

Denison Girls Softball Risk Management Program

Risk Management means administering our softball program in ways that reduce the chances of abuse, injury, discrimination, or negligence of a child. We all know that a certain level of risk will always be present in youth sports; therefore, Denison Girls Softball is taking a pro-active stance in implementing a comprehensive approach that includes the 3P's... **Protection, Promotion, and Prevention.**

The objectives of this information include:

- To improve understanding of DGS mission, values and philosophy related to protecting children in our program, provide a positive learning environment, and keeping softball safe and fun.
- To improve understanding of the role of softball in preventing child abuse and other related forms of violence.
- To improve understanding of each form of child abuse in general and within the context of our softball program.
- To increase familiarity with the 3P's concept including Protection, Promotion, and Prevention within the context of our softball program.
- To improve understanding of DGS policies and procedures related to child abuse.
- To improve understanding of how to respond to inappropriate behaviors and/or allegations of child abuse.
- To increase the familiarity with other related efforts including motor skill development, drug free softball, health and nutrition that promote the positive aspects of softball.

Everyone wants children to be safe and no one wants to be vulnerable. Since DGS is responsible for the children that participate in our softball program, we are striving to be aware of potential risks and safeguards that must be taken to protect our participants and our community. Due to the fact that child abuse in the United States has reached epidemic proportions, it is critical that we take the necessary steps to protect our children and build a protective shield around our program.

Kids play sports to have fun, be with friends and to learn some of life's many lessons. When adults get involved they forget the child's point of view and potentially abusive situations may occur. DGS is striving to make our softball program a place where children can go and be free from all forms of abuse and inappropriate behaviors. It is up to everyone involved including administrators, coaches, officials, and parents to work toward making softball a safe haven for all of our participants.

According to the Athletic Footwear Association, having fun, improving skills, being with friends, and staying in shape are the main reasons that youth participants cite for being involved in youth sports. By age 13, almost 70% will drop out of youth sports. The reasons cited for dropping out include lack of fun, too much pressure to perform and too much pressure to win. If youth sports are abusive, neglectful or not fun, it cannot be a safe haven for children, and as expected, children will not participate.

The softball environment is very important because it will determine if a young athlete will continue to participate or will drop out of softball. Denison Girls Softball is dedicated to making the appropriate changes so that our participants have fun, be with and make new friends, and improve their softball skills in a safe and protective environment.

In order to create a climate that is conducive to keeping softball safe and fun, DGS is implementing this Risk Management Program that includes child abuse and molestation policies and procedures. The following develops this protective shield environment:

- DGS provides information through this handbook that addresses our mission statement, policies and procedures, training opportunities, child abuse prevention and important dates.
- DGS provides a friendly, supportive climate for people to come forward with concerns, complaints and/or questions.
- DGS promotes the positive benefits of softball participation.
- DGS clarifies our expectations of our coaches, parents, officials, and participants.
- DGS encourages supportive communication such as positive praise instead of “putdowns”.
- DGS discourages and does not tolerate win-at-all-costs attitudes.
- DGS does not allow sexual put-downs, sexist comments or homophobic comments.
- DGS does not allow racial slurs.
- DGS encourages respectful listening.

DGS softball participants learn a great deal from youth sports including our softball program. Some of the benefits include:

- ✓ An opportunity to be involved in an activity that is fun and constructive
- ✓ Learn about winning, but not at all costs
- ✓ Understanding the true spirit of competition and teamwork
- ✓ Respect for others
- ✓ Discipline
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Increased self-worth
- ✓ Increased self-esteem
- ✓ Sense of belonging
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ A positive connection to a caring adult (role model)
- ✓ Development of new athletic skills by skill through drill enhancement
- ✓ Cooperation – skills to function as a team member
- ✓ An opportunity to make and be with friends
- ✓ Physical fitness
- ✓ A healthy alternative to “nothing to do”
- ✓ Compromise
- ✓ Commitment
- ✓ Interpersonal, pro-social, life skills
- ✓ Learning to be good sports
- ✓ Learning to resolve conflicts peacefully
- ✓ Following rules
- ✓ And the list goes on...

Do we expect children to gain these same positive aspects in school? For example, we want kids to grow self-confidence and increase their self-esteem by succeeding in school. The same goes for sports. We want school to be “fun” so that kids will enjoy learning and want to continue to learn. The same goes for sports. Go right down the list. Make the comparison and it fits. In fact, you can safely say that youth sports is an extension of the child’s education, where they can continue to learn and develop important characteristics basic to positive human growth and development.

Carrying out the notion that youth sports is an extension of the child’s educational experience, another comparison of sports to school would look like this:

P&R Commission= School Board
League Administrators = Principals
Coaches = Teachers
Athletes = Students
Sports Facilities = Classrooms

- DGS adopted this operational philosophy in our softball program that mirrors the Education Model and expects the same approach, behaviors and desired outcomes in softball that we expect from schools. In fact, the DHS Yellowjacket softball coach is on the Girls Softball Council that acts in an advisory capacity and provides guidance and direction for DGS program.

DGS philosophy that “This is our school and we don’t do that in school” can help get our coaches, parents, officials, and participants to be on the same page. To understand the connection between school and youth sports think about the following.

We would not tolerate a teacher smoking in the classroom and would classify the behavior as inappropriate. If we begin looking at our softball program facilities as classrooms and the coaches as teachers, we would also find it intolerable for a coach to be smoking at our softball facilities. When a parent has a problem to discuss with a teacher, they understand that it is necessary to refrain from interrupting the class and ask for a conference when class is not in session. If a coach is perceived by the parents as a teacher, and the field, as a classroom, they too will begin to understand that there is a right time and place to discuss problems with their child’s coach. A teacher would not allow a parent to attend their child’s spelling bee and while in the classroom swear, taunt, intimidate and trash talk the opponent. A parent would not tolerate a teacher only allowing the most talented at spelling to participate in the spelling bee while leaving the rest of the class sitting at their desk never to have an opportunity to test their skills at spelling. Why is this behavior tolerated in the child’s softball classroom? Most parents would not tolerate a teacher that berates their child for making a spelling mistake when the class was “really depending on them” in order to win the contest. Why are these behaviors tolerated in the child’s softball classroom?

There are many similar observations that one can make when comparing sports to school and the disparity in which each is perceived seems to defy logic. Logically, they are the same kids whether in school or in sports. They are there to learn, experience different things and grow because of the experience.

What Is Child Abuse In Youth Sports?

Another important topic that is discussed in sports as well as in the classroom is abuse. Softball is an excellent way for girls to improve their physical abilities, social skills, self-esteem, confidence, understanding of competition, cooperation and leadership abilities. When the people who should be guiding young athletes are instead emotionally, physically, or sexually abusive, it becomes a hostile, destructive environment that erodes self-esteem, confidence, and trust. The child is not only assaulted by the immediate behaviors, but is often robbed of the potential life-long benefits, which sports participation offers.

You may be saying:

- “But this isn’t a problem here.”
- “Abuse doesn’t happen in this program.”
- “We don’t have **those** people in **our** organization.”

But consider the following examples:

- ❑ Benching the less skilled athletes
- ❑ Cursing, yelling or using “put-downs” to demean a child
- ❑ Name calling (clumsy, stupid, klutz, uncoachable, troublemaker, wimp, etc.)
- ❑ Not allowing a young athlete to take a break or come out of a game when they need to
- ❑ Grabbing or shaking a young athlete in a fit of anger
- ❑ Using racial slurs
- ❑ Putting a player down or demonstrating disgust (You’re playing like a girl, etc.)
- ❑ Making cruel comments about body types
- ❑ Stereotyping (overweight athlete as catcher, least skilled player in right field)
- ❑ Paying special attention to only the best players, casting aside the less talented
- ❑ Cutting young athletes from the team
- ❑ Hurtful comments and/or participation denial to persons with physical or mental disabilities
- ❑ Demanding unrealistic expectations, perfect performance, no losses, no mistakes, etc.
- ❑ Teaching and expecting players to taunt, cheat, intimidate, demonstrate poor sportsmanship, fight, trash talk, disrespect opponents or win-at-all-costs
- ❑ Inappropriate sexual contact between an adult and a child

Some of these are “inappropriate” and some are “abuse”. Either way, if any of these things are occurring, they are a problem for our young athletes and DGS.

Child abuse and other forms of violence affect the world of youth sports in many ways. As shown below, abuse and violence can range from hurtful words to physical injury.

- ❑ When coaches or others emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse athletes.
- ❑ When instead of developing empathy and compassion for others, young athletes are taught to harass or physically injure others.
- ❑ When fans get out of control, scream obscenities and/or threaten or commit violence to athletes, officials, coaches or each other.
- ❑ When athletes are taught, because they are gifted in athletics, no one has a right to say “No” to them, or when they do something that is inappropriate or even criminal, key people look the other way.

- ❑ When there is no differentiation between aggression on the field and acceptable ways to deal with frustrations, anger, and rejection in everyday life. The message needs to be clear that violence is not an acceptable way to solve problems or deal with feelings.
- ❑ When young athletes have witnessed or experienced various forms of abuse or violence and subsequently act in un-empathetic, aggressive or an exploitative manner toward others.
- ❑ When DGS tolerates racial, sexual or other forms of harassment or abusive language, thereby creating a hostile environment.
- ❑ When boys are taught that girls are less than they are (boys are real athletes) or there is something wrong with being a girl (crying, “sissy “ behavior) or it’s okay (a sign of strength or masculinity) to degrade girls.
- ❑ When violence against females is not really considered violence and/or is condoned (gang rape, sexual harassment, sexual assault, date rape or domestic violence).
- ❑ When professional athletes and coaches continually behave in ways that are clearly abusive, if not illegal, and are still considered to be the role models that we encourage children to be like.

Child Abuse Definitions

Many definitions are associated with child abuse and maltreatment. The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA) defines physical abuse as a pattern of injuries to a child that is non-accidental. Child abuse is usually a **Pattern of Behaviors**, the effects of which add up and are detrimental to the well being of the child.

Emotional abuse is the most common form of maltreatment that occurs in youth sports. It is a pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self worth. This pattern of behavior can seriously interfere with a child's positive development. Emotional abuse is an assault on a child's psyche. It includes constant rejection and terrorizing. Examples include: constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, rejection and providing no love, guidance or support. Emotional abuse is sometimes referred to as verbal abuse or mental abuse.

Consider the impact of telling a child:

"You're stupid."

"You're a klutz."

"You're an embarrassment."

"You're not worth the uniform you play in."

These statements can make young athletes feel like their very being is wrong – that they are worthless. Such statements can be very painful, and for some children, damaging. This is true especially when the statements are made because of a child's race, gender, size, or abilities.

Coaches can be great role models for children. Kids may listen intently to every word a coach may utter. Unfortunately, children take the negative things that parents and coaches say very seriously. Statements such as these may not seem serious to adults, and not all children are deeply affected by such statements. However, from a child's point of view, being yelled at or hearing "put-downs" can be humiliating, degrading and shaming.

It is far more helpful to:

- ✓ In a clear and non-threatening manner, explain the specific behaviors the child did or did not do
- ✓ Offer alternatives
- ✓ Create a "constructive environment" (an environment that is child-friendly and supportive) for the child to most effectively learn
- ✓ Catch the child doing something right and give them praise and support (never resort to humiliating a child)
- ✓ Focus on the positive, find something good to say

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult. It may range from exhibitionism and fondling to intercourse or use of a child in the production of pornographic materials. Sexual abuse encompasses a wide variety of inappropriate behaviors and involves the sexual mistreatment of a child by an adult or an older child. In today's environment, many volunteers fear that merely touching one of their young athletes will be viewed as "sexual" in nature. It is important for coaches, parents and young athletes to realize that all touching is not sexual abuse.

The kind of touching that many of us need and appreciate is:

- ❖ Respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level
- ❖ Public (done in front of others), not secret
- ❖ In response to the needs of the child, not the adult
- ❖ Nurturing, not "sexualized"
- ❖ Comfort, reassurance, support

A few examples of "sexualized touch" include:

- Fondling instead of hugging
- Any kissing
- Seductive stroking of various body parts

Sexual abuse often involves:

- Misuse of power and authority
- Manipulation or tricks – "this is love", or "this is what you need to do to be part of the team", or "this is what we do for initiation".
- Grooming – Desensitization that begins with appropriate touch, then the touch changes. Examples of grooming include: courting (gifts, time, attention); romancing (talk of caring, love, attraction); lines ("You're special", or "I don't usually do this sort of thing: or "You are so mature" or "You're so attractive"); or secrets ("This is our special secret ", or "Others wouldn't understand" or "You or I would get in trouble")

Physical abuse is a pattern of non-accidental physical injury, which is inflicted by another person and may include severe beatings, burns, human bites, strangulation, or immersion in scalding water, with bruises and welts, broken bones, scars or serious internal injuries resulting. Rough and physical contact is inherent in many sports and injuries are a part of the game. Yet, when injuries are **caused** by the conduct of a coach, official or other person, something is wrong!

Hitting children, kicking them, throwing equipment at them or shaking them are indications a person has lost control of both their behaviors and feelings. These behaviors are not disciplinary. They are abusive! DGS will not tolerate these types of behavior.

Caution needs to be taken to clarify when:

- Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary
- Training practices become abusive
- Fighting is encouraged or ignored
- Illegal moves, often associated with injuries, are encouraged or ignored
- Pressure exists for potentially dangerous weight gain or loss
- Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage on field conduct which violates clearly defined “safety rules” designed to protect participants
- Coaches allow children to be physically abusive (or verbally abusive) to other children
- Behaviors result in injuries

“They should hug us not hit us; and use words to help us grow up, not just put us down...you talk about not bullying, well adults bully kids all the time. We just want to have fun.” – Second grader, on how coaches should treat young athletes.

Neglect is the withholding of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene, or supervision needed for optimal physical and emotional growth and development. It involves both acts and omissions on the part of the responsible person. Since neglect often involves acts of omission, it is sometimes harder for people to identify because it may involve what is not happening.

A situation may also be neglectful when action is not taken to provide basic emotional and physical safety. In the context of youth sports, neglect may overlap with emotional abuse and with other forms of abuse. Examples include, consistently ignoring a child’s reasonable requests, or when a parent, coach or organization does not make any attempt to provide basic emotional support or needed medical care. Another way to look at neglect is the extreme absence of emotional or physical care or involvement.

Neglect in youth sports may involve:

- Failure to practice, encourage or work with a young athlete in order to help her improve her skills
- To seldom give opportunities to participate or play
- Denying water at any time
- Only playing or practicing the “best” players

“Sports can help with ‘forever memories’ and it is neglect when we leave kids out of playing and participating.” – Dr. Thomas Tutko, Sports Psychologist.

Philosophical abuse involves inappropriate and often abusive use of core philosophy. Philosophical abuse describes extreme reactions to statements like, “No pain, no gain.” It also refers to the “winning-at-all-cost” mentality like, “There’s no place other than first place,” or “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” When attitudes and mentalities override a child’s right to safely participate in sports, it’s abusive and it sets the stage for other forms of abuse. When leagues, teams, or coaches take a philosophy to an extreme, the philosophy can become abusive. For example, a team that is coached with a philosophy that accepts no losses or mistakes is not realistic in youth sports. Since youth sports are supposed to be a learning experience, mistakes will occur.

Other behaviors and attitudes that can be forms of philosophical abuse include:

- Encouraging non-sportsmanlike behaviors
- Pushing for participation in only one sport, versus encouraging multiple skill development
- Making room for elite athletes only
- Condoning or perpetuating inequities in opportunities, including gender, racial, economic or ability

Child abuse is not usually just one physical attack or just one instance of failure to meet a child’s most basic needs. Usually child abuse is a pattern of behavior that takes place over a period of time. Its effects add up. The longer the child abuse continues, the more serious it becomes, the more serious is the damage to the child, the more difficult it is to stop and the more likely that it will be repeated in another generation. (NCPCA)

A Child's Disclosure

What if a young athlete isn't coming right out and saying anything, but you suspect something?

Children need to be able to talk to someone when they have encountered abuse or inappropriate behavior(s). Children also need to be encouraged to speak up if they feel uncomfortable or unsure. One way to approach a child you fear is being abused is to talk to the young athlete. Use the indicators you see which make you suspect abuse. For example, "I noticed (____) and that makes me wonder if someone is (whatever it is you suspect)." A child may not tell you right away even when abuse is occurring. She may:

- Be afraid
- Be protecting the person
- Not think you'll believe them
- Think it is her fault
- Feel responsible for "getting the person in trouble" or for what happened

Let the child know:

"If anyone ever does anything that scares you, hurts your body or feelings or mixes you up, I want you to know you can talk to me, or someone else you trust, about it. It is not okay for anyone to treat anyone else like that."

You may need to also let the child know:

"There is a law that requires me to report when I think or have reasonable cause to believe that abuse has taken place. Just like you came to me for help, I need to let the DGS administrators know that this has happened. I need to tell them, not because you've done anything wrong – you haven't. I need to tell someone else because what is happening to you is not okay. (____)'s behavior is not okay and it needs to be stopped."

Reporting Child Abuse

Deciding whether or not to report suspected child maltreatment can be a difficult and confusing process, yet it is the important first step toward protecting a child who might be in danger. Anyone who has **cause to suspect** or reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected should report it to the DGS administrators, immediately. If you hear that something has happened to a child, see that something has happened to a child or if you feel that something has happened to a child, you should report this to the DGS administrators. A report is not an accusation. Rather, a report means that “something” has happened to a child.

The information that should be reported to DGS administration is the same information that created a “cause to suspect”. Information that should be included in the report includes:

- Child’s name, age, sex and address
- Name and address of the child’s parents/guardians/caretakers
- Nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse or neglect
- Any other information that might help to establish the need for intervention

Once a report is made, DGS will contact the appropriate city officials and an investigation will follow.

Laws Relating to Child Abuse & Neglect

Federal law recognizes that certain basic protections must exist to ensure a degree of equal treatment and basic services for all children. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-247) defines child abuse and neglect as the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment:

- Of a child
- By a person responsible for the welfare of the child
- Under circumstances, which indicate, that the child’s health and welfare is harmed or threatened.

There are many dangers and threats that can surround your child. DGS is providing the safest possible environment for your child. In doing so, a protective shield will in fact, be surrounding each and every child in our program.

Creating A Youth Sports Shield

This resource was developed based on the notion that every softball program has a shield that surrounds the organization and the youth participants. The shield's thickness depends on what steps are taken to protect everyone from abuse, inappropriate behaviors and accidents. Every time something is done to protect participants from abusive situations, DGS is shielded. The more DGS does to protect its participants and itself, the stronger the shield becomes. When abusive situations, inappropriate behaviors, and/or accidents occur, DGS needs to have the thickest shield possible.

Therefore, DGS provides a comprehensive approach to create a very thick shield by including the 3P's.

- **Protection:** Actions to safeguard DGS participants and itself by identifying and minimizing risks.
- **Promotion:** Actions to provide children and DGS with the strengths, assets, and protective factors they need to be resilient and thrive.
- **Prevention:** Actions to stop problems before they begin.

DGS Protection Plan

DGS is strengthening its protection plan by adding a Conduct Official. The Conduct Official will act as a liaison between Administration and coaches, parents, and volunteers. The Conduct Official is responsible for making sure that all individuals within the program are abiding by the policies and procedures set forth by the Risk Management plan. Any instances, circumstances, or occurrences that do not fall under the protection of the Risk Management umbrella such as the suspicion of physical abuse, verbal abuse, molestation, etc. must be reported to the Conduct Official. The Conduct Official can be reached at 903-463-5116 (work) or 580-920-9639 (cell). The Conduct Official will regulate the following items that include but may not be limited to:

1. Limit One-On-One Contact:

Two adults are required to be present at all times during practices. Three to five coaches as dictated by the specific age division must be present for all games. The purpose is to protect the girls and to protect the adults from false allegations or misinterpretations. This policy prevents a person disposed to abusing children from being alone with a child.

2. Monitor Adult-To-Athlete Ratio:

A minimum of 2 trained adults must be present at all times so that our participants are not left unsupervised. Many injuries occur at practices when the coach is focusing attention on teaching a new skill or drill to some while the other team members entertain themselves.

3. Touch Policy:

Touch is acceptable as long as it is respectful and appropriate. Children need caring and appropriate touch. It is not right to penalize all adults because some people misuse touch or do not respect other's boundaries and needs. Touch is especially appreciated when a young athlete needs comfort, reassurance and support. When a person misuses physical and emotional power over another person and "uses" sexual touch, instead of being respectful and nurturing, the touch is abusive.

4. Take Home/Pick Up Policies:

There must be a minimum of 2 adults to take home or pick up athletes for practices, games, or events. This policy is in place for the protection of both the participant and the coaches/adult. It will help in avoiding misinterpretation and/or false allegations.

5. Insurance Policies And Procedures:

DGS provides insurance for its participants, coaches, scorekeepers, officials, and managers in accordance with Dixie Softball, Inc. Requirements. DGS insurance policy covers individuals participating in scheduled tryouts, games or practice sessions, traveling under adult supervision to or from scheduled games or practice session, attending and going to and from, as a supervised group, scheduled league-wide activities where all teams within the league have been invited to participate such as award banquets, parades, picnics and attendance at professional baseball games.

All players and coaches are covered while participating in sub-district, district, state, and World Series tournaments. Teams or players selected to compete in official tournaments will be insured while traveling to and from the tournament city and in addition will be insured for any covered injury, which occurs during the tournament.

No **uncertified** parent will be allowed to catch when a pitcher is warming up due to the void clause in our insurance policy that does not cover any **uncertified** person (coach or otherwise) if one sustains an injury. Also, **all certified** persons must have appropriate headgear on when on the field catching for a pitcher.

Incurred expenses will be paid when such expenses are not already payable under any other existing plan (ex. parents' medical insurance) to a maximum of \$250,000. If an existing plan pays all medical bills except for those not payable because of a deductible or co-insurance, our plan will pay for such deductibles or co-insurance. This is a secondary policy and will pay if the participant does not have primary insurance. If no other insurance is in force, our plan pays from the first dollar up to \$250,000 of the usual and reasonable charges for eligible expenses.

*Note: If a player or coach is injured while practicing, playing, or being transported to/from these activities, they need to follow the process as explained for a participant. It is important to contact DGS administrators immediately in such circumstances so that the correct insurance procedures are followed.

Refer to the Emergency Phone Numbers, Emergency Procedures, and Minor Injury Plan that can assist in following procedures to make sure that your daughter is immediately taken care of and the appropriate information obtained to properly pay for the expenses incurred during an accident, injury, or illness. This information is addressed on the pages that follow.

6. Emergency Planning:

In the event of an emergency or accident, the following steps should be taken:
Assess the situation. Do not panic. Administer first aid only if you are qualified.
Have an adult stay with the injured person at all times.
Contact DGS Administrators for assistance.

If additional assistance is needed, call 911. Provide the dispatcher the following information:

1. Your name and position
2. Exact location including street address, entry access, building location, and/or best route to scene (addresses attached to practice and game facilities)
3. Victim's condition
4. Nature of the injury and circumstances surrounding the emergency
5. Stay on the phone until you are told to hang up

Return to the injury scene in case you are needed for other assistance.

Meet emergency vehicle

Immediately call parent or guardian and advise them of the circumstances. Report accident within 24 hours. Submit written accident report as well. Call the child's parents or guardians to make sure everything is okay the evening of the accident.

Remember:

- ❖ At the time of registration, we require all medical information about each participant.
- ❖ Coaches are given medical information on their players and are responsible for keeping this information accessible at all times.
- ❖ This information will also be accessible in the Culpepper Softball Complex concession stand (903) 463-6360.
- ❖ Coaches are responsible for having a first aid kit (which is provided by the DGS program) at all practices and games.
- ❖ If you are running low on stock in your first aid kit, let the DGS Administrators know so it can be replenished.

All coaches are required to have an emergency plan and to practice emergency situations with the team. A written outline is provided so that names can be filled in to determine who is responsible for what action. A first aid kit is furnished to each coach with instructions on specific information required in case of an injury or accident. Basic first aid training is provided through the NYSCA Coaches Certification.

DGS requires participants' parents to sign a consent/waiver that addresses inherent risks associated with softball and a warning that clearly informs about the potential for accidents and injuries. The form gives consent to participate and permission to administer first aid in the event an accident occurs and the parent(s) or guardian(s) cannot be contacted. Immediately following an accident or incident, the volunteers involved (whether coaches or officials) should complete an accident report. All facts surrounding the incident should be documented.

DGS Coaches have access to the National Center for Sports Safety PREPARE Program. PREPARE is an online sports safety course aimed at educating coaches on how to prevent injuries, how to recognize symptoms of potentially dangerous conditions, and how to respond to emergency situations.

The PREPARE Course is ideal for volunteer youth coaches who do not have the time to attend safety workshops but need to know how to be PREPARED. This course may be accessed at www.SportsSafety.org. Once you complete the course, participants will receive a Sports Safety Patch, a Certificate showing completion and be added to the NCSS National Coaches Registry.

Learning The 3P's Protection

Each individual in DGS has a role to play in promoting pro-social skills, including respect, empathy, and non-violent ways to solve conflicts. Everyone needs to examine the ways we motivate, discipline and educate children making sure our techniques are sensitive to the child's development and needs. Adults should not try to stop a child's inappropriate behavior by using behavior that is inappropriate itself.

It's up to adults to create a nurturing, respectful, and caring environment where children can thrive and achieve their best. Our job is to do everything we can to keep softball safe and fun.

Keys to unlearning violence and protecting children involves:

- Transforming our fear or hopelessness into action and energy to do something positive.
- No more secrets - talk about abuse in general and specifically abuse in GSB terms.
- Cut through denial-acknowledge that abuse can and does happen. This does not mean we should stop providing a softball program for the youth. It does not mean girls softball is bad. **It means no place is immune and everyone has a role to play in prevention.**
- Create a climate that centers on the children's needs-keep in mind GSB programs are for girls. Girls are not miniature adults-they have different emotional and physical needs. **Girls are involved in softball to have fun, be with friends, learn/improve and participate.**
- Create a climate that strongly discourages, and in no way condones behavior that is abusive or violent whether it is adult-to-adult, adult-to-child, or child-to-child.
- Understand the lines, tricks and manipulations used by perpetrators. They are not likely to easily admit their behavior is abusive or hurting to others.
- Understand losing is not failure and success is not winning. **Success in DGS is improving skills and trying one's best.**
- Increase awareness and education around child abuse and GSB.
- Implement a comprehensive program in DGS that includes the 3P's:
 1. **Protecting** participants and DGS through education and training.
 2. **Promoting** the benefits of softball participation.
 3. **Preventing** problems before they occur.

Drug Free Environments

DGS practices, games and events are drug and alcohol-free. Adults involved in DGS have a unique opportunity to help young athletes learn skills that can help them avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Alcohol, tobacco (including smokeless tobacco products), and other drug usage adversely affect one's health, performance, and decision-making.

Promoting alcohol, tobacco, and drug-free girls softball programs includes not only the young athletes, but also the adults involved. **Children learn from what we say and from what we do!** Adults involved in DGS must set examples for the participants in the organization.

- ✓ Talk about the effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs with youth participants
- ✓ Encourage adults to be substance-free role models at all DGS activities
- ✓ Create an open environment to respond to young people who may have problems
- ✓ Know where to refer a young athlete for help

Young athletes are encouraged to enhance their bodies and minds without drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. The child abuse and DGS program is related to anti-drug initiatives because:

- Use of alcohol and other drugs is correlated (not a cause) to abuse and violence
- Use may affect the behavior and judgment of both the victim and the abuser
- Emotions and anger can escalate into violence when under the influence
- Concerns about the influence of tobacco and alcohol advertising at sporting events in general and DGS events specifically
- High visibility cases of college and professional athletes with problematic or addictive use, often correlated with other forms of violent behaviors
- Coaches and parents approved to work with girls *cannot* smoke or have any tobacco in their possession on the fields

Learning the 3P's Promotion

Young athletes and their parents can benefit from sports participation by also embracing other related promotional techniques. These techniques will help to avoid abusive situations by encouraging young athletes to be prepared for sports participation. These related programs and issues include promoting motor skill development, promoting proper health and nutrition.

Promotion: Actions to provide children and our program with the strengths, assets, and protective factors DGS needs to be resilient and thrive. Promotion is best achieved by taking actions to:

- Provide what is needed to help our participants learn to be good sports
- Clarifying the true spirit of competition
- Develop assets of strengths in our participants

Provide the ingredients needed to help softball participants become or remain good sports.

All DGS coaches are required to be NYSCA certified. DGS adopts and operates according to the following position statement in accordance with the National Youth Sports Coaches Association.

1. DGS strives to restore, promote and emphasize the value of sportsmanship, which emphasizes ethical and moral conduct throughout our softball program.
2. DGS, parents, and coaches accept the responsibility of being moral educators for their players and adopt the position that it is against our basic moral code to violate others.
3. DGS, parents, coaches, and participants sign a code of ethics that they pledge to demonstrate positive sportsmanship and values, and proper moral standards.
4. DGS provides a policy that swiftly and equitably deals with violations of sportsmanship, i.e. Moral and ethical standards.
5. DGS, coaches, and parents lead by example in demonstrating sportsmanship and fair play to all participants in our softball program.

DGS pledges to enforce respect, empathy, equity, dignity, and treating others, as we want to be treated. Many “teachable moments” occur in our softball program, which can help to reinforce these core values.

Respect: Softball players can learn to respect the differences among themselves, instead of putting down or fearing those who are different. Our players can be taught that everyone deserves to be treated respectfully. We may be different in terms of race, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, or opportunities, but we are all people with something to offer and to learn from each other.

Empathy: Softball players can learn to think about how others are feeling and how they would feel if they were in a similar situation. This helps them to be more supportive when someone makes a mistake, wins, or loses.

Equity: Softball offers opportunity to teach equity between youth of varying race, class, and abilities. We all deserve an equal opportunity.

Dignity: Involvement in softball can assist individuals in recognizing their own and other's worth, as well as helping those involved to feel valued and esteemed. Dignity involves feeling and/or treating others with esteem and worth. Conscious attention to build a child's sense of worth and esteem helps them to want to stay involved and continue to improve.

Treating others, as they want to be treated: Some refer to this concept as the "Golden Rule". It is the basic value that can be role modeled and practiced in softball.

DGS helps our softball participants be good sports by guiding them to improve their pro-social skills. Softball is an opportunity to learn and/or reinforce pro-social skills, such as being civil, manners, empathy, anger management, problem solving and peaceful conflict resolution.

The role of softball is not to literally teach such curricula, but softball can promote and practice such skills as an integrated part of how we act on a daily basis. Our coaches have the opportunity to teach their players how to respectfully use their words instead of their fists. Keep in mind they learn from what we do as much as from what we say.

Health Promotion

Part of being an athlete is being nutritionally healthy. Young athletes can experience the positive benefits of softball participation when they feel good and eat properly. It is up to adults to help educate, monitor and positively influence young athletes' understanding of nutrition as it relates to performance in softball. Clearly promoting sound nutrition and physical conditioning are part of protecting children and promoting their well-being.

Motor Skill Development

Let's think about the education model once again. Most parents review the alphabet, colors, and numbers with their children before the child attends the first day of preschool or kindergarten. Unfortunately, many parents drop their young children off at the first practice without any introduction to the sport. If we think of the preparation for school as a way to give a youngster a head start, developing basic motor skills prior to becoming involved in softball is fundamental to a successful experience.

Motor skill development is very relevant to promoting the positive benefits of youth softball in that for a child to develop confidence and have fun it is critical that she experiences success and improvement. It is difficult to do this if she does not have the necessary basic motor skills. If parents or coaches do not have realistic expectations of what young children can do and understand the need for them to develop basic motor skills before they move on to finer motor skill development, it could be extremely frustrating for them and the child. This frustration and unrealistic expectation can set the stage for maltreatment or abuse.

Children who enter youth softball programs with fundamental motor skill competence and confidence in their ability to perform are much more likely to improve their skill performance. They are also more likely to learn new, more complex, softball-specific skills, be successful in competition and have a positive sports experience.

Clarifying The True Spirit Of Competition

DGS provides opportunity for its participants to be clear about the true spirit of competition. There is nothing wrong with competition in and of itself. Just like there is nothing wrong with wanting to win in and of itself. But, some famous athletes and sports leaders have become “infamous” in their attempts to win by injuring their competitors or trying to gain unfair advantages. Making sure our participants understand the true spirit of competition involves trying your hardest against a competitor who is performing at her best. That way, whoever wins, wins and both have tried hard and done their best.

Each time a game is played, adults, coaches, and parents can help our participants think about if they played their best and how to improve. Remember, the idea is to have fun. Clearly, winning can be fun but we need to keep in mind that when we get caught up in winning at all costs, we lose.

Develop Assets and Strengths In Our Participants

The administrators, coaches, and parents can make a big difference in the lives of our softball participants by helping each to identify her strengths instead of focusing on their weakness.

One of the most important things we can do to help our young athletes minimize the risks in their lives is to help them build strengths, assets and protective factors they need to cope. Research has shown that building on strengths is the best way to minimize risks.

We cannot protect our children from every bully, scary or brutal scene, but it is important to acknowledge what we can do to protect them. It may sound trite but there is tremendous power in caring. Children need a strong, long-term connection to a positive and caring adult in their life in order to cope with the tough stuff they face. Mentors can make a huge difference in a child’s life. DGS administrators and coaches who work directly with our participants must be aware of their role as a mentor and how important that role can be.

Softball offers young athletes a way to be involved in pro-social and positive activities that help them to develop their own strengths and assets.

Learning The 3P's Prevention

Prevention includes actions to stop problems before they happen. Prevention also involves the development of skills to more effectively handle high-risk situations or to resist abuse.

Adults involved (parents, coaches, officials, and administrators) are in a great position to positively affect children for a lifetime. Implementing a risk management plan that includes child abuse/molestation prevention to ensure safe softball opportunities can prevent child abuse in youth sports.

A clear understanding of the relationship between providing softball opportunities and the prevention of child abuse will allow DGS to reduce the chances of abuse from occurring and will also help those children who are abused outside the program. Remember, every pro-active step we take not only thickens the protective shield that surrounds DGS, but also prevents child abuse and its negative impacts.

We need to focus on prevention for three reasons:

1. Prevention is the humane and right thing to do
2. Prevention costs less money in the long run
3. Prevention works!

Prevention begins with DGS Child Abuse/Molestation Policies and educating all involved with our softball program – the 3P's – protection, promotion, and prevention. Every participant including players, coaches, parents, officials, and DGS Administrators can be a part of the solution.

It is imperative that a coach understands 3 key elements of any child abuse prevention program:

1. A coach must be observant of players and vigilant regarding changes physically and emotionally, which might signal abuse or maltreatment.
2. A coach must know what to do when he/she suspects or knows that child abuse and maltreatment is occurring. The coach must know to contact the DGS Administrators/Conduct Official immediately if there are concerns about child abuse.
3. Coaches and parents must understand that sexual predators (sex offenders) know that the most lucrative supply of victims is in our youth sport programs.

Developing Prevention Skills

Adults can help young athletes develop skills to more effectively handle high-risk situations and resist abuse. The following techniques may be helpful for you, the coaches, or parents in DGS when discussing prevention issues.

Prevention techniques to discuss include, but are not limited to:

- **Refusal and resistance skills**

Ask: “How can you handle it if someone is trying to get you to do something you don’t want to?”

Tell the girls they have the:

- Right to say no and keep saying no
- Right to set limits if things are confusing or uncomfortable
- Right to not keep or break a secret (in the case of abuse, the secret is the abuser’s secret, not the victim’s)

- Understand tricks/lines a perpetrator might use:

Ask: “What kind of tricks or lines might an abuser (someone who is hurting you) use?”

Examples include:

“This is our secret, don’t tell anyone else.”

“If you would do a better job, I wouldn’t need to act like this.”

“This isn’t abuse, you’re just a sissy.”

“You’ve got to toughen up and learn to take it.”

“No one else has ever died from a few little words.”

“If you tell, they’ll think there’s something wrong with you.”

“I lost my temper, it’ll never happen again, let’s just forget about it.”

Make sure the girls understand that such statements are tricks/lines and they can say “NO.” Remember, there are two situations that may occur. A child may be abused while participating in a softball activity or a child may be abused outside the sports environment. Either way, DGS volunteers are in a great position to positively help children and to help them understand what happened to them.

- **Anger Management:**

Ask: “What do you know about how to handle it when you feel really angry?”

Here are some things that can help:

- Know how to safely resolve conflicts:
 - Figure out what the problem is
 - Let the person know how you feel, what you need
 - Listen to the other person’s point of view
 - Figure out what can work for both of you
 - Use words not fists
 - Take a time out if necessary to calm down
- Know how to efficiently communicate:
 - Speak for yourself...that means use “I” statements instead of “you...”
 - Be clear about how you feel
 - Listen...it’s a big part of communicating
 - Talk – don’t just repress your feelings
- Know how to deal with pressure:
 - Pressure and stress are a part of life, we each need to learn how to deal with them
 - Talk about how you feel
 - Get the help you need
 - Deal with the little things instead of letting pressure build up until you’re ready to explode
- Developing empathy for the perspective and the needs of others:
 - Your feelings count, but so does everyone else’s
 - Think about how the other person feels
 - Put yourself in their shoes

- **Set High Expectations:**

DGS and its volunteers need to have high expectations for each participant. High expectations do not mean unrealistic expectations. It just means helping each person know that someone believes in their capabilities and believes in helping them go for their dreams. The idea is not to play into low standards and low expectations that set the stage for poor self-esteem and confidence.

- **Clarify Consequences If Responsibilities Are Not Met:**

Uphold the standards DGS sets. This can be as simple as spelling out each person’s rights and responsibilities, clarifying consequences and following through.

See It Model

(Developed by Cordeila Anderson, 1993)

* **The See It Model** is another possible tool to use in prevention education. It was designed for violence and harassment education but is broadly adapted. This model may be helpful for DGS to use in its efforts to stop abusive behaviors that occur while offering softball opportunities for girls. Volunteers can share this model with young athletes so they too can prevent abusive situations from occurring.

See It – Don't ignore or minimize abusive behaviors.

Name It – Bullying, intimidating, harassing, racist, or sexist comments, etc.

Speak Out – Teach to speak out for the standards of DGS. This is a very critical, often overlooked piece of the puzzle. Change is not just about teaching victims what they can do to protect themselves or swift intervention with perpetrators, it's also teaching everyone what they can do to intervene and not tolerate abusive behavior.

Action – Action steps may vary from reporting to changing policy to listening to someone's concern. It takes courage to act.

One community adapted the See It Model into a community peace pledge:

I will set a peaceful example in my family, community, and school. When I see violence, I will name it, speak up, speak out, and have the courage to end violence and create peace. It

**Tri-County Youth and Family Partnership
Chicago Health Services, MN**

All administrators, coaches, parents, athletes, and officials need to:

- Know their rights and responsibilities
- Understand that DGS is for girls
- Recognize their personal responsibility to do what they can to prevent child abuse and neglect in DGS

Conclusion

So what is the bottom line?

- Child abuse can and does happen in youth softball.
- Every pro-active step DGS takes helps build a protective shield around everyone.
- The time and effort involved with **reacting** to an incident of abuse is much greater than the time and effort required to be **proactive** in the first place.
- Doing something about the problem involves more than just screening and background checks. A comprehensive approach involves the 3P's:
 - **Protecting** participants and DGS program
 - **Promoting** the positive benefits of softball participation
 - **Preventing** abuse and problems before they occur
- Involvement in DGS can be a positive, skill building experience for young girls that helps them to not only improve their athletic techniques but also to build on their strengths to be good sports and citizens for a lifetime.
- Abuse in youth sports is not only the dramatic cases that make the headline news, it also involves how some people (out of ignorance more often than maliciousness) “put-down” rather than “build-up” a child’s spirit. Erick Erickson, a well-known child psychologist once said: “Someday, maybe there will exist a well-informed, well-considered and yet fervent public conviction that the most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child’s spirit.” One of the most positive benefits of being involved in DGS is that it can help strengthen and build a child’s spirit.

Just as a teacher needs training to know not only how to teach a subject, but also equally important, how to teach a child, so does everyone who is involved with our softball program. This takes time and energy but the safety of children and of the girls softball program is well worth the effort. We believe DGS gives you the tools and information needed to be part of the solution.

Just like a child is never without people who can help, neither are you. We’ve designed these materials to be your guide. DGS has designed the Risk Management Program to provide a safe, fun, and developmental program for your children. This plan is not all-inclusive however; we do believe that it provides a foundation on which to build a program. DGS will continue to evaluate and make the needed changes to protect our most precious resource – our children.

Volunteers and Risk

Volunteer positions are crucial to the delivery of our softball program. Volunteers want to enjoy their experience and be successful, therefore, DGS provides the necessary screening, training and supervision so DGS coaches will enjoy and get the most out of the softball coaching experience.

As part of the screening process, the Denison City Council requires ALL volunteer and staff who will be in contact with the youth of our community to pass a background check.

However, screening is more than just background checks. The basic screening that is required in the DGS program includes:

- A comprehensive application form with a signed statement.
- A thorough personal interview that examines an applicant's past employment and/or volunteer experience and explores other indicators of potential problem behavior.
- Reference checks with past employers and personal contacts.

The purpose of screening staff and all volunteers who work with our participants includes:

- 1) To make an unwelcome environment for anyone who doesn't put children's needs first.
- 2) To keep people who have a history of inappropriate behavior or who are unfit to work with children out of the DGS program.
- 3) To select the "best" volunteers for our softball program.
- 4) To clarify DGS standards and expectations. All of our volunteers shall be screened as though they were applying for a job. We are selective!

The screening process consists of eight elements. They include the following:

- 1) A screening policy
- 2) Job description
- 3) Completed application forms
- 4) Consent/Release forms
- 5) Review application, verify references and employers
- 6) Interview applicant
- 7) Conduct a formal background check
- 8) Evaluate results

Volunteer Screening Process

#1. DGS Screening Policy:

The DGS Screening Policy consists of eight elements for which all volunteers and staff members will be screened as though they were applying for a job. The screening process will provide DGS an opportunity to create a shield around its program and participants.

#2. Job Descriptions:

DGS shall provide a job description for every position. The job description will provide a detailed outline of the responsibilities and duties of the position. The description communicates to the volunteer DGS's position and philosophy regarding child abuse and our softball program. The job description creates boundaries and is clearly communicated to the volunteer and/or staff member.

The job description includes:

- Title of position
- Description of position
- Responsibilities
- Qualifications desired
- Time, dates, and location of commitment
- Training needed and/or provided
- Name of Supervisor

Job descriptions are read, signed, and dated to assure that the staff or volunteer understands the position and DGS expectations.

#3. Completed Application Forms:

DGS requires an application and consent/release form to be completed, signed, and processed before a volunteer or staff member will be allowed to work with participants. DGS Administrators will verify past employment and references. The potential coach/staff member shall not be assigned a team or allowed to work around the youth of our program until the complete screening process is completed. Applications provide a tremendous amount of information about the individual and it provides the softball administrators the opportunity to determine the qualifications and share the program philosophy and requirements.

#4. Consent/Release Form:

DGS Consent/Release Form authorizes the investigation of his/her background. The consent/release form specifically informs the volunteer that his or her references will be investigated and that a criminal background check will be performed.

The Denison City Council provides the “**cause for rejection**” of volunteers and staff members of the DGS program. The policy is attached to the application for the individual to review prior to submitting the application.

#5. Review of Application, Verify References and Employers:

DGS Administrators will review application, verify references and past work history in order to determine if the applicant possesses the basic necessities for the position.

#6. Interview Applicant:

DGS Administrators shall utilize the recommended interview questions from National Alliance For Youth Sports. This will allow consistency during the interview process. The process will probe the volunteer's motives, their knowledge of softball, and their relations with the youth of our program. This process also allows the applicant the opportunity to learn about our program and philosophies.

#7. Conduct A Formal Background Check:

After receiving all required forms, the City of Denison Human Resource Director will conduct a criminal background check with the appropriate state and/or federal law enforcement agencies. This procedure is confidential and only the Human Resource Director, City Attorney, P&R Director, and the designated Conduct Official shall have access to these records. The Human Resource Director will decide whether or not the candidate has a "cause for rejection" based on the findings. The criminal background check will be conducted on all league volunteers and all city employees that are working with the youth in our girls softball program.

The City Council also provides an appeal process that allows any person volunteering for service in DGS and has been denied serving because of the attached "cause for rejection" may appeal to the Volunteer Citizens Review Committee. Notice of Appeal shall be filed with the city's Human Resource Director within 7 business days of the decision to exclude the volunteer. The committee, appointed by the City Council (no P&R personnel will be on that committee), shall meet within 7 business days from the notice of appeal. It shall be the obligation of the appealing volunteer to develop and submit in writing, evidence as to why the city's policy for "cause for rejection" should not be applied to him/her. The decision of the committee shall be final.

Acknowledgement Form: All volunteers who have been accepted must read the Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program and must sign the Acknowledgement form.

- Please see attached Appendix for descriptions and forms.

#8. Evaluate Results:

DGS evaluation of all of the required information is critical to the selection of volunteers and staff members that will be working with the participants of our program. DGS is committed to provide a safe, positive, and fun softball environment for our participants, coaches, parents, spectators, officials, and staff.

National Standards For Youth Sports

- 1. Proper sports environment** – Parents must consider and carefully choose the softball environment for their child, including the appropriate age and development for participation, the rules of the sport, the age range of the participants, and the proper level of physical and emotional stress.
- 2. Programs based on the well being of children** – Parents must select a softball program that is developed and organized to enhance the emotional, physical, social, and educational well being of children.
- 3. Drug and alcohol-free environment** – Parents must encourage a drug and alcohol-free environment for their children.
- 4. Part of a child's life** – Parents must recognize that softball is only part of a child's life.
- 5. Training** – Parents must insist that coaches are trained and certified.
- 6. Parents' active role** – Parents must make a serious effort to take an active role in the softball experience for their child, providing positive support as a spectator, coach, and league administrator.
- 7. Positive role models** – Parents must provide positive role models, exhibiting sportsmanlike behavior at games, practices, and home, while also giving positive reinforcement to their child and support to their child's coaches.
- 8. Parental commitment** – Parents must demonstrate their commitment to their child's softball experience by annually signing a Parent's Code of Ethics Pledge.
- 9. Safe play opportunity** – Parents must insist on safe playing facilities, healthful playing situations, and proper first-aid applications, should the need arise.
- 10. Equal play opportunity** – Parents, coaches, and league administrators must provide equal softball play opportunities for all youth regardless of race, creed, sex, economic status or ability.
- 11. Drug and alcohol-free adults** – Parents and coaches must be drug and alcohol free at softball league events.

Training/Orientation of Volunteers and Staff

The importance of training in relation to protecting our participants in softball can be understood by analyzing the Education Model. Parents would not think of placing their children in a school with a teacher who was not trained to teach therefore, DGS feels obligated to select volunteer coaches and administrators that have the knowledge of softball and the ability to work with the participants of our program.

The training provides DGS the opportunity to demonstrate how our program operates and what we intend to accomplish. The coaches and parents meeting is essential to ensure that everyone is “on the same page.”

The purpose of supervision is to:

- Provide support and ongoing “coaching” needed for staff and volunteers to improve their skills, to adjust, and to do their best.
- Provide the guidance needed to make sure the values and standards of the organization are upheld.

DGS supervision policies minimize the opportunity for child abuse and our enforcement procedures make sure that our policies are followed.

DGS requires all of our coaches to become NYSCA certified coaches and to live up to a code of conduct. This code defines expectations and provides tools to be used by our program to check behavior and to respond with resolve to protect all participants from abuses perpetrated by a volunteer coach.

Training coaches involves much more than orientation. Coaches’ training emphasizes those behaviors necessary to promote the development of skills and keeping a child’s involvement in softball fun. DGS program addresses these issues as it pertains to the players they coach.

Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to:

- Allow opportunities for the DGS to review the actions of the volunteers and staff.
- Allow for volunteers and staff to understand how they have been reviewed.
- Provide feedback in a positive and constructive manner.

All information obtained through evaluations is critical for DGS to keep softball safe and fun. Coaches will be observed and evaluated to insure that the expectations of DGS are being maintained. The total environment of the coach, practices, and games are observed.

Written evaluation of what was observed will be maintained and kept active throughout the softball season. At the completion of the season, a written evaluation of the coach will be done. Parents and participants will also have an opportunity to evaluate the coach.

DGS will ask each coach at the end of the season...if he/she should be invited back the following year? If there is any doubt and the observations show the presence of questionable behaviors, DGS will focus on the potential of harm and decide on the risk of the participants. DGS reserves the right to terminate any volunteer and/or staff member if there is questionable behavior and/or attitudes pertaining to the DGS program.

Parent Orientation

It is crucial to increase parental awareness regarding their rights and responsibilities as a softball parent.

Parents are assisted with identifying their respective roles as a softball parent which include:

- Emotional support not only of their child but the other participants on the team
- Financial support
- Support of the coach

Parents have the following expectations and rights when their child participates in our softball program:

- Expect that their child will have as much of an opportunity to participate as the other children.
- Participation will be fun and a learning experience.
- Parents are provided the names of the DGS administrators, P&R representative and members of the P&R Commission which is the governing body of DGS.
- Parents are permitted to see the budget of DGS in order to have a clear understanding of the finances of the program.
- Parents will know when the P&R Commission meets.

At the same time, parents need to be reminded and made aware of their responsibilities accompanying their rights. Examples of these responsibilities are:

- Parents getting their child to practice and to the game on time.
- Assist the league and team by volunteering to work at various functions.
- Periodic parent/child/coach conferences will help clarify the role, expectations, and goals of all the concerned parties.
- Most importantly, parents should behave themselves while in attendance. This means being supportive not undermining the role of the coach or screaming instructions and/or insults towards the child or officials.

Parents are required to sign a “Code of Conduct” which outlines behavioral expectations and the actions DGS will take if their behavior violates the code.

It is vital to children for parents to be supportive and encourage their children to listen to their coaches, learn skills, and most importantly, have fun. However, some parents become overly involved in their children’s performance and put their desires as primary. During the parents’ orientation, this concern will be addressed more in-depth and the concept of keeping the child first will be addressed.

GSB Coaches

- I. Volunteer Application
- II. Practice Policy
- III. Field Locations
- IV. Weather Procedures
- V. Team Sponsorships
- VI. Job Description/Coaches Criteria
- VII. Frozen Ropes clinic