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Youth Sports Mission Statement

The purpose of the City of Santa Clarita's Youth Sports Program is to provide quality recreational sport experiences for the community's youth through a positive atmosphere that values sportsmanship, development, and fun.

Youth Sports Philosophy

The primary objective of the Youth Sports program is for children to have fun through recreational sports! Each child should have the same opportunity to participate in a recreational sports activity regardless of talent or ability. This value the individual and collective experiences of participants by providing a positive atmosphere that emphasizes sportsmanship and player development. Success is not reflected in the score or standings, but is achieved through effectively teaching the skills and strategies of the game as well as building the character and self-esteem of children participating in the program.

Youth Sports Volunteer Requirements

VOLUNTEER APPROVAL PROCESS

The highest priority of the City of Santa Clarita Youth Sports program is to protect our youth. All Youth Sports program volunteers (coaches, assistant coaches or volunteer parents) are required to:

- 1. Have a completed Volunteer Coach Application, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Sanction Forms on file for the upcoming season.**
- 2. Pass a fingerprint screening and background check before assuming a volunteer role with a team.**
- 3. Wear a City issued, personalized badge to games and practices.**

Head Coaches are required to submit a list of team volunteers to the Youth Sports office. Any person or volunteer without a City issued, personalized badge is strictly prohibited from assisting with a team at practices or games. Only volunteers with proper identification will be allowed in designated player/coach boxes or on the team bench during games.

VOLUNTEER FINGERPRINTING INFORMATION

All Youth Sports program volunteers must complete a Volunteer Coach application and have fingerprints on file with the City of Santa Clarita for consideration as an approved volunteer in the Youth Sports program. All approved volunteers will receive a City issued, personalized badge and will be eligible to assist with Youth Sports teams. Any person or volunteer without a City issued, personalized badge is strictly prohibited from assisting with a team at practices or games and must go through the volunteer approval process.

Volunteers can make a fingerprint appointment (no walk-ins) by contacting the Youth Sports Office at (661) 250-3756 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

I. PURPOSE

As a coach of a youth athletic team, you have a tremendous influence on the life of each youth on that team. Next to the parent, you are probably one of the most important adults in the youths' lives. Each youth on the team looks to you for guidance and leadership. You will find yourself, at one time or another, in the position of being a father, a mother, a teacher, a friend, and a disciplinarian; and many times all of these on the same day -- your guidance effects the youths in all situations.

It is the intent of the City to ensure that games shall be conducted with good sportsmanship and fair play. It is our hope that the managers and coaches be the type of individuals who our society can point to as worthy examples for youths to follow.

II. CODE OF CONDUCT**A. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

1. A coach, assistant coach, parent, spectator or player shall not at any time lay a hand upon, push, shove, strike, or threaten to strike a referee, or they are subject to ejection from the game, as well as, any or all games left in the season.
2. A coach, assistant coach, parent, spectator or player shall not verbally abuse a referee or use profane, obscene, or vulgar language in any manner or at any time.
3. A coach shall not appear at any time in an intoxicated condition, smell of alcohol or have in his/her possession any alcoholic beverage.
4. For the conduct of his/her own spectators or rooters on either side of the playing area.
5. For the conduct of his/her players while they are on the field or sidelines.
6. For seeing that his/her assistant coaches and team helpers exhibit good sportsmanship before, during and after the game.
7. Win, lose, or draw, all coaches, assistant coaches and players will be required to show good sportsmanship by giving a cheer to the other team and shaking hands after the game.

Recreation Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

The benefits of Recreation are endless - promoting health, building strong families, and creating a sense of community. To ensure the quality of programs and public safety, all program participants, parents, spectators, coaches, and volunteers must abide by this

Code of Conduct:

- All persons shall act with respect towards others; respect their privacy, and personal safety
- All persons shall treat and respect public and private property, City facilities, and equipment with respect
- Observe program rules and regulations at all times
- Behave responsibly, always exercising self-discipline
- Cooperate with or assist the City staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline

NEVER TOLERATED AND REASON FOR IMMEDIATE REMOVAL

AND DISMISSAL:

- Abusive language or disrespect towards a staff member, volunteer, another participant, or member of the public
- Discourtesy or rudeness to a fellow participant, staff member, or volunteer
- Verbal, physical, or visual harassment of another participant, staff member, or member of the public of any kind
- Bullying or taking unfair advantage of any participant
- Possession or usage of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs on the City of Santa Clarita property, or reporting to the program while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials such as firearms, weapons, or other similar items on City property
- Conduct endangering the life, safety, health, or well being of others
- Failure to leave the area in the condition in which you found it, including restrooms gym, hallways, and any other area used - this includes vandalism/graffiti
- Failure to follow any Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services policy or procedure

Coaches Code of Conduct

- I will place the emotional and physical well being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will praise my players just for participating.
- I will look for positives, and make a big deal out of them.
- I will stay calm when my players make mistakes, helping them learn from their mistakes.
- I will treat my players with respect, avoiding put-down, sarcasm, or ridicule.
- I will remind my players not to get down on themselves.
- I will remind myself, and my players, to laugh and keep a sense of humor.
- I will emphasize teamwork, and help my players to think “we” instead of “me.”
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
- I will remember not to take myself too seriously during the game.
- I will maintain a “fun is #1” attitude.
- I will remember that I am a youth coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.
- I will be a role model for good sportsmanship:
 1. Winning without gloating
 2. Losing without complaining
 3. Treating my opponent and officials with fairness and courtesy

I. WetBulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)

- a. The WetBulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) is a measure of the heat stress in direct sunlight, which considers: temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). This differs from the Heat Index, which takes into consideration temperature and humidity and is calculated for shady areas.

WBGT Temp.	Outdoor Activity Guidelines
<82°F	Provide at least three hydration breaks per practice/game. (i.e. substitutions, timeouts, halftime or hydration breaks during practice)
82.2 – 86.9°F	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise. Provide at least 12 minutes of breaks during each practice/game. (i.e. substitutions, timeouts and halftime, or hydrations breaks during practice)
87.1 – 90.0°F	Provide at least 16 minutes rest breaks during each practice/game (i.e. substitutions, timeouts and halftime, or hydrations breaks during practice)
90.1 – 91.9°F	Practices and or games are permitted with additional hydration breaks. There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice /games. (i.e. substitutions, timeouts and halftime, or hydrations breaks during practice)
>92.1°F	No outdoor practices or games. Delay practices and games until a cooler WBGT is reached.

* The Outdoor Activity Guidelines are based on the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Extreme Heat and Air Quality Policy, as mandated by the William S. Hart District (District). A petition was granted by CIF to the District to move from the category 2 to category 3. Modifications in this document align with City Sports programming.

II. Excessive Heat

- a. The National Weather Service issues an Excessive Heat Warning when there are conditions of a Heat Wave or Extreme Heat. Excessive Heat is defined as temperatures that reach a **Heat Index of 105 degrees**. The Youth Sports office will use the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool (App) to access real-time heat index and hourly forecasts.

III. Unhealthy Air Quality

- a. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Air Quality Index defines unhealthy air quality at 150 AQI or above. It is advised that everyone reduces prolonged or heavy exertion. The Youth Sports office will use the IQ AirVisual / Air Quality (App) to access real-time air quality.

IV. Game Cancellation

- a. The decision to cancel or postpone games due to heat or unhealthy air quality will be made at the discretion of the Youth Sports Supervisor using any one of the guidelines above. A game can be called off at any time, regardless of the inning, quarter, or period, if the conditions are unplayable. If there is no information from the Youth Sports Office, all games will proceed as scheduled. For any inquiries, please get in touch with the Youth Sports Office at (661) 250-3756 or youthsports@santaclarita.gov

Coaches Disciplinary Sanctions

ACTION	SANCTION
1. Aggressive confrontation with official, staff, coach, player or spectator <u>before or during</u> a game. 2. Umpire or staff ejection from a game.	Removal from the game and facility One-week suspension including practices and games, with facility restrictions
1. Aggressive confrontation <u>after</u> a game with official, staff, coach, player or spectator.	One-week suspension, which includes restrictions on practicing and participating in games at the facility.
1. Any aggressive confrontation following a one (1) game suspension 2. Threat or engagement in physical violence towards official, staff, coach, player or spectator. 3. Physical/Verbal threat or abuse of a child.	Termination as Coach Participant's removal from the League Minimum two-week suspension, including practices and games, with facility restriction

Violations by a coach, player, or spectator may apply to ALL TEAMS associated with the program. If a person forfeits a game due to a disciplinary sanction, they will be immediately terminated as a coach. Individuals who receive a disciplinary sanction have the right to submit a written appeal within 48 hours of receiving notification of the sanction. Appeals will be heard by the Youth Sports Supervisor and Administrator. They have the responsibility and authority to interpret and enforce these sanctions on a non-negotiable, case-by-case basis. Until an appeal verdict is rendered, the disciplinary sanction shall be upheld.

The purpose of the City of Santa Clarita Youth Sports Program is to provide a fun, safe, and positive environment for all participants.

Guide for a Successful Parents Meeting

1. Introductions – Introduce yourself to the parents and make sure you get their name and contact information. This could also be a good time for teammates to bond.
2. Discuss Objectives and Expectations – Share with your parents the philosophy of the program and explain your coaching philosophy and how it relates. Share your expectations and ask parents to share their expectations. Talk about playing time requirements, and how you will decide who plays what position.
3. Briefly explain the rules of the game as they relate to playing time and conduct of the spectators. You may want to provide a copy of the rules at this time. Be clear that this program focuses on positive sportsmanship and that unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated.
4. Practice Plan - Explain when/where you plan to conduct practices. Talk about what you expect from players during practices and how they can get involved in practice sessions.
5. Tell them where games will be played and when players should meet before games.
6. Recruit parents to help out with team tasks such as snack list, communication and arranging team party(s).
7. Hand out appropriate literature: Philosophy and Mission Statement, Parent Code of Conduct, Guidelines for Honoring the Game, etc.
8. Other items of discussion may include:
 - Car-pooling
 - Injuries
 - Illness

Guidelines for Honoring the Game

The key to preventing adult misbehavior in youth sports is a youth sports culture in which all involved "Honor the Game." Honoring the Game gets to the ROOTS of the matter and involves respect for the Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and one's Self. You don't bend the rules to win. You understand that a worthy opponent is a gift that forces you to play to your highest potential. You show respect for officials even when you disagree. You refuse to do anything that embarrasses your team. You live up to your own standards even if others don't. Here are ways that **parents** can create a positive youth sports culture so that children will have fun and learn positive character traits to last a lifetime.

Before the Game:

1. Make a commitment to Honor the Game in action and language no matter what others may do.
2. Tell your child before each game that you are proud of him or her regardless of how well he or she plays.

During the Game:

1. Fill your children's "Emotional Tank" through praise and positive recognition so they can play their very best.
2. Don't give instructions to your child during the game. Let the coach correct player mistakes.
3. Cheer good plays by both teams (this is advanced behavior!)
4. Mention good calls by the official to other parents.
5. If an official makes a "bad" call against your team? Honor the Game—BE SILENT!
6. If another parent on your team yells at an official? Gently remind him or her to Honor the Game.
7. Don't do anything in the heat of the moment that you will regret after the game. Ask yourself, "Will this embarrass my child or the team?"
8. Remember to have fun! Enjoy the game.

After the Game:

1. Thank the officials for doing a difficult job for little or no pay.
2. Thank the coaches for their commitment and effort.
3. Don't give advice. Instead ask your child what he or she thought about the game and then LISTEN. Listening fills Emotional Tanks.
4. Tell your child again that you are proud of him or her, whether the team won or lost.

League Non-Drafted Rules

The Youth Sports Office reserves the right to interpret and enforce all T-Ball/Coach Pitch rules. The current SCMAF rules shall govern all play with the exception of the following:

A. GENERAL RULES

1. SPORTSMANSHIP:

- a. Any unsportsmanlike conduct from players, coaches, or spectators may result in them being removed from the game or playing field, and may cause a team to forfeit. If a coach or parent is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct, he/she must leave the park within 2 minutes of the call by the umpire/staff. If he/she fails to leave the park, it will result in a forfeit. In addition, that coach or parent will receive a minimum one game suspension. **(Note: Each incident will be reviewed by the Youth Sports Staff and Recreation Administrator and may result anywhere from a one game suspension to a full season suspension.)**
- b. Failure to abide by the Coaches Code of Conduct or any serious violation of the rules and guidelines may result in the Disciplinary Sanctions of removal, suspension, or termination as a volunteer coach.

2. **PRACTICES:** Practices will be limited to a maximum of two practices per week and no longer than one hour per practice prior to the first game. Once the season has begun, practices will be limited to a maximum of two per week and no longer than one hour per practice. Teams will be given one guaranteed practice on a city permitted field per week.

3. **CHATTER:** Chatter is allowed as long it is positive and directed to own team. The teams may not yell anything at the opposing players.

4. **PARTICIPATION:** Every youth registered in the program is required to participate in each scheduled game when he/she is present and physically capable to participate. Player participation shall not be penalized for any reason. All players present shall play the entire game, at bat and in the field. When all players have batted, the inning is complete. Since there is no score kept during the game, T-ball and Coach Pitch baseball teams will bat through their lineup exactly once, regardless of how many players are on the other team.

5. **FIELD LAY OUT:** The ball diamond will have 50' bases, depending on the dimensions of the field. Pitchers position will be located 30' from home plate. A 10' diameter circle will be drawn around the pitcher's position. Between each base (halfway point) shall be a line to determine whether a runner shall advance or return to their last base.

6. **GAME DURATION:** All T-Ball and Coach Pitch baseball Division games shall be four (4) innings or no new inning after 50-minutes.

League Non-Drafted Rules

7. **FORFEITS:** All games shall begin at the scheduled starting day and time. There shall be no forfeits. Teams will play with the number of participants present. Games will not be rescheduled. Games will **only** be rescheduled for City of Santa Clarita logistical reasons (no exceptions).
8. **GAME CANCELEATION POLICY:**
 - a. The decision to cancel or postpone games due to heat, unhealthy air quality, or inclement weather will be made by the Youth Sports Supervisor. A game can be called off at any time, regardless of the inning, quarter, or period, if the conditions are unplayable. If there is no information from the Youth Sports Office, all games will proceed as scheduled. For any inquiries, please reach out to the Youth Sports Office.
 - b. Games cancelled due to increment weather and/or field conditions will be rescheduled if time permits.
9. **DUGOUT:** All players shall remain in the dugout during their game and may not leave without their coach's permission.
10. **EQUIPMENT:** Equipment will be furnished by the Youth Sports program. It is the responsibility of the coach to see that it is turned in at the last game of the season.
 - a. Shoes must be rubber cleats or tennis shoes. No metal spikes.
 - b. **Any type of regulation baseball or softball bat is acceptable.** No wooden bats.
 - c. All players must wear a baseball/softball glove.
 - d. Jewelry is **not** permitted during Youth Sports participation.
11. **BALL SIZES:**

<u>Division</u>	<u>Ball Size/Type</u>
T-ball	9 inch/ Tee Ball
Coach Pitch	9 inch/Tee Ball
12. **HELMETS:** All batters, on deck batters and runners must wear helmets at all times.
13. **NO THROWING BATS:** Coaches are responsible for insuring the safety of participants. If a batter throws a bat, the coach should instruct the player on the dangers of throwing bats. The team will be issued a warning for reoccurrences.
14. **BASE RUNNING:**
 - a. Stealing bases is not permitted
 - b. Base runners must remain on base until the ball is hit.
 - c. A coach cannot physically assist a runner while the ball is in play, except in the T-Ball Division. Assisting (touching) a runner in Coach Pitch shall result in that player being called out. When a runner touches home plate, he is no longer considered a runner.
15. **DEFENSE:** There will be one pitcher, 1st baseman, 2nd baseman, 3rd baseman, (a rover behind the designated pitcher's circle in T-Ball), and shortstop in the infield. The rest of the players must be placed in the outfield, or at least 8 feet behind the baselines. Play will stop only when the designated pitcher is in the circle with possession of the ball.

League Non-Drafted Rules

16. **CATCHERS:** Catchers shall not be used in T-Ball or Coach Pitch baseball Divisions. An Assistant Coach will act as the catcher.
17. **LAST BATTER:** The entire batting order will bat each inning. The coach shall notify the other team when the last batter comes to bat. Play will end when the ball is returned to the pitching circle or if an out is recorded.

B. T-BALL SPECIFIC RULES

1. **ON-FIELD COACHING:** The defensive team is permitted 2 coaches on the field to orally assist their team. Coaches must be on the outfield side of the baselines and remain there when the ball is in play.
2. **BATTING:** If the batter hits the "T" and the ball, it is a fair hit. Any hit ball, whether intentional or not, is in play. A batted ball must pass the 8' arc or it will be replayed. **There are no strikeouts.** The location of the batted ball when touched by a defensive player determines whether the ball is in play.
3. **PLACING BALL ON "T":** The ball will be placed on the "T" by coaches. There is no umpire in T-ball.
4. **MOVING "T":** Coaches shall move the "T" from its home plate position out of the way of any base runners attempting to score.
5. **BASE RUNNING:** Players will advance one base per batter. **Players will remain on base even if they are considered out.**

C. COACH PITCH SPECIFIC RULES

1. **BATTING:**
 - a. The batter will be allowed a maximum of 5 pitches (due to time constraints), and then the Tee will be brought out. The batter will be allowed hit the ball off the Tee until he hits a fair ball.
 - b. The Coach or team representative will be pitching to his/her own team. If a batted ball, from either the pitcher or the tee, hits the Coach, the ball is declared dead and the batter gets one extra pitch. Coaches must make a reasonable attempt to avoid the ball so the other team will be able to field the ball.
 - c. Any batted ball must pass the arc to be considered a fair ball.
2. **OFFENSIVE COACHING:** Coaches must stay in or around their dugout. Coaches may not help the batter, or coach from behind the batter.
3. **BASE RUNNING:** Base runners can advance as many bases after a hit. Base runners considered "out" by their coach, must return to the dugout and may not remain on the base.

C. COACH PITCH SPECIFIC RULES (CONTINUED)

4. PITCHING CIRCLE:

- a. The ball is dead and the play is stopped when any player has possession of the ball and crosses the plane of the circle with one foot.
- b. The pitcher may stand anywhere within the circle with both feet inside the circle until the batter hits the ball.
- c. The half way line shall determine whether a runner advances or returns to his base when the pitcher has completed subsection "a". If the runner is more than halfway to the next base, when the pitcher has stopped play, he/she shall continue on to the base. The lead runner will determine the location of all other runners unless there is a force. Example: Lead runner doesn't cross the half way line and the trail runner does, so they would both return to their original base. There is no half way line in play for the batter going to first base. If play is stopped and the batter is not out, the batter shall be awarded first base no matter where he/she was on the base line, and if necessary, the batter shall advance other runners in order to be on first base.
- d. The base runner cannot leave the base until the ball is hit by the next batter.
- e. When a runner is returned to a base, that runner shall push back any advancing runner that conflicts with the leading runner's return to that base. If safe, the batter going to first base will not re-bat.
- f. Exceptions to the pitcher stopping the play: Play continues when the pitcher fields a ball inside the circle, and 1) makes a play at any base on the runners or batter; 2) catches a fly ball, he/she can make a play at any base. (If no play is made, baserunners can only advance one (1) base.)

5. **OVERTHROWS:** An overthrow occurs only when a fielder throws the ball to any base (first, second or third), is missed or muffed by the baseman and the ball goes more than 10 feet (where there are no fences) from that base while staying in foul territory, or makes contact with fence. When the ball is considered to be overthrown, a dead ball should be declared and runners placed on the base they are advancing toward (for example: if the ball hits the fence before the runner reaches third base, the runner may *not* advance home). Base runners may only advance one base per overthrow. There are no overthrows to the pitcher.

D. CONDUCT OF PARTICIPANTS AND SPECTATORS

1. Failure to abide by the Coaches Code of Conduct or any serious violation of the rules and guidelines may result in the Disciplinary Sanctions of removal, suspension, or termination as a volunteer coach.
2. Only the City approved volunteer Head Coach and Assistant Coaches are permitted on the bench during the game.

Heads Up: Safety in Youth Sports

Dehydration and Heat Illness

Why Kids Are at Risk:

1. Children absorb more heat from a hot environment than adults. The smaller the child the faster they heat up.
2. Children release less heat through sweating.
3. Children usually don't drink enough fluids to replenish sweat losses during prolonged exercise.
4. Young athletes may be more easily distracted when occasions allow for them to rest and rehydrate.

Signs of Dehydration and Heat Illness

If dehydration progresses unchecked, the risk of heat illness increases. Heat illness is best understood in three separate degrees: HEAT CRAMPS, HEAT EXHAUSTION and, the most serious and deadly form, HEAT STROKE.

Dehydration

Dehydration during exercise is a common problem. Some young athletes can begin to suffer the consequences of dehydration if they become dehydrated by just two percent of their body weight. That's why it's important to recognize the warning signs:

- Noticeable Thirst
- Muscle Cramps
- Weakness
- Decreased Performance
- Nausea
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Lightheaded feeling or dizziness
- Difficulty paying attention

Treating the symptoms of dehydration is crucial in preventing more serious conditions such as heat exhaustion.

1. Rest in a cool place.
2. Consume a sports drink that contains the adequate amount of electrolytes.
3. Prevent dehydration in the future by consuming fluids before, during and after exercise.
4. Allow for ample time to rehydrate.

Heads Up: Safety in Youth Sports (cont.)

Heat Exhaustion

If dehydration goes untreated, the likelihood of heat exhaustion may increase. Common symptoms of heat exhaustion are:

- Dizziness and fatigue
- Chills
- Rapid pulse

Treatment of heat exhaustion is similar to that of dehydration and should take place immediately. This treatment includes:

1. Rest in a cool, shaded area and place ice cold towels on the body.
2. Drink a sports drink that contains the adequate amount of electrolytes.
3. Lie down with legs elevated to promote circulation.
4. Athlete should begin to feel better relatively soon; if not, assume heat stroke.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a medical emergency! When it is not recognized promptly and treated properly, it can result in death. If rapid cooling does not occur, damage could be extreme, resulting in fatal consequences. Symptoms and results of heat stroke include:

- Very high core body temperature
- Altered central nervous system function (i.e., confusion or unconsciousness)
- Otherwise healthy athlete collapses during intense exercise in the heat

Remember that athletes get better relatively quickly with heat exhaustion, and they get worse with heat stroke. The important thing to remember is that heat stroke must be treated immediately by doing the following:

- Immediate cool-down by whatever means possible
 - An ice bath in a “cool pool” is preferable because of the superior cooling rates (holding head out of bath)
 - Ice packs over as much of the body as possible
 - A cool shower
 - Cool, wet towels
 - Water spray
- **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY** (always transport a suspected heat stroke victim to the hospital).
- Do not drink fluids since nausea and vomiting are extremely common.

Reference:

Kendrick Fincher Hydration Foundation

For more information visit: http://www.kendrickfincher.org/hydration_facts.htm#

Heads Up: Safety in Youth Sports (cont.)

SAFETY RULES

- Players must remove any jewelry (necklaces, rings, earrings, etc.) to prevent a hazard to opponents and themselves.
- If a child has a special need, check with the parents on how to address that need.
- Here is a list of suggested first-aid supplies you might want to have on hand
 - Band-aids
 - Gauze pads
 - Ice packs
 - Athletic tape
- Procedure for Serious Accidents
 1. Do not move the individual if indications are that they may have a back or neck injury.
 2. Get in touch with parents and proceed from there, offering assistance in every way.
 - a. If parents cannot be contacted or the situation requires immediate medical attention, call 911. Stay with the child until help arrives.

Concussion in Youth Sports

The Facts

- A concussion is a **brain injury**.
- All concussions are **serious**.
- Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur **in any sport**.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost.

Heads Up: Safety in Youth Sports (cont.)

Recognizing a Possible Concussion

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among your athletes:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in a rapid movement of the head.
2. Any change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning. (See the signs and symptoms of concussion.)

Signs and Symptoms

Signs Observed by Coaching Staff

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

Action Plan: What to do When a Concussion is Suspected

1. **Remove the athlete from play.** Look for the signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head.
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated right away by an appropriate health care professional.** Do not try to judge the severity of concussions.

Coaching Hints

1. Make sure kids have plenty of water breaks.
2. Put kids' safety above everything else.
3. Make practices fun and interesting. Keep drills relatively short.
4. Use encouragement and positive reinforcement as your primary method of motivating.
5. Reward effort, not just good outcomes.
6. Be patient and allow your players to have fun.
7. Have a practice agenda to make practice run smoothly.

Sample Practice Agenda:

- Warm-up (running, stretching, exercising, etc.)
- Drills
- Scrimmage
- Conditioning
- Review (go over the practice and what you worked on)

Warm-ups Stretching & Endurance Building

All athletes should warm-up for 5 minutes before stretching and working out. A good warm-up exercise is jogging around the basketball court two or three times.

Stretching

When stretching, stretch lightly, don't bounce, breathe out while extending the stretch, and hold each stretch for 10 to 20 seconds. Here are some basic stretches good for preparing for practices and games:

- Start at the top of your body. Move neck from side to side and around front to back a few times.
- With arms out to the side, make five small circles, five to the front and then five to the back.
- Make five large circles the same way loosening up the arms and shoulders.
- Put one arm out in front and pull it across the chest using the other arm.
- Keep stretching the arm straight across the chest. Change arms and repeat two or three times with each arm.
- Put one arm straight in the air, and then place it behind your head. Bend it at the elbow so that the arm and hand are pointing down the back. Place the opposite hand on the elbow and push down slightly. Repeat two or three times with each arm.
- Bend at waist, keeping your legs together, bend knees slightly, and try to touch your toes. Try not to lock your knees. Bend slightly front, back and side to side.
- Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart. Turn your body to either side.
- Sit upright on the floor with one leg straight and the other positioned so that the heel touches the opposite thigh. Exhale and bend forward at the waist, and grasp ankle or foot. Hold and relax for 20 seconds, and repeat with the opposite leg.

Bounce to the Bucket. Large basket or cooler put on a base. Outfielders try to throw and bounce the ball into the open container.. Can be done as a game with 10 points for getting the ball in, 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for the nearest bounce, no matter where the ball ends up. This drill/game teaches throwing from the outfield to a base.

Catch. Two or more players play catch. Keep score of the number of successful catches.

Catching Contest. Players are in pairs and throw the ball back and forth between each other. Last pair that has not dropped a ball wins.

Catching Flies. Hit or throw fly balls to fielders by using a soft baseball, rubber ball or tennis ball. Repetition and practice is the key to success.

Catch the Coach. Coach runs from home plate to first base. After a few steps, couch shouts "tag me" to a player holding a ball, who runs after the coach and tries to tag him out. Coach to decide where/when/if the runner is successful.

Catch the Players. Coach starts four or more players about 10 seconds apart from home plate to circle the bases. Coach starts last, trying to tag the players [alternate: snatch off their caps.]

Crab Drill. Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as coach rolls the ball.

Crow Hop. Classic throwing drill. Player takes a short step and a hop in the direction of the intended throw.

Distraction. Coach rolls the ball to a fielder, but another player runs in front of the fielder and tries to break the fielder's concentration on catching the ball.

Dive. Coach throws or hits ball to one side or the other of a fielder, who has to dive to make the catch. Then, throw to 1st base.

Just Block It. Coach hits ball directly to a fielder. Emphasis is on stopping the ball from getting through to the outfield. OK to just block the ball; [better, of course, to catch it]. Can be a game with a point scored from every block, two for a catch and zero if the ball is not stopped.

One and Two. Two players play catch. Thrower scores 2 points if ball is caught at or above the shoulders. 1 point if caught between waist and shoulders. No points if caught below the waist or not caught. First player to score 10 points wins.

Run Down. Two fielders and a runner, who tries to run from one base to another without getting tagged out. Participants rotate positions.

Scoop or Pick-up. Two players [or two rows of players] line up about 10 feet apart. From kneeling position, one player rolls the ball to the other. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

Coaching Resources

T•BALL USA Association

The T•BALL USA Association is the national not-for-profit youth sports organization dedicated to the development of the game of tee ball.

www.teeballusa.org/TBall.asp

LA 84 Foundation

The LA 84 is a nonprofit foundation that is committed to serving youth sports. They provide information for coaches and also provide various coaching clinics

www.la84foundation.org

Kendrick Fincher Hydration Foundation

The Kendrick Fincher Hydration Foundation offers important facts about hydration and what can happen if you are not properly hydrated.

www.kendrickfincher.org

The LIVESTRONG Foundation

The LIVESTRONG Foundation offers authoritative expert content in diet, nutrition, fitness, wellness and lifestyle categories. They offer excellent information on softball and other sports.

www.livestrong.com/softball

National Alliance for Youth Sports

The National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) is America's leading advocate for positive and safe sports and activities for children. NAYS offers programs and services for everyone involved in youth sports experiences, including professional administrators, volunteer administrators, volunteer coaches, officials, parents and young athletes. The goal of NAYS is to make sports and activities safe and positive by providing programs and services that add value to youth sports.

www.nays.org

Youth Sports Contact Information

Youth Sports Office

(661) 250-3756

youthsports@santaclarita.gov

Cameron Mudgett – Program Specialist

(661) 250-3774

cmudgett@santaclarita.gov

Devin Mackey – Recreation Coordinator

(661) 250-3757

dmackey@santaclarita.gov