

## Welcome to US YOUTH SOCCER

*Whether you play in Honolulu or Anchorage...*

Whether your club has thousands of players or just a few teams...

*Whether you work with (or are) a paid professional coach*

Or, are just playing (coaching) for the fun of it....

*Whether you're an under-6 or an under-19....*

Whether you're a parent, a player, an administrator, a trainer or a coach

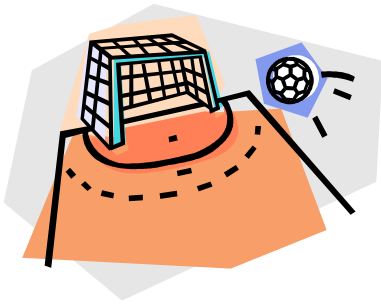
You are part of



Our commitment to each of you is to provide the safest possible environment through Risk Management and the US Youth Soccer Kidsafe program. We want to provide your player with a culture of safety – a place where every parent, every player, every coach and administrator, every adult, works together to insure the safety of each player. The following guide touches on some of the important issues and is designed to educate and inform so that you can help us in making sure that every child in our program is protected in every possible way. Thank you for your help!

## GOAL SAFETY

**Every year children lose their lives in goal post accidents!** This risk is very real and soccer goals are so much a part of our “scenery” that we



often don't recognize the danger. Simply, falling goals can seriously injure and kill. Here are some simple safety guidelines to reduce the risk....

### FOR COACHES

- Never start a practice or game without inspecting the goals – don't rely on referees or the coach who was on the field before you!
- Always make sure that goals are properly anchored – including portable goals – before you start play. If they are not anchored, don't have players in the goal area and notify the proper city or club official. Be sure to check that the top cross bar is secure. If it is constructed of two pieces, make sure they are bolted together.
- Know how goals should be anchored. For the best instruction go to Consumer Safety Products at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)
- Make sure that nets are removed when not in use.
- **NEVER – UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES – ASK PLAYERS TO HELP YOU MOVE A GOAL.**

## FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Know how goals should be anchored. Again, for the best instruction go to Consumer Safety Products at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) and then make sure you give proper instruction of all personnel in your club.
- If possible, do not own goal posts that are on public property. Instead, give your goals to the municipality who owns the field.
- Do not manufacture or design goal posts – buy from a manufacturer who has product liability
- Perform periodic surveys not only on goal condition – but also on who owns goals. Could your club be held responsible for goals that don't belong to you?
- Put warning labels on all goals.
- Hand out goal safety information at registration or include it in your membership packet.
- Add safety information to your club website.

## FOR PARENTS

- Goals aren't playground equipment. Make sure that your soccer player – all your children – understand that goals should never be climbed. Don't allow play on soccer goals.
- Be our eyes – if you see children playing on a goal, inform the club officials or ask them to stop
- Instruct your child to never help move a goal – even if the coach asks.

## FOR PLAYERS

- Don't hang from goals. Don't swing on goals. Don't climb goals. Don't climb goal nets.
- AND, don't let your team members, younger brothers or sisters or friends do any of those things either.
- Tell your coach NO if he or she asks you to move a goal.
- Be aware – they're part of the landscape but goals can kill. Respect them.

## FINANCIAL SAFETY

Financial crimes – and financial losses – happen at all levels. They happen to teams, clubs, leagues and, even, State Associations. Financial crimes may be well-planned with a person volunteering or taking a position that will make stealing possible. They may be crimes of convenience when lack of procedures and oversight create temptation and they may be crimes of need brought on by a person's financial problems or needs.

Embezzlement is the most common crime and is usually committed by a person who is trusted within the organization.

### FOR COACHES

- Whenever possible keep your team finances under the umbrella of your club or league.
- At team fund raising events, put two unrelated adults in charge of money. Establish a procedure. Who will pick up the cash? Who will count it? Who will deposit it?
- If you have a team bank account, make sure that it is not in the hands of a single person.

### FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Establish a comprehensive written policy for financial procedures. Include timelines of how often checks will be written, deposits made, etc.
- Include reviews and oversight in your policy.
- Document all financial transactions so that each one has a paper trail.

- Reduce temptation by dividing financial responsibilities to create a check and balance system. If possible preparing checks, receiving payments, making deposits, signing checks and bank reconciliation should be done by different, unrelated people.
- Don't sign checks in advance.
- Don't leave cash lying around.
- Compare budget and actual expenditures.
- Reconcile your bank accounts – look at the actual checks and make sure that the payee is correct.
- On-line banking and financial programs may make it easier to involve more than one person in finances and to verify and track your expenses.
- Use financial review – an audit, review or compilation.
- Watch FDIC limits so your money is protected.
- Bond employees/volunteers who are handling your money.

## FOR PARENTS

- Know what you are paying for and what your responsibilities are. Do you need to 1099 a trainer or coach?
- Don't assume full responsibilities for team finances. Protect yourself by working with another, unrelated adult.

## FOR PLAYERS

- Don't tempt your teammates or fate – keep your valuables in a safe place.
- Don't leave cash out in the open or in view in your equipment bag.
- Remember, soccer gear can be expensive – take good care of it!

## PERSONAL SAFETY

The statistics are frightening. Fact: One out of every 4 girls and one out of every 6 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. Fact: Pedophiles are drawn to places where there are children. All youth sports, including youth soccer, are such places.

Each US Youth Soccer State Association has a Kidsafe Risk Management program in place. At a minimum this includes Risk Management Disclosures and it may also include background checks of coaches, assistant coaches, administrators and even parent helpers who are working with the players. However, background checks can only turn up past offenses; they cannot prevent child abuse on their own.

Coaches are also vulnerable. They can be falsely accused. It is vital that no coach, trainer or adult puts themselves in a position that could jeopardize their good name and their future.

Education protects our adults and our players. Know the types of predators and the red flags. Be vigilant. Whether you are a coach, administrator, parent or player be alert and if you suspect someone is at risk talk to the appropriate person. You can go to your club officials, your league officials or to the Risk Manager in your State Association. You will be treated with respect.

Here are the types of predators that prey on youth:

**The pedophile** creates & seeks opportunities for access to children. This person has a tremendous aptitude for identifying children's needs and vulnerabilities. He or she will take the time to form relationships not only

with the youth, but, possibly, the family. Youth sports can open the door for predators. By offering success they can take advantage of the needs and desires of both parents and players.

**The seducer, sexual harasser or exploiter** preys on older adolescents & young adults. He or she may make sexual behavior, sexual advance or romantic involvement part of the terms and conditions for participation. Players feel that coach's benefits -- from playing time to recommendations -- are based on an intimate or sexual relationship.

**The molester** is the nightmare in the news. This is the person who seeks, and may snatch, vulnerable and easily manipulated children – often the very young. Because we play in parks, our youth are vulnerable to these predators, which may become fixated with a child from a distance.

## FOR COACHES

- Never be alone with a child. If you are working with an individual player one-on-one, work in sight of other coaches or adults.
- Don't send children to restrooms alone.
- Keep barriers in place. If you communicate by text or emails, send group messages to the entire team and, even, include parents. Don't use these means to communicate on an individual basis.
- Do not become "friends" with your players on Facebook or other social websites.
- Limit your use of cell phones. Don't use your players' cell phones to communicate with players individually.

- If you are a male coaching females or a female coaching males, make sure you have an assistant coach, a parent or manager of the same sex as the players at all practices, training sessions, games, etc.
- Have another adult at all practices. Be sure they'll wait with you if a player is not picked up promptly.
- Establish boundaries between team and social activities. Make sure parents are involved & included in team activities that are social in nature and in tournament travel.

### FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Make sure that every adult who works with youth has complied with the Risk Management policies of your State Association, League and Club.
- Check references thoroughly. Don't be afraid to ask a coach, assistant coach, trainer or administrator about their previous experience.
- Do not encourage activities that leave a coach or trainer alone with a single child.
- Be wary of a coach with rigid age preferences.
- Help create an open environment that makes sure players know that they will be supported for seeking help with anything that makes them uncomfortable. Assure them that there are multiple avenues of support.
- Conduct "exit interviews" with players who withdraw from a team without explanation.

- Be aware of the atmosphere established by your coaching staff. Do not tolerate flirtation, banter, teasing or any conduct that blurs the boundaries between youth and adult.
- Make sure players know they can express concerns without penalty.
- Make sure club/team websites are safe and do not identify children by name or give personal information.
- Set a tone of respect for players. Address the professional conduct you expect from your coaches and administrators at coaches' meetings, parent meetings and in league/club literature.

## FOR PARENTS

- Question expansion of the coaching relationship into other areas such as social interaction. There is a difference between team activities and coach/player activities.
- Within the parameters of your family's beliefs, be aware of and/or monitor your player's cell phone and computer use.
- Be alert. Approach adults who appear to be observing children at a game or practice. Strike up a conversation; ask them who they are and why they're there.
- Talk to your child. Create an open atmosphere where your child knows he or she will be heard and respected.
- Never leave your child alone at a park. Don't drop your player off early or be late picking him or her up.

- Be available as an adult/parent to take part in team activities, to wait for late parents to pick up children and to observe practices. Don't interfere with coaching!

### FOR PLAYERS

- It is your right to be treated with respect. If you feel your playing situation does not meet this standard, talk to your coach, your team administration, your club, league or State Association.
- Do your part to keep a professional relationship between your coach, yourself and your teammates.

### FOR EVERYONE

Watch for red flags:

- Coach/adult who seeks personal intimacy with a player or discloses intimate, personal or emotional feelings for a player
- Coach/adult who "courts" a player or responds in kind to flirting or seductive behavior
- Coach/adult who makes physical contact excessively or disproportionately with one player

## TOURNAMENT AND TRAVEL SAFETY

Tournaments and tournament travel are part of the fun of participating in youth soccer – help make them safe for everyone involved!

### FOR COACHES – BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Plan ahead – make sure you have all the necessary paperwork, including original Emergency Release forms. Know if the hospitals in the area require a notarized form.
- Make sure that all contact numbers for parents, administrators, etc. are good, current numbers.
- If players are traveling without their family, know their transportation arrangements. Are they going with another family? Do they need someone to pick them up at an airport?
- Plan your first team meeting/game in advance. Make sure everyone knows the meeting place and time along with how to get to the hotel, field or facility.

### FOR ADMINISTRATORS – BEFORE THEY LEAVE

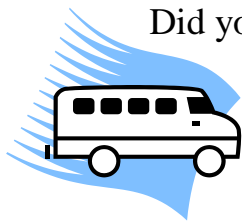
- Remember, playing on mixed cards (i.e., some of the team using US Youth cards and some using US Club cards) may create insurance problems.
- ALL adults who will be directly working with players such as parents who may be helping during the trip should have followed the Risk Management procedures of your State Association, League and/or Club.

- If a team is traveling for the first time, make sure they are well prepared. Help them through the needed paperwork. Ask questions about how they will chaperon the players. Do everything you can to help keep the players safe.

## FOR PARENTS – BEFORE THE TRIP

- Double check all arrangements. If you have questions, ask!
- If your child is traveling with someone else, make sure that you approve of the arrangements. Also, make sure they have the necessary paperwork to take care of your child should an emergency or injury occur.
- Make sure your player has all the gear, necessary funds, etc. to be ready to play.

## ON THE ROAD



Did you know that Federal Law prohibits the use of 15-passenger vans for school-related transport of high school age and younger children? Between 1990 and 2002, there were 1576 fatal crashes involving 15 passenger vans. 87% of those killed were not wearing seatbelts.

If your team chooses to use a 15 or 12 passenger van:

- Van should be driven **ONLY** by experienced operators.
- Seat belts on everyone – all the time!
- No more than 15 people, including the driver.
- When the van is not full, passengers should sit in seats in front of rear axle.

- Maintain proper tire inflation and tread. Check tire pressure and tread wear before traveling.
- Do not drive when fatigued.
- Do not speed.
- Avoid conditions that lead to loss of control.
- Be especially cautious on curved roads and rural roads.
- If wheels drop off the roadway or pavement, gradually reduce speed and steer back on roadway when it is safe to do so.
- Do not load luggage on roof – this greatly increases the rollover risk.

**REMEMBER, THAT THE INSURANCE COVERAGE PROVIDED BY YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION MAY NOT INCLUDE LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR DRIVERS. IF YOU ARE TRANSPORTING PLAYERS IN YOUR OWN VEHICLE, YOU MANY NOT HAVE ADDITIONAL LIABILITY OTHER THAN YOUR PERSONAL COVERAGE.**

### HOTEL SAFETY FOR COACHES

- If players are staying together in their own rooms, make sure you have adequate supervision. Rule of thumb: Are there enough adults to remove the players from the hotel safely in an emergency?
- Set team rules and monitor that they are being kept. Standards should include in-room behavior, behavior in public areas, lights-out time, etc.
- Instruct team members on basic hotel safety.

- Players should use elevators, not stairs (unless an emergency dictates otherwise).
- Players should always have a buddy with them.
- Players should keep doors locked.
- Players should not allow anyone into their rooms other than their family members and/or teammates.
- Protect yourself – never be alone with a player in his or her room.

#### FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Use a hotel booking service whenever possible for hotel selection to reduce your liability.
- If it is “your” tournament, remember that dictating that teams must stay in certain hotels increases your liability should there be a problem at a hotel. Again, use a service to reduce your liability if you want to specify hotels.

#### FOR PARENTS

- If you are traveling with your player, know who is in charge at all times. Don’t let your son or daughter leave your supervision unless you know he or she is going to a specified team activity.
- Do not let your player roam the hotel alone.
- Instruct your player on both your family rules and hotel safety.
- If you are not traveling with your player, be certain that you are comfortable with the travel and supervision arrangements.

## FOR PLAYERS

- Keep your room number private. Do not shout it out to friends.
- Do not prop your door open so that people can come and go freely. Keep your door locked at all times.
- Don't allow anyone in your room except your roommates or, with your coach's approval, your teammates.
- Always have a buddy with you when you are outside of your room.
- Use elevators instead of stairs unless an emergency requires use of the stairway.
- Don't be afraid to alert your coach or a supervising adult if you feel that rules are not being followed or you feel you are in an unsafe situation.

Thank you! We hope that this will give you some ideas on how to help make US Youth Soccer the safest possible place for our players. If you have any questions or concerns, please remember that you can contact the Risk Management officials in your Club, League, State Association or Region. The list of Regional Risk Managers is available under the Risk Management tab on the US Youth Website, [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org). Thank you for intrusting your player to us and for helping us keep them safe.

Bob Brantley  
Chairman  
US Youth Soccer Risk Management Committee