

Suggested General Guidelines

In addition to being in compliance with the Safe Sports Act and the related Babe Ruth League requirements, we suggest that you consider the following guidelines as part of your child abuse risk management program. These guidelines can enable children and adults to better protect themselves.

Limit One-on-One Contact

No activities should take place involving one-on-one contact between a single, non-related league volunteer and a child, if such activities can be practically avoided. Instead, a “buddy system” is encouraged where two (2) adults should always be present during practices, games, carpooling, and special events.

Drop Off/Pick Up

Drop off/pick-up of athletes by league personnel should be strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one-on-one contact between adult and child. Parent(s) should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events. Parents should be instructed to make backup plans in the event they can't provide transportation. If parents cannot provide transportation they must communicate to the coach/manager the name of the person(s) who are authorized to pick up their child. We recommend completing a shared travel declaration form signed by the parents/legal guardian of any minor athlete who may need to be transported as part of such a carpool arrangement.

The league should clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parents. Children dropped off too early or picked up late are targets. Parents and volunteers should be encouraged to pick up and drop off on time. Children should be warned about strangers, about not riding with them, about telling someone if they are approached by them.

Travel

Leagues should establish policies to guide its travel, minimize one-on-one interactions and reduce the risk of misconduct. Adherence to travel guidelines will increase minor athlete safety and improve the competitive experience while keeping travel a fun and enjoyable experience.

- Coaches and other volunteers who have regular contact with minors, who are also a minor athlete's parent/legal guardian may provide shared transportation for any athlete(s).
- Coaches and other volunteers who have regular contact with minors, who are not also acting as a parent/legal guardian, should not drive alone with an unrelated minor and should only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian in advance of travel. Such agreement should be in writing and signed by the parent/legal guardian.



Team Travel

Team travel is a standard aspect of baseball and softball, especially during tournaments. Because of the distances of some competition, coaches and other adult volunteers will often travel with the minor athletes. No coach or other volunteer who have regular contact with minors should engage in team travel, without proper safety requirements in place, such as a valid driver's license, proper insurance, a well-maintained vehicle and compliance with the Safe Sport Act and Babe Ruth League mandates in relation to the Safe Sports Act, i.e., Coaches Certification, Background Screening, Abuse Awareness and Prevention Training.

Babe Ruth League recommends that a player be accompanied by and stay with his/her parent/legal guardian when hotel housing is required. In some cases, not every parent/legal guardian will be able to attend. Therefore, leagues should have plans in place to provide adequate supervision through the coaching staff and/or other adults who are in compliance with the Safe Sport Act and meet the requirements of Babe Ruth League, Inc. Appropriate adult-to-minor athlete ratios should be considered and will depend on the age of the participants.

The league should provide/post a detailed itinerary containing the travel plans, hotel information and listing the dates and times for all practices, games and other activities. This itinerary should also include contact information for team travel chaperones filling in for any parent/legal guardian unable to attend.

For minor athletes not staying with a parent/legal guardian, Babe Ruth League encourages the league to permit such minor athletes to call their parents/legal guardians on a regular basis and allow for any unscheduled calls by either the minor athlete or parent/legal guardian.

When a team is not practicing, competing or taking part in another tournament-related activity, the league should have plans in place to monitor the activities of the minor athletes and adult volunteers. At no time, should a non-related adult and minor athlete be involved in an activity that is not attended by other adults or participants.

At no time, should a non-related adult stay alone with a minor athlete. Nor should a non-related adult be able to transport alone, a minor athlete to and from the tournament, practices, games and any other activity.

Touch/Physical Contact

An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling (instead of hugging with permission), kissing, or seductive stroking of various body parts. On the other hand appropriate touching can be used when a young child needs comfort, reassurance, and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level, public (done in front of others and not secretly), and nurturing (not sexualized). Shown below are examples of appropriate and prohibited physical contact:



Appropriate Physical Contact

- Physical contact that takes place in public or in the presence of others.
- Physical contact for the purpose of developing skill or technique.
- Physical contact with no potential for physical or sexual intimacies during the contact.
- The contact is for the benefit of the player, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult.
- Celebratory gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, pats on the back, shoulder and head.
- Consolation gestures such as publicly embracing a crying athlete.
- Physical contact assisting an injured player, preventing an injury or treating an injury are appropriate.
- Touching in a non-threatening, non-sexual manner.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

- Lap sitting.
- Lingering, maintaining prolonged or repeated embraces that go beyond appropriate.
- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other harsh physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from a player.
- Playful, yet in appropriate, contact that is not part of regular training, i.e., tickling, horseplay, wrestling.
- Continued physical contact that makes a player visibly uncomfortable.
- Contact involving touching of genital area, buttocks or breasts.
- Physical contact that intentionally causes or has the potential to cause the player to sustain bodily harm or injury.
- Physical or sexual abuse, harassment or misconduct.
- Kissing, back rubs or massages.

Facilities

Facilities should be well-maintained with proper safety equipment available for the sport; visible for others to see, but with security measures to control access for adults when possible (*access should be controlled where children are present, such as the dugout and locker rooms*); equipped with bathroom or locker-room facilities that provide athletes privacy and security. The lighting of fields, parking lots and any indoor facility should be bright enough so participants can identify individuals as they approach, and parents/observers can recognize abnormal situations.

Codes of Conduct

Policies should spell out appropriate and inappropriate physical contact between athletes and adults who are not a child's parent. Hazing, bullying, and other forms of harassment or abuse by athletes or adults should be strictly prohibited.



League Social Events

- All social events for the league (picnics, award ceremonies, pool parties, etc.) where the participants are involved, must include attendance by enough adults where the supervision of each participant is conducted by at least two adults who are in each other's presence at all times.

Establish an Electronic Communication Policy

- If it is necessary for a coach or other volunteer to send a direct text message or email to a player, the following guidelines should be followed:
 - A parent or guardian must be copied.
 - It should be signed so it is clear as to whom and what league is sending the message. Just using the number or email address for identification is not sufficient.
 - It should be non-personal and for the purpose of communicating information about practices, games or other team activities.
 - It should never include or contain offensive, sexual or inappropriate language or photos.
 - The time of day and the number of messages sent should be considered.
 - Records should be kept of every coach/volunteer's current cell number and email accounts.
- When a player feels the need to text or email a coach or other volunteer, the following guidelines should be followed:
 - A parent or guardian must be copied.
 - It should be sent only with information regarding the league or team activities.
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Similar Sites)
 - Leagues should set specific guidelines for Social Media Platforms in regard to contact between adult volunteers and participants.
 - Adults and participants should not post pictures of other team members that can be hurtful or embarrassing or without their permission.
 - Social media sites should not be used to abuse or criticize the league, members or players.
- If any parent/guardian of a minor player requests that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by coaches or other adults involved with the league, the league and its coaches/volunteers must immediately comply with such a request without any repercussions.

Babe Ruth League encourages all leagues to adopt any other procedures/policies not covered above that safeguard the welfare of all players and members of their organization.



Required Awareness and Prevention Training

The Safe Sport Act requires all managers, coaches, board members, as well as any other persons/volunteers, who provide regular service to the league, and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams, complete Awareness and Prevention Training.

There's no doubt that the background screening of volunteers is a required level of due diligence. However, it's not enough to run background checks. There is a high percentage of sexual predators that have never been caught and don't have a criminal history. This is why background checks must be supplemented with awareness training, along with the adoption of certain policies and procedures that make incidents less likely to occur.

It is important to note that the type of training contemplated under the Safe Sports Act is not merely to identify those who may already have been victimized by abuse by a list of indicators. Instead it is to learn how to prevent sexual abuse from occurring. In other words, the training must be proactive rather than reactive.

Abuse prevention training includes more than just signs of child abuse. It includes a review of the things that put children at risk of being abused. One of the most essential parts of training is to learn the process of sexual grooming. A key to preventing the grooming process is to train all participating adults in a sports organization on understanding how it works, identifying when it is occurring, and taking appropriate action.

Babe Ruth League, Inc. strongly suggests that all volunteers use the services of SportsEngine to complete required Abuse Prevention and Awareness Training as mandated by the Safe Sports Act. Abuse Prevention and Awareness Training is required every two years for anyone 18 years of age or older. Such training offered by Sports Engine takes approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours (with a test at the end of the training) and does not need to be completed in one session.

Let's recap some of the steps you can take to protect your Babe Ruth League participants:

- Child Abuse – 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.
- Recognize grooming.
- Educate your volunteers, parents and children. They need to be supplied with the necessary information to protect everyone, especially with a copy of your league's Child Protection/Risk Management Program. Let your participants know that it is never their fault.
- Adhere to the Safe Sport Act, Babe Ruth League's safety requirements (Coaches Certification, Background Screening), and the suggested guidelines outlined above. Employ basic rules, such as the "buddy system" to limit one-on-one interactions between minors and adults.
- Background Screenings and Awareness & Prevention Training offered by SportsEngine.



Allegations of Abuse – Reporting Requirements

Our goal is to prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors. Monitoring involves observing interactions and reacting appropriately.

The Safe Sport Act extends mandatory reporting of abuse to each “covered individual. The term “covered individual” under the Safe Sport Act means an adult who is authorized by the amateur youth sports organization to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sport organization facility or at an event sanctioned by the amateur sports organization.

Covered individuals are required to report suspicions of child abuse including, sex abuse, as soon as possible (within a 24-hour period) to the appropriate law enforcement agencies as determined by state or federal law. Babe Ruth League asks that if you make a report of child abuse, to also communicate this report to our Headquarters Office.

Each state has a separate law relating to mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. Some states require every adult to report suspicions of abuse and neglect. Others only require certain adults to report under certain circumstances.

A person will not be held liable if they make a report in good faith, including in situations where the reported incident is determined not to be child abuse. The Safe Sport Act provides a limitation of liability provision that protects the sports organization and any officer, employee, agent, or member/volunteer who reports suspicions of abuse. They are protected against civil actions for defamation, slander, and libel arising from the execution of their functions under the Act. In addition, the Act prohibits retaliation by the amateur sports organization against the reporting individual.

An individual who is required, but fails to report suspected child abuse, is subject to criminal and civil penalties.



Summary

There needs to be formal training, a universal standard that all coaches/volunteers must follow so that vigilance doesn't vary wildly from program to program or community to community. The goal is an atmosphere in which sexual predators can't succeed. It takes a village -- the institution to make the rules, the parents, coaches, and other volunteers to genuinely embrace them, and the teammates to feel powerful enough to speak up when they see something that isn't right. And everything has to be transparent.

Such measures wouldn't be necessary if sexual predators wore a label or fit a stereotype. But the image of the guy with the thick mustache cruising the neighborhood in a windowless van is a Hollywood myth. The most successful sexual predators are scarier than that. They're the people you trust. They are normal, everyday people. They're smart. They're deceptive. If they were creepy, they couldn't be successful. No one would give them access to kids.

Each Babe Ruth Baseball, Cal Ripken Baseball and Babe Ruth Softball league should customize its own child abuse risk management program to protect its participants, to adhere to the Safe Sports Act and to meet its own unique needs. The end result should be an environment unsuitable for the abuser and/or sexual predator.

Every adult involved with the league should be aware that Babe Ruth League, Inc., as well as your league program, 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 parents and other adults. Even though parents may find it difficult to talk with their children about child abuse, they can reduce the likelihood of abuse by educating their children. Children should be encouraged to take an active role in protecting themselves, but ultimately the responsibility for ensuring their safety rests with the adults. We are better able to identify potentially uncomfortable situations, for ourselves as well as for them.

This might seem like a daunting thing for league volunteers and a daunting thing for sports organizations to implement. However, to protect our children, it is a necessity.

And if you are implementing these abuse prevention strategies, one of them being background screening, another being abuse prevention training, you are going to have much more well-rounded volunteers. They are going to understand the process. They are going to understand what needs to be done and how it needs to be done. Because of that you are going to have educated parents. These parents want and need to see that you as an organization are doing everything possible to ensure their kids are in a safe environment.

