

Operating Directive
Northern Indiana Youth Football League (NIYFL)
Adopted April 2022

Article I: Purpose

This Directive is meant to be a companion to the Northern Indiana Youth Football League's (hereafter referred to as either NIYFL or The League) Bylaws. Herein are operating procedures for carrying out the business of the league.

Article II: Player Requirements

Section A: Eligible Ages - Boys or girls must be seven (7) years of age on, or before, the first day of scheduled practice and may not turn thirteen (13) years of age prior to the last day of scheduled games for the season. A player may not participate on a school team and play in the NIYFL.

Section B: Levels of Play - The League offers three levels of play in season identified as 12U, 10U, and 8U. The requisite information will be posted to the NIYFL website, will be included in annual updates to The League's Commissioner Handbook, and will be included in the NIYFL's documents entitled "Game Rules" for each level of play.

Section C: Physical Requirements/Physical Condition – The league expects parents/guardians to be responsible to ensure their child is in a physical condition (without physical limitations) for a sport as physically demanding as football. If any parent/guardian were in question of their child's physical condition or health, then The League requires an examination by a medical doctor at the parent's/guardian's expense before the child will be allowed to participate. Refer also to The League's Game Rules regarding injury and concussion protocol.

Section D: Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) – The NIYFL will abide by the rules of the IHSAA except where matters of safety and convenience mandate we do otherwise. Please consult the document entitled "NIYFL Game Rules" for such instances.

Section E: League leaders, coaches, and Commissioners should promote good scholastic standing among our players and cheerleaders. If a parent asks for our support in disciplining a player or cheerleader for poor grades or behavior at school we should support this effort.

Section F: Registration – All children must be registered by his/her parent/guardian with the NIYFL. The official manner of registration is through the NIYFL website. The dates and process will be announced each year by the NIYFL via its member areas. In order for a player to be considered registered the following must be met: *(1) Completed registration form (2) Proof of birth date (3) Parent/Guardian signatures of consent (4) Paid in full registration fee or approved scholarship request.* Failure to meet all four (4) criteria is considered an unregistered player.

Article III: Team and League Requirements

Section A: Coaches – Each area shall select one (1) head coach and not more than three (3) assistant coaches for each of its teams. All coaches must attend a league sponsored coaches clinic and have a new background check performed every season. Note, a team may have more than three (3) assistant coaches, but the NIYFL will only pay USA Football Certification fees for up to four (4) coaches per team. The Area will be responsible for the rest.

Section B: Team Composition –12U and 10U teams must have a minimum of 11 players and no more than 33 players. 34 players is enough for two (2) teams. If an Area is having trouble finding enough certified coaches it may petition the league to field a team of 34 or more players. 8U teams must have a minimum of 7 players and a maximum of 19 players; 20 players is enough for two teams. If an Area is having trouble finding enough certified coaches it may petition the league to field a team of 20 or more players.

Section C: League Composition – The NIYFL Board shall determine the number of levels of play and the criteria for meeting these. These will be published on the NIYFL website, in the Commissioners Handbook, and in the document entitled “Game Rules”.

Section D: Eligible Players – All players must meet the age requirements set forth and be considered a registered player per Article II, Section F.

Section E: Insurance – Accident insurance is not provided by the NIYFL. Parents/guardians must obtain/maintain their own medical and/or accident insurance at their expense. The League does not require proof of coverage.

Section E: Minimum Playing Time – The NIYFL is an instructional league and therefore maintains a strict rule regarding minimum playing time for all eligible players. The minimum is addressed in The League’s Game Rules.

Section F: Admission Fees to NIYFL Games - Areas are discouraged from charging admission to games. However, if financial considerations force an Area to charge, it is requested the fee be minimal and set well in advance.

Article IV: Season

Section A: The NIYFL will follow the rules of the IHSAA to determine the beginning of the season. This date will be the first date member areas may begin practices. The date will be published on The League’s website and in the Commissioners Handbook.

Section B: Practices – Practices shall not exceed two (2) hours in duration. The first two (2) weeks of practice shall be limited to five (5) two (2) hour sessions per week with the first two days being non-contact practice with nothing more than helmets and shoulder pads being worn. Thereafter practices are limited to two (2) two (2) hour practices in full pads and a third non-contact practice without pads each week. You must have at least ten (10) practices and no more than 14 practices prior to playing your first game each season.

The Area Commissioner is responsible for enforcing and reviewing practice plans. Upon request the Board must be furnished with the Area’s practice plans.

Member areas must hold all practices for all its teams at the same time and at the same location.

Practices must conclude by 8:00 PM local time.

Scrimmages will count as a full contact practice and must be approved by a vote of the NIYFL Board.

Teams from the same area scrimmaging during practice are exempt from obtaining Board approval.

Section C: Regular Season – The schedule for each level of play, or league, will be established by the Board. The NIYFL Scheduler will present to the Board before the season a proposed schedule for each level of play or league. The schedule must be adopted by a majority vote of the NIYFL Board.

- The league will not schedule more than eight (8) games.
- All divisions, levels of play, or leagues are permitted to play in pre-season or postseason

games as approved by the NIYFL Board.

- A period of at least four full days must elapse between a team's last game and its next one unless a schedule change is approved by a majority vote of the NIYFL Board.
- All night games must be scheduled to begin no later than 7:30 PM local time and must be completed no later than 10:00 PM local time. Local curfew laws, field availability, and other athletic contests must be considered when scheduling games.
- Under no circumstances may a team play a team from another level of play.
- During bye weeks a team may seek an opponent outside the NIYFL with Board approval.
- Make-up games must be scheduled by the affected area commissioners with input from each team's coaches through the NIYFL Board. If it is not possible to meet the above restrictions a vote of the NIYFL Board must be taken before proceeding to schedule a make-up game.

Section D: All Star Games – The NIYFL does not endorse all star games where players are picked on the basis of football prowess alone. Registered players are not permitted to take part in such all-star events unless approved by the NIYFL Board.

Article V: Cheerleading

The following are simply guidelines the NIYFL Board of Directors has voted on and accepted for any member area that chooses to have a cheerleading program which will cheer at NIYFL scheduled games and events. These guidelines may and can be changed at any time the Board deems necessary and appropriate.

1. NIYFL Commissioner of the area has the right to decide whether there will be a cheer program in that area.
2. Any area which chooses to have a cheer program can decide whether that area will have joint or separate bank accounts. Only one P&L will be submitted to the Board at year end regardless of the banking arrangement chosen. The area's P&L should reflect football and cheer entries. NIYFL banking rules (refer to Article VII of The League's Bylaws) apply.
3. The Commissioner may either appoint, or allow for an election of, the individual responsible for administering the cheer program. Ultimately the Commissioner bears responsibility and liability for the cheer program and therefore has the final authority in all matters pertaining to the cheer program.
4. All cheer coaches must meet the requirements of Article II of The League's Bylaws.
5. The individual in charge of the cheer program answers to the duly elected NIYFL Commissioner in that area. That area Commissioner is the area cheer program's voice on the NIYFL Board.
6. Each area has authority to determine all fees related to its cheer program. These are not collected by the NIYFL but will remain in the member area for use of the cheer program. The exception is a small per participant fee to be determined by the Board to cover the cost of liability insurance related to cheer participants.
7. Any cheer team which cheers at any NIYFL scheduled game or event must have some type of matching uniforms. These may consist of cheer uniforms or matching t-shirts and shorts at the member area's discretion.

8. If any cheer team chooses to perform so-called pyramids these may only be three(3) rows high with each cheerleader being on hands and knees. A cheer coach must be in a position to safely spot the cheerleaders making the pyramid. At no time may any cheer participant be thrown or flipped.
9. Cheer routines performed to music with sexual content or profanity is prohibited.
10. NIYFL Board reserves the right to ban or suspend an area's cheerleaders from performing at any scheduled NIYFL event if the area does not comply with these guidelines. Repeated violations of these guidelines may result in the dissolution of an area's cheer program.

Article VI: Role of the Parent

The role of a parent in the NIYFL should be one of support. Parental support is essential to the success of the League. Parents should support the NIYFL from actions beginning with watching their child at games to becoming an active member of the Board of Directors. Under no circumstances, should a parent be negative or derogatory toward the NIYFL at any time, nor should a parent be overly vocal at a practice or game. See "Zero Tolerance Policy" for further clarification. The responsibility of the operation of the NIYFL lies with the Board of Directors. Parents should never interfere with the operation of the NIYFL. Coaches, and coaches alone, will decide the positions a child is to play, formations used, strategy and all judgments related to the particular team. The following avenue is available to parents to present to the Board of Directors, a problem or complaint of a serious nature: The complaint or problem of a serious nature should first be directed to the area commissioner. If the issue remains unresolved, the complainant should follow up with a member of the Board of Directors in writing, describing the situation. The complaint/problem will be addressed by the Board of Directors within thirty(30) days and an appropriate response will be delivered to the complaining parent, coach, etc. This response may be generated via email but should include all parties involved in the complaint. If appropriate, all parties will be notified and invited to attend a meeting to obtain a resolution.

Article VII: Role of the Coach

Coaches are selected by the area commissioner each year. A coach's first year is probationary, and they must meet criteria set forth in The League's Bylaws. Coaches are responsible to the area commissioner, and in the absence or unavailability, any other member of the Board of Directors. Coaches are to be the first at practice and the last to leave. They are responsible for understanding the rules and regulations as well as following the mission of the NIYFL. Safety must always come first. Coaches must regularly inspect each player for the proper, and properly fitting, equipment. Coaches must be current on safe drilling and playing practices. They are responsible for their own conduct on and off the field. Coaches are also responsible for obtaining any needed equipment for their players, including jerseys, and safeguarding their return at the appointed time. Coaches are responsible for their teams at picture day, and at any League Banquet or League approved function. In other words, all coaches must be good communicators. Coaches are also responsible for educating and informing parents of rules, regulations, expected behaviors, games, pictures, changes in practice or game schedules and other team functions. Difficulties that arise with a parent, coach or other Board Member should immediately be referred to the area commissioner. Coaches must attain USA Football certified status and attend a league sponsored rules clinic in addition to having a background check annually.

Article VIII: Code of Conduct for all NIYFL Volunteers

Values and lessons learned through practice and competition in The League can be a great influence on children participating in the league. NIYFL believes that participation is a privilege rather than a right. High standards of conduct are expected for all participants in The League. However, more strict rules are in place for the representatives of The League such as Board Members, Coaches, and volunteers; these should be positive role models to the youth participating. We have an opportunity to instill desirable qualities, fair play, good sportsmanship, respect for others, respect for one's own health and physical well-being, development of leadership, group pride, teamwork, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. Therefore, Board members, Commissioners and coaches (all representatives of the NIYFL) must be aware of the philosophy, rules, and regulations under which they shall be given the opportunity to participate. Prior to participation all representatives of the NIYFL shall be required to file a signed form that they have read and agreed to rules and regulations which shall be enforced throughout the calendar year. The signed code of conduct will be kept on file by the NIYFL Secretary. Those who choose to participate can expect to follow the general rules established by the NIYFL provided these rules meet the following criteria:

1. They must be fair and reasonable as determined by the NIYFL Board.
 2. They may not discriminate where equal rights and regulations have been established.
- Societal and community values as well as current law necessitates the need for the NIYFL to maintain a fair and consistent written conduct policy for Board Members, Commissioners, Coaches, and volunteers. Acting in service to the community, NIYFL believes this policy is necessary to further the best interests of the league.

ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

The policy will be administered by the NIYFL Board of Directors and all representatives of the NIYFL shall abide by the code from the time of signing until the conclusion of their term as Board Officer, Commissioner, Coach, or volunteer (365 days - 24 hours a day). A representative who reflects discredit upon the NIYFL, or creates a disruption in the discipline, good order, morals or constructive environment shall be ineligible to participate in NIYFL sponsored functions. The following prohibited infractions include, but are not limited to:

Minor Infractions

1. Use of tobacco or alcohol at any League event involving children as determined by the Board.
2. Possession of alcoholic beverages on grounds where NIYFL practices or games are being held.
3. Subjugating the rules of the NIYFL.
4. Pending misdemeanor criminal charges.
5. Any other act which proves detrimental to the NIYFL.

Major Infractions

1. Illegal use or illegal possession of a drug, depressant, stimulant, controlled substance, or drug paraphernalia. This includes illegally obtained prescription medications.
2. Verbal abuse or harassment.
3. Destruction of NIYFL property or documents pertinent to The League's business.
4. Failure to provide required documents and items as required by League rules such as, but not

- limited to, P&L, bank statements, registration forms, tax information, etc.
5. Derogatory language toward another ethnic group, gender, or religious group.
 6. Pending felony criminal charges.

Z Offenses which result in immediate lifetime ban from association with the NIYFL

1. Theft or misappropriation of NIYFL property or funds.
2. Sexual or physical abuse.
3. Use of the NIYFL name, logo, and/or tax ID# for use other than NIYFL business.
4. Any act which endangers a child, even one's own child.
5. Felony convictions.

Penalties

1. Minor Offenses

First Offense - Written reprimand signed by the offender and a Board Member.

Second Offense - Suspension of one (1) to six (6) games depending on the violation(s) and whether the offender came forward of their own volition.

2. Major Offenses

First Offense - One (1) year suspension pending investigation by the Board. If this is an Area Commissioner or Board Officer, they will lose their vote while the process is adjudicated. If found guilty of the offense the Area Commissioner or Officer must be replaced. They will not be allowed to vote until a replacement has been elected.

Second Offense - One (1) year to lifetime suspension as above.

3. Z Offenses

Lifetime ban.

Cooperation and Honesty

If a participant is honest and forthright about his/her involvement prior to or during the investigations into a violation, a lighter penalty can be implemented at the discretion of the investigating panel with the support of the Board. If at a later date the person is found to have misrepresented his/her involvement in a violation, the participant/offender will be forced to serve the maximum allowable suspension.

Investigative Procedure

An Advisory Board will be established by the NIYFL President, or the President's designee, to investigate any alleged violation and report its findings and a recommendation to the President and Executive Committee of the Board. The Executive Committee is not bound by the Advisory Board's findings nor by its recommendations regarding suspension.

This Advisory Board will consist of two (2) Executive Committee Board Members from an area not involved in the alleged violations and a Commissioner from an area not involved in the alleged violations. The Advisory Board shall appoint, elect, or designate one (1) of its three (3) members the Chairperson. This Advisory Board will respond systematically and professionally to possible participant violations. The Advisory Board will strive to maintain a balance and sensitivity to the task at hand with regard to fact finding, questioning, etc. Information that may be considered in determining a violation of the Code includes, but is not limited to, admissions or statements by the participant, written or oral statements of witnesses, police reports, tickets/citations, court records, news reports of any of these, and any

other information which may demonstrate that a violation of the code has occurred.

Procedure

The following procedure will be followed to implement the rules.

1. The participant will be suspended initially by the NIYFL President after consultation with the Advisory Board. The NIYFL President should make first contact by telephone, if possible, to the offender. This will be followed by written notification to the offender from the President and may be in either written or electronic format. Lastly the President shall draft and send via certified mail to the address of record on the registration form, a letter informing the offender of the suspension, this must be done within four (4) business days of the decision.
2. Within a reasonable amount of time after being notified of a suspension the offender may request a hearing in front of the NIYFL Board. The request for this hearing should be made directly to the NIYFL Board President, who will preside over the hearing. The Advisory Board Chairperson (see above) shall present the finding and details of the investigation.
3. A Simple majority vote of the NIYFL members present at the appeal hearing will determine the outcome of the appeal.
4. The participant will be on suspension pending the outcome of any appeals.
5. The League Secretary shall record and communicate the procedures outlined above.

Article IX: Changes to the Operating Directive

The Board may make changes to the agreement at any time provided Robert's Rules are adhered to, there is a quorum present, a simple two-thirds majority of the quorum is met.