



**Babe Ruth League, Inc.
Child Protection
Risk Management Program**



**Every Participant Deserves
To Reach Home Safely**

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Babe Ruth League Child Protection Program

The safety, protection and the well-being of our participants is always the top priority of Babe Ruth League, Inc. Any form of child abuse is contemptible and goes against our mission. We want to ensure that the young athletes participating in the Babe Ruth League program learn valuable life lessons in a safe environment that help them develop into happy, healthy and productive adults.

Like many other youth organizations, Babe Ruth League relies on the efforts and resources provided by our volunteers and seeks to attract the most qualified adults to serve as league officials, managers, coaches, board members, and in any other volunteer position. At the same time, we realize that this could make us a target for those who seek to do harm to children, to rob them of their right to feel safe and grow up in an enjoyable and healthy environment. These are child abusers, and although it is not an easy or pleasant topic for any of us to think about, the fact remains that child abuse happens.

Whether they are our children, or the children of others, each of us has a responsibility to protect them. Babe Ruth League has several programs in place to encourage safe interaction between volunteers and youth, as well to create a safe, educational and enjoyable environment for all. These include mandatory Coaches Education and Certification, Risk Management disclosures, and mandatory background screening (including a check of the applicable government sex offender registry) on all managers, coaches, board members, as well as any other persons/volunteers, who provide regular service to the league, and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.

Babe Ruth League, Inc. will continue to review and implement rule changes and other initiatives to combat the threat of child abuse and molestation.



Definitions

Children, Child, Athlete, Participant, Minor

Anyone between the ages of zero and 17 years. In this document, these terms are used interchangeably

Child Abuse

Child abuse can occur in any cultural, ethnic, or income group. Child abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual. It can also result from neglect. Abuse can result in serious injury to the child and possibly even death. Physical abuse involves non-accidental harming of a child by, for example, burning, beating, or breaking bones. Verbal abuse involves harming a child by, for example, belittling them or threatening physical acts. Emotional trauma can result from several forms of abuse.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between an older and younger child also can be abusive if there is a significant disparity in age, development, or size, rendering the younger child incapable of giving informed consent. (Legal definitions may vary by state.)

Manager, Coach, Board Member, Person, Volunteer, Adult

Any individual (18 years of age and older) who provides regular service to the league, and/or has repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.



Covered Individual

The term “covered individual” under the Safe Sport Act means an adult who is authorized by the amateur youth sports organization (Babe Ruth League) to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sport organization facility or at an event sanctioned by the amateur sports organization.

Group, League, Team, Organization

Chartered member who is sanctioned by Babe Ruth League, Inc.

Parent

Father or mother or as otherwise may be defined by statute such as through adoption or same-sex relationships.

Legal Guardian

A legal guardian acts as the primary caretaker of a child or minor. This person may be personally selected by the child's biological parents, or appointed by the court.

Protecting Young Victims From Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017

On February 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 to extend 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.



Safe Sport Act – Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse

It is important that we call your to your attention the **Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017**, which is now **federal legislation** signed into law effective February 14, 2018.

U.S. Federal Law

The Safe Sport Act creates a new standard of care that affects **all youth-serving organizations around the country, not just Babe Ruth League, Inc. or just the sports of youth baseball and softball**. This law mandates that all amateur sports organizations, which participate in an interstate or international amateur athletic competition and whose membership includes any adult who is in regular contact with an amateur athlete who is a minor, must report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to law enforcement. According to federal law:

- Child abuse is defined as physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child.
- **What about Babe Ruth leagues that don't compete against international or out-of-state teams, does the Safe Sport Authorization Act still apply to them?** It does. The law is written broadly, but since you have adults working with youth and the requirement says that they need to follow the Safe Sport Act requirements.
- According to the Safe Sport Act, if any individual suspects, has reason to believe, has knowledge of, or observes a child being subjected to, conditions that would reasonably result in harm to the child, the individual is required to report that abuse within a 24-hour period to appropriate law enforcement agencies, as determined by state or federal law.
- An individual who is required, but fails to report suspected child sexual abuse, is subject to criminal and civil penalties.
- If you make a report of child abuse, please also communicate this report to Babe Ruth League, Inc. Any volunteer involved will be suspended, and if convicted of inappropriate acts with a child, will be barred from participating in Babe Ruth League. Such individuals may also be entered into a national database for banned volunteers and coaches. **Reporting to Babe Ruth League is not a substitute for reporting to the appropriate law enforcement.**
- The federal obligations are in addition to any State law requirements that an individual may have in a particular jurisdiction.



- To summarize, all Babe Ruth volunteers that are in repetitive contact with minor athletes will need to be in compliance with the Safe Sport Act and related Babe Ruth League requirements that include:
 - **Successful completion of the Babe Ruth League Coaching Education and Certification Program.** *(Any coach who successfully passes the Babe Ruth League Coaching Education and Certification Program will receive a certification that is valid for their entire coaching career with Babe Ruth League, Inc.)*
 - **Complete your background screening requirements** through the designated providers of SportsEngine (NCIS). A background screening must be completed every two years.
 - **Complete Abuse Awareness and Prevention Training** offered via the designated providers of Sports Engine.
 - **Mandatory reporting of Child Abuse.**

State Law - Fifty (50) states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws which address mandatory reporting of child abuse to protect the health and safety of children.



SportsEngine

In order to comply with the Safe Sports Act and fulfill the specifications mandated by Babe Ruth League, Inc., effective with the 2021 season, **Babe Ruth League, Inc. requires all managers, coaches, board members, as well as any other persons/volunteers, who has consistent and direct contact with players through league sanctioned activities, to have a National Verified Background Check and Abuse Prevention Training every two years. Babe Ruth League, Inc. requires leagues to use services of Sports Engine for all background checks and abuse prevention training.** SportsEngine, Inc., an NBC Sports Group, is the leading provider of Sport Relationship Management software.

Background screening is managed through the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI), a SportsEngine, Inc. wholly owned subsidiary and leader in youth-centered background screening solutions. NCSI provides the “Gold Standard” in background screening, serving youth sports organizations and national governing bodies across the country, and is the only background check provider endorsed by the National Council of Youth Sports.


Background Screening by NCSI is very different from a discount background check. Unlike most discount screens, NCSI will do an in-depth identify verification, search over 800 million records from the national multi-jurisdictional databases, and the sex offender registry, and then go to the local state and county searches. This is a key component missing from many discount searches, as many localities do not consistently report up to the national database providers. NCSI will then always do a thorough quality control review on the report before sending results back to the customer.

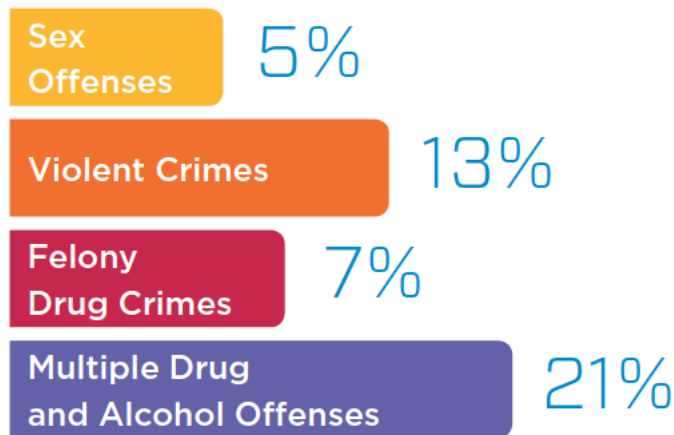
Prevention of Child Abuse Education is a very important tool for our children and adults. It empowers them to recognize potentially compromising situations, and it places a barrier between abusers and their victims. **SportsEngine** has integrated Abuse Prevention Training to their services to fulfill the requirements set forth by the Safe Sport Act for all adults who have contact with minor children.

Information, frequently asked questions, how to use **SportsEngine's** excellent services and child protection can be found at www.baberuthleague.org.



SPORTSENGINE BACKGROUND SCREENINGS POWERED BY NCSI VERSUS DISCOUNT SCREENINGS

		Discount screening service
In-depth identity verification	✓	—
Name/address trace & SSN validation	✓	—
County criminal records search	✓	—
Statewide search using official repository	✓	—
Multi-jurisdictional database search	800 million +	200-400 million
Sex offender registry search	✓	✓
Re-verification of criminal records	✓	✓
Fair Credit Reporting Act compliance	✓	—
Live customer service	✓	Varies



Crimes that would have been missed



Suggested General Guidelines

In addition to being in compliance with the Safe Sports Act and the related Babe Ruth League requirements, we suggest that you consider the following guidelines as part of your child abuse risk management program. These guidelines can enable children and adults to better protect themselves.

Limit One-on-One Contact

No activities should take place involving one-on-one contact between a single, non-related league volunteer and a child, if such activities can be practically avoided. Instead, a “buddy system” is encouraged where two (2) adults should always be present during practices, games, carpooling, and special events.

Drop Off/Pick Up

Drop off/pick-up of athletes by league personnel should be strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one-on-one contact between adult and child. Parent(s) should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events. Parents should be instructed to make backup plans in the event they can't provide transportation. If parents cannot provide transportation they must communicate to the coach/manager the name of the person(s) who are authorized to pick up their child. We recommend completing a shared travel declaration form signed by the parents/legal guardian of any minor athlete who may need to be transported as part of such a carpool arrangement.

The league should clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parents. Children dropped off too early or picked up late are targets. Parents and volunteers should be encouraged to pick up and drop off on time. Children should be warned about strangers, about not riding with them, about telling someone if they are approached by them.

Travel

Leagues should establish policies to guide its travel, minimize one-on-one interactions and reduce the risk of misconduct. Adherence to travel guidelines will increase minor athlete safety and improve the competitive experience while keeping travel a fun and enjoyable experience.

- Coaches and other volunteers who have regular contact with minors, who are also a minor athlete's parent/legal guardian may provide shared transportation for any athlete(s).
- Coaches and other volunteers who have regular contact with minors, who are not also acting as a parent/legal guardian, should not drive alone with an unrelated minor and should only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian in advance of travel. Such agreement should be in writing and signed by the parent/legal guardian.



Team Travel

Team travel is a standard aspect of baseball and softball, especially during tournaments. Because of the distances of some competition, coaches and other adult volunteers will often travel with the minor athletes. No coach or other volunteer who have regular contact with minors should engage in team travel, without proper safety requirements in place, such as a valid driver's license, proper insurance, a well-maintained vehicle and compliance with the Safe Sport Act and Babe Ruth League mandates in relation to the Safe Sports Act, i.e., Coaches Certification, Background Screening, Abuse Awareness and Prevention Training.

Babe Ruth League recommends that a player be accompanied by and stay with his/her parent/legal guardian when hotel housing is required. In some cases, not every parent/legal guardian will be able to attend. Therefore, leagues should have plans in place to provide adequate supervision through the coaching staff and/or other adults who are in compliance with the Safe Sport Act and meet the requirements of Babe Ruth League, Inc. Appropriate adult-to-minor athlete ratios should be considered and will depend on the age of the participants.

The league should provide/post a detailed itinerary containing the travel plans, hotel information and listing the dates and times for all practices, games and other activities. This itinerary should also include contact information for team travel chaperones filling in for any parent/legal guardian unable to attend.

For minor athletes not staying with a parent/legal guardian, Babe Ruth League encourages the league to permit such minor athletes to call their parents/legal guardians on a regular basis and allow for any unscheduled calls by either the minor athlete or parent/legal guardian.

When a team is not practicing, competing or taking part in another tournament-related activity, the league should have plans in place to monitor the activities of the minor athletes and adult volunteers. At no time, should a non-related adult and minor athlete be involved in an activity that is not attended by other adults or participants.

At no time, should a non-related adult stay alone with a minor athlete. Nor should a non-related adult be able to transport alone, a minor athlete to and from the tournament, practices, games and any other activity.

Touch/Physical Contact

An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling (instead of hugging with permission), kissing, or seductive stroking of various body parts. On the other hand appropriate touching can be used when a young child needs comfort, reassurance, and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level, public (done in front of others and not secretly), and nurturing (not sexualized). Shown below are examples of appropriate and prohibited physical contact:



Appropriate Physical Contact

- Physical contact that takes place in public or in the presence of others.
- Physical contact for the purpose of developing skill or technique.
- Physical contact with no potential for physical or sexual intimacies during the contact.
- The contact is for the benefit of the player, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult.
- Celebratory gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, pats on the back, shoulder and head.
- Consolation gestures such as publicly embracing a crying athlete.
- Physical contact assisting an injured player, preventing an injury or treating an injury are appropriate.
- Touching in a non-threatening, non-sexual manner.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

- Lap sitting.
- Lingered, maintaining prolonged or repeated embraces that go beyond appropriate.
- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other harsh physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from a player.
- Playful, yet in appropriate, contact that is not part of regular training, i.e., tickling, horseplay, wrestling.
- Continued physical contact that makes a player visibly uncomfortable.
- Contact involving touching of genital area, buttocks or breasts.
- Physical contact that intentionally causes or has the potential to cause the player to sustain bodily harm or injury.
- Physical or sexual abuse, harassment or misconduct.
- Kissing, back rubs or massages.

Facilities

Facilities should be well-maintained with proper safety equipment available for the sport; visible for others to see, but with security measures to control access for adults when possible (*access should be controlled where children are present, such as the dugout and locker rooms*); equipped with bathroom or locker-room facilities that provide athletes privacy and security. The lighting of fields, parking lots and any indoor facility should be bright enough so participants can identify individuals as they approach, and parents/observers can recognize abnormal situations.

Codes of Conduct

Policies should spell out appropriate and inappropriate physical contact between athletes and adults who are not a child's parent. Hazing, bullying, and other forms of harassment or abuse by athletes or adults should be strictly prohibited.



League Social Events

- All social events for the league (picnics, award ceremonies, pool parties, etc.) where the participants are involved, must include attendance by enough adults where the supervision of each participant is conducted by at least two adults who are in each other's presence at all times.

Establish an Electronic Communication Policy

- If it is necessary for a coach or other volunteer to send a direct text message or email to a player, the following guidelines should be followed:
 - A parent or guardian must be copied.
 - It should be signed so it is clear as to whom and what league is sending the message. Just using the number or email address for identification is not sufficient.
 - It should be non-personal and for the purpose of communicating information about practices, games or other team activities.
 - It should never include or contain offensive, sexual or inappropriate language or photos.
 - The time of day and the number of messages sent should be considered.
 - Records should be kept of every coach/volunteer's current cell number and email accounts.
- When a player feels the need to text or email a coach or other volunteer, the following guidelines should be followed:
 - A parent or guardian must be copied.
 - It should be sent only with information regarding the league or team activities.
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Similar Sites)
 - Leagues should set specific guidelines for Social Media Platforms in regard to contact between adult volunteers and participants.
 - Adults and participants should not post pictures of other team members that can be hurtful or embarrassing or without their permission.
 - Social media sites should not be used to abuse or criticize the league, members or players.
- If any parent/guardian of a minor player requests that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by coaches or other adults involved with the league, the league and its coaches/volunteers must immediately comply with such a request without any repercussions.

Babe Ruth League encourages all leagues to adopt any other procedures/policies not covered above that safeguard the welfare of all players and members of their organization.



Examples of Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete. Examples include making the following statements:

- You're stupid;
- You're an idiot;
- You're an embarrassment;
- You're not worth the uniform you play in.

Physical Abuse

Besides the obvious examples of a coach hitting, kicking, throwing equipment, or shaking a player, watch out for the following:

Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary.

Training practices become abusive.

Fighting is encouraged or ignored.

Illegal moves, often associated with injuries are encouraged.

Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage conduct which violates safety rules.

Coaches allow athlete(s) to become physically or verbally abusive.

Behaviors result in injuries to athlete(s).

Bullying

Bullying is the use of coercion to obtain control over another person or to be habitually cruel to another person. Bullying involves an intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate another person. Bullying can occur through written, verbal or electronically transmitted expression or by means of a physical act or gesture. Examples of bullying include:

- Punching, kicking or choking
- Verbal and emotional behaviors, including the use of electronic communications – cyberbullying – to harass, frighten, degrade intimidate or humiliate.

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that are reasonably designed to establish normative team behaviors or promote team cohesion. Bullying also does not include rough play or conduct between opponents that occurs during or in connection with a game.



Hazing

Hazing includes any conduct which is intimidating, offensive, or physically harmful. The hazing conduct is typically an activity that serves as a condition for joining a group/team or being socially accepted by a group/team's members. Some examples of hazing include:

- Consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Tying, taping or physically restraining an individual.
- Beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault.
- Verbal abuse or threats or implied threats.

Harassment

Harassment is a repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that (a) are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance, (b) offend or degrade, (c) create a hostile environment or (d) reflect discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability. Examples of harassment can include:

- Making negative or disparaging comments.
- Displaying offensive materials, gestures or symbols.
- Withholding or reducing practice or playing time based on a participant's sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religion, skin color, ethnic traits or any legally protected grounds.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual abuse involves any sexual activity between an adult and a minor. **Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly forbidden.** This also includes sexual contact with a minor that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force regardless of whether there is deception or the minor understands the sexual nature of the activity.

An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling instead of hugging (with permission), kissing, or seductive stroking of various body parts. On the other hand appropriate touching can be used when a young child needs comfort, reassurance, and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level, public (done in front of others and not secretly), and nurturing (not sexualized).



Sexual Abuse of Children:

- Misuse of power and authority.
- Misuse of love and affection.
- Manipulation or tricks:
 - This is love.
 - This is what you need to be a part of the team.
 - This is what we do for initiation.
- Grooming: desensitization that begins with appropriate touch, then the touch changes. (For more on grooming behaviors, see the information provided later in this document.)
Examples include:
 - You liked the touch before.
 - What's wrong? Don't you trust me?
 - Courting (gifts, time, attention).
 - Romancing (talking of love or attraction).
 - Line (you're special, I don't usually do this sort of thing, you're so mature, you're so attractive).
 - Secrets (this is our special secret, others wouldn't understand, you or I would get in trouble).



Warning Signs of Abuse

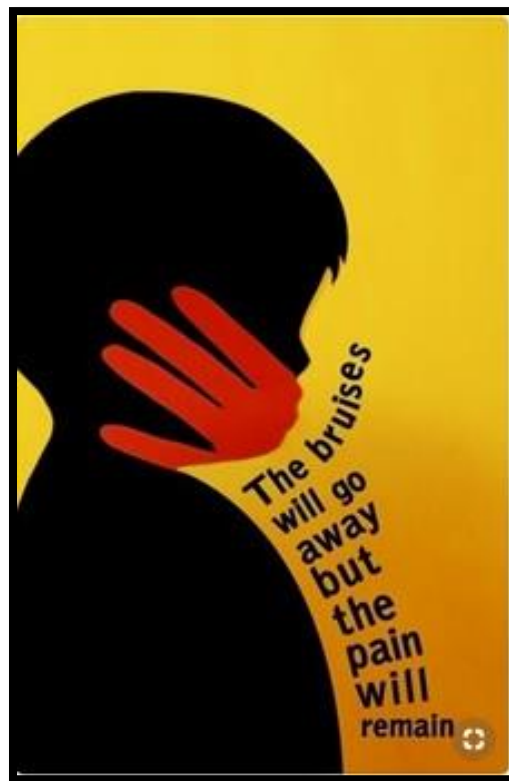
With some forms of abuse, there may be physical indicators (i.e., with **physical abuse** - bruises, welts, broken bones or with **sexual abuse** - venereal diseases, genital swelling/soreness, difficulty sitting or walking, pain or itching with urinating or defecating, stomach aches, pain/itching in the genital area, and frequently, unexplained sore throats). But most often the effects of sexual abuse are less obvious. For example, sudden shifts in behavior or attitudes when an outgoing child suddenly builds a protected, closed wall or a generally happy child becomes aggressive and angry or a trusting child becomes fearful, may be an indication of abuse. In sports, this can show up as losing interest or wanting to drop out of sports or a sudden decline in ability or functions.

Please note that no indicators or symptoms are absolute. Many of these could be indicators of problems other than child abuse. However, if some of these things are going on, consider them to be a red flag. One difficulty is that some signs are ambiguous. Children may respond in different ways and some may show no sign at all. Some indicators include:

- Disclosure by child. Most children won't just come out and say they have been abused, but instead, may hint at it.
- Observations, complaints, concerns, or allegations about league volunteers.
- Attitudes/behaviors expressed on the part of an adult that may be associated with inappropriate or abusive behavior (racist, poor sense of athlete development, raging temper, extremely controlling, jealous, hypersensitive, poor sexual boundaries, bullying, intimidating manner, unrealistic or inappropriate training practices and risks, etc.)
- Unexplained/unlikely explanation of injuries.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Fear of medical treatment or examination.
- Shrinks back from touch.
- Being overly affectionate or acting out sexually.
- Wearing excessive clothing.
- Emotionally abuses others.
- Overreaction to mistakes



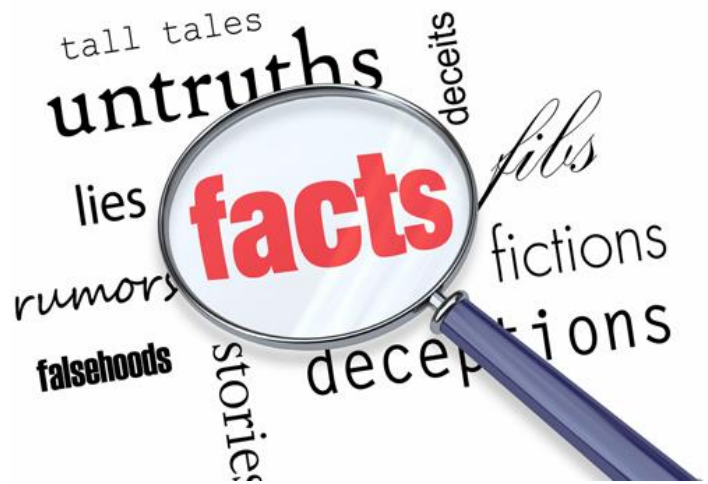
- Continual self-deprecation, i.e., “I’m ugly”, “I’m stupid”, etc.
- Extreme fear of a league volunteer.
- Extreme low self-esteem, self-worth.
- A child’s attachment to a coach/staff to the point of isolation from others.
- A coach/volunteer with an interest beyond caring concerns, special interest in a child (time, gifts, attention, obsession, unrealistic expectations).
- A child’s desire to drop out without a clear explanation or without one that makes sense.
- A child that misses a lot of practices or games with suspicious explanations or excuses.
- Despite increased sensitivity to abuse, there is still a tendency to blame the victims instead of holding the person(s) accountable who:
 - Lost their temper.
 - Got a little out of control.
 - Was just having a dispute.
 - Misinterpreted the touch.
 - Is really a wonderful person.
 - Listen to what the athlete is saying.



Common Myths About Child Abuse

Myth: Child abuse is rare.

Fact: All types of child abuse and neglect are common. Child abuse and neglect are often not identified as they occur in privacy and secrecy. Children also find it hard to disclose, and be believed. Often there is little evidence to substantiate the crime.



Myth: It doesn't happen in our sport.

Fact: Abuse happens in all sports. Unfortunately, sports are just one part of our social system, suffering all the good, bad and ugly features of other sectors, including child abuse.

Myth: You can always spot a child molester.

Fact: You cannot assume someone is a child abuser just by looking at him or her. In fact, he is probably not that creepy guy down the street. More likely, abuse will be inflicted by a parent, a relative, or a child's coach, teacher or caregiver.

Myth: It's only abuse if it's physical or violent.

Fact: Child abuse does not necessarily involve violence or anger. Abuse often involves adults wielding their power over children, and using children as objects rather than respecting their rights.

Myth: Ours is a team sport, so we don't need to worry.

Fact: Abuses of all types take place in all sports. No sport is immune. There are many situations where team athletes might train alone. The competitive structure of a sport tells us nothing about the type or frequency of safeguarding problems that may be encountered.

Myth: Children are usually abused by strangers.

Fact: Children are more likely to be abused by someone they know and trust rather than by a stranger. Many children are unable to tell they are being abused when someone familiar is the perpetrator. Disclosing what has happened (or is happening) to them also has a greater personal impact when it involves someone the child knows.

Myth: Children usually tell someone about their abuse.

Fact: Most children do not tell anyone. They are often silenced through threats or fear of not being believed. Some children don't have the words to speak about what is happening to them or do not speak up because they have feelings of shame.



Myth: People lie about child abuse for attention and sympathy.

Fact: Research, including police and court statistics, shows that it is very rare for a person of any age to say they were abused if they weren't. However, "false negative reports" of abuse are common e.g. many adults state that they were not abused as children when they were.

Myth: Children 'get over' bad experiences in childhood.

Fact: Adults are often deeply affected by childhood trauma and abuse. You can't just "get over" it. Survivors need the right care and support to overcome the impacts of abuse, recover and live full and healthy lives.

Myth: Only men sexually abuse children.

Fact: While statistically more men do sexually abuse children than women, women can also be perpetrators.

Myth: People who sexually abuse children are mentally ill.

Fact: Most people who sexually abuse children are not mentally ill. They are often married and/or have sexual relationships with adults. In anonymous surveys, a significant minority of men in the community indicate a sexual interest in children.

Myth: People do not "forget" child abuse.

Fact: For over one hundred years, traumatic amnesia has been documented amongst war veterans, survivors of natural and man-made disasters, and adult survivors of child abuse. These memories can later resurface through flashbacks, nightmares and intrusive thoughts. These memories have sometimes been called "recovered memories".

Myth: Children are very suggestible and they can easy "make up" stories of abuse.

Fact: Children are no more suggestible than adults, and can clearly distinguish between reality and fantasy. Research has shown that children resist making false reports during leading and suggestive interviewing techniques.



Recognize Grooming

Grooming is the process by which sexual predators pave the way for sexual abuse by gradually gaining the trust of and conditioning of minors, parents, and administrators. Aspects of sexual grooming may include:

- Targeting the victim.
- Securing access to and isolating the victim.
- gaining the victim's trust.
- Controlling and concealing the relationship.

The purpose of grooming is:

- To manipulate the perceptions of other adults around the child.
- To manipulate the child into becoming a co-operating participant which reduces the likelihood of a disclosure and increases the likelihood that the child will repeatedly return to the offender.
- To reduce the likelihood of the child being believed if they do disclose.
- To reduce the likelihood of the abuse being detected.

Understanding sexual grooming and common sexual grooming behaviors can help individuals prevent sexual abuse before it occurs. Common sexual grooming behaviors are often subtle and may not appear inappropriate. These behaviors include:

- An adult seems overly interested in a child.
- An adult frequently initiates or creates opportunities to be alone with a child (or multiple children).
- An adult becomes fixated on a child.
- An adult gives special privileges to a child (e.g., rides to and from practices, etc.).
- An adult befriends a family and shows more interest in building a relationship with the child than with the adults
- An adult displays favoritism towards one child within a family.
- An adult finds opportunities to buy a child gifts.
- An adult caters to the interests of the child, so a child or the parent may initiate contact with the offender.
- An adult who displays age and gender preferences.



Required Awareness and Prevention Training

The Safe Sport Act requires all managers, coaches, board members, as well as any other persons/volunteers, who provide regular service to the league, and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams, complete Awareness and Prevention Training.

There's no doubt that the background screening of volunteers is a required level of due diligence. However, it's not enough to run background checks. There is a high percentage of sexual predators that have never been caught and don't have a criminal history. This is why background checks must be supplemented with awareness training, along with the adoption of certain policies and procedures that make incidents less likely to occur.

It is important to note that the type of training contemplated under the Safe Sports Act is not merely to identify those who may already have been victimized by abuse by a list of indicators. Instead it is to learn how to prevent sexual abuse from occurring. In other words, the training must be proactive rather than reactive.

Abuse prevention training includes more than just signs of child abuse. It includes a review of the things that put children at risk of being abused. One of the most essential parts of training is to learn the process of sexual grooming. A key to preventing the grooming process is to train all participating adults in a sports organization on understanding how it works, identifying when it is occurring, and taking appropriate action.

Babe Ruth League, Inc. requires that all volunteers use the services of SportsEngine to complete required Abuse Prevention and Awareness Training as mandated by the Safe Sports Act. Abuse Prevention and Awareness Training is required every two years for anyone 18 years of age or older. Such training offered by Sports Engine takes approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours (with a test at the end of the training) and does not need to be completed in one session.

Let's recap some of the steps you can take to protect your Babe Ruth League participants:

- Child Abuse – know what it is, and know where to look. Defining child abuse, and separating the truth from the myths, better enables us all to spot potentially dangerous situations.
- Recognize grooming.
- Educate your volunteers, parents and children. They need to be supplied with the necessary information to protect everyone, especially with a copy of your league's Child Protection/Risk Management Program. Let your participants know that it is never their fault.
- Adhere to the Safe Sport Act, Babe Ruth League's safety requirements (Coaches Certification, Background Screening), and the suggested guidelines outlined above. Employ basic rules, such as the "buddy system" to limit one-on-one interactions between minors and adults.
- Background Screenings and Awareness & Prevention Training offered by SportsEngine.



Allegations of Abuse – Reporting Requirements

Our goal is to prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors. Monitoring involves observing interactions and reacting appropriately.

The Safe Sport Act extends mandatory reporting of abuse to each “covered individual. The term “covered individual” under the Safe Sport Act means an adult who is authorized by the amateur youth sports organization to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sport organization facility or at an event sanctioned by the amateur sports organization.

Covered individuals are required to report suspicions of child abuse including, sex abuse, as soon as possible (within a 24-hour period) to the appropriate law enforcement agencies as determined by state or federal law. Babe Ruth League asks that if you make a report of child abuse, to also communicate this report to our Headquarters Office.

Each state has a separate law relating to mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. Some states require every adult to report suspicions of abuse and neglect. Others only require certain adults to report under certain circumstances.

A person will not be held liable if they make a report in good faith, including in 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 officer, 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 their 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.



Summary

There needs to be formal training, a universal standard that all coaches/volunteers must follow so that vigilance doesn't vary wildly from program to program or community to community. The goal is an atmosphere in which sexual predators can't succeed. It takes a village -- the institution to make the rules, the parents, coaches, and other volunteers to genuinely embrace them, and the teammates to feel powerful enough to speak up when they see something that isn't right. And everything has to be transparent.

Such measures wouldn't be necessary if sexual predators wore a label or fit a stereotype. But the image of the guy with the thick mustache cruising the neighborhood in a windowless van is a Hollywood myth. The most successful sexual predators are scarier than that. They're the people you trust. They are normal, everyday people. They're smart. They're deceptive. If they were creepy, they couldn't be successful. No one would give them access to kids.

Each Babe Ruth Baseball, Cal Ripken Baseball and Babe Ruth Softball league should customize its own child abuse risk management program to protect its participants, to adhere to the Safe Sports Act and to meet its own unique needs. The end result should be an environment unsuitable for the abuser and/or sexual predator.

Every adult involved with the league should be aware that Babe Ruth League, Inc., as well as your league program, will not tolerate child abuse in any form. Suspected abuse must be reported and retaliation for good faith reporting is prohibited.

Stress the role of parents and other adults. Even though parents may find it difficult to talk with their children about child abuse, they can reduce the likelihood of abuse by educating their children. Children should be encouraged to take an active role in protecting themselves, but ultimately the responsibility for ensuring their safety rests with the adults. We are better able to identify potentially uncomfortable situations, for ourselves as well as for them.

This might seem like a daunting thing for league volunteers and a daunting thing for sports organizations to implement. However, to protect our children, it is a necessity.

And if you are implementing these abuse prevention strategies, one of them being background screening, another being abuse prevention training, you are going to have much more well-rounded volunteers. They are going to understand the process. They are going to understand what needs to be done and how it needs to be done. Because of that you are going to have educated parents. These parents want and need to see that you as an organization are doing everything possible to ensure their kids are in a safe environment.





SportsEngine believes that team sports and athletic activities teach kids the importance of hard work and communication while building confidence and character. They partnered with Babe Ruth League, Inc. to share our focus of increasing participation in youth sports, teaching kids core values, and making our local communities better and safer places to play. It is our goal to keep our kids safe, happy, healthy and active.

Families trust board leadership and league organizations to find volunteers and coaches that create fun, educational, and safe environments for their athletes. **SportsEngine** protects athletes and organizations by thoroughly investigating all screening subjects through a variety of databases and search parameters, as well as offering excellent Awareness and Abuse Prevention training.

Information and frequently asked questions on how to use **SportsEngine's** excellent services and child protection can be found at www.baberuthleague.org. You may also contact Babe Ruth Headquarters at 1-800-880-3142 for further information.

There are several organizations that will gladly assist our efforts to protect our young people, including USA Baseball. USA Baseball is located at 1030 Swabia Court, Suite 201, Durham, NC 27703. They can be reach via phone at 919-474-8721 and via email at info@usabaseball.com.

