

Starting A New Sport Season

The athletics director faces many demands on his/her time as well as coaches prior to the start of a new season. Good planning is essential to preparation that can make sure nothing is overlooked. By being proactive, the athletics director and his/her coaches can make certain that nothing is left to chance.

It is important to document in writing that proper steps were taken to ensure a safe program for the student-athletes. The following check list can assist athletics directors and coaches in meeting their responsibilities. The following guidelines are part of the institution's risk management plan:

1. Document in writing that a preseason staff meeting was held. Keep a copy of the agenda and list the staff members in attendance. Keep minutes of the meeting.
2. Update all department policies and procedures.
3. Review eligibility rules, pre-participation physical examination, insurance coverage including pre-existing physical conditions, HMO and PPO policies, catastrophic insurance and liability coverage for all personnel. Discuss exclusions with athletes and notify parents of exclusion.
4. Discuss warnings (waivers and agreements to participate). Designate who will meet with individual teams to discuss and implement the agreement.
5. Computerize all requirements prior to issuing equipment

(eligibility, insurance coverage and pre-participation physicals).

6. Require certification in emergency first aid and CPR of coaches.
7. Discuss with coaches the procedure for a medical emergency plan.
Discuss the coach's role and have them sign a statement that they understand the emergency action plan.
8. Meet prior to the start of the season with local EMT's and discuss protocol for treating injured athletes at practice or during athletic contests. Make sure the athletic director, coaches and athletic trainers understand the protocol.
9. Check all first aid kits, walkie-talkie's and on-site telephones to determine that they are operative. Plan to check prior to every practice that all are in working order.
10. Have trainers provide contact cards for each sport in the event of an emergency.
11. Inspect all facilities and equipment and document the inspection.
(Do not let athletes modify equipment).
12. Have a plan for administering accident/injury reports and claims.
13. Discuss your transportation policy with staff.
14. Check Title IX compliance.
15. Check Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.
16. Schedule regular inspection dates of facilities and equipment.
Designate who will conduct the inspections.
17. Develop a due process policy for student athletes and staff.

18. Develop a plan for disruptive action prior to the start of athletic contests.
19. Review catastrophic plans for bomb threats, fire, earthquake and tornado.
20. Review proper signage in areas that need signage.
21. Discuss blood borne pathogens and policies that will be in effect.
22. Discuss crowd management procedures.
23. Discuss alcohol policy (Dram Shop Law).
24. Design a policy for security/ejection from facilities.
25. Review catastrophic injury protocol.

The check list, while not inclusive of every issue that confronts the athletics director and coaches, nevertheless covers the potential problems and strategies that need to be addressed. Adherence to the policies and procedures will ensure to a judge and jury that your department did everything it could to protect the participants of your sports program.

From The Gym To The Jury attempts to send these important Guidelines periodically. We believe in the importance of the preseason checklist as a risk management strategy.