



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

Child Safety Policy for Youth Sports Participation

Revised - July 2016

St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department requires youth sports Associations and Leagues to be in accordance with section 943.0438, Florida Statute (as it may be amended). The Association/League will conduct annual background screening of each adult coach, official and paid staff person who will have direct contact with youth in a county-owned recreational facility. For your convenience, we have included the statute below.

943.0438 Athletic coaches for independent sanctioning authorities.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Athletic coach” means a person who:

1. Is authorized by an independent sanctioning authority to work as a coach, assistant coach, or referee for 20 or more hours within a calendar year, whether for compensation or as a volunteer, for a youth athletic team based in this state; and

2. Has direct contact with one or more minors on the youth athletic team.

(b) “Independent sanctioning authority” means a private, nongovernmental entity that organizes, operates, or coordinates a youth athletic team in this state if the team includes one or more minors and is not affiliated with a private school as defined in s. 1002.01.

(2) An independent sanctioning authority shall:

(a)1. Conduct a level 1 background screening pursuant to s. 435.03 of each current and prospective athletic coach. The authority may not delegate this responsibility to an individual team and may not authorize any person to act as an athletic coach unless a level 1 background screening is conducted and does not result in disqualification under paragraph (b). Level 1 background screenings shall be conducted annually for each athletic coach. For purposes of this section, a background screening shall include a search of the athletic coach’s name or other identifying information against state and federal registries of sexual predators and sexual offenders, which are available to the public on Internet sites provided by:

a. The Department of Law Enforcement under s. 943.043; and

b. The Attorney General of the United States under 42 U.S.C. s. 16920.

2. For purposes of this section, a background screening conducted by a commercial consumer reporting agency in compliance with the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act using the identifying information referenced in subparagraph 1. that includes a level 1 background screening and a search of that information against the sexual predator and sexual offender Internet sites listed in sub-subparagraphs 1.a. and b. shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph.

(b) Disqualify any person from acting as an athletic coach as provided in s. 435.03 (Exhibit or if he or she is identified on a registry described in paragraph (a)). The authority may allow a person disqualified under this paragraph to act as an athletic coach if it determines that the person meets the requirements for an exemption from disqualification under s. 435.07.

(c) Provide, within 7 business days following the background screening under paragraph (a), written notice to a person disqualified under this section advising the person of the results and of his or her disqualification.

- (d) Maintain for at least 5 years documentation of:
1. The results for each person screened under paragraph (a); and
 2. The written notice of disqualification provided to each person under paragraph (c).
- (e) Adopt guidelines to educate athletic coaches, officials, administrators, and youth athletes and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of concussion and head injury.
- (f) Adopt bylaws or policies that require the parent or guardian of a youth who is participating in athletic competition or who is a candidate for an athletic team to sign and return an informed consent that explains the nature and risk of concussion and head injury, including the risk of continuing to play after concussion or head injury, each year before participating in athletic competition or engaging in any practice, tryout, workout, or other physical activity associated with the youth's candidacy for an athletic team.
- (g) Adopt bylaws or policies that require each youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or competition to be immediately removed from the activity. A youth athlete who has been removed from an activity may not return to practice or competition until the youth submits to the athletic coach a written medical clearance to return stating that the youth athlete no longer exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion or other head injury. Medical clearance must be authorized by the appropriate health care practitioner trained in the diagnosis, evaluation, and management of concussions as defined by the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee of the Florida High School Athletic Association.
- (3) In a civil action for the death of, or injury or damage to, a third person caused by the intentional tort of an athletic coach that relates to alleged sexual misconduct by the athletic coach, there is a rebuttable presumption that the independent sanctioning authority was not negligent in authorizing the athletic coach if the authority complied with the background screening and disqualification requirements of subsection (2) prior to such authorization.
- (4) The Legislature encourages independent sanctioning authorities for youth athletic teams to participate in the Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System, as authorized by the National Child Protection Act of 1993 and s. 943.0542.

Disqualifying offenses include, but are not limited to:

The person has been registered as a sex offender as described in 42 U.S.C. s. 9858f(c)(1)(C) or has been arrested for and is awaiting final disposition of, has been convicted or found guilty of, or entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, or has been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been sealed or expunged for, any offense prohibited under any of the following provisions of state law or a similar law of another jurisdiction:

Felony offenses: relating to domestic violence; relating to murder; relating to manslaughter, aggravated manslaughter of an elderly person or disabled adult, aggravated manslaughter of a child, or aggravated manslaughter of an officer, a firefighter, an emergency medical technician, or a paramedic; relating to aggravated assault; relating to aggravated battery; relating to kidnapping; relating to luring or enticing a child; relating to leading, taking, enticing, or removing a minor beyond the state limits, or concealing the location of a minor, with criminal intent pending custody proceedings; relating to leading, taking, enticing, or removing a minor beyond the state limits, or concealing the location of a minor, with criminal intent pending dependency proceedings or proceedings concerning alleged abuse or neglect of a minor; relating to sexual battery; relating to sexual activity with or solicitation of a child by a person in familial or custodial authority; relating to unlawful sexual activity with certain minors; relating to female genital mutilation; relating to arson; relating to incest; relating to child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child; relating to contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child; relating to sexual performance by a child; relating to child pornography; relating to sexual misconduct in juvenile justice programs.

Misdemeanor Offenses: relating to battery, if the victim of the offense was a minor; relating to luring or enticing a child; relating to child pornography; a criminal act committed in another state or under federal law which, if committed in this state, constitutes an offense prohibited under any statute listed.