

LITTLE LEAGUE® CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM

The safety and well-being of all participants in the Little League® program is paramount. As adults, we want to ensure that the young people playing in the Little League program are able to grow up happy, healthy and, above all, safe. Whether they are our children, or the children of others, each of us has a responsibility to protect them.

Unfortunately, there are those who would seek to do harm to these children, to rob them of their right to feel safe and grow up in a free and healthy environment. These are child abusers, and although it is not an easy or pleasant topic for any of us to think about, the fact remains that child abuse happens. In 1998, Little League International launched our Child Protection Program to educate local league volunteers, with the goal of creating local league programs where only those who have the best interests of children in mind are involved. Like many national youth organizations, Little League seeks to attract the most qualified and enthusiastic volunteers to assist our programs. At the same time, we must be aware that this could make us a target for child abusers, since statistics show that the largest number of sexually abused children are young children. Clearly, dealing with child abuse is a major concern for everyone involved in Little League, from the Little League International staff to the local league volunteers.

Since Little League could not exist without the time and effort that volunteers and parents donate, it is important to communicate directly with the volunteers. For that reason, this statement on the Little League Child Protection Program should be freely copied and distributed to all adults in the local league.

Defining child abuse is the first step in battling it. Child abuse can take several different forms, and it is important for us to make clear right at the start what the prevention goal of the Little League Child Protection Program is.

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse can be defined as the exploitation of a child by an older child, teen, or adult for the personal gratification of the abusive individual. This form of abuse could involve a range of sexual activities, from touching to non-touching offenses, and may also include acts that are considered non-sexual, but are done for the gratification of the abuser. This might include talking to a child in a sexually explicit way, voyeurism, or exposure of genitalia to a victim and/or victim's exposure of his or her genitalia.

A crucial step in stopping child abuse before it happens is knowing who might be a child abuser, and where child abuse might happen. For better or worse, the answer to each question is simple. Where can it happen? Anywhere. Who could be a child abuser? Anyone. However, we needn't feel that this makes our task impossible.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a leading national child protection advocacy group, defines child abuse as "the physical or emotional injury of a child (17 years old or younger) by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare." Although Little League recognizes emotional abuse as a serious offense that should never be tolerated within the organization, the primary objective of this program is more specific: the protection of Little Leaguers from child sexual abuse, as well as the protection of all adults in the organization from

being placed in difficult or uncomfortable situations with the children in their care.

Myths and Stereotypes

Child abuse knows no social, economic, or geographic boundaries, but there are several statistics at our disposal to help us identify warning signals. What we need to do is separate these facts from the stereotypes that have surrounded child abuse for many years. Let's look at some of the fiction and fact.

"Sex abusers are dirty old men." Not true. While sex abusers cut across socioeconomic levels, educational levels and race, the age of a sex offenders are often in their 30s.

"Strangers are responsible for most of the sexual abuse." Not true again. Fact: 80 to 85 percent of all sexual abuse cases in the US are committed by an individual familiar to the victim. Less than 20 percent of all abusers are strangers.

"Most sex abusers suffer from some form of serious mental illness or psychosis." Not true. The actual figure is more like 10 percent, almost the same as the figure found in the general population of the United States.

"Most sex abusers are homosexuals." Also, not true. Most are heterosexual.

"Children usually lie about sexual abuse, anyway." Not true. In fact, children rarely lie about being sexually abused. If they say it, don't ignore it.

"It only happens to girls." Again, not true. While females do comprise the largest number of sexual abuse victims, it is now believed that the number of male victims is much higher than reported.

"Sexual abuse can only happen when physical contact is made." Not true. While some examples of sexual abuse do involve contact, non-contact sexual abuse is just as dangerous. This can include indecent exposure, voyeurism, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, and more.

"Sexual abuse can only be committed by adults." Not true. Children may also commit sexual abuse against other children.

And this last item on our list points to one of the greatest obstacles in identifying sexual abuse cases: Sexual abuse is shrouded in secrecy. This is because often abusers scare children into silence by saying things like: "This must be our secret-if you tell, something awful will happen."

Child victims are made to feel as though they've brought the abuse upon themselves; they're made to feel guilty. For these reasons, sexual abuse victims seldom disclose the victimization. Children need to understand that it's never their fault, and both children and adults need to know what they can do to keep it from happening.

Education/Prevention of Child Abuse

Education is the most important tool for both our children and our adults. It empowers them to recognize potentially compromising situations, and it places a barrier between abusers and their

victims. Here are a few education and prevention suggestions for our Little League volunteers and children.

Meet with them. Since Little League operates with several volunteers, our membership changes from year to year. Thus, it is important to hold regular meetings in which both volunteers and parents can talk about child abuse, and ask questions.

Make our position clear. Little League has a clearly defined policy for dealing with child abuse. Make adults and kids aware that Little League will not tolerate child abuse in any form. Suspected abuse must be reported and retaliation for good faith reporting is prohibited.

Stress the role of adults. Children should be encouraged to take an active role in protecting themselves, but ultimately the responsibility for ensuring their safety rests with us, the grown-ups. We are better able to identify potentially uncomfortable situations, for ourselves as well as for them. The welfare of our Little Leaguers is the highest priority in any situation.

Encourage the "Buddy system." It's an old maxim, but it's true: There is safety in numbers. Encourage our kids to move about in groups of two or more children of similar age, whether an adult is present or not. This includes travel, leaving the field, or using the restroom areas. It's far more difficult to victimize a child if they're not alone. Adopt additional reasonable procedures to limit one-on-one interactions between minor athletes and an adult. All interactions between minors and adults should be observable and within an interruptible distance of another adult.

Provide additional information. There are many organizations that will gladly assist our efforts to protect our young people, several of which are listed below. Feel free to give these names, numbers, and addresses to parents and volunteers, as well as kids.

U.S. Center for SafeSport
1385 S Colorado Blvd.
Ste A-706
Denver, CO 80222
SafeSport.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
2101 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201-3052
800-843-5678
us.missingkids.com

National Children's Advocacy Center
Visit nationalcac.org/locator to find a center near you.
Nonprofit Risk Management Center
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20036
202-785-3891
nonprofitrisk.org

General Guidelines

In addition, the basic safety procedures that Little League follows generally can also be applied specifically to the identification and prevention of child abuse situations. Adhered to properly, these guidelines can enable children and adults to better protect themselves.

Rides — Children dropped off too early or picked up late are targets. Little League parents and volunteers should be encouraged to pick up and drop off on time. And children should be warned about strangers; about not riding with them, about telling someone if they're approached by them.

Access — Controlling access to areas where children are present, such as the dugout or locker rooms-protects them from harm by outsiders. It's not easy to control the access of large outdoor facilities, but visitors could be directed to a central point within the facility. Individuals should not be allowed to wander through the area without the knowledge of the Little League volunteers.

Lighting — Child sexual abuse is more likely to happen in the dark. The lighting of fields, parking lots and all indoor facilities where Little League functions are held should be bright enough so that participants can identify individuals as they approach, and observers can recognize abnormal situations.

Travel — When traveling with the team, make sure that children are sharing rooms with Little Leaguers of the same age. Girls' rooms should not be adjacent to boys' rooms, and rooms should not have adjoining access, either between children or children and adults.

Shower and Toilet Facilities — Most Little Leaguers are capable of using toilet facilities on their own, so there should be no need for an adult to accompany a child into restroom areas. There can sometimes be special circumstances under which a child requires assistance to toilet facilities, for instance within the Tee Ball and Challenger divisions, but there should still be adequate privacy for that child. Again, we can utilize the "buddy system" here.

Rooting Out Child Abuse — A Five-Step Screening Process

Once we know what child abuse is, and where to look for it, we are better able to prevent potential child abusers from entering the ranks of Little League. Another aspect of this prevention is screening all applicants who wish to be managers, coaches, Board of Directors and any other persons, volunteers and/or hired workers who provide regular services to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.

The term "volunteer" in this context refers to every person in the organization coming in contact with the kids: program workers, coaches, bus and carpool drivers, maintenance workers, etc. The goal is to find caring, competent individuals who can provide a safe, positive climate for Little Leaguers.

Little League requires a five-step process for selecting individuals to fill volunteer positions:

1. **Application** — All local leagues are required to use the Little League Official Volunteer Application for all Managers, Coaches, Board of Directors and any other persons, volunteers and/or hired workers who provide regular service to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with players or teams. The Little League Official Volunteer Application is available online at LittleLeague.org. The applicant must also submit a government-issued photo ID, usually a driver's license, for the league to verify that the information on his/her volunteer application is correct, i.e. spelling of the name, address,

- date of birth, etc.
2. **Background Check** – A background check in compliance with Regulation I(c) 8 and 9 must be conducted on every individual that is required to complete a volunteer application prior to the applicant assuming his/her duties for the current season. The individual is required to consent to a background check on the volunteer application. The local league must conduct a nationwide search that contains the applicable government sex offender registry data and criminal records. Information regarding free background check services is available at LittleLeague.org. Just click the “Learn More” tab and look under Risk Management.
 3. **Interview** – The applicant should be made fully aware of the position of Little League regarding child abuse. No person who is a known child-sex offender shall be allowed to participate in any manner in the Little League program.
 4. **Reference Checks** – This is important to determine if any information from the references differs from that garnered from the volunteer application and/or during the review.
 5. **Exclusion of Certain Individuals** – No local league shall permit any person to participate in any manner, whose background check reveals a conviction for, guilty plea, no contest plea, or admission to any crime involving or against a minor. A local league may prohibit any individual from participating as a volunteer or hired worker, if the league deems the individual unfit or inappropriate to work or volunteer. The local league must conduct a nationwide search that contains the applicable government sex offender registry data and criminal records. NOTE: The United States Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Registry is free and available at nsopr.gov.

In addition, Little League requires all leagues to utilize the national criminal records search available through the Little League website. This additional criminal records check may provide additional important information regarding the criminal records of individuals whose crimes do not require that they be listed on a sex offender registry. If no sex offender registries exist in a province, or country outside the United States the local league must conduct a more extensive search of a country, province or city-wide criminal background check through the appropriate governmental agency unless prohibited by law. Failure to comply with this regulation may result in the suspension or revocation of tournament privileges and/or the local league’s charter by the action of the Charter or Tournament Committee in Williamsport. If a local league becomes aware of information, by any means whatsoever, that an individual, including, but not limited to, volunteers, players, and hired workers, has been convicted of, pled guilty, pled no contest, or admitted to any crime involving or against a minor, the local league must contact the applicable governmental agency to confirm the accuracy of the information. Upon confirmation of a conviction for, guilty plea, no contest plea, or admission to, a crime against or involving a minor, the local league shall not permit the individual to participate in any manner.

Additionally, the league president should inform the parents of all children who have had contact through the league with the excluded individual of any Public Record information that is the basis of the league’s decision to exclude the individual. Public Records are documents received from a governmental body/agency that are available to the general public.

Volunteers are important to the operation of the local leagues. However, to protect the children involved in the local leagues, it is necessary to require the volunteers to complete a volunteer

application and consent to a background check. To protect the privacy of volunteers, the following procedure has been established:

1. The local league president shall only share any personal non-public record information contained in the volunteer application or attached documents with other league officers in order to make personnel decisions.
2. The local league president should maintain the record of a volunteer for at least two (2) years after the volunteer is no longer in the league. When it comes time to dispose of these records, they should be shredded as they contain sensitive information. All actions concerning these records must comply with any applicable laws.
3. Leagues should also maintain records in the case that the league has acted or decided based upon the information contained in the records. The records should be maintained in a locked and secure area, such as the president's home and not in a club house or similar facility.

Enforcement/Reporting of Child Abuse

No matter how much education and prevention we put in place to stop child abuse, it can still happen. In the unfortunate instance that a case of child sexual abuse is suspected and/or reported, specific steps should be in place to deal with the situation. Let's look at these.

- **Reporting** – Because child abuse reporting laws vary from state to state, a Federal law was recently enacted which established a nationwide standard duty to report suspected child abuse. The “Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Act of 2017” mandates that all amateur sports organizations, which participate in an interstate or international amateur athletic competition and whose membership includes any adult who is in regular contact with an amateur athlete who is a minor must report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to law enforcement. An individual who is required, but fails, to report suspected child sexual abuse is subject to criminal penalties. If an individual suspects a case of abuse within their league, they should report it to the appropriate child services organization and/or local law enforcement as well as, their league president and District Administrator. Information regarding reporting child abuse can be found at LittleLeague.org/Player-Safety. After making a report to law enforcement, individuals may also consider contacting one of the following organizations for additional support:
 - The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s CyberTipline accepts reports of child sexual abuse and assists professionals seeking resources to help them in their missing and sexually exploited child cases. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
 - Make a report: Call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or visit www.cybertipline.com
 - The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline provides professional crisis counselors who can offer a variety of services, including emotional support for abuse survivors and information about how to report known or suspected abuse.
 - Learn more about it: www.childhelp.org/pages/hotline-home
 - Get support: Call 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
 - ‘Stop It Now!’ confidential, national prevention Helpline assists callers with

questions or concerns about child sexual abuse.

- Learn more about it: www.stopitnow.org/help#contact
- Get support: Call 1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368) or submit an [email](#)

- **Investigating** – An individual and alternate with significant professional background should be chosen by the league from the community to receive and act on abuse allegations. These individuals will act in a confidential manner, and serve as the league's liaison with the local law enforcement community. Little League volunteers should not attempt to investigate suspected abuse on their own.
- **Suspending/Terminating** – When an allegation of abuse is made against a Little League volunteer, it is the duty of the organization to protect the children from any possible further abuse by keeping the alleged abuser away from children in the program. If the allegations are substantiated, the next step is clear: Assuring that the individual will not have any further contact with the children in the league. The Nonprofit Risk Management Center urges Little League organizations to develop policies on suspension and termination of volunteers with a lawyer who can advise about their effects on the rights of the alleged abuser.
- **Immunity from liability** – Concern is often expressed over the potential for criminal or civil liability if a report of abuse is subsequently found to be unsubstantiated. However, we want adults and Little Leaguers to understand that they shouldn't be afraid to come forward in these cases, even if it isn't required and even if there is a possibility of being wrong. All states provide immunity from liability to those who report suspected child abuse in "good faith." At the same time, there are also rules in place to protect adults who prove to have been inappropriately accused. Little League policies prohibit retaliation of any kind when a good faith report of child abuse is made.

Child Abuse - A Five-Step Review

Let's recap the steps you can take to protect your Little Leaguers:

1. Know what it is, and know where to look. Defining child abuse, and separating the truth from the myths, better enables us all to spot potentially dangerous situations.
2. Educate the Little League parents, volunteers, and children. They need to be supplied with the information necessary to protect everyone. Let the children know that it's never their fault.
3. Follow the safety procedures and guidelines outlined above. Employ basic rules, such as the "buddy system," to limit one-on-one interactions between minors and adults. These basic rules can lessen child abuse from happening in the first place.
4. Screen applicants carefully. An effective five-step screening process can keep potential child abusers out of our Little League programs, and keep our kids safe.
5. Don't be afraid to speak out. Both Little League children and adults need to feel safe to come forward. If an individual honestly feels something is wrong, the laws are in place to protect them.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM'S BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS

Q1. What do we, as a league, have to do to comply so that we can be chartered for the next season?

A: Since 2003, the local league has been required to have all board members, managers, coaches, and other volunteers or hired workers who provide regular service to the league and/or who have repetitive access to or contact with players or teams to fill out the Little League Official Volunteer Application. Additionally, the league has been and is required to conduct a background check on each of these individuals. A local Little League must conduct a nationwide background check utilizing JDP or another provider that is comparable to JDP in accessing background check records for sex offender registry data and other criminal records. Little League Baseball and Softball will require each league to sign an agreement on the charter application that they will comply with Regulation I (b) and I(c) 8 & 9. The leagues are also required to sign a statement on the tournament enrollment form verifying that the process under the regulation has been completed and implemented. Failure to sign the agreement on the charter application will result in the league not being chartered and failure to fulfill the requirement of the regulations will result in the league's status being referred to the Charter/Tournament committee for action to revoke the league's charter and all privileges.

Q2. What type of background check is required by the new regulations?

A: A local Little League must conduct a nationwide background check utilizing JDP or another provider that is comparable to JDP in accessing background check records for sex offender registry data and other criminal records. This criminal records check may provide additional, important information regarding the criminal records of individuals whose crimes do not require that they be listed on a sex offender registry. The background check provider for United States leagues is JDP, which can be accessed by going to LittleLeague.org/Background. More information can be obtained by going to LittleLeague.org/ChildProtectionProgram. The first 125 checks through JDP are paid for by Little League International and are free to each chartered Little League. If additional checks are necessary, they will cost the league only \$.95 per background check conducted.

Q3. What type of offenses are we screening for when we conduct a background check?

A: Local leagues are conducting a nationwide background check that includes sex offender registry data and other criminal records for anyone who has committed any type of offense involving minors. An individual who has been convicted of or plead guilty to charges involving or against a minor, no matter when the offense occurred, must not be permitted to work or volunteer.

Q4. Why is Little League changing the background check minimum requirement?

A: A background check that includes millions of criminal files in addition to national sex offender registry data will provide those individuals making personnel decisions that much more information in determining whether an applicant is acceptable and fit to volunteer, work, or participate in any manner within their local league program.

Q5. Why JDP?

A: Little League has partnered with JDP to provide local Little League programs a criminal background check tool. Through this partnership, each league and District is given 125 free background checks (paid for by Little League International) and any additional checks will only cost \$.95 per check. The JDP National Criminal File database contains more than 450 million records which include criminal records and sex offender registry records across 50 states and the

District of Columbia. This program continues to be a great resource and value to local leagues

Q6. Our League is required by the property owner (city, town, municipality, county, etc.) where we play our games and practices to conduct background checks approved by them on all our volunteers and/or hired workers before we can use their fields. Are these checks acceptable and do they meet Little League's minimum requirements of Regulation I (c) 8 and 9?

A: No. Most checks required by these entities are local or state only checks which do not meet the Little League requirements. Also, the local league is responsible for conducting and reviewing the background check data and making their own personal decisions per the regulations. Although the property owner has the right to determine who uses their facility, any decision they make as a property owner may or may not meet the Little League Regulations. A local Little League must conduct a nationwide background check utilizing JDP or another provider that is comparable to JDP in accessing background check records for sex offender registry data and other criminal records. Background checks must be completed on all Board Members, managers, coaches and other volunteers or hired workers who provide regular service to the league and/or who have repetitive access to players or teams.

Q7. Who in the local league should be responsible to process the background check information?

A: Little League Baseball and Softball recommends the Board of Directors appoint the local league president and two other individuals to handle the background checks. These individuals may be from the board or individuals outside the board. For instance, the Board of Directors may appoint individuals who have a significant professional background in this area, such as law enforcement officers or individuals with a legal background.

Q8. What if an individual has previously had a background check?

A: Each league must conduct its own background check on the appropriate individuals annually.

Q9. What will result in termination of a volunteer under these regulations?

A: Any background check that reveals a conviction for, guilty plea, no contest plea, or admission to any crime involving or against a minor must result in immediate termination from the league. Additionally, volunteers who refuse to submit a fully completed Little League Volunteer Application, including their Social Security Number and a government issued photo ID, must be immediately terminated or eliminated from consideration for any position. This includes individuals with many years of service to your league unless the league has used the JDP Background Screening tool (available on the Little League website) in previous seasons.

Q10. What if offenses involving or against minors are pending prior to or after appointment to a position in the local league?

A: We suggest the individual not be appointed or should be suspended from his/her current position pending the outcome of the charges.

Q11. What if there are convictions or other offenses NOT involving or against minors?

A: Even though convictions or other offenses may not be against a minor, the local league Board of Directors still may deem these individuals as inappropriate and/or unfit and may prohibit him/her from working as a hired worker or volunteer within the league.

Q12. Who is to be made aware of the information found on the background check?

A: The local league president shall only share personal information contained in the volunteer application, background check or other information obtained through the screening process with other members of the Board of Directors to make personnel decisions. If the information obtained through the background check, is public record and causes an individual to not be appointed or to be terminated, Little League Baseball and Softball recommends this information be shared with the parents/ guardians of the children who have had contact with the individual previously.

Q13. Where should these records be maintained and for how long?

A: The local league president shall retain each volunteer application, background check information, and any other documents obtained on file and maintain the record of a volunteer for at least 2 years after the volunteer is no longer in the league. When it comes time to dispose of these records, they should be destroyed as they contain sensitive information. All actions concerning these records must comply with any applicable laws. Leagues should also maintain records in the case that the league has acted or decided based upon the information contained in the records. The records should be maintained in a locked and secure area, such as the league president's home and not a club house or similar facility.

Q14. What is the timetable for completing the screening of each individual?

A: The league must complete the annual screening process prior to the individual assuming his/her duties for the current season. This would include the individual submitting a completed volunteer application and the league completing an appropriate background check. The applicant must also submit a government issued photo ID, usually a driver's license, for the league to verify that the information on his/ her volunteer application is correct, i.e., spelling of name, address, date of birth, etc.

Q15. What resources are available through Little League Baseball and Softball to assist this process?

A: The current Little League Official Volunteer Application is available at LittleLeague.org/VolApp. A local Little League must conduct a nationwide background check utilizing JDP or another provider that is comparable to JDP in accessing background check records for sex offender registry data and other criminal records. The first 125 checks conducted through JDP are paid for by Little League International and are free to each chartered Little League. If additional checks are needed, they will cost the league only \$.95 per background check conducted. JDP can be accessed by going to LittleLeague.org/Background.

Q16. What will it cost my league to implement this initiative?

A: The first 125 checks conducted through JDP are paid for by Little League International and are free to each chartered Little League. If additional checks are needed, they will cost the league only \$.95 per background check.

Q17. When should local leagues begin to conduct background checks on volunteers and hired workers?

A: In accordance with Little League Regulation I(c) 8 & 9, local leagues must conduct background checks on all volunteers and hired workers prior to the applicant assuming his or her duties for the season. Background checks must be completed on all individuals who are required to complete the "Little League Official Volunteer Application" and who provide a regular service

to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players and teams. This includes, but is not limited to, managers, coaches, Board of Director members, and other persons or hired workers.

Q18. Does this initiative also apply to those individuals that assist the manager and coaches at practices or games?

A: Yes. Any individual who provides regular service to the league or/and has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams must fill out the Volunteer Application with a Social Security Number, provide a copy of a government issued photo ID, and go through the background check process.

Q19. Who is going to coach the team if a screened manager or coach is no longer able to fulfill his/her duties?

A: Any permanent replacement cannot assume their duties until the volunteer application and background check has been completed. The league may temporarily assign a board member or another screened individual to fill the vacancy until the proper process and appointment has been made.

Q20. Should our league wait until the entire screening process has been completed to submit our Charter Application and Insurance Enrollment Form?

A: No. The appropriate league officers must sign the statement on the form agreeing to adhere to the new regulations requiring the use of the new volunteer application and background screening process as outlined in Regulations I(b) and I(c) 8 & 9. Once this section is completed the balance of the charter application can be completed and submitted to Little League Baseball and Softball.

Q21. As the league president or an official of the local league, how do I explain the need for this initiative?

A: These requirements were implemented in 2002 by Little League and your local league to:

- 1- Protect our children and maintain Little League as a hostile environment for those who would seek to do them harm.
- 2- Protect individuals and leagues from possible loss of personal or league assets because of litigation.
- 3- Take advantage of current technology and laws that have made background check information accessible to your league.