

Bollinger Sports Safety Bulletin

January 2007



Chaperones and Team Travel

Tournament season may seem far off in the future, but it is never too early to start planning for team travel. Most planning issues are obvious – making hotel reservations, organizing transportation and outlining the logistics of the trip itself. Many coaches, however, may overlook the importance of chaperones in their travel plans.

The role of Chaperones

For parents, chaperoning is a great way not only to get more involved with the team, and be an extra set of eyes on the trip, but also to help coaches manage the pre-travel planning. Before the trip, coaches should meet with chaperones and other team parents to establish guidelines and communicate their expectations. These discussions should include:

- How many adults will be chaperoning the trip? A good chaperone to player ratio is 8 kids to 1 or more adults. There should always be a minimum of two adults (the Rule of Two) for every activity while on the trip.
- Who are the chaperones? Consider if background checks are appropriate. For example, if your league is performing background checks on all volunteers in the organization, chaperones, especially, should be no exception.
- Avoid the potential for sexual or other types of abuse by making sure that no player is alone with an adult. Use the buddy system at all times – no player should go anywhere alone. Adults should follow the “Rule of Two” to protect themselves from allegations of inappropriate behavior.
- If staying in hotels, determine how many players will be assigned per room, pairing up players of same gender/age. Adults should be in separate but nearby rooms.
- Discuss whether there will be a curfew; and what measures will be taken to prevent players from leaving their rooms at night.
- Alcohol consumption: When traveling out of the country, the permissible drinking age may vary and/or alcohol may be more accessible to underage players. Discuss appropriate ways to ensure that minors are not drinking, and that adults drink responsibly (if at all) in order to protect the coach’s and the team’s liability.

Emergency Preparedness

Chaperones can also assist coaches in compiling the information that each adult should have on hand for all travelers:

- Emergency Medical form for every player and adult on the trip, including all the necessary contact info.
- A signed waiver and release of liability and a notarized medical authorization for each participant (this is particularly important if traveling out of the country).
- Lastly, in case someone gets separated from the group, each person should carry a list of cell phone numbers for the adults on the trip as well as the name, address and phone number of the place where they are staying.

By being more involved in the travel and safety issues for the team, parent chaperones provide much needed help for coaches and pave the way for a safe, fun and hassle-free trip.

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NOTE: These guidelines are not legal advice nor are they intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with emergency or safety procedures, in preventing crisis situations in your sports program, or in complying with any safety-related regulations or other laws.