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# LITTLE LEAGUE

## CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM

### **PURPOSE**

The safety and well-being of all participants in Little League® is paramount. Little League promotes a player-centric program where young people grow up happy, healthy, and, above all, safe. Little League strives to create an environment that is as safe as possible both on and off the field. Little League does not tolerate any type of abuse against a minor, including, but not limited to, sexual, physical, mental, and emotional (as well as any type of bullying, hazing, or harassment). Little League's goal is to prevent child abuse from occurring through required screenings, mandatory training and education, awareness, and mandated reporting of abuse.

Ancaster Little League (hereinafter 'The League') establishes a zero-tolerance culture that does not allow any type of activity that promotes or allows any form of misconduct or abuse (mental, physical, emotional, or sexual) between players, coaches, parents/guardians/caretakers, spectators, volunteers, and/or any other individual. League officials should remove an individual that is exhibiting any type of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct and must report the individual to the authorities immediately.

### **APPLICABILITY**

The Child Protection Program applies to anyone who has any involvement in the Little League program, as well as anyone who participates in Little League-approved programs and activities, including, but not limited to, Board of Directors members, volunteers, managers, coaches, umpires, spectators, players, or anyone who provides regular services to the league and/or has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

The league will establish a culture prohibiting any type of activity that promotes or allows any form of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct behavior between players, coaches, parents, volunteers, and any other individual. League officials must remove any individual that is exhibiting any type of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct and must report the individual to the authorities immediately.

As part of the chartering process, the league agrees to comply with all aspects of the Little League Child Protection Program.



## DEFINITIONS

Defining child abuse is the first step in battling it. Child abuse can take several different forms, and it is important to understand what is considered child abuse and other terms that are mentioned herein.

Abuse or Neglect: Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation;" or "an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

Different types of Child Abuse or Neglect

- Neglect is the negligent failure of a minor's caretaker to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision which threatens harm to a minor's health, safety, or welfare.
- Physical Abuse is any non-accidental, intentional, deliberate act that results in physical injury.
- Emotional and Psychological Abuse is any act that diminishes the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth by humiliation, intimidation, verbal assault, and emotional deprivation.
- Sexual Abuse is any type of maltreatment, violation, or exploitation that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator.
- Bullying is the intentional, repetitive harmful act, words, and behavior that makes the victim feel hurt, scared, and/or ashamed. Bullying can also be an imbalance of real or perceived power between the bully and the victim. Different types of bullying include, but are not limited to, physical bullying, verbal bullying, emotional bullying, harassment, and hazing.
- Grooming is the process where an individual creates a relationship with a minor or the minor's family to gain trust so he or she can take advantage of a minor for a sexual purpose.

Child/Minor: Any individual who is younger than 18 years of age.

League Programs and Activities: Any games, practices, tournaments, approved activities, and/or approved special games are considered Little League programs and activities.

Volunteer: Any person in the organization who provides regular service to the league and has contact with minors: coaches, managers, the Board of Directors, program workers, concession volunteers or workers, bus and carpool drivers, maintenance workers, or anyone that has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams.

## LITTLE LEAGUE CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

The League adheres to the following requirements to remain affiliated with Little League Baseball and Softball:

1. **COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS**  
All volunteers are required to obtain and submit a Police Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC). A VSC is good for a period of 24 months from the date of issue.
2. **MANDATORY TRAINING & CONTINUING EDUCATION**  
Volunteers are required to complete the Little League Abuse Awareness Training.  
Coaches are required to complete the Little League Diamond Leader Training program.
3. **MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**  
Report Child Abuse, including sexual abuse involving a minor, to the proper authorities within 24 hours.
4. **NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING**  
Adopt a policy that prohibits retaliation against "good faith" reports of child abuse.
5. **PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS**  
Adopt a policy that limits one-on-one contact with minors without being in an observable and interruptible distance from another adult.



## 1. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

### A. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

The League requires that a Volunteer Application form is to be completed by all volunteers (managers, coaches, and any other person, or volunteer, who provides regular service to the league and/or has access to minors). The applicant must submit a government-issued photo identification card for the league to verify that the information on his/her volunteer application is correct.

The league shall have the right to interview applicants. The applicant must be interviewed by an approved board member. All volunteers selected to participate must be educated on Little League's Child Protection Program and his/her role in the protection of minors in the program.

A minimum of three reference checks must be provided by each new volunteer. The board shall have the right to have an approved board member conduct reference checks before a new volunteer is allowed participation in a Little League program. All information from reference checks should be documented, dated, and signed by the board member conducting the reference check. Reviewing the reference check is important to determine if any information from the reference differs from what is represented on the volunteer application and/or during the review.

### B. BACKGROUND CHECK PROCESS

Per Little League Regulation, every individual is required to complete a volunteer application **every year** before the applicant assumes *any* of his/her duties for the current season. The individual is required to consent to a background check during the volunteer application process. The league Board of Directors must conduct, review, and verify that the background check process is completed.

All Volunteers are required to obtain and submit a Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC). A VSC is good for a period of 24 months from the date it was issued.

Volunteers must complete an Attestation if their VSC was issued 12 to 24 months prior to the start of the season.

VSCs that are older than 24 months will not be accepted.

### C. OFFENSES THAT PROHIBIT PARTICIPATION

The League shall not permit any person to participate in any manner whose background check reveals a pending charge, conviction for, guilty plea, no contest plea, or admission to any crime involving or against a minor. An individual is also prohibited from participating as a volunteer if he/she appears on the Little League International Ineligible/Suspended List. The league may impose stricter guidelines and prohibit any individual from participating as a volunteer if the league deems the individual unfit or inappropriate to work or volunteer in the league

If an individual involved with a league, or any activity of the Little League program, is under investigation for any type of child abuse, or has a pending charge against, or involving, a minor, that individual must be suspended until the outcome of the investigation or pending charges are complete and the allegations are resolved.

**If the league becomes aware of information at any time, by any means whatsoever, that an individual, including, but not limited to, volunteers, or players has a pending charge for , been convicted of, pled guilty, pled no contest, or admitted to any crime involving or against a minor, the league must immediately contact the applicable governmental agency to confirm the accuracy of the information before allowing the volunteer to participate in their position or per their Little League Constitution suspend the volunteer until the information is received and reviewed.**



D. Properly Handling Sensitive Documents

The league must exercise due diligence to protect any information that is provided. To protect the privacy of volunteers and others, the League President shall only share, on a need-to-know basis, any personal, non-public record or information contained in the volunteer application or attached documents, with other League Officers to make personnel decisions.

## 2. MANDATORY TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Training and Education are important tools in the prevention of abuse. All individuals who complete the volunteer application for the league **must annually complete** Abuse Awareness Training. This includes anyone who wishes to be a manager, coach, member of the Board of Directors, volunteer, and any other person who provides regular services to the league and/or has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams.

A. Mandatory Abuse Awareness Training

The Little League Abuse Awareness Training, in compliance with Little League Regulation I(c)(10), is required to be completed annually by every individual before assuming **any** of his/her duties for the current season. The free Little League Abuse Awareness Training provides resources to create a positive and safe environment for all athletes, coaches, parents, legal guardians, and umpires by understanding how to recognize misconduct and abuse of all types. Topics covered include how to identify and report incidents and what abuse awareness policies should be in place. The interactive Abuse Awareness training should take approximately 45 minutes.

The league is responsible for ensuring all volunteers have completed the training. Upon completion of the training, volunteers should print out a copy of the certification of completion for their records and provide a copy to the league. The training must be completed on or after October 1 of each year to be considered valid for the upcoming season.

It is important that all volunteers in a league complete the training on an annual basis. Even though it may be a training the individual has completed in the past, it is important to keep the information that comes from this training fresh in everyone's mind. The more individuals in a league or involved in a league that have the information that the Abuse Awareness Training provides, the better.

B. Continuing Education Opportunities for Leagues:

To help create a player-centric environment, the league will implement the following continuing education for its members:

Little League Diamond Leader Training Program

- o Focused on ensuring children have a positive, well-rounded experience on and off the field, the Little League Diamond Leader Training Program is a FREE educational resource that provides coaches with an understanding of the impact that mental, social, and emotional well-being has in youth sports through detailed information, interactive scenarios, and a variety of additional resources. Through this course, which navigates Little League volunteers through real-life scenarios that are being faced in local leagues all around the world each year, coaches will have a better understanding of the impact he/she has on the players, both on and off the field. Upon completion of the training, volunteers should print out a copy of the certification of completion for their records and provide a copy to the league.

C. Online Resources (to be made available on The League's website)

- **Grooming:** Grooming is a tactic used by sexual predators to methodically build a trusting relationship with victims, parents, and the community to place themselves in a position of trust, which the perpetrator then uses to draw the victim into a sexual relationship. Many times, the perpetrator becomes a family friend. Grooming can be subtle and hard to recognize. It's important to bring awareness of grooming to all individuals in the league. Understanding the grooming process and behaviors of grooming can help prevent abuse from occurring. The League will post information on Grooming to raise awareness within the league. The more individuals in the league that are equipped with knowledge to understand and recognize grooming, the better protected the children are within the league.

**Online Resource: USA Center for SafeSport:**

- [What Parents Need to Know: Grooming in Sport](#)
- **Bullying:** Any type of bullying can have serious effects on players. Anyone who engages in harassment, in any form (verbal, physical, cyber, etc.), or commits violence or acts of intimidation shall be prohibited from participating in Little League. This applies to player-to-player, adult-to-player, player-to-adult, and adult-to-adult interactions. The League strives to have a safe and encouraging environments for all individuals participating in the league. The following types of behavior are not accepted in the Little League culture and will not be tolerated by the League:
  - **Physical Bullying:** Hitting, pushing, shoving, punching, strangling, hair-pulling, stealing, excessive tickling, or any other deliberate and inappropriate touching.
  - **Verbal Bullying:** Hurtful, deliberate name-calling, banter, taunting, intimidating, threatening, gossiping, and teasing.
  - **Emotional Bullying:** Rejection, terrorizing, extorting, humiliating, blackmailing, rating/ranking of personal characteristics, such as race, disability, ethnicity, or perceived sexual orientation, manipulating friendships, isolating, and peer pressure.
  - **Social/Cyber Bullying:** Deliberately excluding, alienating, ignoring, spreading rumors, impersonation, inappropriate photographs, video shaming, and hacking social media accounts.
- **Harassment:** Harassment includes bullying, and all of the actions listed above, as well as subjecting someone to unwanted sexual advances, involving physical contact or explicit written or verbal language. **Hazing:** An initiation, ritual process involving different types of harassment that intentionally humiliates the individual or a group.

**Online Resource: USAB Develops**

- [Bullying 101: Understanding and Responding](#)



D. Creating a Player-Centric Environment

Both children and adults may experience frustration at times. It is important to recognize when a person needs to take a break from activities to calm down. Adult volunteers should never escalate a situation when someone is upset. Instead, he/she should attempt to de-escalate any stressful situation.

Little League recommends that local leagues create and issue a “Code of Conduct” that is upheld by players, managers, coaches, board members, umpires, other volunteers, and parents. This should be reviewed each season to establish a safe environment for everyone involved with the local Little League season.

If an individual (player, volunteer, or parent) feels stressed out and cannot handle the situation, he/she should remove themselves from the area until the issue is de-escalated.

### 3. MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

When an allegation of abuse is made against a Little League volunteer, the league must protect the child from any further potential abuse by keeping the alleged abuser away from all children in the program until the incident is reported to one or more of the below outlets **and** completely investigated.

A. Investigating Suspected Abuse

Once a report of abuse has been made, the league should promptly notify the alleged abuser that he/she is suspended from any involvement with the league until the investigation is completed. If the investigation substantiates the allegations, the league must assure that the individual will not have any further contact with the children in the local league. All information and statements received from the parties involved with the incident (suspect, victim, witness, etc.) must be passed onto the proper authorities. **Little League officials should not attempt to investigate suspected abuse. Let law enforcement and child services professionals conduct the investigation.**

B. Reporting of Suspected Abuse

Any volunteer who participates in the league must report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to the proper authorities. If a case of abuse is suspected within a league, it must be reported to the appropriate child services organizations and/or local law enforcement, as well as to the League President and District Administrator. **If you or someone else is in immediate and serious danger, you should call 911.**

C. Suspension/Termination

If allegations of abuse are made against an individual in the league, the league must take steps to assure that the individual will not have any further contact with the children in the league. While allegations of abuse are under investigation or if criminal charges are pending, the league must promptly notify the individual that he/she is suspended until the matter is resolved by an external investigation or through the court system. While an individual is suspended, he/she may not volunteer in any league activity.

If the allegations of abuse against an individual are substantiated, the local league must notify the individual that he/she is terminated from their position and may no longer volunteer for Little League in any capacity. The Board of Directors should communicate with the members of their local league about the termination.

D. Communication from the League

The local league’s Board of Directors must be prepared to contact parents if a substantiated abuse allegation is made against a volunteer or participant within their league. The league must remember that both parties (suspect and victim) have privacy rights. The league must only provide information available in a public record, without any commentary. Public records are documents that are received from a governmental body/agency and are available to the general public (such as police records, court records, a statement from the arresting police department).

#### 4. NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING

The league may not retaliate against any individual within the league who makes a good faith report of suspected abuse, even if the allegation is later determined to be unsubstantiated. Reporters of abuse cannot be afraid to come forward in cases where he/she either has firsthand knowledge of or a good faith belief that abuse has occurred, even if there is a possibility that the report is wrong. The league should encourage all individuals in the league to be vigilant and observant in regard to the safety and protection of the children in the league.

#### 5. PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Most child sexual abuse or grooming is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between players and adult volunteers, you reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. However, one-on-one time with trusted adults is also healthy and valuable for a child. Policies concerning one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relationships. To minimize the chance of an individual's opportunity to groom or abuse a player, the league adopts a one-on-one policy relating to the interactions between a player and any adult volunteer of the league during the league's programs and activities. The League will communicate this policy prior to the start of the season and provide a copy to all volunteers within the league. The policy includes the following:

- Volunteers are prohibited from being alone with a minor athlete during the league's programs and events unless:
  - There is an emergency.
  - There is written permission from the player's parent/legal guardian.
  - The volunteer is the player's parent/legal guardian, sibling, or personal care assistant.
- A Volunteer's interactions with players must be observable and interruptible by another adult.
- Volunteers are prohibited from contacting players directly through social media or electronic communication unless another adult volunteer or the player's parent/legal guardian is copied.
- Volunteers are discouraged from interacting one-on-one with unrelated minor athletes in settings outside of local league program and activities (such as the volunteer's home, a restaurant, a vehicle, personal communication including electronic communication).
- Players may not reside with unrelated volunteers for the purpose of participation qualification within the league.
- If a volunteer is in a position where he/she is left alone with a player, he/she should not leave the child so long as the volunteer has exhausted all the options above to comply with the guidelines of the policy. Likewise, if a child is injured and must be transported to a hospital, urgent care, or treatment centre, the volunteer should not leave the child alone if all options have been exhausted to comply with the policy in an emergency where medical treatment is necessary.
- Physical contact between volunteers and players should be very limited. Some examples of appropriate physical touch include high fives or administering appropriate first aid.

### SUMMARY

The safety and well-being of all participants in the Little League program is paramount. The Little League Child Protection Program provides the necessary tools for local leagues to create an environment that is as safe as possible for its players. Protection begins at the local league level. Every Little League program must place the safety and well-being of its players above all else. The league must adhere to the requirements of the Child Protection Program and utilize the additional resources provided to customize its own program to protect its participants which meets the unique needs of the league. Parents/Guardians play a critical role in assuring the safety of their players. It is critical that leagues arm parents/guardians with awareness and share the Child Protection Program with everyone within the league.