

Creating a Culture of Safety

February 2011

Risk Management Presentation



Red Flags Help Keep Us Safe

We see something potentially dangerous and a red flag goes up – we think is that *safe*?



See Any Concerns?

- Your team rents a 15-passenger van to go to a tournament
- The coach invites a couple of key players over to watch a soccer game
- Players move a goal to get ready for practice
- A parent starts a team website
- Practice is canceled – by a text message
- Your treasurer takes care of all the financial dealings



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- Your team rents a 15-passenger van to go to a tournament.
 - Federal law prohibits the sale of 15-passenger vans for school related transport of high school aged and younger students
 - Loading the van with baggage & passengers moves the center of gravity upward and rearward, increasing the risk of rollovers (NTSB)



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- The coach invites a couple of key players over to watch a soccer game
 - Is another adult present? Is this a team activity?
 - Are clear boundaries established between social and team activities? When blurred, there is possible risk.

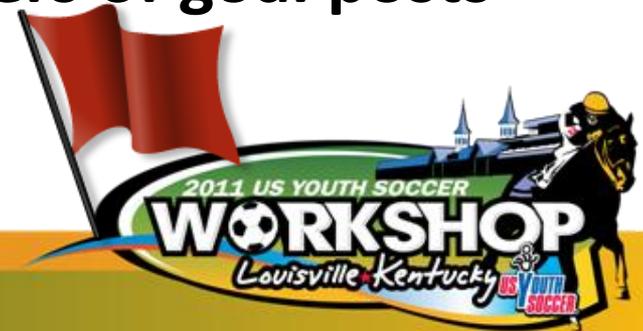
Recommendation: Activities with players present should be attended by more than one adult.



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- Players are asked to move a goal.
 - NTSB records show 21 deaths and 120 injuries in the 16 years between 1979-94
 - Always exercise extreme caution when moving goals and allow adequate manpower. Movable soccer goals should only be moved by authorized and trained personnel (NTSB)

Recommendation: The dangers of goal posts should be communicated.



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- An individual starts a team Website.
 - Team websites can offer opportunities for those who would prey on our children to identify, single out, and make contact – whether at home or during soccer events
 - Are there guidelines concerning the posting of pictures and information? Are they followed?



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- It's more than a website – It's social media
 - Found by searching Girls Soccer on Facebook
 - THE GIRLS(: Pat L. #26, Sara T. #2, Christine #10, Connie P. #3, Sue H. #7, etc.
 - Along with over 30 action photos – some showing jersey numbers
 - Viewer can then follow posting to each persons Facebook page



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- Practice is canceled – by a text message.
 - Texting is expedient, but lowers the barrier between adult and child
 - This is how young people communicate with each other
 - Who is included in the text? Every player? All parents? Other administrators?



What Are Soccer's Potential Red Flags?

- The treasurer is the only person responsible for the “books”
 - Embezzlement is the most common financial crime – and is usually perpetrated by someone you trust
 - Good financial policies use checks and balances
 - The person who collects funds doesn't deposit them
 - The person who makes the deposits doesn't balance the accounts



Red Flags Point to Potential Problems

HOW DO WE CREATE RED FLAGS FOR OUR SOCCER COMMUNITY?



Start By Knowing the Potential Risks

- One out of every 4 girls and one out of every 6 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18.
- Pedophiles are drawn to places where they can interact with youth. All youth sports are such places.
- Coaches are also vulnerable. It is recommended that no coach, trainer or adult be alone with a player. This protects the players and the coach.



Create Guidelines

- Adults should not be alone one-on-one with a player
 - Make sure that the coaches, parents and players understand the potential risks
 - If a trainer or coach is working with an individual player, make sure the work is done in an open area where others are present
 - Assistant coaches or parents can attend practices



Create Guidelines

- Encourage professionalism
 - Decide what the guidelines should be in place.
 - Should all emails & texts be group messages and/or include parents?
 - Suggest adults attend team social functions
- Convey guidelines
 - How do you want coaches to represent your team/club/league? Are players and parents in the know?



Create Guidelines

- Develop vigilant parents
 - Parents and guardians are the eyes and ears; they may be the first to see an unsafe situation or relationship
 - Make parents aware of the club guidelines. Help them spot a potential red flag
 - Consider a whistle-blower policy and reassure parents that if they raise an issue, it will be heard



Create Guidelines

- Communicate about goal safety:
 - Teach coaches to check goals before every practice and game – home or away!
 - Establish a regular schedule of goal inspection
 - Make sure goals are anchored at all times
 - Goals should be chained to a fence, chained together or stored in a safe, locked place when not in use
 - Put warning labels on goals
 - Remove nets when not in use



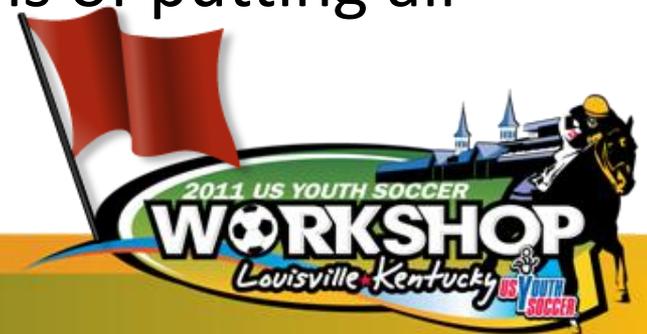
Create Guidelines

- Create a written financial policy that includes:
 - Checks and balances: More than one person should be involved. Divide tasks. For example, the person who makes deposits shouldn't balance the account.
 - Use technology such as on-line financial programs and on-line review of accounts, but don't rely on technology. For example, most checks are processed electronically. Signatures may not checked – including accounts that “require” dual signatures.



Create Guidelines

- Consider the many Risk Management areas.
Does your organization need to have:
 - A written travel policy that takes into account adult-to-player ratio, transportation guidelines, who is driving, hotel safety, etc.
 - A workable code of conduct that covers today's new social media.
 - A website policy and/or a means of putting all websites under a League or Club umbrella.



Risk Management
Implementation Should
Work From the Top Down
and
From the Bottom Up



Create a
Culture of Safety
Where Everyone Can Spot
The Potential Red Flag



Communicate!

- From the Top Down:
 - Get the word out. Use coaches' meetings, parents' meetings, your website and, even, written parents' and coaches' manuals.
 - Be visible. Introduce yourself to players and parents. Attend tournaments, practices and games. Ask questions. Start a conversation.
 - Consider exit interviews if a team loses players for no apparent reason.



Communicate!

- From the Bottom Up:
 - Empower your coaches, staff, admins and parents. Make it clear they can bring forward any concern – or complaint.
 - Listen and make sure that they know they've been heard. Take action if necessary.
 - Consider a club ombudsman, a safe person who is there to listen.



Risk Management isn't easy.
It's rarely black and white.
It's often many shades of grey.



But, it's one of the most important things we do.

The aim is to create environments where coaches, staff, admins and players are safe.



Create a culture of safety and awareness so that our potential red flags are visible to everyone!

