

Crow River Soccer Club

COACH LIABILITY AND PLAYER SAFETY

Liability and the Volunteer Coach

As a volunteer coach you will have the care, custody and control of someone else's children for 40-60 hours this season. In this capacity you have the potential both to create and to prevent accidents and injuries. You should be aware of your legal responsibilities as a coach. Attention to these duties will help minimize your personal risk, prevent sports-related injuries, and avoid claims of coaching negligence.

Your legal duties include:

1. Providing adequate supervision (general and specific to the game) - The health and safety of your team members are entrusted to your care. You must provide adequate supervision to avoid foreseeable accidents and injuries. NEVER leave players unattended! NEVER leave after a game or practice until all are safely picked up by parents or guardians!
2. Sound planning - Carefully plan your practices and drills so players progress and learn new skills at a safe pace. Make written practice plans and keep them on record for the duration of the season.
3. Warning players of inherent risks - Players and parents must know, understand, and appreciate the risks they are likely to encounter in soccer. Always warn your players about potentially dangerous techniques.
4. Providing a safe playing environment - Be certain that practice and playing fields are free of hazards (e.g. holes, rocks, broken glass or other debris) and that equipment (e.g. goal posts) is in proper condition. Warn your players MUST NOT EVER hang from the goal cross bar!
5. Evaluating players and determining any limitation regarding participation - Be sure players are physically capable of performing the required skills. Evaluate old injuries as carefully as you can before letting players return to action.
6. Matching or equating opponents - Fairly match players for practices and games, giving consideration to body weight, skill level, and maturity.
7. Providing proper first aid - Have a first aid kit available along with a plan which outlines emergency procedures. Know where to find emergency help and a cell phone. Don't attempt to provide aid beyond your qualifications. ALWAYS have your players' medical release forms with you - they should provide emergency phone numbers as well as permission for you to obtain emergency medical aid in the event a parent/guardian cannot be reached.

Be aware of problems concerning transportation. Carry adequate personal liability insurance. Accepting money for transportation may void your personal auto liability insurance - check with your insurance agent or carrier.



Crow River Soccer Club

Respect the civil rights of your players on and off the field. Consider the factors of the game as it relates to officials and spectators. Keep good records of an event especially in the case of an injury.

Finally, it is to your advantage to have a second adult in attendance at your practices. This reduces the risk that you could unjustly be accused of inappropriate behavior.

Coaches who successfully perform the above duties not only reduce their personal risk, but also demonstrate to parents and other coaches a desire and willingness to act responsibly for the benefit of the kids.

† (adapted from Glenn M. Wong, Sports Management Program, and University of Massachusetts and Woodbury Soccer club.)

Negligence and a Coach's Legal Duties

The risks of the game (called inherent risks) are acceptable as long as a coach acts prudently and as long as these inherent risks are known, appreciated, understood and consciously accepted by the participants.

NEGLIGENCE: The failing to act in manner that a reasonable and prudent coach would normally act in a similar situation.

Four Factors in Determining Negligence

All four must be present to prove negligence:

1. The presence of a duty: Do you have a duty/duties to your players?
2. Breaching the duty: Failing to act necessarily, acting wrongly or acting properly but in a wrong fashion.
3. Cause of the injury: Your breach of duty?
4. Extent of injuries.

2

Legal Defense

When charged with negligence there are defenses:

1. Assumption of Risk: Players must know, understand and appreciate those risks. Parents have signed Liability waivers, but you must tell them. It should be included in your introductory email and discussed at your first team meeting.
1. Contributory negligence: The player acted negligently and contributed to the injury.
2. Comparative negligence: Negligence of both parties compared on a percentage basis.
3. Player cannot recover if his/her percentage is above 49%.
4. Other defenses: Act of God or technical defenses.

Coach's Safety Checklist

Prior to each practice, game or organized activity all coaches, assistant coaches and others in charge of an activity should develop a habit of a safety check.

Coaches do not go to games and practices thinking about safety. Generally, they are not trained to do this and as a result do not know the problems to search for. As a result, safety is out of mind.



Crow River Soccer Club

Coaches may average six hours per week with the team. The coach has care, custody and control of someone else's child and has the moral and legal obligation to see that the safety of each player is part of the everyday routine. A safety check-list would include but not be limited to the following:

SAFETY CHECKLIST

PORTABLE SOCCER GOAL (all CRSC goals are portable goals)

The head coach of the home team is responsible for the condition of the field and soccer goals. Inspect the goals and field before play begins.

- Assure the goals are solid and won't fall apart during play.
- Assure there are no protrusions that create an unsafe condition.
 - This includes hooks for attaching the nets and anchors (must be in back)
- Assure there are no sharp or rough edges to cut or injure players.
- Ensure portable goal anchors are secure.
 - Attached to the anchors that are set into the ground.
 - Threaded or screw-in anchors used for natural grass fields.
 - Extra long or additional anchors if the ground is soft or soggy.
- Make certain safety and warning stickers are in place on the goal frame.
- Assure the playing surface is free of obstructions from other sports.
- Assure the field surface has holes filled or marked.
- Assure the lines are adequate for officials to call the game.

Information Points

- Begin at a team meeting, instructing players and parents to never climb or swing from the goals. They can tip over causing serious injury or death, and it weakens the goals.
- Parents should supervise ALL their children and keep them from climbing on the goals.
- There have been over 30 deaths from Portable Soccer Goals falling onto children. Many were unused goals, blown over by the wind, which were not anchored. Goals that are not in use and not anchored should be placed face down on the field.
- Anchors should be mounted into the ground and attached to the goal. When not permanent, the anchors should be a screw in type, as pegs are more easily pulled out.

Field Conditions

- Goal posts anchored
- Posts inserted to frame properly
- Glass/Foreign objects removed from field
- Sprinkler heads seated properly

Weather

- High winds (tip goals face down)
- Approaching rain or thunderstorm
- Lightning. Vacate the field and get to a safe location (car, building, etc.)
- Heat: Light clothing, water
- Cold: Proper dress



Crow River Soccer Club

Equipment

- Covered shin guards on each player
- Jewelry removed
- Shoes adequate for conditions
- Ball in good shape

Medical Information

- Know special needs of all players
- Have medical release forms on hand in case of emergency
- Have first aid kit

Emergency Conditions

- Locate nearest telephone
- Know location of health care facility
- Use 911 if health emergency

Schedule

- Be there when practice begins
- Stay until practice ends
- Arrange for supervision of players without rides
- Arrive early enough to police fields

Team Conditions

- Train and warm up properly
- Prohibit non-acceptable activities or behaviors
- Place players of similar ability together

4

Coach's Kit

- First Aid
- Player I.D. cards
- Medical release forms, making sure parent contact numbers are filled out

Coach

- Understand the Laws of the Game
- Understand the role of the referee & linesman
- Communicate the Laws clearly to players
- Attend coaching clinics
- Have balanced attitude

Parent

- Communicate with parent, especially after injuries and if there is behavior concerns
- Let parent know schedule
- Recruit their help in supervision
- Discuss your philosophies

First Aid for Soccer Injuries

When you accept the role of coach, you accept a major responsibility for the care and safety of your players. Although the athletes share in the responsibility for their protection and safety,



Crow River Soccer Club

their ability to understand what they can do, how they can do it, and whether they are doing it correctly, may be limited. It is your job to help them practice and play as safely as possible. If you don't already have first aid certification, we encourage you to enroll in both CPR and first aid classes to help prepare yourself to handle accidents that may happen while you are coaching. Your job as a volunteer coach is to recognize an injury when it happens, to stabilize the injury as best you can, and to summon medical assistance if necessary. You need to understand the limitations of your training and knowledge. If you are not a trained medical professional, then it is your responsibility to call one immediately whenever you have any doubt as to what to do next.

For those emergencies that require immediate attention by a trained professional, call 9-1-1.

Have an Emergency Plan

It is important to have a well thought out plan for dealing with injuries. It is best to have a written response plan for emergencies. Keep this in your coaching bag where you can pull it out and refer to it if necessary.

Some points to consider in your plan:

- Is a first aid kit available?
- Do I have all of my players' medical consent forms and emergency contacts with me at all times?
- Where is the nearest phone?
- How do I get first aid and paramedics/ambulance?
- Do any of my assistant coaches or parent volunteers know first aid?
- Who will go for help if I need to attend to an injured player?
- Who will supervise other players if I need to summon help?
- Do my assistant coaches and players know the emergency plan?

5

Resources

American Heart Association for First Aid -

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3011764>

Red Cross First Aid & CPR Online - <https://www.redcrossonlinetraining.org/Distance/Default.aspx>

National Center for Sports Safety - <http://www.sportssafety.org/prepare/>

Woodbury Soccer Club Risk Management

