



American Legion Baseball

# RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDEBOOK

for Junior and Senior American  
Legion Baseball Teams

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# INTRODUCTION

Thousands of Legionnaires and members of the American Legion Family throughout the nation donate countless volunteer hours each year helping Baseball, Oratorical, Boys State/Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement and Scouting programs. Our youth programs teach young people a variety of practical skills, as well as developing leadership, teamwork, discipline and self-confidence.

Our programs encourage a strong sense of citizenship, patriotism and good living. Every youth program of The American Legion relies heavily upon dedicated volunteers willing to contribute time and skills for conducting essential functions of the programs. What motivates these selfless volunteers is an innate desire to give back to their communities and to help nurture those young Americans whose impressions of this country are still developing.

Although the occurrence of events such as those referenced below are overall relatively infrequent, youth programs have proven they can be a high-risk environment for misconduct by adults in positions of authority and leadership who have sometimes misused their positions by exerting various forms of abuse. This may include physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse. The aftermath of numerous events throughout the nation involving the sexual molestation of youth by a trusted authority figure has served to prominently illustrate the need and importance for protecting the welfare of vulnerable populations, such as minor children, as well as the need for protection from liability for those organizations and volunteers that serve them.

In February 2018, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-126) was signed into law. The bill amends the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 to extend the duty to report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, immediately to law enforcement and adults who are authorized to interact with minor or amateur athletes by an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition.

While The American Legion has the utmost trust and confidence in its volunteers, the need for implementing such measures is a stark manifestation unfortunately reflective of today's social reality. Any organization entrusted with the safety and welfare of youth must mitigate its overall risk and liability, and that of its participants and volunteers, by taking measures aimed at sustaining program integrity and safety.

Prevention is key to being proactive in mitigating abuse in youth programs. A comprehensive child protection program will incorporate: (1) screening; (2) abuse awareness training; (3) established policies and safeguards; and (4) awareness and oversight.

## SCREENING

Use of current, dependable and complete criminal history information is considered a critical screening protocol for any youth-serving organization. Volunteer program staff undergo criminal history screening for many of the same reasons employers conduct background checks the purpose is to verify identity and determine whether a potential staff member may have anything in their past that might disqualify them from working with youth participants.

Handling of sensitive information during the screening process should receive the utmost attention to discretion and confidentiality so as not to damage one's reputation or career. All adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) are required to have adult abuse awareness training and background checks each year to be eligible to participate in national tournaments

hosted by The American Legion. **All adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) are required to have a background checks each year to be eligible to participate in national tournaments hosted by The American Legion. All coaches, managers, and volunteer staff of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams must be screened prior to conducting any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants.**

## **ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING**

As part of the education and training requirements of Public Law 115-126, Resolution No. 17 was passed by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion at its October 2023 meeting titled, “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs.” The resolution states that under the advice and guidance of the compliance and risk manager of the national organization and the national judge advocate, policies and procedures are required beginning in 2021 mandating sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screening for all coaches, managers and volunteer staff members of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams. All adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) are required to have adult abuse awareness training and background checks each year to be eligible to participate in national tournaments hosted by The American Legion. **All adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) are required to have adult abuse awareness training each year to be eligible to participate in national tournaments hosted by The American Legion. Coaches, managers and volunteer staff members of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams must complete the abuse awareness course prior to conducting any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants.**

## **ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING VIDEO LINKS**

**Protect Youth Sports** - [baseball.legion.org/background](http://baseball.legion.org/background)

- Select “Volunteer” version

**USA Baseball** - [usabdevelops.com/USAB/USAB/Store/Shop\\_Course.aspx](http://usabdevelops.com/USAB/USAB/Store/Shop_Course.aspx)

- Select “Abuse Awareness for Adults”

## **POLICIES AND SAFEGUARDS**

Policies and safeguards should be clearly established by an organization that reinforces a positive environment, safe interactions and appropriate conduct among program staff, volunteers and youth participants. Providing coaches, managers, volunteer staff and adult players of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams an awareness of the policies established for acceptable/unacceptable behavior minimizes opportunities for misconduct and helps prevent unfounded allegations. It is just as vitally important that policies and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected abuse, misconduct, or policy violations are clearly established as well.

## **AWARENESS AND OVERSIGHT**

Awareness is a key element to any prevention strategy. Awareness and orientation on safeguards, policies and procedures are instrumental in contributing toward a knowledge and prevention of various forms of abuse. Awareness and orientation can be disseminated in a variety of ways and should be made available to all coaches, managers, volunteer staff and adult players of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams prior to conducting any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants, regardless of how experienced they may be.

It is strongly urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or American Legion post or other organization sponsoring an American Legion Baseball team assume responsibility for ensuring their coaches, managers, volunteer staff and adult players of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball teams have the skills, knowledge, materials, equipment, facilities, etc., needed to do the job. It is essential that every coach, manager, volunteer staff and adult players of an American Legion Baseball team know who they should go to with questions or problems should they arise.

# DEFINITIONS

## Abuse

**Physical Abuse** – injury intentionally inflicted.

**Economic Abuse/Exploitation** – Deliberate temporary or permanent misuse of another’s money or belongings.

**Emotional Abuse** – mental or emotional injury inflicted resulting in an observable and material impairment in growth, development or psychological functioning.

**Neglect** – failure to provide basic needs of vulnerable individuals or protect them from harm.

**Sexual Abuse** – contact or activity of a sexual nature without consent or when consent is not possible.

**Verbal Abuse** – use of words intended to cause harm or demean the person being spoken to.

**Adult:** Anyone 18 years of age or over.

**Child/Minor/Youth:** Anyone 17 years of age or under.

**Protecting Young Victims From Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-126):** On Feb. 14, 2018, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 was signed into law and became effective immediately. The bill amends the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, extending the duty to report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to all adults who are authorized to interact with minor or amateur athletes by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition.

**Provider:** The exclusive commercial vendor engaged by The American Legion National Headquarters to conduct background check screening of Designated Individuals of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams:

Priority Research Services, Inc., DBA “Protect Youth Sports”  
14499 N. Dale Mabry Hwy, Suite 201S  
Tampa, FL 33618  
(877) 319-5587 (8:30am to 4:30pm Eastern Time)  
protectyouthsports.com

**Designated Individual(s):** All adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) of Junior and Senior teams of the American Legion Baseball program.

**Organization:** The American Legion National Headquarters.

**Reporter:** An individual reporting suspicions or allegations of child abuse.

**Team Sponsor:** The American Legion post or other organization sponsoring a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team.

**Verifier:** Those who are assigned responsibility for making verifications as noted below. It is strongly urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or American Legion post or other organization sponsoring an American Legion Baseball team assume the responsibility for verifying that:

1. Each Designated Individual has successfully passed the mandated background check screening requirements for each upcoming season
2. An individual charged with or having a case pending involving disqualifying criteria is prohibited from having contact with the team until legal adjudication has been made and the screening has been confirmed as successfully completed
3. A substitute or replacement team coach, manager or volunteer staff does not assume any duties with the team until the background check screening is successfully completed
4. Validity of information that a team coach, manager or volunteer staff may have sustained one of the disqualifying criteria in the interim after a required background check screening
5. Non-screened adults removed from the field of play have successfully completed a background check screening prior to their return.

# SCREENING

Resolution No. 17 NEC Oct. 2023, “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs” (Appendix A) mandates that coaches, managers, volunteer staff and adult players of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams must have background check screening and abuse awareness training conducted each season prior to any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants and that they must comply with the risk management policies of The American Legion established for the enhanced protection of children and youth .

## BACKGROUND CHECKS

**Designated Individuals to be Screened.** Background check screening will be conducted on all adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams, hereafter referred to as Designated Individuals.

**Authorized Background Check Provider.** All background checks for Designated Individuals will be conducted by the exclusive commercial vendor engaged by The American Legion National Headquarters to conduct background check screening of Designated Individuals, and is hereafter referred to as the Provider.

In addition to conducting background checks, the Provider provides screening and reporting of background check results in accordance with criteria established by the Organization. The Provider is responsible for complying with the Fair Credit Reporting Act, storage of information and records consistent with applicable laws, and maintaining confidentiality of information obtained through the background check process.

**Applicability of Background Checks.** Although a Designated Individual may have the ability to provide proof of a background check having been previously conducted through a source other than the Provider, background check screening as mandated in Resolution No. 17 NEC Oct. 2023, “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs,” will still be conducted by the Provider in order to provide screening consistency and enhanced confidentiality.

**Frequency of Background Checks.** Background checks will be conducted on all Designated Individuals each baseball season prior to any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants.

**Level of Information to be Checked.** To ensure that Designated Individuals are provided screening consistency and enhanced confidentiality, all background screenings conducted will include:

- Social Security Number verification and address history trace
- Alias names national search
- National criminal database search
- National sex offender registry search

**Costs Associated with Conducting Background Checks.** The Organization will not fund or collect any costs associated with conducting mandatory background check screenings of Designated Individuals. Information regarding costs associated with conducting background check screening of Designated Individuals of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams within a department must be obtained from the Provider. The Organization has negotiated with the Provider to ensure the best pricing possible without sacrificing the integrity or quality of their services.



**Background Check Disqualifying Criteria.** Disclosure during a background check screening that contains one or more of any of the following disqualifying criteria will prohibit an individual from serving as a an adult participants (coaches, managers, volunteers and players, 18 years of age or older) of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team:

1. Conviction of a felony
2. Conviction of a crime involving a minor, regardless of the offense
3. Conviction of a crime involving force or threat of force against a person
4. Conviction of a crime in which sexual behavior is an element; including “victimless” crimes of a sexual nature (including pornography)
5. Conviction of a crime involving controlled substances (not paraphernalia or alcohol)
6. Conviction of a crime involving cruelty to animals
7. Any sex offender registrant
8. Refusal to undergo background screening

An applicant will not be disqualified for a harassment or conspiracy conviction unless it is presented in the context of one of the already existing disqualifying criteria listed above.

Local ordinance violations are not considered a disqualifying criterion given their low-level of severity.

**Findings.** The Provider grades (adjudicates) and assigns either an “accept” or “reject” designator to a background check application from a Designated Individual. An “accept” designator means the background check of a Designated Individual does not contain disqualifying criteria previously set forth and that individual may have contact with youth participants of the American Legion Baseball team. A “reject” designator means the background check of a Designated Individual contains disqualifying criteria and that individual is prohibited from having contact with youth participants of the American Legion Baseball team. The Provider sends the results of their adjudication to the appropriate American Legion department that has been designated; a full copy of the report is not revealed to the American Legion department during that process. This system of reporting eliminates the need to disclose specific criminal history details to the American Legion department.

When a background check reveals there is a pending case or an active warrant for crimes involving the disqualifying criteria listed, the Provider will assign a “reject” designator. Doing so supports the Organization’s mandate of prohibiting an applicant from having contact with any youth program participants until such time completed legal adjudication is made and there is verification that an “accept” designator is then achieved.

**Pre-Adverse Action Notice.** The Provider has a system in which they are automatically aware that a “reject” designator has been reported for an individual. The Provider will email that individual a copy of their full report, along with a “Pre-Adverse Action Notice” and a copy of the Summary of Rights as mandated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

At this point the Provider allows five (5) business days for the individual to contact them in order to file a dispute or request a recheck should the individual disagree with the outcome of the report. If contacted, the Provider will follow its normal re-check procedure and will send out an updated report, should one be needed at the completion of the recheck/dispute.

If an individual should ultimately deem that after re-check/dispute that the situation has been resolved, the individual at that time may submit a new application to the Provider in order to provide

confirmation of an “accept” designator to their account manager.

If 5 business days pass with no communication from the individual, the Provider will then issue, via email, a final Adverse Action letter and a copy of the Summary of Rights to the individual. There is no report sent with this phase.

**Initiating and Verifying Background Checks.** Each American Legion department is urged to establish a system for oversight and management of background check screening for Designated Individuals of junior and senior American Legion Baseball teams that will best suit the needs of the department for: 1) initiating background checks of Designated Individuals; 2) conducting background check verifications of Designated Individuals; 3) assigning Verifier(s); and 4) managing costs. The Provider will discuss the management solution options they have available to help determine what will best suit the needs and available resources within a department.

**Verifications.** During the online American Legion Baseball registration process the Organization will require acknowledgment that all Designated Individuals of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team have been verified as having successfully passed the mandated background screening requirements. It is urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor be assigned responsibility for conducting that verification (“Verifier”). The online registration process for American Legion Baseball will be unable to continue until such time the acknowledgment statement is checked off that all required background checks have been verified as successfully complete and an electronic signature of the verifier provided.

If during the background screening process it is revealed that a Designated Individual is charged with or has a case pending that involves any disqualifying criteria as previously set forth, that individual will be prohibited from having contact with the American Legion Baseball team until legal adjudication has been made and the screening has been confirmed/verified as successfully completed; it is strongly urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor assume responsibility for oversight of an appropriate disposition in this situation.

If information is acquired during the playing season that a Designated Individual may have sustained one of the disqualifying criteria in the intervening period after a required background check has been conducted, that individual will be prohibited from having contact with the American Legion Baseball team until accuracy of the information has been validated so as to ensure the protection of the youth participants; it is strongly urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor assume responsibility for oversight of an appropriate disposition in this situation.

A replacement or substitute for a Designated Individual at any time during the season cannot assume any duties until background check screening as mandated has been confirmed as successfully completed; it is strongly urged and recommended that the respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor assume responsibility for oversight of an appropriate disposition in this situation.

The American Legion at any level may reserve the right to prohibit an individual from serving as a Designated Individuals of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team if at any time it is deemed the individual is unfit to work with minors.

**Appeals.** The Organization will not intercede if a Designated Individual has concern with the outcome of their background check report of findings; it is strongly urged and recommended that they be referred directly to the Provider for discussion.

**Copies of Reports.** Should an individual who receives an “accept” designator desire to receive a full

copy of their background check report, that individual should directly contact the Provider to make that request and pay the fee associated with doing so since the routine release of a full report is not an obligatory requirement of the contractual agreement established between the Organization and the Provider.

There are three ways an individual may request a copy of their background check report from the Provider:

1. **Fax:** By faxing a request letter to 800-319-5582
2. **Email:** By emailing a request to support@protectyouthsports.com
3. **Mail:** By mailing a request letter to: Protect Youth Sports Compliance Department, 14499 N. Dale Mabry Hwy, Suite 201S, Tampa, FL 33618

The following information should be included with each request:

- Full name
- Social Security Number (do not provide if sending via email)
- Daytime phone number
- Copy of driver license or photo ID (please enlarge and ensure copy is clear and legible)
- Secondary form of ID
- Report ID (if available)
- Mailing Address. (Please note: the report will be sent certified mail)
- Signature

**Removal from Record.** As a possible recourse, individuals may independently seek having disqualifying criteria removed from their record through legal or governmental avenues. This may not always be an option, but if an individual can have disqualifying criteria removed from his/her record and then achieve an “accept” designator through background screening with the Provider, they may then be considered qualified to serve as a Designated Individual for American Legion Baseball.

# ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

Upon successfully completing the background check process, the Designated Individuals will proceed to one of the two designated web sites offered to complete their “Abuse Awareness” training. Each person should check with their state baseball chairman to see which training site is recommended for their program. The two training sites are:

## PROTECT YOUTH SPORTS

[baseball.legion.org/background](http://baseball.legion.org/background)

- Applicant will receive email invite to complete volunteer “Child Safety Training” upon submission of their background screening application.

## USA BASEBALL

[usabdevelops.com](http://usabdevelops.com)

- Select “Abuse Awareness for Adults.”

Once a Designated Individuals completes their “Abuse Awareness” training and prints off their Certificate of Completion they will have proof of completion. Proof of completion must be submitted to their American Legion department baseball chairman each baseball season prior to any meetings, events, practices or games that involve youth participants. **The American Legion Baseball program mandates that each Designated Individuals renew their abuse awareness training certificate annually.** The certificate of completion will need to be presented to tournament officials should a team qualify for post season play such as The American Legion National Regionals or World Series tournaments.

If you should have a question regarding this training requirement, **please contact the American Legion Baseball chairman in your state.**

# PROTECTON POLICIES AND SAFEGUARDS

American Legion youth programs are designed to encourage safe interaction between staff, volunteers, and children/youth. Parents and families trust American Legion programs to provide a safe and healthy environment for all participants.

**Youth Protection Policy.** The American Legion does not tolerate abuse in any form, whether it is physical, emotional, sexual, verbal or economic exploitation.

**Youth Protection Safeguards.** The following safeguards are intended to place the welfare and well-being of children and youth in the highest priority and to assist in employing and monitoring behaviors and interactions with children and youth so as to avoid, recognize or stop those that are harmful. These safeguards do not and cannot address every situation that could be encountered. Just because a certain action is not prohibited in this section does not mean it is acceptable behavior. Staff may be required to act with a certain degree of personal discretion.

**Conduct.** The following guidelines have been established for persons serving in volunteer and staff roles for youth programs of The American Legion.

General conduct:

- Demonstrate behavior appropriate for a role model for youth: be courteous, fair and unbiased in your treatment of all children and youth.
- Put the welfare and well-being of children and youth first.
- Treat all children and youth with dignity and respect.

Drugs, tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol and sexually explicit materials:

- Do not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use alcohol or drugs during the operation of national youth programs.
- The use of tobacco/e-cigarettes at national youth programs is prohibited in the presence of children or youth.
- Do not be in the possession of any sexually orientated materials when conducting business as staff or a volunteer of a national youth program.

Use of Language:

- Do not use harsh, inappropriate, offensive, profane or degrading language in the presence of children or youth.
- Do not discuss sexual history, preferences or fantasies with or in the presence of children or youth.

Physical contact:

- Do not use restraint or any type of restraining device as punishment or behavior management.
- Do not use physical punishment in any form (e.g., slap, push, hit, kick). Use of the most minimal physical force necessary is only acceptable to save one from serious harm or death when the actions of a child or youth is placing themselves or others at immediate risk.

- Do not participate in, or allow others to engage in, hazing or any activities involving harassment, humiliation, teasing, ridicule or abuse.
- Do not have sexual contact with children or youth.
- Do not engage in any sexual activity in the presence of children or youth.
- Remain alert to the appropriateness (see below), context and location of any physical contact with children and youth; any physical contact only takes place in public.
- Do not dress, undress, shower or bathe with or in the presence of children or youth.
- Do not have sleeping locations with children or youth.
  - » Sleeping room assignments involving youth program participants should be so that no participant of an adult age (18 years of age or older) is rooming with a participant who is a child/minor/youth (17 years of age and below). Up to four (4) participants may occupy the same room.
- Have contingency plans in place for separating those program participants who may become involved in youth-on-youth/child-on-child harassment.
- Do not be alone with a child or youth when transporting them in a vehicle.

#### Appropriate forms of contact:

- Brief hug (e.g., a “shoulder-to-shoulder” hug of celebration or appreciation).
- Pats on shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- “High-fives.”
- Holding hands during prayer.

#### Inappropriate forms of contact:

- Lengthy, fully engaged embraces or “bear hug.”
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Touching of buttocks, breasts or genital area.
- Occupying same bed as a child or youth.
- Any type of massage.
- Snapping of bras or giving wedgies or similar touching of underwear, whether covered by other clothing or not.
- Private meals with a child or youth.
- Giving gifts to or receiving gifts or money from children or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.

#### Communication:

- Do not be alone with a child or youth when one-on-one discussion or counseling is necessary; one-on-one interaction with a child or youth will only take place in a publicly visible and open area that allows for private conversation and while still remaining in the presence of another staff member.

## Electronic Media:

- As part of the American Legion Baseball's emphasis on minor athlete safety, all electronic communications between minor athletes and staff members, or other adults who have regular contact with minor athletes, must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. This policy applies to all staff members and other adults who have regular contact with minor athletes.

## American Legion Baseball electronic communication policy:

- Content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the minor athlete's family, American Legion Baseball or local organization upon request. Any request under the electronic communication policy must include copies of any email, electronic text, social media post, or similar communication, and to be sent to either the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian, American Legion Baseball or local organization.
- Social Media. Staff members, or other adults who have regular contact with minor athletes, are not permitted to maintain social media connections with minor athletes. Staff members, or other adults who have regular contact with minor athletes, are not permitted to accept any new personal requests on social media platforms from minors. Existing social media connections with amateur athletes who are minors shall be discontinued. The American Legion and local organizations will monitor its organizational social media pages and remove any posts that violate policies and practices for appropriate behavior. Minor athletes or parent/legal guardian of minor athletes will be informed of any inappropriate posts.
- Email. Minor athletes and staff members, and other adults who have regular contact with minors, may use email to communicate. All email content between staff members, or other adults who have regular contact with minors, and minor athletes must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team or individual sport events. Emails must come from an account that can be monitored by the American Legion Baseball and local organizations. American Legion Baseball or local organization staff member, volunteer member, and/or a parent/legal guardian must be copied when communicating with a minor athlete through email.
- Texting. All text messages between staff members, or other adults who have regular contact with minors, and minor athletes must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team or individual sport events. Text messages cannot be sent to one individual minor athlete; a text message must go to entire team or must have additional staff member included.
- Request to Discontinue All Electronic Communications. The parent/legal guardian of a minor athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by the American Legion Baseball or local organization staff members.
- Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

## Safety:

- Plan for adequate staff-to-participant ratios that are appropriate to the nature of the youth program, the activities involved and the age of program participants.
- Always keep medical and emergency contact details for all youth program participants readily available in the event of an emergency.
- Immediately obtain, or provide appropriate medical assistance, in the event of an injury.

# POSSIBLE SIGNS OF ABUSE

These signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, but they may help adults recognize the possibility that something is wrong.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Frequent suspicious or unexplained injuries out of the norm for those normally associated with childhood activities, e.g., burns, deep bruising, etc.
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries.
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover injuries, e.g., long sleeves or pants on a hot day.
- Injuries appearing to have a pattern, such as a handprint or belt.
- Fear of medical treatment or examination.
- Aggression toward others.
- Shrinks back from touch.
- Refusal to change for gym or athletic activities.
- Rebels against authority.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Excessively withdrawn or fearful.
- Continual self-deprecation, e.g., “I’m ugly,” “I’m stupid,” etc.
- Overreaction to mistakes.
- Emotionally abuses others.
- Extreme sensitivity to criticism.
- Extreme fear of new situations.
- Extremes of passivity or aggressiveness.
- Continuous unwillingness to develop relationships.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a person without explanation or strong reluctance to interact with a person.
- Fear of touch.
- Wearing excessive amounts of clothing.
- Isolation or withdrawal.
- Insecure or clinging.
- Extreme personality changes.
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Being overly affectionate or acting out sexually.



# RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE / SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Anyone having knowledge of, or a reasonable cause to suspect, that abuse of a child or youth has occurred, has a personal, ethical, and legal obligation to make a report. The definition of a “mandated reporter” for suspected child abuse can vary from state-to-state, with the applicability of who should report being defined more broadly in some states more than others. But remember, it is the responsibility of all individuals and community members — not just mandated reporters — to respond to the suspected maltreatment of any child or youth. No matter the state laws, learning the appropriate ways to respond to suspected abuse and becoming informed and involved are important steps toward protecting children. **All Designated Individuals of Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball teams are required to immediately, but no longer than 24 hours (per federal guidelines), report cases of abuse or suspected abuse involving a child or youth.** Any individual reporting suspicions or allegations is hereafter referred to as the Reporter.

## If a child or youth tells you about abuse:

- Remain calm and reassuring.
- Find a quiet place to talk.
- Believe in what you are being told.
- Don’t jump to conclusions.
- Reassure the child or youth they did the right thing by telling you.
- Reassure the child or youth that they will be protected and supported.
- Be discreet.
- Call 911 if medical treatment is necessary.
- Report the concern immediately to the proper law enforcement authorities. The law requires only that you have a reasonable suspicion that a child or youth is being abused.
- Do not discuss the concern or share information with anyone other than those having a “need to know.”

## REPORTING

When anyone, including Designated Individuals of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team, observes or are made aware of any inappropriate behavior(s) or behavior(s) inconsistent with those detailed in the “Protection Policies and Safeguards” section of this guide, they must immediately report, but no longer than federal guidelines allow, their suspicion(s)/allegation(s) to law enforcement and their respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor.

**In ALL cases involving ANY reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred, a report must immediately, but no longer than 24 hours (per federal guidelines), be made to law enforcement authorities and notification to the youth participant’s parent(s) or guardian(s).** This reporting responsibility may NOT be abdicated to another individual. The assumption should NOT be made that law enforcement authorities, parent(s)/guardian(s), etc., have already learned of a situation through other venues – report immediately, but no longer than 24 hours (per federal guidelines), upon becoming aware of suspected child abuse.

It is strongly urged and recommended that respective American Legion departments and/or Team Sponsors implement use of the written report form found in Appendix B entitled “REPORTING FORM”, and after having immediately contacted law enforcement authorities and parent(s)/guardian(s) in cases involving child abuse or suspected child abuse, the Reporter then offer a copy of this completed form to law enforcement authorities, and provide a copy to the respective American Legion department baseball chairman and/or Team Sponsor, if considered necessary. All information regarding alleged child abuse must be maintained under strict confidentiality and communicated only to those having a “need-to-know.”

In the event of a report, the department baseball chairman is responsible to notify the appropriate parties at The American Legion’s National Headquarters to the attention of the Americanism Division. The American Legion’s Americanism Division will then meet their obligation by notifying the U. S. Center for Safesport and USA Baseball of the minor athlete abuse report.

A person will not be held liable if they make a report in good faith, including situations where the reported incident is determined not to be child abuse. The Safe Sport Act provides a limitation of liability provision that protects the sports organization and any office, employee, agent, or member/volunteer who reports suspicions of abuse. They are protected against civil actions for defamation, slander and libel arising from the execution of the functions under the Act. In addition, the Act prohibits retaliation by the amateur sports organization against the reporting individual.

An individual who is required, but fails to report suspected child abuse, is subject to criminal and civil penalties.

# **AWARENESS AND ORIENTATION**

All Designated Individuals must comply with the “Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth” set forth in this manual. The Organization will provide online accessibility to “Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth” but does not have responsibility for ensuring that Designated Individuals receive the information. It is strongly urged and recommended that American Legion departments and/or Team Sponsors implement a system for ensuring availability of “Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth” to Designated Individuals each season.

It is strongly urged and recommended that each season the respective American Legion department and/or Team Sponsor require and maintain a record of submission of the statement form contained in Appendix C that acknowledges receipt and understanding of the “Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth” from Designated Individuals, or maintain documentation through management solutions that may be established through the Provider.

## APPENDIX A

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

October 11-12, 2023

Indianapolis, Indiana

#### **Resolution No. 17: Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs**

**Origin: Americanism Commission**

**Submitted by: Finance Commission**

WHEREAS, Federal law (Public Law 115-126) titled “Protecting Young Victims From Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017” requires amateur youth sports organizations affiliated with a national governing body or non-affiliated organizations to develop policies and procedures to prevent the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of amateur athletes; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 32 of the National Executive Committee, October 2020, titled “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs” mandated that The American Legion, under the advice and guidance of the compliance and risk manager of the national organization and the national judge advocate, shall have policies and procedures established beginning in 2021 which mandates sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screening for:

- American Legion Baseball program staff (coaches, managers and volunteers 18 years of age or older) who have regular contact with players who are minors
- Coaches, managers and volunteers 18 years of age or older who have regular contact with minors who are in clubs affiliated with an American Legion post and who are participating in the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Tournament
- Those selected to staff national tournaments of American Legion Baseball, the American Legion Boys Nation program, the American Legion National Oratorical Contest, the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Shoulder-to-Shoulder National Championship, and National Boy Scouts of America Jamborees, or who are adults and have regular contact with program participants who are minors; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 32 of the National Executive Committee, October 2020, titled “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs” authorized the national adjutant, after legal review and approval of the national judge advocate, be directed to execute such contract(s) as may be necessary to support the execution of criminal history background check screening and/or sexual abuse awareness training; and

WHEREAS, A legal adult in the United States is commonly defined as 18 years of age wherein they can legally work, participate in legal contracts, vote, marry, give sexual consent and join the military; and

WHEREAS, American Legion youth program participants can participate at 18 and older if still in high school which places a legal adult in proximity to children under the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to spare no effort to protect minor children trusted in their care; and

WHEREAS, All legal adults involved in all American Legion youth programs have been subject to criminal background screen and sexual abuse awareness training except for youth program participants; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 11-12, 2023, That The American Legion, under the advice and guidance of the compliance and risk manager of the national organization, and the national judge advocate, shall have policies and procedures established effective immediately which mandates sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screenings for:**

- **American Legion Baseball program staff (coaches, managers and volunteers 18 years of age or older) who have regular contact with players who are minors**
- **Coaches, managers and volunteers 18 years of age or older who have regular contact with minors who are in clubs affiliated with an American Legion post and who are participating in the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Tournament**
- **Those selected to staff national tournaments of American Legion Baseball, the American Legion Boys Nation program, the American Legion National Oratorical Contest, the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Shoulder-to-Shoulder National Championship, and National Boy Scouts of America Jamborees, or who are adults and have regular contact with program participants who are minors**
- **All American Legion Youth Program participants 18 years of age or older who participate in any national capstone event hosted by The American Legion National Headquarters who have contact with minors; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the national adjutant, after legal review and approval of the national judge advocate, be and is hereby authorized and directed to execute such contract(s) as may be necessary to support the execution of criminal history background check screening and sexual abuse awareness training; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That departments of The American Legion are strongly encouraged to establish procedures and policies for sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screening similar to the national organization for legal adults who are selected to support and participate in youth programs conducted within their departments; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That all American Legion youth program risk management guidelines, standard operating procedures, rules and materials be updated to reflect these mandates and address any extenuating and mitigating circumstances; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That American Legion youth program participants 18 years of age or older who fail to complete sexual abuse awareness training and criminal history background check screening will not be permitted to participate in national capstone events hosted by The American Legion National Headquarters who may have contact with minors; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 32 of the National Executive Committee, October 2020, titled “Risk Management Mandates for National Youth Programs” is hereby superseded and rescinded.**

## APPENDIX B



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
National Headquarters

## REPORTING FORM CHILD ABUSE / SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

This section is about the individual you are reporting. Please provide as much information as possible.

INDIVIDUAL		
Name of the individual you are reporting (first and last)		
Age or approximate age	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Street Address		
City	State	ZIP
Program position(s) this individual held at time of the incident		

This section asks questions about the incident(s) you are reporting. Please provide as much information as possible.

INCIDENT(S)		
Type of offense (e.g., what is being suspected or alleged)		
During which national youth program did the incident(s) take place?		
What is the location of where the incident(s) took place? (include city, state and any other available location information)		
Street Address		
City	State	ZIP
Other location information		
Describe what happened (include who, what, when, where) (continue on reverse side if necessary)		

This section is for information about the victim(s).

<b>VICTIM(S)</b>		
Name (first and last)		
Age or approximate age	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Parent/Guardian name		
Parent/Guardian Address		
City	State	ZIP
Parent/Guardian phone numbers		
Cell	Home	

This section is your information. A person reporting alleged misconduct should not fear any retribution and/or consequence when filing a report, he/she believes to be true.

<b>YOUR INFORMATION</b>		
Name (first and last)		
Email address		
Cell	Home Phone	
Address		
City	State	ZIP
Program position you were holding at time of the incident		
Relationship to victim (if any)		

It is strongly urged and recommended that respective American Legion departments and/or Team Sponsors implement use of this written report form entitled "REPORTING FORM", and after having immediately contacted law enforcement authorities and parent(s)/guardian(s) in cases involving child abuse or suspected child abuse, the Reporter then offer a copy of this completed form to law enforcement authorities, and provide a copy to the respective American Legion department baseball chairman and/or Team Sponsor, if considered necessary. All information regarding alleged child abuse must be maintained under strict confidentiality and communicated only to those having a "need-to-know".

In the event of a report, the department baseball chairman is responsible to notify the appropriate parties at The American Legion's National Headquarters to the attention of the Americanism Division

## APPENDIX C

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND UNDERSTANDING OF RISK MANAGEMENT POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN LEGION FOR THE ENHANCED PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

If you have any uncertainty or questions regarding the content of the Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth, you are required to consult the American Legion Baseball Program Director at National Headquarters prior to signing and acknowledging this agreement.

"I have read and understand the 'Risk Management Policies of The American Legion for the Enhanced Protection of Children and Youth' and agree to abide by its terms and conditions. I understand that my failure to follow the terms of this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of serving as a coach, manager, volunteer staff or adult player of a Junior or Senior American Legion Baseball team."

Signature of Volunteer	
Printed Name	Date

Team Name
Team Sponsor Name
American Legion Department