

CHARACTER COUNTS!

# Gold Medal

STANDARDS

## for Youth Sports





# The Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports A Key Part of the Pursuing Victory With Honor Campaign**

Organized athletic competition can have a uniquely powerful influence over values, habits and skills that last a lifetime. With this in mind, leaders in youth sports gathered at a high-level conference in 2002 to discuss the necessity and opportunity for coaches, administrators, officials and parents to improve the character of young athletes. This resource, *The Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports*, is the result of their deliberations.

These Standards are a key component of **Pursuing Victory With Honor (PVWH)** — a sportsmanship campaign founded by the nonprofit Josephson Institute of Ethics and endorsed by virtually every major U.S. amateur athletic association. Endorsers include the National Association of Basketball Coaches, the NCAA Division IA Athletic Directors Association, the American Football Coaches Association, the National Federation of State High School Associations, the U.S. Olympic Committee Coaches' Division and most of the nation's Division IA collegiate athletic programs.

Other foundational documents of PVWH include the Aspen Declaration on Character Education (1992), the Arizona Sports Summit Accord (1999) and the Gold Medal Standards for Amateur Basketball (2001). But PVWH is action-oriented and so provides such resources and services as:

- A free monthly newsletter on sports and sportsmanship — resource-rich, fast-growing and influential
- Matchless support materials, such as the *Ultimate Sportsmanship Tool Kit*, customizable banners and more
- Expertly designed training programs and workshops

It's all part of the mission of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Josephson Institute, which seeks to improve the ethical quality of society by changing personal and organizational decision making. Toward this end, PVWH — like the CHARACTER COUNTS! initiative also founded by the Institute — develops resources and services to help people Teach, Enforce, Advocate and Model core values called the Six Pillars of Character.

The success has been remarkable. CHARACTER COUNTS! is now the most widely implemented approach to character education in the U.S., reaching six million young people through thousands of schools, service organizations and government agencies.

We hope you find The Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports useful. If you would like more information about Pursuing Victory With Honor, CHARACTER COUNTS! or any of the Josephson Institute's projects and programs, please call (800) 711-2670 or visit [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org).

## Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports Drafters and Signatories

### Delegates to the Pursuing Victory With Honor Summit on Youth Sports Los Angeles, CA • Feb. 10-11, 2002

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## Quick Overview of the Gold Medal Standards

**1. Pursue Child-Centered Goals.** A Gold Medal program fosters the social, emotional, intellectual, moral and physical development of each youngster in a positive atmosphere.

- Make It Fun.
  - Fun is the main reason children play sports, so it's a crucial teaching strategy.
  - Balanced competition enhances fun.
- Develop Good Character.
- Teach Children Positive Life Skills.
- Promote Fitness and a Healthy Lifestyle.

**2. Clearly State Your Mission and Objectives.**

A Gold Medal program builds on a foundation of objectives that guide program design and help set policies.

- Make Sure All Your Activities Advance the Mission.
- Select and Retain Only People Who Will Pursue the Objectives.
- Encourage Parents to Collaborate.
- Uphold the Program Standards.

**3. Keep the Sporting Environment Safe.**

A Gold Medal program provides an environment free of physical and emotional abuse, and with less risk of injury.

- Have an Adult Trained in First Aid on Hand at All Times.
- Create an Action Plan for Emergencies.
- Don't Overstrain Athletes in Practice.
- Require Background Checks.
- Demand a Signed Application, Waiver and Fingerprints.
- Require Clearance.
- Try to Have Two Adults Present at All Times.
- Inform Adults About Safety.
- Inspect the Facilities Regularly.

**4. Make Sure Activities Are Age-Appropriate.** A Gold Medal program assures that coaches and parents take into account the phases of youngsters' development, as well as the reasons they play and drop out of sports.

**5. Ensure Effective Coaching.** A Gold Medal program specifically describes the behavior expected of coaches and ensures that they realize they are teachers first, with the knowledge and commitment to advance the program's goals.

- Expect Coaches to Know:
  - Character building and sportsmanship
  - Safety
  - Coaching techniques
- Require Positive Coaching.
- Emphasize Effort and Improvement.
- Teach Youngsters How to Win and Lose With Grace.
- Forbid Negative Techniques.
- Make Sure Parent-Coaches Understand the Conflicts in Their Role.



**6. Ensure Effective Officiating.** A Gold Medal program hires officials with the knowledge and commitment to create a positive culture.

- Expect Officials to Promote Good Sportsmanship.
- Make Sure They Know the Sport.
- Instruct Them to Promote a Safe, Positive Atmosphere.

**7. Educate Parents and Encourage Their Support.** A Gold Medal program shows parents how to play a helpful role with their children, avoid false expectations, and help administrators advance the objectives.

- Keep Parents Well-Informed About the Program.
- Encourage Positive Parenting.
- Encourage Parents to Teach Their Children Athletic Responsibility.
- Show Parents How to Help Their Children Gain From the Sports Experience.
- Advise Parents to Listen Carefully to Their Children's Needs and Wants.

**8. Evaluate the Program Every Year.** A Gold Medal program surveys everyone -- parents, players, coaches and officials -- each year to determine how well it is doing. It uses the feedback to improve the program.

## Preamble

At their best, youth sports programs provide young people with a safe environment in which they have fun, build character, learn to practice sportsmanship, and develop skills and traits that help them become responsible citizens and live happy, healthy lives. This provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, coaches and sports administrators to positively influence the development and growth of the next generation.

These Gold Medal Standards articulate the most worthy objectives of youth sports programs and the conditions necessary to best achieve these objectives. They present a framework of principles and a common language of values that establish high but attainable standards of quality, standards to which all youth sports programs should aspire. Programs that adopt and practice these Standards are Gold Medal Sports Programs.

The Standards focus on three core objectives of youth sports: personal development, fun and safety. They embrace the notion that athletic competition can be an ideal setting for the social, emotional, intellectual, moral and physical development of youngsters and that striving to win is an important part of sports. But they also stress that competition is not simply about winning. The Standards require positive coaching techniques that permit participants to derive joy and a sense of accomplishment from effort and improvement as well as the passionate pursuit of victory, regardless of the outcome.

Finally, the Standards recognize that real success in youth sports depends in large part on the education and management of adults. Consequently, they place great emphasis on the training of administrators, coaches, officials and parents.

Certain standards, such as those concerning background checks, fingerprinting and training, will require new procedures and practices that impose significant administrative challenges even on highly developed youth sports programs. The assistance of local, state and federal agencies may be necessary to assure the rapid, inexpensive availability of criminal record reports that include crimes committed anywhere in the United States. Because such assistance will be essential to many youth sports organizations, it may take several years for some programs to fully conform to these standards. The fact that a program has not yet met each and every standard does not imply a lack of quality.

The Pursuing Victory With Honor Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports is a central part of the Pursuing Victory With Honor campaign and the national CHARACTER COUNTS! movement to promote the development of sportsmanship, ethics and character through sports.

## Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports

- **1. Child-Centered Developmental Objectives.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program is child-centered and is directed at the social, emotional, intellectual, moral and physical development of each participating youngster in a positive and safe atmosphere. Stated objectives should embrace the following:

**1.1 Promote Fun.** Promote an enjoyable sports experience based on healthy fun.

**a) Fun Is an End in Itself and an Effective Teaching Strategy.** Fun is an intrinsically worthy objective because it enhances the lives of children and provides lasting memories and relationships. It is also an effective teaching strategy because children are more likely to stay in the program to learn and develop important skills when they are having fun, spending time with friends and participating with enthusiasm.

**b) Provide Balanced Competition.** Because youngsters have more fun when they have a reasonable chance of success, to the extent reasonably possible, the program should adopt policies that tend to assure balanced teams and opportunities for youngsters to play with and against others with comparable skills and abilities.

**1.2 Develop Good Character.** Develop good character including an understanding of and commitment to the six core principles embodied in the concepts of sportsmanship and ethics — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness and citizenship (the Six Pillars of Character).

**1.3 Teach Positive Life Skills.** Teach, nurture and foster positive life skills, traits and attitudes, including self-discipline and an appreciation for the value of hard work and preparation, self-confidence, responsibility, courage, perseverance, empathy and teamwork. Such values will help youngsters lead socially responsible and personally satisfying lives.

**1.4 Promote Physical Fitness and Healthy Lifestyles.** Promote physical fitness and exercise, the development of physical skills, a love of sports that can yield a lifetime of participation in physical activity, and a healthy lifestyle. Discourage the use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other unhealthy substances.

- **2. State Mission and Objectives.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program is built on a clear and comprehensive statement of mission and objectives that guides program design, provides a foundation for the establishment of policies and informs all participants about the program's purposes and aspirations. Gold Medal programs:

**2.1 Assure That All Activities Conform to Mission and Objectives.** Establish and adhere to procedures designed to assure that all volunteers and paid staff consistently and faithfully pursue the program's mission and objectives, and that the intent and impact of all activities are compatible with the mission and objectives. The program must be prepared to stand up for, promote and defend its values with moral courage despite pressures to do otherwise, and to take whatever actions are necessary to uphold these values.

**2.2 Select, Retain and Promote Only Those Who Will Pursue the Mission and Objectives.** Select only people who are willing and able to pursue faithfully and effectively the program's mission and objectives. Retain only those administrators, coaches and officials who have effectively pursued the program's mission and objectives.

**2.3 Encourage Collaboration With Parents.** Treat the concerns of parents, guardians and caregivers (hereafter "parents") with respect and encourage them to participate fully and constructively in pursuing the program's objectives and to work collaboratively with administrators and coaches.

**2.4 Uphold Program Standards.** Separate from the program anyone whose actions are incompatible with the program's mission and objectives.

- **3. Provide a Safe Environment.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program places great emphasis on providing a safe environment that reduces risks of injury and is free of physical, emotional or verbal abuse. Gold Medal Programs:

**3.1 Require the Presence of an Adult Trained in First Aid and Safety.** Provide opportunities for volunteers and staff to complete a qualified safety and first aid certification program (American Red Cross or equivalent) and strive to assure that at least one adult with such training is present at each game and practice. When it is not possible to have at least one adult with formal first aid and safety training present, procedures should be in place to assure that qualified help is rapidly accessible.

**3.2 Establish an Emergency Action Plan.** Develop and distribute an emergency action plan establishing clear procedures for dealing with injuries, illness, fighting, threats and other emergency or security situations. At least one adult with knowledge of the procedures should be present at each game and practice.

**3.3 Require Safe Drills.** Require coaches to use safe conditioning and skill-building drills for the health and well-being of athletes.

**3.4 Require Background Checks.** Reduce the risk that youngsters will be abused, exploited or otherwise harmed by conducting background checks on coaches, administrators and officials. Specifically:

**a) Require a Signed Application, Waiver and Fingerprints.** Require those who seek to serve as a coach, administrator or official to: 1) complete a signed application form requiring disclosure of important background facts, including arrests and convictions, 2) provide fingerprints and 3) execute a waiver permitting program administrators to use fingerprint and application information to acquire complete background facts concerning conduct that bears on the qualifications of the applicant to work with young people.

**b) Require Clearance.** Background information should be examined and clearances provided before coaches, administrators or officials are permitted to perform their roles in the program. When this is not possible, make special efforts to assure that at least two adults are present during practices and other team gatherings.

**3.5 Encourage the Presence of Two Adults.** Assure the safety of children by encouraging the practice of having at least two qualified adults present during practices and other team gatherings.

**3.6 Provide Safety Guidance for Parents.** Provide parents with information and guidance about potentially dangerous situations, factors to look for to avoid abuse and techniques that encourage youngsters to report questionable conduct by adults.

**3.7 Require Inspection of Facilities and Equipment.** Establish procedures to assure that a specifically identified individual is responsible for inspecting equipment, fields and facilities used by youngsters and confirming that conditions are safe.

- **4. Consider Social, Emotional and Physical Developmental Stages.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program is child-centered and assures that coaches and parents are informed about emotional, cognitive, moral and physical developmental stages, as well as the reasons why youngsters participate in or drop out of sports. They participate to have fun, make friends, learn skills, improve coordination and experience excitement. They drop out because they lose interest, they're not having fun, other activities become more important, they have a bad experience with a coach (e.g., being criticized or not getting to play) or there is too much pressure to perform and win. This information should be kept in mind by all adults in forming expectations and making judgments as to the appropriateness of sports opportunities, including the nature and level of competition and in selecting instructional methods.

- **5. Educate Coaches to Achieve Program Objectives.**

A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program recognizes the central role played by coaches in youth sports, provides coaches with a job description containing specific behaviors desired, and establishes procedures to assure that coaches have the knowledge and commitment to effectively advance the program's mission and objectives and understand that they are, first and foremost, teachers.

**5.1 Require Basic Education.** Require all coaches to complete an education program that reflects the national standards for athletic coaches and is designed to assure that they understand:

**a) Character Building and Sportsmanship.** The character-building aspects of sports, including techniques such as the **T.E.A.M.** method of Teaching, Enforcing, Advocating and Modeling values comprising good sportsmanship and good character.

**b) Safety.** First-aid principles, injury prevention, the physical capacities and limitations of the age group coached, and knowledge of procedures for dealing with injuries and emergency situations.

**c) Coaching Techniques.** Positive and effective coaching techniques as well as the rules and strategies pertaining to the coach's particular sport.

**5.2 Require Positive Coaching Techniques.** Require coaches to use positive reinforcement and other teaching techniques that help develop each child's potential and promote individual self-esteem, self-confidence and team pride.

**a) Focus on Effort and Improvement.** Educate coaches to focus more on effort, improvement and incremental mastery of skills than on winning. Though the program can encourage the passionate pursuit of victory, it should unequivocally convey the message that the actual results are not as important as personal effort and progress and the joy of competition.

**b) Teach Youngsters to Win and Lose.** Educate coaches to stress that mistakes and losing are an inevitable part of competition and that it is important to be a good sport in both victory and defeat and not be ashamed or afraid of errors or mistakes.

**5.3 Prohibit Negative Techniques.** Strictly prohibit the use of profanity, bullying, intimidation, humiliation and other abusive or disrespectful behavior as well as techniques that create unreasonable stress or diminish the child's positive outlook on the sports experience.

**5.4 Consider the Special Issues for Parent Coaches.** Adopt procedures to assure that coaches who are also parents of players are aware of problems created by a lack of objectivity, such as the temptation to treat one's child differently (more leniently or harshly) and the negative impact of real or perceived favoritism.

- **6. Educate Officials to Achieve Program Objectives.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program adopts procedures to assure that officials have the knowledge and commitment to effectively create and maintain a positive culture that advances the program's mission and objectives.

**6.1 Require Officials to Promote Good Sportsmanship.** Require that officials play an important role in advancing the sportsmanship and character-building objectives of the program by employing the **T.E.A.M.** method of Teaching, Enforcing, Advocating and Modeling good sportsmanship, encouraging the pursuit of victory with honor and referencing the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship).

**6.2 Require Basic Education.** Require all officials to complete an education program designed to assure that they have a basic knowledge of the essential rules and regulations governing competition including the official rules of the game and of techniques of effective officiating, game management and professional demeanor that improve the accuracy of judgments and the credibility of the officiating process.

**6.3 Instruct Officials to Promote a Safe and Positive Environment.** Instruct officials to proactively assist in making the sports environment safe and positive.

- **7. Educate Parents to Play a Constructive Role in the Pursuit of Program Objectives.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program develops means to educate parents on the program's philosophy, objectives and methods so that they can play a constructive role with their child, avoid inappropriate or unrealistic expectations and help administrators pursue the program's objectives.

**7.1 Provide Parents With Basic Information.** Use written materials, group meetings and individual counseling to assure that parents are informed of all-important aspects of the program, including policies and expectations. Basic information should include:

- The mission and objectives of the program
- The process for team selection
- Procedures for selecting and training coaches and officials
- Likely costs (e.g., enrollment fees) along with an explanation of how money is allocated
- Requirements regarding uniforms
- Policies for playing time and position rotation
- Policies regarding practices including schedules and locations, attendance policies, equipment requirements and transportation options
- Game schedules including locations and expected time of arrival
- Procedures for informing coaches when children will be absent from a game or practice
- Policies regarding participation on other teams and in other sports
- Policies regarding all-star and traveling teams and post-season tournaments
- Behavioral expectations, including codes of conduct, enforcement policies and penalties and guidelines for proper interaction with coaches
- Volunteer expectations of parents such as providing refreshments, staffing the refreshment stand, providing transportation, helping coaches
- Process and contact information for communicating individual matters to officials and coaches
- Policy regarding team and parent meetings
- Eligibility requirements and other league and program rules of competition
- The basic rules of the game (e.g., through an easy-to-read primer)
- Programs available for parents who want advanced level competition or private coaching, and the pros and cons of such programs
- Information to help parents and their children make realistic appraisals of their future in sports

**7.2 Encourage Positive Parenting.** Encourage parents to use positive reinforcements and techniques such as the **T.E.A.M.** method to Teach, Enforce, Advocate and Model good sportsmanship and high ethical standards.

**7.3 Require Civil and Responsible Behavior.** Encourage parents to assist in teaching children that their behavior should always be respectful and responsible, that their commitment to a sports program involves responsibilities to teammates and others, that they should participate in practices and games fully and enthusiastically and that they should complete the season (barring injury or significant academic or emotional problems).

**7.4 Provide Guidance for Constructive Attitudes and Expectations.** Provide parents with explicit guidance to help them develop healthy and constructive attitudes and expectations so that the sports experience benefits the child. Parental guidance should include cautionary words about common sources of problems including:

- Making unreasonable demands on the program or coaches
- Developing unrealistic and unfounded expectations concerning their child's athletic future including the possibility of college scholarships
- Overestimating their child's skill or talent, resulting in unreasonable expectations of the program, the coach or their child
- Verbal or physical abuse of administrators, coaches, officials, athletes, spectators or parents

**7.5 Counsel Parents to Be Attentive to the Wants and Needs of Their Children.** Counsel parents to heed the needs and wants of their children and to avoid forcing them to participate when it is no longer fun.

- **8. Evaluate Program Effectiveness Annually.** A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program provides for annual surveys of parents, players, coaches and officials to assess how well the program is achieving its mission and objectives. Feedback from the evaluations is used to improve the program.



## Get Started With These Action Steps!

### Educate Coaches and Staff

Conduct orientation sessions and workshops to explain Gold Medal Standards and Pursuing Victory With Honor to coaches and staff members. Present clear expectations for each group.

### Develop and Enforce Codes of Conduct

Groups to address include coaches, athletes, parents, spectators, officials, administrators and volunteers. (Samples are available at [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org).)

### Provide Handouts to Parents and Caregivers

Develop short, easy-to-read materials on such topics as:

- The benefits, and pitfalls, of competition
- Why your organization has chosen to operate by the Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports
- Developing realistic expectations regarding scholarships and careers
- When to push and when to let go
- How to address a coach's shortcomings, including ignorance, disrespect and unfairness

### Conduct Background Checks — and Urge That Others Do Too

Background checks should be routine for all staff and volunteers. Go a step further if you can and advocate for laws requiring background checks for all not-for-profit youth-serving sports organizations or government agencies offering youth sports.

### Provide Incentives and Awards

- Create special ways to recognize good sportsmanship.
- Patches, pins and other rewards are available at [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org).

### Promote Your Commitment

- Post the Standards — or a summation of them like that on page three of this booklet — in a public place. Include information on them in your promotional materials and on your website. Let everyone know what you stand for.

### Seek Basic Requirements for the Use of Sports Facilities

Advocate that your local youth facilities:

- Have qualified coaches.
- Adopt sound safety standards.
- Monitor and enforce high standards of sportsmanship.
- Have a reasonable emergency action plan and adequate security to protect officials, participants and spectators.
- Ensure a safe environment, including easy access to law enforcement and emergency services

### Promote Sportsmanship in the Wider Athletic World

Contact high school, collegiate and professional teams to request that they rigorously advocate and enforce high standards of sportsmanship, including firm prohibitions against fighting, spectator violence, taunting, verbal abuse by coaches or spectators, running up the score, and other tactics that violate the spirit of rules and the traditions of the sport. Share your views even more widely by writing letters to the editor or otherwise participating in local media.

### Contact CHARACTER COUNTS! for More Ideas and Resources

Resources include two editions of *The Ultimate Sportsmanship Tool Kit*, training programs and more. Visit [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org) or call (800) 711-2670.



## **Additional PVWH Foundational Document: Aspen Declaration on Character Education**

*In July 1992, the Josephson Institute of Ethics convened in Aspen, Colorado, a diverse group of ethicists and educators to find ways to work together and boost their character-education efforts. The declaration that concluded this meeting would form the intellectual foundation for the CHARACTER COUNTS! movement, started by the Institute the following year.*

1. The next generation will be the stewards of our communities, nation and planet in extraordinarily critical times.
2. The present and future well-being of our society requires an involved, caring citizenry with good moral character.
3. People do not automatically develop good moral character; therefore, conscientious efforts must be made to instruct young people in the values and abilities necessary for moral decision making and conduct.
4. Effective character education is based on core ethical values rooted in democratic society, in particular, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship.
5. These core ethical values transcend cultural, religious and socioeconomic differences.
6. Character education is, first and foremost, an obligation of families and faith communities, but schools and youth-service organizations also have responsibility to help develop the character of young people.
7. These responsibilities are best achieved when these groups work in concert.
8. The character and conduct of our youth reflect the character and conduct of society; therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model the core ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character.

## Additional PVWH Foundational Document: The Arizona Sports Summit Accord

*To explore issues in sports that affect athletes and young people, nearly 50 sports leaders met in Scottsdale, Arizona in May 1999 and issued the Arizona Sports Summit Accord to provide a framework of principles for sports organizations to adopt and practice. This version of the Accord was prepared for high school and youth sports organizations; another version, for intercollegiate and Olympic sports, is available from the Institute or online. If you or your organization would like to be a signatory to the Accord, or if you would like printed copies of this document, contact the Josephson Institute at (800) 711-2670, or go online: [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org).*

At its best, athletic competition can hold intrinsic value for our society. It is a symbol of a great ideal: pursuing victory with honor. The love of sports is deeply embedded in our national consciousness. The values of millions of participants and spectators are directly and dramatically influenced by the values conveyed by organized sports. Thus, sports are a major social force that shapes the quality and character of the American culture. In the belief that the impact of sports can and should enhance the character and uplift the ethics of the nation, we seek to establish a framework of principles and a common language of values that can be adopted and practiced widely.

### ***It is therefore agreed:***

1. The essential elements of character-building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these “Six Pillars of Character.”
2. It is the duty of school boards, superintendents, school administrators, parents and school sports leadership — including coaches, athletic administrators, program directors and game officials — to promote sportsmanship and foster good character by teaching, enforcing, advocating and modeling the Six Pillars of Character.
3. To promote sportsmanship and foster the development of good character, school sports programs must be conducted in a manner that enhances the academic, emotional, social, physical and ethical development of student-athletes and teaches them positive life skills that will help them become personally successful and socially responsible.
4. Participation in athletic programs is a privilege, not a right. To earn that privilege, student-athletes must abide by the rules and they must conduct themselves, on and off the field, as role models who exemplify good character.
5. School boards, superintendents, school administrators, parents and school sports leadership shall establish standards for participation by adopting and enforcing codes of conduct for coaches, athletes, parents and spectators.
6. All sports participants in high school sports must consistently demonstrate and demand scrupulous integrity and observe and enforce the spirit as well as the letter of the rules.

7. The importance of character, ethics and sportsmanship should be emphasized in all communications directed to student-athletes and their parents.
8. School boards, superintendents, school administrators, parents and school sports leadership must ensure that the first priority of their student-athletes is a serious commitment to getting an education and developing the academic skills and character to succeed.
9. School boards, superintendents, principals, school administrators and everyone involved in sports program governance must maintain ultimate responsibility for the quality and integrity of those programs. Such individuals must assure that education and character development responsibilities are not compromised to achieve sports performance goals and that the academic, social, emotional, physical and ethical well-being of student-athletes is always placed above desires and pressures to win.
10. All school employees must be directly involved in and committed to the academic success of student-athletes and the school's character-building goals.
11. Everyone involved in competition — including parents, spectators, associated student body leaders and auxiliary groups — has a duty to honor the traditions of the sport and to treat other participants with respect. Coaches have a special responsibility to model respectful behavior and the duty to demand that their athletes refrain from disrespectful conduct, including verbal abuse of opponents and officials, profane or belligerent trash-talking, taunting and inappropriate celebrations.
12. School boards, superintendents and school administrators must ensure that coaches, whether paid or voluntary, are competent to coach. Training or experience may determine minimal competence. These competencies include basic knowledge of: the character-building aspects of sports, including techniques and methods of teaching and reinforcing the core values comprising sportsmanship and good character; 2) the physical capacities and limitations of the age group coached, as well as first aid; and 3) coaching principles and the rules and strategies of the sport.
13. Because of the powerful potential of sports as a vehicle for positive personal growth, a broad spectrum of sports experiences should be made available to all of our diverse communities.
14. To safeguard the health of athletes and the integrity of the sport, sports programs must prohibit the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and performance-enhancing substances, as well as demand compliance with all laws and regulations, including those relating to gambling and the use of drugs.
15. Schools that offer athletic programs must safeguard the integrity of their programs. Commercial relationships should be continually monitored to ensure against inappropriate exploitation of the school's name or reputation. There should be no undue interference or influence of commercial interests. In addition, sports programs must be prudent, avoiding undue financial dependency on particular companies or sponsors.
16. The profession of coaching is a profession of teaching. In addition to teaching the mental and physical dimensions of their sport, coaches, through words and example, must strive to build the character of their athletes by teaching them to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and good citizens.

## **Additional Resource:**

### **The Six Pillars of Character in Sports**

#### **Trustworthiness**

- Demonstrate and demand scrupulous integrity.
- Observe and enforce the spirit and letter of rules.
- Don't compromise education and character-development goals.
- Don't engage in or tolerate dishonesty, cheating or dishonorable conduct.

#### **Respect**

- Treat other participants and the traditions of the sport with respect.
- Don't engage in or tolerate disrespectful conduct, including verbal abuse of opponents and officials, profane or belligerent "trash talking," and taunting or unseemly celebrations.
- Win with grace and lose with dignity.

#### **Responsibility**

- Be a positive role model on and off the field and require the same of your athletes.
- Further the mental, social and moral development of athletes and teach life skills that enhance personal success and social responsibility.
- Maintain competence including basic knowledge of: 1) character building, 2) first aid and safety, and 3) coaching principles, rules and strategies.

#### **Fairness**

- Adhere to high standards of fair play.
- Treat players fairly according to their abilities.
- Never take unfair advantage.
- Be open-minded.

#### **Caring**

- Assure that the academic, emotional, physical and moral well-being of athletes is always placed above desires and pressures to win.

#### **Citizenship**

- Avoid gamesmanship and promote sportsmanship by honoring the rules and goals of the sport.
- Establish codes of conduct for coaches, athletes, parents and spectators.
- Safeguard the health of athletes and the integrity of the sport by prohibiting the use of alcohol and tobacco.
- Demand compliance with all laws and regulations.

## **Additional Resource:** **The T.E.A.M. Approach to Developing the Whole Player**

### **Teach**

- Let players know that character counts — that enduring happiness depends on who you are, not on what you have or can do.
- Show that people of character know the difference between right and wrong because ethical values guide them.
- When explaining character, use the Six Pillars, personal stories, history and the news.

### **Enforce**

- Reward good behavior and impose fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character.
- Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing core values when it is difficult to do so.
- Discourage all instances of bad behavior.

### **Advocate**

- Continually encourage others to live up to the Six Pillars. Be clear and uncompromising that you expect young athletes to demonstrate trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.
- Be an advocate for character.
- Don't be neutral about the importance of character or casual about improper conduct.

### **Model**

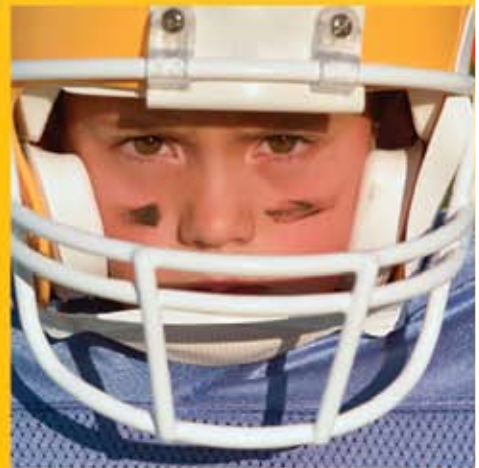
- Set a good example in what you say and do.
- Hold yourself to the highest standards by honoring the Six Pillars at all times.
- Be sure your actions reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing even when it is hard to do so.
- When you slip, act the way you would prefer young people to when they behave improperly. Be accountable, apologize sincerely — and do better!





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