



# Powhatan Little League

## Risk Management Policies & Procedures

### RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Background: Child abuse/molestation in the world of youth sports has received much media attention over the past 10-15 years. Much has been written and reported about frequent problems within the churches, sports programs, scouting and schools and has had a positive impact in heightening awareness to these issues and risks of occurrence.

Medical professionals state that the effects of child abuse can surface decades later and often result in suicide, violence, delinquency, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and other forms of criminality that are child abuse related. There have been a number of multi-million dollar verdicts against coaches and associations for sexual abuse over the past several years and at least one child has been killed.

Purpose: The purpose of this program is to reduce the liability risk and related negative publicity, expense, and trauma to Powhatan Little League and especially, first and foremost, the children they serve. The likelihood of such horrendous activities can be reduced by making the environment unsuitable for the sexual predator and/or abuser.

This program will key in on the bare essentials of education, volunteer screening, policies, and program administration. The intent of this program is not to be all encompassing, but instead, to provide the framework of a basic workable program.

Policy Statement: As the Board of Directors or Powhatan Little League, we are ardent supporters of the well-being and are committed to the safety of our ball players when under our supervision. We will strive to ensure all reasonable measures are taken to protect these children from abuse and molestation. We are each stewards of this policy and will ensure active communication, reminders and ongoing reiteration of the importance of protecting our children.

#### **POLICIES ON CHILD ABUSE/MOLESTATION:**

**Limit One On One Contact:** It is this organization's policy that no activities shall 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.

**Prohibition of Sleepovers:** All PLL Baseball sanctioned team or league sleepover activities are prohibited whether overnight parties or traveling to away games. Exception: Teams traveling to far away tournaments can have sleepovers if each child is either accompanied by his/her parent or is being supervised by two (2) adults who are in each other's presence at all times.

**Touch Policy:** Touch is acceptable only if it is “respectful and appropriate”. Some experts have adopted a no touch policy, but most experts believe that “no touch” is an over-reaction and is ultimately damaging in itself and not practical.

**Verbal Conduct Policy:** Inappropriate comments of a sexual nature and suggestive jokes are prohibited.

**Take Home/Pick-Up:** Take home/pick-up of ball players by PLL volunteers is strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one on one contact between adult and child (remember the Buddy System). Parent(s) should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events. The league will clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parent(s). Parent(s) should be instructed to make back-up plans in the event they can't provide transportation. If parent(s) can't provide transportation they must communicate to PLL manager and/or league director the name of the person(s) who are authorized to pick up the child. Such policy will help to protect against potential abductions or being thrust into the middle of any custody dispute.

It is also a best practice to ensure that no child is left waiting alone after a league event for a pickup. Each manager/coach is responsible to ensure each child has appropriate supervision until they are picked up by their parent or an approved adult guardian or family member.

**Child Abuse Prohibition:** All forms of sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse are prohibited.

**Name Distribution:** The distribution of directories/rosters with names, phone numbers, addresses, and pictures should be limited to persons on a “need to know” basis.

## RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

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### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Child Abuse:** Verbal abuse (ridicule or put-downs), physical abuse (any hurting touching or excessive exercise used as punishment), emotional abuse (threats to perform unreasonable tasks), and sexual abuse.

**Sexual Abuse:** Refers to a wide spectrum of interactions including rape, physical assault, sexual battery, unwanted physical sexual contact, unwelcome sexually explicit or offensive verbal communication, coercive or expletive sexual contact, verbal sexual harassment, and/or sexualized attention or contact with a minor.

**Risk Committee:** Committee established by PLL and members appointed by the board to administer the Simplified Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program. The Risk Committee is responsible for education, reviewing Volunteer Applications, checking references, conducting criminal background checks, handling appeals from disqualified candidates, conducting investigations on allegations of abuse, acting as liaison to local law enforcement, etc. Unless otherwise voted upon by the PLL Board of Directors, the standing Risk Committee membership will be the President, Vice-President and Safety Coordinator.

**Volunteer:** Citizens who perform the various functions entailed in the running of a league without pay including league board members/directors, committee personnel, managers, coaches, scorekeepers and practice assistants.

**Sexual Offender Registry Check (SOR):** SOR checks are currently available on the internet for free in 43 states. Each state determines its own definition of what constitutes a sex offender. As a result, some states only list high risk (level 3) sex offenders. SORs rely on a third party to input the information and current media accounts indicate that SORs in many states are more than 50% incomplete. SOR information only goes back to the mid-1990s in most states. SORs will never indicate other serious criminal history such as murder, armed robbery, etc. For the

reasons listed above, a sports organization should not rely solely on a SOR check. Instead, only a criminal background check (CBC) should be used.

**Criminal Background Check (CBC):** CBCs will provide all misdemeanor and felony information (not just sex offenses) that a sports organization may want to take into account in the disqualification process. CBCs show offenses that go back a minimum of 7 years, but much longer in most cases. Also, CBCs don't rely on 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to enter information into the database as this happens automatically as part of the judicial process.

### **EXAMPLES OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION:**

**Emotional Abuse:** Yelling or making the following statements:

- You're stupid;
- You're an idiot;
- You're an embarrassment;
- You're not worth the uniform you play in; etc.

**Physical Abuse:** Besides the obvious examples of a coach hitting, kicking, throwing equipment, or shaking a player, watch out for the following:

- Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary;
- Training practices become abusive
- Fighting is encouraged or ignored;
- Illegal moves, often associated with injuries are encouraged;
- Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage conduct which violates safety rules;
- Coaches allow athlete(s) to become physically or verbally abusive;
- Behaviors result in injuries to athlete(s); etc.

**Sexual Abuse:** An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling, 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).

### **WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION:**

With some forms of abuse, there may be physical indicators (examples: with physical abuse, bruises, welts, broken bones) or with sexual abuse venereal diseases, genital swelling/soreness, difficulty sitting or walking, pain or itching when urinating or defecating, stomach aches, pain/itching in genital area, and frequently unexplained sore throats. But most often the effects of sexual abuse are less obvious. For example, sudden shifts in behavior or attitudes when outgoing child suddenly builds a protected, closed wall or a generally happy child becomes aggressive and angry or a trusting child becomes fearful may be an indication of abuse. In sports, this can show up as losing interest or wanting to drop out of sports or a sudden decline in ability or functions.

Please note that no indicators or symptoms are absolute. Many of these could be indicators of problems other than child abuse. However, if some of these things are going on, consider them to be a red flag. One difficulty is that some signs are ambiguous. Children may respond in different ways and some may show no sign at all.

Some indicators include:

- Disclosure by child. Most children won't just come out and say they have been abused, but instead, may hint at it.
- Observations, complaints, concerns, or allegations about league volunteers.
- Attitudes/behaviors expressed on the part of an adult that may be associated with inappropriate or abusive behavior (racist, poor sense of athlete development, raging temper, extremely controlling, jealous, hypersensitive, poor sexual boundaries, bullying, intimidating manner, unrealistic or inappropriate training practices and risks, etc.)

- Unexplained/unlikely explanation of injuries.
- Extreme fear of a league volunteer;
- Extreme low self-esteem, self-worth;
- A child's attachment to a coach/staff to the point of isolation from others;
- A coach/staff with an interest beyond caring concerns, special interest in a child (time, gifts, attention, obsession, unrealistic expectations, etc.)
- A child's desire to drop out without a clear explanation, or without one that makes sense;
- A child that misses a lot of practices or games with suspicious explanations or excuses.

Despite increased sensitivity to abuse, there is still a tendency to blame the victims instead of holding the person(s) accountable who:

- lost their temper;
- got a little out of control;
- were just having a dispute;
- misinterpreted the touch;
- is really a wonderful person; etc.

### **LISTEN TO WHAT THE ATHLETE IS SAYING.**

#### **ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION & OTHER POLICY VIOLATIONS:**

**Point of Contact:** The Risk Committee members are each one of the appropriate persons to whom all reports of child abuse/molestation should be reported. In the event that the one of these members is the alleged abuser/molester, the report should be made to another member of the Risk Committee.

In assessing the seriousness of the situation, it is useful to differentiate between:

**Concern:** When the person just needs to be heard and have some information clarified.

**Complaint:** When the person needs you to listen and may or may not want action taken if they feel you listened.

**Allegation:** Clarify if the allegation is:

- appropriate, but unappreciated act;
- inappropriate act, but not illegal act;
- illegal act that needs to be reported to law enforcement.

**Disclosure:** When the person tells you that abuse occurred or based on their actions gives you reason to believe abuse has occurred.

The member of the Risk Committee must take the appropriate action depending on where the situation falls in the above mentioned categories.

**Information Gathering:** Upon receipt of a disclosure of child/sexual abuse or of a policy violation the Risk Committee Member should gather all pertinent facts in a fair, respectful, and confidential manner and review with both the accuser and accused. All such disclosures must be brought to the attention of the Risk Committee who will report to the Board of Directors. The Risk Committee Member must immediately report to the authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that physical abuse or sexual abuse has occurred. At this point, the Risk Committee Member should never investigate, as this is the role of the law enforcement authorities. Furthermore, allowing the law enforcement authorities to investigate helps to shield Powhatan Little League against potential lawsuits for defamation of character.

**Suspension/Termination:** The findings of the Risk Committee Member should be reported to the Board of Directors and all proceedings should be confidential. If the alleged abuser or policy violator admits to the conduct, the Board can employ the most appropriate punishment. If the alleged abuser or policy violator denies the conduct, the Board can conduct further investigations (except when reasonable cause of physical or sexual abuse exists that should be reported to the authorities) deemed necessary prior to rendering any appropriate punishment or exoneration.

Remember, the alleged violations range from inappropriate, but not illegal behavior to clear cut child/sexual abuse and the punishment must be tailored to the violation.

**Suspension:** Less egregious conduct on the part of the volunteer will result in a written reprimand. If more than two (2) written reprimands are received in a three (3) year time period, this will result in termination of the volunteer. Slightly more egregious conduct for a first offense may result in both a written reprimand and suspension (duration to be recommended by the Risk Committee and approved by the Board). Upon a second suspension in a three (3) year time period, the volunteer will be terminated.

**Termination:** All volunteers are subject to immediate termination based on the disqualification criteria below.

**Duty to Disclose/Immunity/Confidentiality:** All volunteers may be required by state law to report suspected cases of child/sexual abuse. Any person(s) who makes or participates in the making of a good-faith report of abuse/neglect, participates in the investigation, or in judicial proceedings shall in so doing be provided with complete and absolute immunity from civil liability.

The identity of the Volunteer reporting a case of suspected child/sexual abuse should not be revealed. All records and reports concerning investigations and their outcome are protected by various confidentiality laws. Unauthorized disclosure of such records is a possible criminal offense which could subject the violator to fines and/or imprisonment.

#### **VOLUNTEER SCREENING:**

**Background Check:** PLL will follow the rules for background checks established by Little League Inc. Each PLL Baseball Director, instructor, coach, assistant coach, scorekeeper, practice assistant or other volunteer who may be in contact with children registered to play in PLL shall be required, as a condition to participate in PLL activities, to submit a volunteer application form annually. Failure to submit or complete the form shall disqualify the individual from participation. All individuals must provide truthful, correct and complete information on the volunteer application. Failure to do so may result in disqualification. Background approval shall be good for a period of one (1) year from the date of official approval.

**Background Check Results Review:** All negative results (yellow or red) will be reviewed by the Risk Committee. All yellow or red results will be logged, reviewed and further investigated and confirmed prior to making a recommendation to the Board. Any cases where a volunteer is confirmed to have been a sexual offender will result in disqualification of the volunteer.

NOTE: There are known data quality issues in the CBC program that will require that the volunteer be contacted to verify or refute any results returned. The Risk Committee will manage this process with the utmost confidence and discretion. Only the Risk Committee will have access to this data record.

**Acknowledgment of Training:** All volunteer applicants must acknowledge they have read and reviewed the PLL Risk Management Policies and Procedures and must agree to abide by the rules. PLL leadership will conduct sufficient volunteer meetings before each season to ensure adequate coverage and opportunities to be trained on risk management and safety procedures.