhile. You may be aware that as a coach you are in a special position to impact the lives of children in so many areas. Your influence extends far beyond simply helping them learn and progress in their respective sport, so it's of paramount importance that you take great care to approach your role with diligence.

One of the best ways you can prepare yourself for the season is to review the policy that FSL has adopted regarding the National Standards for Youth Sports. The Standards place in motion a national policy for children's sports. They serve as a blueprint for all youth sports programs and must be incorporated into the delivery of every youth sports experience to best ensure that the needs of every child are met.

When you coach a youth sports team you take on the responsibility to meet the needs of every child under your care. As you review the Standards – which should be customary operating procedure before you gather the children for your first practice of the season – keep in mind that these represent what being involved in youth sports is all about.

By making a commitment to abide by these Standards you'll greatly increase your chances of making special connections with your players. This will translate into happy and productive children who will learn and develop skills and likely continue their involvement in the sport for years to come. Equally important, they'll reflect back on their experiences with you favorably and if they choose to coach someday they'll be more likely to pass along many of the same positive attributes to their players that they gained from their interactions with you.

What the Standards mean to youth sports participants

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.