

**“SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN BASEBALL/SOFTBALL:  
THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATION AND COACHES EDUCATION MODEL  
FOR INJURY PREVENTION AND IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY”.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Coaching is one of the crucial elements in the conduct of safe play in baseball/softball at every level. The coach can have the greatest impact on risk management and safety and must be educated to make safety a priority in team management. Research has indicated that approximately ninety percent of American coaches have never attended a coaching education program and have not been exposed to risk management.

We know that most injuries which occur during practice or game competition on the baseball/softball field can be prevented. Coaches need to be convinced of this fact so that an injury preventing approach becomes part of their coaching philosophy and methodology. Additionally, they must instill injury prevention into every action and reaction of their players. Unfortunately, not all coaches are convinced that this must be part of their program.

The litigation explosion has brought to light many problems associated with coaching and resulted in demands by various public groups to educate coaches regarding sport safety and appropriate coaching methods. These law suits have defined the expectations of individuals in coaching roles and have put all coaches on notice that they have a duty to establish and conduct a safe experience for their players.

It is an expectation of parents that when their child is enrolled in a baseball/softball program, the coach is qualified and will have the welfare of the child as a primary responsibility. When this duty is violated and results in an injury to the child, lawsuits are inevitable. The best posture for coaches in avoiding injuries and litigation is to embrace the "mind set for safety" and to understand their responsibilities, and their roles as "in loco parentis" supervisors and teachers.

This paper explores the problems encountered in the coaching environment relating to baseball/softball safety and the steps being taken to improve coaching education. The model used is the New Jersey State Legislation regarding the requirement for a program of "Safety and Skills Orientation" for volunteer baseball/softball coaches. Coaches who undertake such a program may be provided with immunity from liability. (The power point presentation, on October 7, 2001, that is part of this program includes photographic examples of risk management needs and also points out problems which have been exposed during litigation and other review. The power point expands the concepts and information presented in this paper)

The New Jersey State Legislature has realized that risk management and safety orientation is an important part of coaching education and has passed legislation to provide liability immunity to youth and volunteer baseball/softball coaches if they undergo a safety and orientation training program. The legislation states:

*"In order to be covered by the provisions for civil immunity as prescribed by New Jersey P.L. 1988, Chapter 87 (c. 2A: 62A-6.2) the volunteer athletic coach, manager, or official must participate in a safety orientation and training skills program which meets the following minimally acceptable standards. These standards apply for all New Jersey volunteer athletic coaches, for all age groups, and for all populations of athletes served."*

The risk management and safety and orientation components of the program include the following:

- A. Medical, Legal and First Aid Aspects of Coaching; Equipment, Facilities
- B. Legal and Ethical Responsibilities of Baseball/Softball Coaches
- C. Training and Conditioning of Athletes
- D. Psychological Aspects of Coaching
- E. General Coaching Concepts
- F. General Officiating Concepts

Although the law falls in the category of enabling legislation, recreation departments and some school districts have put some teeth into its implementation. Those public entities which provide facilities for games and practices have required safety and orientation training in order to issue a permit for the use of the facilities. No outside group which applies for a facility use permit is issued one without the coaches' training. All public recreation departments which sponsor "in-house" programs require the coaches to be trained.

The law does not cover any coaches involved in a public or private school baseball/softball, whether or not they are volunteers. School coaches are not covered. It is unfortunate that the law does not require coaches who do not have a college degree to undergo a skill and orientation training. New Jersey has a system that has developed the "60-credit wonder" as a coach. It provides that anyone who has completed any college courses totaling 60 credits can be hired as an assistant or head coach at a high school. No education in coaching principles, sport psychology, growth and development, fitness conditioning, or methods of teaching sport skills is required.

The complete text of the legislation is included in the Appendix.

## **COACHING EDUCATION FOR SAFETY**

The New Jersey State Legislature instructed the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to establish the standards of content and instruction for the safety and orientation program in order for the youth and recreational coaches to be protected from liability. A special committee of experts was established to develop the criteria.

Institutions such as Montclair State University have been encouraged, by the legislation, to establish and conduct these programs. The Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Leisure Studies established the Montclair State University Coaching Academy for the training of coaches in "Safety Orientation and Training Skills Programs". The programs meet the requirements of PL 1988 c. 87 as enacted by the New Jersey Legislature to provide immunity from liability for damages in civil actions arising out of sports activities.

The major components of the safety and orientation program include the following:

### **1. Medical, Legal, and First Aid Aspects of Coaching**

- A. Every volunteer coach/manager education program shall include basic knowledge and skills in the recognition and prevention of athletic injuries and knowledge of first aid. To ensure the standards

are achieved, the following topics shall be included:

1. Legal and ethical responsibilities of the coach;
2. Recognizing common sport injuries specific to the populations served by the sports programs;
3. Safety plans and procedures for injury prevention;
4. Safety issues specific to the populations serviced.

The Legal and Ethical Responsibilities of Baseball/Softball Coaches fall under this category and include a thorough understanding of risk management.

The term, "*coach*", comprises many responsibilities which have evolved from the general to the specific. Early responsibilities of the coach were limited to organization and training of the team members. Today the responsibilities have evolved to more formalized duties. They have been identified, prescribed, written and evaluated to include risk management and avoidance of unreasonable risk of injury to players. Performance in coaching has to be according to a "*standard*" of the reasonable and prudent coach and avoidance of negligent action which leads to avoidable injuries. This is accomplished by the recognition of risks and taking avoidance strategies to prevent injuries at all times that the players are under a coach's supervision.

The nature of baseball/softball requires coaches to have a heightened sensitivity for safe training of the players, and the provision of proper and safe facilities and equipment for the execution of safe skills and tactics. Catastrophic and less serious injuries must be prevented at all costs. Coaches cannot take a cavalier attitude and claim that because baseball/softball is a volunteer program and a young person elects to play the game, that the person assumes all responsibility for his or her safety. The "Assumption of Risk" philosophy or defense is no longer universally accepted.

This paper will address the risk management issues in coaching. The following legal duties of the coaches will be addressed. These duties have been established by sports safety experts, as well as by courts in litigation, and include some of the following:

- a. Supervision
- b. Instruction
- c. Facilities
- d. Equipment
- e. Warnings and Cautions
- f. Competitive Matching
- g. Emergency Action Plan
- h. First Aid and CPR
- i. Record Keeping

## **1. PROPER SUPERVISION**

This is the most important duty of the baseball/softball coach. The lack of proper supervision in the team environment is the most litigated area. The coach is responsible for providing general as well as specific supervision throughout the coaching session or when the coach assumes responsibility for the players. General supervision includes overall direction of the players on the team. Specific supervision

dictates the coach to be with one or several players, in close proximity and directly supervising the specific skill and technique in which they are engaged.

Among the important roles of the coach in respect to supervision are the following:

- a. The coach must understand that passive presence is not supervision.
- b. Active presence and control of the players throughout the activity session and until players have departed. Constant vigilance of all activities in the coaching environment.
- c. Supervisory plan developed, published, and implemented.
- d. Equipment and facility inspection to detect hazards and to anticipate problems.
- e. Alert to developing dangerous situations and conditions.
- f. Immediate intervention when necessary.
- g. Use of general supervision and direct or intensive supervision throughout the session or game.

## **2. INSTRUCTION**

Next to supervision, this is the most litigated issue. Safe instruction requires the coach to have up-to-date knowledge of baseball/softball and to be able to teach the proper skills and tactics of the game. It is important to regularly attend workshops, symposia, and clinics to maintain and improve knowledge and skills. Coaching certification and safety orientation programs are available and should be attended. These are available from leagues, governing bodies, university programs, and service organizations. Documentation of attendance and certification is important to substantiate knowledge and experience in case of litigation.

The instruction, coaching, or teaching process of skills, techniques, and tactics includes knowing the proper techniques, proper progression, and providing feedback. A recommended progression for teaching fundamental, game related or game condition phases includes the following:

- a. Proper and safe organization of the team for practice. Avoid multiple activities going on at the same time without an assistant coach at each location. Provide an adequate buffer zone between groups and between permanent objects such as screens or posts. Make certain that the buffer zone will enable the player to stop prior to contact with the fence or post. Make sure appropriate padding of stationary object in proximity of play protects the player.
- b. Introduction of topic and communication of importance in game and safety aspects.
- c. Correct demonstration of skill to be learned: "*A picture is worth a thousand words*".
- d. Repeat demonstration - Solidify the proper and safe aspects.
- e. Short and clear explanation. Avoid verbosity/logorrhea.
- f. Provide sufficient time for practice.
- g. Positive feedback, solidification, modification.
- h. Teachable moment - Use the moment to make an important point.
- i. Review.

## **Position Specific Skill Training and Fitness Conditioning**

It is important to develop and implement baseball/softball specific fitness conditioning. There needs to be an understanding of the conditions which lead to injuries and to condition those parts of the body to withstand the varied intensities of the game for the duration of the game. The coach should identify which positions are most "*at risk*" in the environment and to incorporate this specific knowledge in game fitness training.

It is the responsibility of the coach to make certain that adequate skill, tactical training, and fitness conditioning is provided to each player in each position he or she will play. Adequate instruction and practice time under supervision is imperative in this type of situation. Adequate practice promotes player game readiness and develops confidence. A lack of functional practice develops a lack of confidence and promotes indecision and potentially improper and dangerous skill execution.

As an example, proper training progression in sliding and wearing of recommended or required safety equipment constitutes an important means of minimizing the possibility of limb, body or head injury, and must be adequately addressed during each practice. Beginning players should avoid sliding altogether. Head first sliding should be very carefully addressed with intermediate and advanced players. When to slide or when not to slide should be taught during practice in a controlled environment.

Players should be instructed on all other hazardous situations during the game and the proper evasive action to undertake.

### **3. A SAFE COACHING ENVIRONMENT**

This duty includes the use of safe equipment on safe facilities. All necessary and required protective equipment must be worn by the players. The coach must make certain that the equipment, itself, is safe and fits properly. An inspection system should be implemented to inspect the facility and to check the equipment on a regular basis. A risk management evaluation should include bases, home plate, the infield, outfield, fencing, bats, and protective equipment. A daily check is more appropriate than only a pre-season or post-season inspection. Any facility defect should be repaired and defective equipment should be replaced. Coaches should warn players not to misuse or abuse the equipment and to use it only for the purpose intended. (Example: Power Point photos, presented at the meeting, of failure to inspect the warning track, buffer zone, protrusions and a mask which became defective)

#### **Facilities**

Facilities should be inspected daily to detect any defects. The facility defects include dangerous surfaces of the infield grass, the base paths, bases, outfields, warning tracks, wall padding and dangerous protrudings. They also include holes, ruts, stones, rocks, improperly maintained grass areas, etc. Any defects detected should be corrected before use. (Examples of facility defects provided in the Power Point)

The following is a recommended policy for facility risk management for all coaches:

1. Inspect for hazards.
2. Detect the hazards.
3. Eliminate the hazards when possible.
4. Secure the hazards if they cannot be eliminated.
5. Produce no additional hazards.

Proper baseball/softball field maintenance is one of the critical areas in the prevention of baseball/softball injuries during practices and games. The intense use of the baseball/softball field, especially during daily practice sessions, requires a comprehensive seasonal, weekly, and daily maintenance program for safe use. The coach should be part of this system in providing information to the maintenance staff following a post-practice inspection of the fields. Proper liaison and maintenance steps will reduce potential injuries to players. (Power Point: Jim Fassel example)

## NETTING AND FENCING

Protective netting in front of the dugout or team bench at a proper height. Necessary use of screens during practice, includes the "L" screen for batting practice, as well as screens at first and other locations. Pitching machine ball feeder should be screened.

### NETTING OR FENCING TO PROTECT SPECTATORS FROM INJURIES.\*

1. Place the bleachers a sufficient distance from the field to prevent the ball or bat from striking people. Inspect the bleachers on a regular basis and report problems to facility management.
2. Understand what is the most dangerous area for foul balls and protect the spectators.
3. Do not design or set up snack bar and concession areas that are unprotected from foul ball line of flight.
4. Do not schedule other distracting activities in area of frequent foul ball flight.
5. In multiple field facility, install netting or fencing to prevent striking persons playing or watching the game at other adjacent fields. Inspect and replace any netting which includes holes or rips which may not stop a ball.

## DESIGNATED "ON DECK CIRCLES"

Many injuries have been suffered by players and spectators due to indiscriminate swinging of bats. The coach should make certain that bat swinging should only be done in 'on deck circles' and that these circles should be away from player or spectator traffic areas. Helmets should be worn in the 'on deck circle' area.

The 'on deck' area should be protected from foul balls and should be away from the dugout and home plate.

## SAFETY BASES: BREAKAWAY BASES V. PERMANENT BASES

There is sufficient research pointing to the greater safety of breakaway bases versus the permanent system. Safety bases should be used in youth and recreational baseball/softball. A regular inspection and maintenance of the base system and sliding area should be conducted before the game or when the area will be used in practice. Check for erosion at all base areas and home plate. Cover anchor system when not in use. Manufacturer's guidelines should be adhered to in the installation, inspection and maintenance of the base system.

## PITCHING MACHINE

There are examples of pitching machine injuries and death due to a young player being struck in the chest with the ball. When using a pitching machine, young players should wear a chest protector. No player should be permitted to operate the pitching machine. The rules should be explained to the players and should be posted.

When using the machine, make certain it is electrically grounded. Only an adult coach should feed the machine by showing the ball to the batter. The ball should be held above the machine and then should be brought slowly to the machine. The ball should not be placed into the machine unless the batter is alert and is properly dressed and addressing the pitch.

## **PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Coaches should follow the principles and rules established by the governing bodies such as USA Baseball, Little League, National Federation, NCAA and the like. These principles should be in effect during practices as well as competitive games. and should be part of a continuous process of safety in the team environment. The baseball/softball coach should be familiar with what equipment has been made mandatory by the rules of the game. Additional available safety equipment should be considered. Players should be instructed to wear safety equipment at the appropriate times during practices and games.

Coaches should be knowledgeable with what constitutes illegal equipment and should take appropriate steps to prevent players from wearing it.

The NCAA lists the following as mandatory protective equipment:

6. A double ear-flap protective helmet for batting, on deck and running bases. Helmets must have the National Operating Committee for Safety in Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) stamp. Helmets that are cracked, split or broken shall not be worn.
7. All catchers must have a built-in or attachable throat guard on their masks.
8. All catchers are required to wear a protective helmet when fielding their position.

The National Federation expands the mandatory wearing of helmets to retired runners, players/coaches in the coaches boxers as well as non-adult bat/ball shaggers. A face mask may be attached to a batting helmet at the time of manufacture. A specifically designed face mask may be attached to a particular helmet model after manufacture, provided that it is approved by the manufacturer.

The NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook outlines the coach's responsibility regarding advising the umpires about protective equipment.

The head coach or his designated representative shall certify to the umpire prior to the game that all players are equipped in compliance with NCAA (baseball/softball) rules and:

- a. Have been informed what equipment is mandatory by rule and what constitutes illegal equipment;
- b. Have been provided the equipment mandated by rule;
- c. Have been instructed to wear and how to wear mandatory equipment during the game, and
- d. Have been instructed to notify the coaching staff when equipment becomes illegal through play during the game.

The Federation also requires the head coach to verify to the umpire that the players are equipped in compliance with the above rules. Any questions regarding legality of equipment shall be resolved by the umpire. The Federation rules committee shall review any non traditional equipment before it will be permitted to be used. New protective and safety equipment which has been developed should be considered for

adoption.

Youth coaches should consider batting helmets with face masks as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness.

### **Baseball/Softball Bats**

There is a controversy regarding the use of the aluminum bat in some Division III programs. The debate and research continues. The coach should know the rules of the league or conference and comply with those rules.

### **Eye Safety in Baseball/Softball**

The coach should be aware that eye injuries are relatively frequent and sometimes catastrophic, in all sports. It is well known that eye injuries are completely preventable with the use of appropriate devices such as spectacles and goggles. (Catcher's mask example)

## **4. WARNINGS AND CAUTIONS**

This duty requires that team members and their parents must be constantly warned of the known or inherent risks of baseball/softball. This must be an ongoing process, not an infrequent occurrence. Daily instructions in safety is a requirement. The failure to warn of the dangers of using an improper technique can lead to injuries and litigation problems. Individual players and the entire team must be constantly reminded of unsafe action or behavior during practice or game. As an example, the on deck circle is the proper location to take practice swings in preparation for batting. Indiscriminate swinging of the bat must be stopped immediately. It is a good idea to have a team meeting about safety rules and to distribute the list for further discussion. The list should be expanded as the need arises.

## **5. HEALTH AND INJURY CARE**

The coach usually has the responsibility of making certain that each player has met all requirements established by the school, league or association.

- A. A pre-participation exam is necessary because it provides detailed information regarding the players' current health status, physical fitness, and a history of illness, injury, or surgery. If health problems are discovered during the exam, the player will be able to secure medical care to rehabilitate the cause. If it is not possible to treat the condition, and it is hazardous, the player will be so advised and prevented from participating. The coach must not coerce or pressure a player to engage in fitness or skill drills prior to being cleared by the pre-participation exam. There are examples of players dying due to participating in drills without medical clearance.
- B. Emergency first aid care for an injured athlete will generally fall to the coach, unless an athletic trainer is present. In most youth coaching sessions there are no trainers present. There should be a First-Aid kit at every practice and game. The coach should be trained and certified in First Aid and CPR and should develop and establish an Emergency Action Plan to provide reasonable medical assistance to injured participants as quickly as possible. An emergency action plan is included in this paper.

## **Post Injury Rehabilitation Return to Play**

When a player has been injured and has been under the care of a physician, the parents and the physician have the final say regarding clearance for the player to return to practice and competition. Coaches should not intimidate and coerce players and parents to return before the player has been medically cleared.

## **Prevention of Heat Illness**

Recent reports of the deaths of players has focused on the need to instruct coaches about the potential catastrophic results of heat injury in sports. The coach must be knowledgeable about the effects of heat on the body and to understand when to practice and play and how much hydration the players should have. The coach should never prevent players from drinking water on demand and should make certain that plenty of water is available at the practice site.

## **Inclement Weather and Lightning Issues**

Recent information has focused on educating coaches about the dangers of lightning storms. In 1997, the NCAA has added recommendations and requirements regarding the coach's responsibilities in the event of inclement weather and lightning. Some schools and athletic conferences have established recommendations regarding lightning. The following are part of the NCAA guidelines, included in the Sports Medicine Handbook:

1. Designate a chain of command as to who monitors threatening weather and who makes the decision to remove a team or individuals from an athletics site or event.
2. Obtain a weather report each day before a practice or event.
3. Be aware of National Weather Service-issued thunderstorm "watches" and "warnings" as well as signs of thunderstorms developing nearby.
4. Know where the closest "safe shelter" is to the field or playing area and know how long it takes to get to that safe shelter.
5. Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. The flash-to-bang method is the easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring.
6. People who have been struck by lightning **do not** carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation is safe for the responder.

## **6. RECORD KEEPING**

Coaches should keep accurate records of the events which led to an injury as each state has legislation regarding the statute of limitations on litigation following an injury. The younger the child who is injured, the longer the records should be kept. The coach should not discard the records until the child has reached the age of 18, plus two years for the statute of limitations. The following are some recommendations for record keeping for future litigation:

1. Record of risk management steps taken to prevent injuries.

2. Accurate description of events.
3. Indicate the conditions which led to the injury occurred. Do not admit wrong doing.
4. Do not provide a public statement, but report the incident to your supervisor.
5. Obtain witness statements with complete documentation.
6. Photograph of videotape the scene and circumstances.
7. Keep complete record. Do not discard.

## **7. EXAMPLES OF COACHING PROBLEMS IN Baseball/Softball**

The following are some examples which occurred in high school baseball/softball and which can occur in youth baseball/softball. These examples resulted in injuries to players and subsequently in litigation. They need to be addressed and incorporated into ongoing coaching education, in-service training, and/or CEU programs for baseball/softball safety.

### **Pre-Season Practice**

A recent controversy at a New Jersey High School clearly shows that there are coaches who are not committed to a "safety" environment. The baseball/softball coach scheduled a pre-season practice prior to meeting the MINIMUM requirements for the first day of permissible practice as required by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association. This disregard of an important safety protection rule for the high school baseball/softball player indicates a need for a mechanism to educate the coach regarding the legal and ethical ramifications of his/her decision.

### **Captains' Practices**

Recent revelations of abuses of new and inexperienced players have brought forth a need for the baseball/softball coach to make certain that fitness and conditioning are the main considerations in the sessions. Some captains' sessions have included hazing and vicious, unexpected contact which resulted in injuries.

Although the coach may not be present during the captain's practices, the coach has given the sessions his imprimatur and is responsible for providing instructions and information pertaining to safety, as a structure for the sessions.

### **Mismatching and Coaching Ethics**

The win at all costs mentality of some coaches is a detriment to the game and to the proper and safe conduct of a baseball/softball program. The recent scandal at the Little League World Championships point to problems when players are mismatched. Not only is the function of age,

experience, size, skill problematic to the results of the competition, it is also problematic regarding the potential injuries which can be suffered in the mismatch. An older pitcher can throw the ball at a speed which cannot allow a younger player to react to a ball which may strike him in the chest and cause a catastrophic injury. Any physical contact between players will result in injuries to the younger, smaller, less experienced player.

## **8. THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL PLAN**

The plan should be developed specifically for the team, league, and practice or game facility and include communication requirements with the local physicians and hospital.

The National Youth Sports Foundation has developed an Emergency Medical Plan which contains the following critical information necessary for appropriate immediate medical assistance:

### DESIGNATED PERSONNEL

1. Person designated to stay with injured athlete:
2. Person designated to phone for medical assistance:
3. Person designated to meet emergency medical assistance at gate and accompany them to injured athlete (This person should have all necessary keys to gates and doors in their possession):
4. Person designated to immediately call parents and inform them of circumstances:
5. Person designated to accompany injured athlete to the hospital:
6. Person responsible for documenting all information relating to injury and emergency response:

### EMERGENCY INFORMATION

1. Location of closest phone:
2. Keys to access phone are located at:
3. Change for pay phone is kept in:
4. Address of the athletic facility is:
5. Entry location for the closest emergency vehicle is:
6. To access the athletic facility, emergency medical personnel must pass through gates and doors. Keys to unlock these areas are available from:
7. Phone number of emergency facility if 911 is not available:
8. The closest emergency care facility is \_\_\_\_\_ which is located at \_\_\_\_\_ and is \_\_\_\_\_ miles from the athletic facility. Average travel time is: \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The closest Trauma I facility is \_\_\_\_\_ which is located at \_\_\_\_\_ and is \_\_\_\_\_ miles from the athletic facility. Average travel time is: \_\_\_\_\_.

### EMERGENCY CALL INSTRUCTIONS

When you call an emergency medical service (911), you should:

- Identify yourself and your exact location.
- Explain what happened and the type of injury (head, neck).
- Give address of athletic facility and exact instructions on how the ambulance is to reach the injured athlete. Include street address, gate information, building location, and entry information.
- Stay on the line until the operator disconnects the call.
- Return to the injury scene.

#### ADDITIONAL PHONE NUMBERS

Team Physician:  
Ambulance Service:  
Fire Department:  
Police Department:  
School Nurse:  
Athletic Director:  
Principal:

The Emergency Medical Plan must be issued to all coaches and parents of the players. There should be review and practice or rehearsal of the plan as if an injury actually occurred.

#### SUMMARY

Baseball/softball coaches occupy an important place in the lives of athletes. Many coaches have little formal coaching education or training. Due to the increase in injuries and litigation, the coach needs to learn the risk management philosophy and practices to reduce or eliminate dangerous conditions within the coaching environment. The State of New Jersey has made an important step to require coaches to take an educational program in Safety and Orientation and has spelled out the minimum components which need to be included in the educational model.

Risk management must be the center piece of the program. Such a program has been in existence at the Montclair State University Coaching Academy. The program provides education and training regarding all aspects of coaching responsibilities.

## **APPENDIX**

- 1. Complete Text. New Jersey State Legislation for Coaches Safety Orientation and Training Skills Program. P.L. 1988, c 87 (NJSA 2A:62A-6 et seq)**

### **CHAPTER 52**

#### **GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS**

##### **SUBCHAPTER 1. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEER COACHES' SAFETY ORIENTATION AND TRAINING SKILLS PROGRAMS.**

###### **5:52. Introduction**

**(a) The minimum standards set forth in this subchapter identify the major topics which must be addressed in volunteer coaching/managing/officiating programs for safety orientation and training skills program required for civil immunity according to N.J.S.A. 2A: 62A-6 et seq. The topics must be presented within the context of an educational program that addresses the perspective of the specific population(s) or athletes served (for example, young, senior, disabled, novice and skilled athletes).**

**(b) In order to be covered by the provisions for civil immunity as prescribed by New Jersey P.L. 1988, c. 87 (N.J.S.A. 2A: 62A-6 et seq), the volunteer athletic coach, manager, or official must attend a safety orientation and skills training program of at least a three-hour duration which meets the minimum standards set forth in the subchapter. The programs may be provided by local recreation departments, non-profit organizations, and national/state sports training organizations. The standards apply to all volunteer athletic programs in New Jersey regardless of populations served.**

**(c) Any organization providing a safety orientation and skills training program pursuant to these rules shall issue a certificate of participation to each participant who**

**successfully completes the program.**

**5:52-1.2 Medical, legal and first-aid aspects of coaching.**

**(a) Every volunteer coach/manager educational program shall include basic knowledge and skills in the recognition and prevention of athletic injuries and knowledge of first aid. To ensure the standards are achieved the following topics shall be included:**

- 1. Legal and ethical responsibilities of the coach;**
- 2. Recognizing common sports injuries specific to the populations served by the sports program;**
- 3. Safety plans and procedures for injury prevention;**
- 4. Safety issues specific to the population serviced;**
- 5. Plans and procedures for emergencies; and**
- 6. Care and treatment of injuries generally associated with athletic activities.**

**"5:52-1.3 Training and conditioning of athletes**

**(a) Every volunteer athletic coach/manager educational program shall include instruction in procedures for training and physical conditioning for participation in athletic activities appropriate for the population served. To ensure the standards are achieved, the following topics shall be included:**

- 1. General principles of fitness and conditioning; and**
- 2. Safety issues specific to environmental conditions in sport (for example, age, skill level, overtraining and staleness).**

**5:52-1.4 Psychological aspects of coaching**

**(a) Every volunteer athletic coach/manager educational program shall stress the importance of fostering positive social and emotional environments for all sports participants. To ensure the standards are achieved, the following topics shall be included:**

- 1. Philosophy of coaching;**
- 2. Psychological understanding of the individual athlete; and**
- 3. Sportsmanship.**

**5:52-1.5 General coaching concepts**

**(a) Every volunteer athletic coach/manager educational program shall include general concepts of teaching and coaching athletic activities. To ensure the standards are achieved, the following topics shall be included:**

- 1. Goals and objectives appropriate for the population served;**
- 2. Teaching and coaching methods;**

3. **Planning and managing practices and competitions;**
4. **Coaching fundamental sports skills; and**
5. **The importance of playing rules."**

#### **5:52-1.6 General officiating concepts**

**(a) Every volunteer athletic official's educational program shall be designed to prepare the official to conduct a safely officiated, competitive experience based upon the rules of the game and the maturity level and proficiency of the athletes involved. To ensure the standards are achieved, the following topics shall be included:**

1. **Legal and ethical responsibilities of the official;**
2. **Safety issues under the control of the official;**
3. **Mechanics of officiating; and**
4. **Plans and procedures for medical emergencies.**

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