

CATHOLIC SPORTS LEAGUE

Safe Environment SOP For Coaches

October 2011

Coaches are guardians and role models. They are called to treat each player with respect and care. Whether paid or volunteer, coaches are expected to maintain professional relationships with players on-duty and off. **Please review the following guidelines and sign the “Acknowledgement of Receipt” to be kept on file with your parish/school and diocesan athletic directors.**

- All coaches are considered high-responsibility personnel and must comply with Safe Environment Program policies regarding criminal history checks, safe environment education, and healthy professional boundaries.
- The role of coaches carries with it considerable position power. Players need the expertise of the coach to improve and rely on the approval and support of the coach for reassurance and motivation. Coaches, therefore, must respect the limitations characteristic of professional or ministerial relationships to avoid even unconscious manipulation of players or other abuses of power.
- Emotional closeness is inevitable, but coaches must avoid assuming a parental role with any player, which may create an excessive emotional attachment for both parties.
- Attraction between adults and minors is possible, and caution should be maintained in all interactions. The parish/school administration should be informed immediately if such an attraction exists. Dating between a coach and a minor is inappropriate and unethical. Sexual relationships between a coach and a minor are not only unethical but also unlawful.
- Physical closeness is inevitable, but coaches must avoid touching except in public situations and then primarily for instructional reasons and in a manner that does not allow for misinterpretation.
- Coaches are to engage in games or practice activities with minors only in the presence of other adults, or in a place openly accessible/visible to others.
- When a coach is alone in a room with a minor, the door must be open, or there must be clear visibility through windows.
- Coaches may not have any minors in their homes without the knowledge of the minor’s parent or guardian and at least one other adult present, the other adult also being credentialed as a high-responsibility employee or volunteer with knowledge of these guidelines.
- Coaches will ensure that players are properly supervised at all times, thus providing a safe environment. Coaches commit to prevention of any form of exploitation of players by others and harassment or bullying among peers.
- When coaches are supervising minors or young adults at school-sponsored athletic events, they may not be under the influence of alcohol, may not consume alcohol in the presence of persons under age 21, and may not offer alcohol to them.
- Electronic and other communications with minors (e.g., notes, letters, e-mail and Internet exchanges, telephone calls) must be for professional reasons only, conducted in such a way that the parent of the player is included, and carried out in conformity with the [Guidelines for the Pastoral Use of Technology](#).
- Sexual jokes, slang or innuendo are always inappropriate when interacting with minors. Discussions including sexual content are appropriate only in an educational context and never within the context of a sports event or practice.
- Coaches will respect confidential information concerning players or confidential information of a personal nature shared by a player. There is, however, an essential difference between privacy and secrecy. If a player shares confidential information that could pose a threat to the minor or to others, the coach has an obligation to notify the proper authorities.
- Coaches may not transport minors unless it is to or from a school-sponsored sports activity and then never in such a manner as to allow the coach to be alone with a minor at any stage of the journey. Transporting minors requires written parental permission.
- The school administration must approve any use of personal vehicles and all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and credentialed as high-responsibility personnel through the parish/school, with verification of valid license and insurance. Coaches should have on file all permission slips for each sports season. [Refer to the [Guidelines Concerning Supervision of Minors on Parish and School Trips & Other Outings](#).]
- Parent/guardian written permission is required for the publication of a picture of a minor.
- If any circumstance leads to a reasonable suspicion that a player has been or is being abused, coaches must make a report to law enforcement immediately. In the face of non-criminal violations of the Code of Conduct or these guidelines, a report must be made to the Pastor, Principal or immediate supervisor.
- No minor may be permitted to serve as a coach without an adult supervisor present at all times. Adult supervisors must maintain the same boundaries with youth coaches as they do with youth athletes. Youth coaches must maintain the same boundaries with youth athletes as do the adult coaches.