



RISK MANAGEMENT



Providing the safest possible environment
through US Youth Soccer Risk Management
KIDSAFE PROGRAM

SAFE
KID

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WELCOME TO US YOUTH SOCCER

Whether you play in Honolulu or Philadelphia...
Whether your local club, league or association has
thousands of players or just a few teams...

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





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KIDSAFE

US Youth Soccer and its State Associations consider the safety of youth soccer players and others involved in youth soccer to be of paramount importance.

Introduction

Our commitment is to provide the safest possible environment through US Youth Soccer Risk Management **KidSafe Program**. We want to provide each player with a culture of safety – a place where every parent, player, coach, administrator and volunteer works together to ensure the safety of all of our players. This guide touches on several important topics and is designed to educate and inform so that you can help us in making sure that every child that is registered with US Youth Soccer is protected in as many ways possible. The topics included in this guide are:

- US Youth Soccer KidSafe Program (beginning on this page)
- Goal Safety (page 6)
- Personal Safety (page 8)
- Travel and Tournament Safety (page 12)
- If Guidelines for Financial Management are needed, please refer to the US Youth Soccer web site

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

KidSafe Program

US Youth Soccer and its State Associations consider the safety of youth soccer players and others involved in youth soccer to be of paramount importance. We have implemented stringent risk management policies and practices to promote the safety and security of players, teams, team officials, parents, volunteers and spectators. US Youth Soccer works in close cooperation with its State Associations to protect and improve the safety of youth soccer players nationwide.

US Youth Soccer and its State Associations' programs, activities, policies and bylaws that protect the safety and security of youth soccer players include the following:

- (A) adopting the KidSafe Program, including establishing and training Risk Management coordinators, and applying the program broadly to team officials, referees and volunteers;
- (B) promulgating risk management guidelines for youth web sites;
- (C) encouraging and facilitating compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA);
- (D) instituting coach and referee training programs;
- (E) developing materials and presenting programs about running safe activities, such as this guide and well-managed soccer tournaments and games;
- (F) developing and disseminating programs about proper parenting of youth soccer players;
- (G) encouraging and conducting educational programs about positive interactions among players, parents, team officials, referees and spectators;
- (H) providing information and guidance concerning many safety matters, such as lightning and weather, goal anchoring and safety, and coordination with local fire, emergency and law enforcement officials; and
- (I) ensuring age-appropriate interaction between and among youth soccer players.



KIDSAFE

Falling goals can seriously injure and kill. Every year children are injured or lose their lives in goal post accidents.



Goal Safety

Every year children are injured or 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:

- Never start a practice or game without inspecting the goals; don’t rely on someone else to ensure the safety of your players.
 - Always make sure that goals are properly anchored, including portable goals, before you start play. If goals are not anchored, don’t have players in the goal area and notify the proper official immediately.
 - 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; then make sure you give proper instruction to all members of your club, league or association.
- Do not manufacture or design goal posts – buy from a manufacturer who has product liability.
- Perform periodic surveys on goal condition, including who owns the goals. Could your organization, league or association be held responsible for goals that don’t belong to you?

- Put warning labels on all goals. For warning label information: www.cpsc.gov
- Communicate goal safety information through every channel and opportunity, including your web site and registration.
- 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 responsible. If you see any children playing on a goal, ask them to stop and inform the proper official.
- Be aware – goals are a part of the landscape but can injure or kill. Respect them.
- Make sure that nets are removed and the goals are stored safely when not in use.

**Never
under any circumstances
ask players to help
you move a goal.**

KIDSAFE

Fact: One out of every 4 girls and one out of every 6 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18.



Personal Safety

The statistics are frightening. Fact: One out of every four girls and one out of every six 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 Program in place. At a minimum, this includes Risk Management disclosures and it may also include background checks of coaches, assistant coaches, administrators, volunteers 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.

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. If you suspect someone is at risk, inform the appropriate person. You can go to club, league or association officials, or to the Risk Manager of your State Association. Your concerns will be treated with importance and respect.

Here are the types of predators that prey on youth

- The pedophile creates and seeks opportunities to access 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 and young adults. He or she may make sexual behavior, sexual advances or romantic involvement part of the terms and conditions for participation. Players may feel that a coach's actions (from playing time to recommendations) are based on the 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 and other publicly accessible facilities, our youth are vulnerable to these predators who may become fixated with a child from a distance.

Here are some simple safety guidelines to reduce the risk

- Make sure that every adult who works with youth has complied with the Risk Management policies of your State Association, and club league or association.
- Check references thoroughly. Don't be afraid to ask a coach, assistant coach trainer, or administrator about his or her previous experience.
- 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.

Make sure that every adult who works with youth has complied with the Risk Management policies of your State Association, and club, league or association.



- Set a tone of respect for players. Communicate the level of expected professional conduct to coaches, administrators and volunteers at coaches' meetings, parent meetings and in literature.
- As an adult, never be alone with a player. If you are working with an individual player one-on-one, work in sight of other adults.
- Don't send players to restrooms alone.
- Keep barriers in place. If communication occurs by text or emails, send group messages to the entire team, including parents. Don't use these means to communicate on an individual basis.
- Limit the use of adult-to-player communication through cell phones.
- Adults involved in a team, club, league or association should not become "friends" with players on social web sites.
- Coaches coaching players of the opposite sex should make sure to have an assistant coach, 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 at least two adults wait for players to be picked up from practices or games or, if there is only one adult available, such as the coach, then make sure the adult stays out in the open and visible.

- Establish boundaries between team and social activities.
- Watch for red flags:
 - Adults who seeks personal intimacy with a player or discloses intimate, personal or emotional feelings for a player.
 - Adults who “court” a player or responds in kind to flirting or seductive behavior.
 - Adults who make excessive or disproportionate physical contact with one player.



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Tournament and Travel Safety

Tournaments and travel are part of the fun and experience of participating in youth soccer. Help make them safe for everyone involved.

- Plan ahead – make sure you have all the necessary paperwork, forms and passes.
- Make sure that all contact numbers for parents, guardians, administrators, etc. are current.
- If a player is traveling with someone else, other than his or her family, know the player's transportation arrangements. Make sure these arrangements have been approved. Is the player going with another family? Does the player need someone to pick him or her up?
- 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.
- Double check all arrangements. If you have questions, ask.
- Make sure players have all their gear and necessary funds to be prepared to travel and play.
- Hotel safety:
 - If players are staying together in their own rooms, make sure they 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 behavior.



- Use a hotel booking service whenever possible for hotel selection to reduce liability.
- If it is “your” tournament, remember that requiring teams to stay in certain hotels increases liability should there be a problem at a hotel. Again, use a service to reduce liability if specifying hotels.
- If parents are traveling with the team, know who is in charge at all times. Don’t let your son or daughter leave your supervision unless they are attending a specified team activity.
- Do not let players roam the hotel alone.
- Instruct team members on basic hotel safety, including the following:
 - Instruct players on hotel rules and safety.
 - Players should use elevators, not stairs (unless an emergency dictates otherwise).
 - Players should always have a buddy with them.
 - Players should not allow anyone into their rooms other than their family members and/or teammates unless with an adult’s approval and knowledge.
 - Keep room numbers private.
 - Do not prop doors open so that people can come and go without restriction. Keep doors locked at all times.



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- Communicate matters of non-compliance and unsafe behavior.
- 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 1,576 fatal crashes involving 15 passenger vans. 87% of those killed were not wearing seatbelts.
- Remember; 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 may not have additional liability other than your personal coverage.

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 Risk Management officials in US Youth Soccer, your State Association your local club, league or association. The Risk Management committee members contact information is available in the Risk Management Resource Center on, www.USYouthSoccer.org

Thank you for helping us keep our players safe.

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