

ASAP news



Continuing the Little League tradition of making it "safer for the kids."

CHECK BACKGROUNDS

LITTLE LEAGUE MANDATES NEW NATIONWIDE CHECK OF SOR; PROVIDES ASSISTANCE

Little League offers leagues 80 free national background checks for the 2007 season to help meet the new, nationwide requirement to check all their volunteers' backgrounds through ChoicePoint's extensive database of criminal and SOR records. In addition, leagues will receive a new, lower price for all criminal background checks required for leagues beyond the first 80 free checks.

Minimum Requirement

This year Little League has mandated all leagues check the volunteers who have repetitive contact with their league's children against sex offender registries across the nation. The move was prompted by concerns that checking a single state's sex offender registry is not sufficient in a society where people can so easily move out of state.

The new requirement allows leagues — and parents with children in the league — to be assured any volunteer checked is not on a sex offender registry (SOR) anywhere in the US. The state-only SOR check is no longer sufficient to meet the minimum requirements for all leagues.

Going Beyond the Minimums

Little League's new mandatory nationwide check of volunteers' backgrounds will help protect all players. Now Little League has made background checks of your volunteers even more affordable by partnering with ChoicePoint.

"Little League remains committed to providing its volunteers with the means to make Little League a safer program for children," said Stephen D. Keener, president and CEO of Little League Baseball and Softball, recently.

That's a huge step toward ensuring child molesters aren't working as volunteers in your league. But, a national check of SORs, the minimum requirement, can't tell you if your volunteers have committed other crimes. Moving to a new state is a quick and easy way for people who have committed crimes to leave problems in their past. These are issues you should be aware of prior to approving someone as a volunteer.

80 Checks Free; Others Just \$1

The new agreement with ChoicePoint reduces the cost of full, nationwide background checks from \$1.50 per name to \$1 for potential volunteers checked beyond the first 80 free checks. See the Little League website for specifics on this program: <http://www.littleleague.org/common/childprotect/states.asp>

The recommendation by Little League International Director of Risk Management Dan Kirby is to always do more than the minimum and do a check not only of the nationwide SOR but for criminal data as well. "In the most recent 12 month period checked, ChoicePoint searches found 14,615 criminal offenses on 93,428 potential volunteers checked."

Of those crimes, 1,008 were felonies and 34 were of registered sex offenders outside the state they were living in. The number of criminal records found on potential volunteers was a 26 percent increase from 2005 figures. And these numbers represent only 8 percent of all volunteers checked annually.

"This underscores the importance of leagues doing the best possible background check of all people who are seeking to be volunteers in the local league," Kirby stated. "That's why we recommend the ChoicePoint background check and are paying for each league's first 80 checks."

The kinds of crimes found in the last year: sexual offenses, financial offenses, offenses against children, drug-related crimes and vehicle/traffic related offenses. Specifics: aggravated criminal sexual assault/threat, sexual activity with a child 12-17 years, felony child abuse . . .

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Violence

Train to Keep

Rise in youth sports confrontations and violent altercations requires action NOW!

Make time to discuss your league's goals and expectations for coaches during spring training sessions, and how the league will support them as volunteers. Work with parents to set ground rules for conduct at games and practices, so they give coaches and players support, not headaches.

Organized sports provide quality growth opportunities for youth; participation in Little League reached a 3-year high in 2006, showing the interest in sports.

Sports provide children opportunities to learn life lessons like leadership, character and loyalty, as well as exercise for growing bodies and weight control. Children are given the opportunity to be a part of a team and feel like a contributing teammate.

Many leagues endorse the Character Counts "Six Pillars of Character" teaching children trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Sportsmanship is exhibited and taught by many coaches who volunteer their time and talents. So, children would seem to be having good experiences by being involved in youth sports, but, some lessons that children learn aren't always good ones.

Survey, Stories Show Problems:

In a survey by *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, **74 percent** of the 3,000-plus readers who responded to the poll had seen "out of control" adults at their games and 57 percent believe there is too much violence in youth sports.

Of the bad behaviors exhibited by adults at youth sporting events, children have witnessed: Parents yelling at kids, 37 percent; parents yelling at coaches or officials, 27 percent; coaches yelling at officials or kids, 25 percent; and violent actions by adults, 4 percent.

The violence these children have seen is very real:

- In Kentucky, a father of a tee ball player was jailed after an outburst, threatening to beat the umpire only moments before walking onto the field and starting a fight with the official. One six-year-old girl suffered minor injuries when she was struck in the face amid the fight.
- In Pennsylvania, a father of a pee-wee football player pulled a gun on his son's coach because he didn't think his son had enough playing time.
- In Louisiana, a father attacked an umpire following his 7-year-old son's baseball game where both of the son's coaches had been ejected earlier for disputing calls.

In all of these cases of violence, adults appear to be the problem. Officials, coaches and especially parents need to remember that little eyes are on them. Children learn behavior from adults. The only way to prevent adults from acting inappropriately is to educate them on appropriate behavior. The Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) with Little League is working to decrease the violent acts by educating coaches, parents and even children on positive ways to learn and have fun.

PCA's objective is to ensure that every child gets the most out of every experience. Coaches are encouraged to follow a "double-goal" approach where

they want to win, but they also want to help players learn positive traits and lessons to use outside of sports. PCA offers *Coaches' Certification in Positive Coaching Principles* to promote a positive environment. Three themes are incorporated into positive coaching: redefine the term "winner" to emphasize effort, learning and recovering from

It should be reiterated to players that they are going to be held to the same standards as the adults, in terms of conduct. Leagues should set standards of behavior for all athletes, volunteers, parents and other spectators. Prior to the season, everyone should be made aware that abusive behavior, whether physical or verbal, will not be tolerated.

Simply having umpires and coaches trained in conflict management won't suffice if a violent situation erupts. Umpires and coaches can't handle the responsibility of their team and spectators.

Leagues should provide "on duty" volunteers, trained in proper conflict management, during all games to handle

It Out of Your League

mistakes; offer encouragement, praise and recognition; honor the game by getting to the **ROOTS** of positive play (*Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self*). Parent workshops teach parents to support the coach and team.

The young athletes need to understand a situation when it happens. The best way to do this is to sit the child or team down and explain it to them.

If the situation involves an ejection, use it as an example for the children. They need to understand that actions have consequences, and if they choose to act in an unsportsmanlike manner, they will have to leave the game, whether they are an athlete or a spectator.

PCA teaches coaches to redefine the term 'winner' to emphasize effort, learning and recovering from mistakes.

Provide Standards, 'On-Duty' Vols

Parents and volunteers, including coaches, should be given a written copy of the league's standard of behavior. All athletes, volunteers, and parents should be required to sign a form stating they understand the standards they will be held to.

situations occurring off field. Of those volunteers, there should always be an adult present. As a last resort for conflict resolution, make sure there is always a means of contacting the police.

It is the responsibility of every league to provide a safe, fun environment for their athletes. Many leagues are taking great steps in the right direction to resolve these violent problems.

Little League has partnered with the Positive Coaching Alliance to help foster the positive attitude and dual-goal coaching method of not just winning, but teaching athletes positive life lessons. For more, go to: <http://www.positivecoach.org/LittleLeague>

7 Steps to Conflict Resolution

Undoubtedly, in youth sports there are going to be conflicts. To prevent small conflicts from escalating to disputes or violent actions, try using Little League's 7 Steps of Conflict Resolution. But always remember that you don't have control over other people's actions, but you do have control of your own.

Little League Tips for Conflict Resolution

Step 1: Speak to the person privately.

No one likes to be belittled and berated publicly. Choose an appropriate time and place to have a conversation about the problem.

Step 2: Listen Actively. Active listening involves focusing completely on what the person with the conflict says.

Step 3: Reverse Roles. After the person tells you their concern, respond back with "I understand what you're saying is..." then restate their concern. If you don't quite understand their concern, ask them to clarify it.

Step 4: Expressing Feelings. The person with the concern also needs to give you a chance to express your feelings on the conflict at hand.

Use the phrase, "I feel..." when expressing your feelings on the matter.

Step 5: Solving the Problem. Suggest ways that you can solve the conflict.

Step 6: Select a WIN/WIN solution. Look at the suggestion you'd made in Step 4 and choose a solution that benefits both parties involved.

Step 7: Agree on a Follow-Up. If the concern is not resolved or comes up again, offer to revisit it and try to work out another solution.

What Goes in My Safety

"In 2006 we submitted our Safety Plan for the first time, and it was approved. I am not clear on what I need to do to maintain our safety program in 2007, and in years to come. I understand that I must send a Facilities Survey each year, but am I also required to submit the update "memos" I have added to our program, and/or a complete Safety Program each year?"

— Harry Squier, safety director
Walkill Valley Little League
Franklin, NJ



Pictured above is the 2007 Cyclone Little League ASAP trading Pin you will receive for submitting a

Helping to keep Little League the

Your question is a common one, especially from leagues with first-time safety programs and safety officers. First, thank you for taking the time to create a safer environment for your players, volunteers and spectators. You are helping keep Little League the premier youth sports organization in the world.

Every year each league needs to submit your full safety plan (with all changes/updates), including:

- Coaches Manual
- Concessions Manual
- Facility/Groundskeeping Manual, etc.
- Current year's registration form
- Current year's facility survey
- Current year's Little League Volunteer Application or note that your league uses it
- Any photos, drawings or other documentation of your safety manual/program.

These are needed in order to have a qualified safety plan and be eligible to receive the league cash award. (See *Safety Plan Incentives story at right for more on this!*)

Your safety plan is what is thought of as a living document. Every year your league should take out the policies and procedures you follow and look at them from a stance of "what can we do to make our program better?" Part of this process is to consider the safety aspects of the activities you put on, as well as the equipment and facilities you use.

Making updates to the safety manual is one of the off-season updates your board goes through. You should look at all new rules and regulations from Little League, and incorporate those that affect safety into your plan. As an example, the new requirement that all leagues conduct a nationwide check of all sex offender registries is a safety issue, and one all

leagues will have to implement, with or without a true safety program. Little League is now offering all leagues 80 free national background checks, that include criminal data as well as full SOR checks, per charter through Choice Point. (For specifics on this, see Little League's website at <http://www.littleleague.org/common/childprotect/states.asp>)

So make sure you are helping drive how your league handles this important new regulation. The requirement for all leagues to use break-away bases by the 2008 season is something you should be planning for, either to implement this year, part this year and part next year, or all in 2008. The benefits to your players of implementing this requirement sooner, in the reduced number and severity of injuries, should be discussed when your board makes this decision. These are just two examples of changes that affect your current and approved safety program.

In addition you should look at any optional changes you feel warranted to improve general safety (reduced impact balls for younger divisions, face guards for batting helmets, fence caps to cover the tops of outfield fences, improved procedures for trainings, nationwide background checks of all volunteers, etc.) as you look at changes to your safety program and implement as desired.

Entry deadlines

Plans are already arriving and should be submitted at this time, but are to be postmarked no later than May 1, 2007. The District Early Incentive submission date is for your safety program to be turned in to Little League International and approved by April 1, 2007. If 80 percent of the leagues in your district meet this deadline, your DA will earn \$350 to use toward activities (training, meetings, materials, mailings, etc.) in your district. If 60 to 79 percent of your

y Program Submission?

premier youth sports organization in the world.

districts meet this deadline, your DA will earn \$150. This early submission and approval of safety plans allows us to better get through the safety plans for judging and awards.

How to check

Please check Little League's website (<http://www.littleleague.org/programs/asap/plans.asp>) in the days following submitting your plan to see if it has been entered. If it does not show up on the website within two weeks of submission, please contact Little League International at 570-326-1921 to request assistance on tracking down your plan's status.

Where to mail

You can mail a hard-copy of your completed safety manual and all forms (2007 Registration Form, 2007 Facility Survey, 2007 Managers and Coaches Manual, Concession Stand Manual, etc.) to:

ASAP Safety Plan Contest
c/o Little League International
PO Box 3485
Williamsport, PA 17701

Or ship to (UPS, FedEx, etc.):

ASAP Safety Plan Contest
c/o Little League International
539 US Route 15 Hwy.
South Williamsport, PA 17702

"In our safety plan under the Facility Survey section, do we need to have drawings submitted for our practice fields?"

— Tom Jacobs; via email

No; you don't need drawings of fields, but measurements should be included on the last page of the survey (where appropriate; i.e. if no outfield fence, then no outfield measurements needed). You really need to do a survey of all fields you use, whether for practices and games, or just practices. The purpose of the survey is simply to help identify areas where accidents and injuries can occur, so your league can take steps to repair them before someone is hurt.

Safety Plan Incentives

Sending in a safety plan? Wondering what you will get in return?

League Cash Award & Pin

First, by putting together a qualified safety program you are demonstrating to your entire community your league's commitment to providing the best possible environment for your players, volunteers and spectators. This includes as a major focus the safety of everyone on the field and even those who come to watch. Raising the safety awareness of everyone in your league will help reduce the possibility of injuries as well as the severity of injuries that do occur. That is your goal as safety officer and your contribution to your league.

Is being a safety officer easy? Let's be frank: No. However, it is certainly one of the most important positions in your league as you, with the help of other board members, coaches and volunteers, improve the safety of all the activities, equipment and facilities of your league.

League Cash Award & Pin

The second benefit you will receive is a cash incentive. This award will go directly into your league's account with Little League International in mid-summer. It can be used for any expense you have, from next year's charter and insurance fees, to the items you purchase from Little League's store.

The amount is 20 percent of the player accident insurance on the teams your league has involved. The more children who play in your league and benefit from your safety program's added protection, the bigger your award. This award will come from AIG Insurance, one of Little League's sponsors and ASAP's co-sponsor, but is only available to those leagues carrying Little League/AIG Insurance for their teams' player accident insurance.

For submitting an annual facility survey with your qualified safety program, you receive a limited edition, dated Disney character ASAP trading pin (*at far left*).

Regional Winners Award

The two safety plans in each region judged to be the best will each receive a \$500 cash prize, and those ten leagues will be recognized in the ASAP News for their contribution for raising safety awareness. From each region, one plan will be judged the best. The league president and league safety officer with these five top-ranked safety plans will be brought to Williamsport for the Little League World Series in August to be recognized at an awards breakfast for ASAP, courtesy of Musco Lighting.

National Winner Award

One safety plan from all the safety plans in the country will be judged the best, and that league will receive a Musco Light-Structure Green™ lighting system for a 200-foot field. Light-Structure Green will save the league 50 percent in energy costs, and is warranted for 25 years. Musco is a founding sponsor of ASAP with Little League, and ASAP's other co-sponsor.

ASAP Safety Chatter

Questions & Answers!

Breakaway Bases

“Are breakaway bases required starting with the 2007 Spring season?”

*Bret Cansler, president
Bayshore Little League
District 6 Fla.*

No, the break-away bases are not mandatory until the start of the 2008 season, although leagues are encouraged to begin the transition to break away bases as soon as possible in order to start realizing sooner the benefits in decreased injury numbers and severity. The rule can be found in Little League’s 2006 Rule Book under Rule 1.06 and will again be under Rule 1.06 in the 2007 Rule Book.

The main manufacturers are listed on Little League’s website under the “Approved Equipment” section for Plates and Bases: <http://www.littleleague.org/common/equipment/view.asp?cid=5&id=25>. The three types are the Rodgers Break Away Base System by Rodgers USA, Inc.; Soft Touch Bases by Soft Touch Bases; and McGregor Magnetic Super Base by Sport Supply Group.

The Rodgers bases are the kind that Little League uses at Lamade Stadium and the other fields at Little League International in Williamsport, home of the Little League Baseball World Series annually. All three of these dealers’ websites are listed at the link above.

Helmet Usage

“Are there any changes in regards to rules for helmet use in Little League in regards to using masks on the helmets as a requirement?”

*Irene Ydens, president
Campbell Little League*

No, the rules have not changed on batting helmets. Individuals may still elect to wear face guards on their

helmets, as long as the guard is a device meeting NOCSAE standards for the game being played (baseball face masks on baseball helmets for baseball games, softball face masks on softball helmets for softball games).

Leagues may also elect to standardize on the option, requiring all players in the local league to have face guards on their helmets when batting. All local rules such as this are required to be approved by Little League, and this is an option many leagues have successfully adopted in the last few years to protect players. But face masks/face guards are not required nationally for any level of play in Little League, and are an option allowed at all levels for any player to adopt, whether the league has mandated that all players wear them or not.

Tee Ball Helmets

“Is it a requirement to have a facemask attached to a batting helmet for Tee Ball players? I have a grandson who will start playing next month. I purchased a helmet with a facemask already attached. The boy’s father is questioning whether it should have the face mask on it since they bat off the tee?”

Linda C. — via email

The rules allow all batting helmets to have facemasks at any division of play including Tee Ball (see the question above for more on local options). Many people who grew up not using safety equipment feel the facemask isn’t necessary at all, while others — especially those who have seen injuries caused by ball contact — feel it should be part of the required batting helmet through college.

In general, the safety of any player would be enhanced by a facemask. The benefit of starting at a young age is:

- 1) The players are most vulnerable and least able to move out of the way of a thrown or batted ball at this age. They haven’t yet learned the reflexive skills of avoidance (they stand like deer in a car’s headlights as the ball comes at them) usually learned from being hit by or narrowly missed by a ball — painful but true.
- 2) Balls can rebound off the bat even from a tee and up into a player’s face. Maybe not often, but it does happen.
- 3) Some throwing plays happen on the base paths. Players’ faces/teeth are still vulnerable without a face guard to a throw-out attempt at a base, similar to a pitched ball at home plate.
- 4) The guard becomes part of the standard equipment, so they don’t resist wearing it in later years. So when the speed of the pitched ball and the reaction time for getting out of it’s way is much less, the need is greater for the protection.
- 5) And they grow up adjusting for the guard. In wearing one then they do not have any playing issues of continually tracking the ball from the pitcher’s hand — the major reason some people feel the face guards or masks aren’t a good idea.

So maybe in Tee Ball the face guard isn’t crucial in all cases, but it does set the stage for successful use of the guard in coming years, if that is your intention. Again, it’s not required, but is an option for all players to choose, or the local league to mandate.

Have a question or tip to share?

Call the ASAP Hotline:

800-811-7443

or email: asap@musco.com

First Aid Training

“We will be providing first aid training for all managers and coaches. Many of them have first aid cards or certificates from their place of employment. If this training is current, is it acceptable and do they need to also take the league course?” — *Steve Barnett, safety officer · Granite Falls, Wash.*

You aren't the only ones to question if an employer's first-aid training meets Little League's requirements. Since the trainings are really not the same, it does not. They do need to attend your training. However, CPR is just a highly recommended training; it is only required that you supply first aid training. The training you provide in first-aid preparedness should relate to the kinds of injuries someone would witness on a ball field. A first-aid training an employer supplies might well only deal with injuries someone might experience while at their job, and not go into other areas.

Also, your training should supply coaches, managers and board members with the specific expectations of what they should do before, during and after

an injury at a Little League function. Who to call, how to follow up and what forms need to be filled out. None of this information would be covered by an outside training they would have taken. Do you have any fields where a telephone isn't available? Do you have specific procedures in case of lightning or other storms/weather issues like high heat and humidity? This is the time to educate all your volunteers on what their role is and what the league's expectations are for their conduct in case of any of these. In many instances, the problems leagues run into with volunteers not doing what is expected are more communication issues than anything: One manager feels “X” is supposed to happen in a given situation, and the other manager thinks it is “Y”. If they both attend your training and you

explain what the league's expectation is, the argument never occurs.

Most people have busy lives and feel “trained once, trained for anything”; but the training you supply them should be tailored for the needs you have as a league and according to your locations. It can be difficult to make your league training do everything you want it to, and you are looking only at playing ball issues. If someone comes in and says, “I've been trained for first aid by my employer” or whomever, there should be many things they will not know if you allow them to skip yours. Plus, someone trained in a different first aid program may be able help others better understand a specific first aid issue in your training. Information shouldn't just travel in one direct after all.

... continued from Cover Story, page 1

CHECK BACKGROUNDS

... — serious injury, aggravated kidnapping, showing obscene material to a child, giving narcotic controlled substance to a minor, felony possession of cocaine, possession of meth, vehicular manslaughter, counterfeiting, identity theft, and embezzlement.

Any crime against a child, as well as being on a SOR, makes a potential volunteer ineligible. It is the league's responsibility to choose *ONLY* those people who they have confidence will make good volunteers. No one receives a guarantee that by filling out a volunteer application a person will be accepted. From the application forms submitted, the president should only nominate, and the board should only approve, those

individuals they feel confident will properly reflect the Little League philosophy in coaching.

Most crimes against a child won't show up on a SOR check. The ChoicePoint check may deter potential volunteers with crimes from signing up, or it will reveal the crimes, Kirby said leagues have found. In 2006, 37 sex crimes were found on potential volunteers who were not listed on any SOR. These people wouldn't have shown up in the minimum check, but are not good candidates. Other crimes, such as drug charges, identity theft or vehicular manslaughter, are concerns your board should discuss prior to determining if a person should be one of your league's volunteers.

Also, while your board has the final voice on who is chosen as a volunteer, people not selected may want to push the issue. No matter what check you use, it is recommended you only tell someone they have not been chosen as a volunteer. No reasons are required. Don't allow them to force your board to give them a reason to fight the decision. It's your board's responsibility to approve volunteers and that's final.

Lastly, background checks by state no longer meet minimum requirements. But, free state SOR sites *may* be used as a tool to verify data on duplicate, name-only searches, to exclude people's records that do not belong to your candidate.

Education Ideas From The Leagues

Violence

Train to keep it out of your league.

Safety Programs

What needs to go in your safety plan program submission.

Questions & Answers

Answering your questions about bases and helmets.

First Aid Training

If you get first aid training elsewhere will it qualify for Little League?

Vasalia Little League, California

One of our safety goals this year is adding Saturday games for the Junior/Senior Division which will ease scheduling concerns and prevents so many games being played so close to dark.

Tucson International Little League, Arizona

Safe kids know whom they can ride with. The magic word is a code that the child shares with the parent(s). No one is to know this word other than the player and the parent(s). It's used as a code word in special ways. For example, if the parent(s) can't pick the player up from ball practice, they may send someone else to bring the child home. The player should only go with that person if he or she knows the magic word. If a person tries to pick the player up who doesn't know the magic word, run from them, find help and call 911.

Poway National Little League, California

Poway National Little League will contact police and fire department personnel, prior to the beginning of the Little League season, to advise the dates of play and location of the league field site and practice facilities.

Bryan Little League, Texas

We have been in contact with the Bryan Police Department to have an officer present during games and other activities as their schedule allows. We have also talked with them about providing “Stranger Danger” training to all managers, volunteers and athletes. This training will provide all individuals concerned with the danger/warning signs of child abduction and abuse.

PO Box 3485 / 539 US Rt. 15 Hwy
 Williamsport, PA 17701-0485
ASAP News
 ASAP News is a service of
 Little League Baseball®
 and Softball
 facilitated and published by
 Musco Lighting
 P.O. Box 808
 Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577
 © February 2007,
 Little League®
 and Musco Lighting
24 Hour Hotline:
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