



Youth Sports

Handbook and Policy Manual



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Our Mission

Valpo Parks is dedicated to **enriching** our community by designing **meaningful spaces**, creating **impactful experiences**, and promoting **healthy lifestyles**.

The following core values help us provide these positive experiences through youth sports:

Compassion

Our goal is to provide experiences that will help athletes grow on and off the field through personal, independent growth.

Improvement

We believe that all athletes, no matter their abilities or skill levels, should have a place in youth sports and can progress at their own pace.

Integrity

We are dedicated to upholding strong moral and ethical principles when it comes to the creation and execution of all our youth sports programs and activities.

Quality

Our programs are designed to ensure the greatest quality experiences for all athletes throughout the duration of the program.

Safety

All programs are designed with athlete, parent, spectator, and employee safety in mind.



Sportsmanship Pledge

As a parent, coach, official, or athlete, I will follow the guidelines below to ensure a positive and safe environment for everyone:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials at every game, practice, or other youth sports event.
- I will remember that the game is for youth – not for adults.
- I will do my very best to make youth sports fun.
- I will help facilitate a positive relationship between athletes and sports by modeling respectfulness, encouraging others, and aiding in the process of learning when applicable.
- I will keep open communication throughout the season about treating other players, coaches, fans, and officials with respect.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to create a fun and stimulating atmosphere at practice and at games for those who are participating or spectating.
- I will not cheat or engage in any form of unethical behavior that violates league/Valpo Parks rules.
- I will remember that volunteer coaches are parents too.
- I will do my best to listen and learn from all coaches and other volunteers/instructors that are assisting in the program.
- I will remember that youth sports are a great opportunity to meet new friends, learn some new skills, and work as a team with fellow athletes, not just focus on winning.
- I will adhere to all parts of the Behavior Policy.
- I will adhere to the corrective action plan if policies are violated.

Behavior Policy and Reporting

Behavior Policy

- It is the responsibility of ALL coaches, players, parents, and other spectators to maintain the highest standards of conduct for their behavior at all events including, but not limited to, practices, games, and tournaments.
- **Undesirable behaviors include, but are not limited to:**
 - Criticism
 - Harassment
 - Obscene language
 - Discrimination
 - Bullying
 - Disruptions to game play
 - Intimidation
- Failure to follow these rules may result in the implementation of a Corrective Action Plan (see pages 9).
- **We will have ZERO TOLERANCE for the below behaviors.**
 - Abusive language/Verbal abuse
 - Violence, including but not limited to:
 - Fighting
 - Throwing equipment at officials/coaches/spectators/players
 - Verbal or physical threats
 - Sexual harassment
 - Intentional property damage

Coach/Official Complaints/Reporting an Incident

- All complaints against coaches/officials or incidents must be documented and filed with the Sports Coordinator, Cassey Knight, at cknight@valpo.us.
- Complaints must include:
 - Date of incident, name(s) of the person(s) involved, name(s) of witness(es), and a brief description of the incident.
- Sports Coordinator will then:
 - Gather information from others that were present during the incident (other parents/coaches/officials).
 - Contact the coach/official in question to get their side of the story.
 - Use the Corrective Action Plan as necessary depending on if a violation to the rules has occurred.

This handbook was developed to connect with our parents, athletes, coaches, spectators, umpires, and others who may be a part of our youth sports community.

Policies and Procedures

Refund Policy – Youth Sports

- To be eligible for a refund, cancellations must be requested a minimum of seven (7) days before the published registration deadline.
- Cancellations within seven (7) days of the registration deadline **will not be refunded.**
- Refunds will be distributed back to the participant through a check in the mail. This process takes 4 – 6 weeks.
- A \$15.00 service charge for processing all cancellations will apply (unless the Valpo Parks and Recreation Department cancels a program due to low enrollment).

Insurance/Liability Policy

- By participating in a Valpo Parks program you assume the risk of injury and you agree to hold harmless the Valpo Parks Department, the City of Valparaiso and its agents and forfeit the right to make any claim for monetary damages against Valpo Parks and the City of Valparaiso if you or your property is damaged while participating in or attending a program or while in a park facility.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

- “Under Indiana law, any individual who has reason to believe that a child has been the victim of child abuse or neglect is required to immediately make an oral or written report of such abuse to the Department of Child Services or to a local law enforcement agency.” - **Duty To Report Child Abuse or Neglect 31-33-5-1. Duty to Make Report**
 - Valpo Parks and all volunteers are mandated to report all signs of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Child Services or to local law enforcement.

Background Check Policy

- All volunteers that are in direct contact with any participants during the season as a head coach, assistant coach, or assisting at practices/games in any way must pass a federal background check through Valpo Parks.
- Any volunteer who does not wish to take a background check or does not pass the background check will not be allowed to hold a position as a volunteer coach or assist in any way.

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

- Drugs and alcohol in city parks is discouraged for your safety and the safety of others, Please refrain from drinking and driving.

Polices and Procedures *continued*

Safety/First Aid

- The following safety measures have been put in place to aid in minor to severe incidents:
 - All Valpo Parks Youth Sports facilities are equipped with basic first aid resources such as, but not limited to: Band-Aids, gauze pads, antiseptic wipes, dressing, medical tape, and ice packs.
 - All staff members can access these at any time.
 - First aid resources will be provided to the parent/guardian/coach to aid in minor cuts and scrapes.
 - Valpo Parks policy dictates that employees classified as part-time are limited in their ability to provide first aid assistance. While we value the safety and well-being of all individuals within our organization, part-time employees are not expected to perform first aid, but to assist in obtaining first aid resources provided by Valpo Parks.

Coach Incentive Policy

- A parent or guardian who volunteers to be a head coach will receive free registration for one (1) of their own children.
- To receive the free registration, the following must be true:
 - MUST be a head coach, Assistant coaches will receive at 25% discount.
 - MUST be able to coach 80% of the scheduled games.
- If parent/guardian is unable to coach when the season begins:
 - Athletes will be taken off the roster and not assigned a team until the balance is paid.
- Only one (1) official assistant coach and one (1) bookkeeper per team.
 - 3 people MAX in a dugout during games for baseball/softball.
 - This includes head coach, assistant coach, and bookkeepers.
 - Non-coaching parents will not be allowed in the dugout/around the bench during games.

Participation Policy

- All athletes participating are entitled to a fair opportunity to develop.
 - Sports with game play: All athletes should participate in at least 50% of each game played.
 - I.E. :A soccer game with 4 quarters means all players must play **at least 2** quarters.

Photo Policy

- Valpo Parks staff and volunteers may photograph, or videotape participants enrolled in programs and events or enjoying park facilities. These photos are for department use only and may be used in department publications or media promotions. If you prefer that you or your athlete, not be photographed, please notify the photographer or program director.

Polices and Procedures *continued*

Inclement Weather Policy

Heat Index Policy: *Decisions for heat index will be made approximately 2 hours prior to program start time.*

- Heat Index of 80 – 90 degrees
 - All youth sports and outdoor recreation activities will proceed as normal.
 - Participants and staff are encouraged to stay hydrated and take breaks as needed.
- Heat Index of 91 - 99 degrees
 - Valparaiso Parks and Recreation will not cancel practices or games but will encourage coaches to assess the age group and sport they are coaching and react accordingly.
 - Coaches will be encouraged to modify practices to avoid prolonged exertion.
 - This may include, but is not limited to, shortening practice/game times, modifying practice instruction, more frequent water breaks, shifting practice times to avoid the hottest part of the day, etc.
 - Participants and staff are encouraged to stay hydrated and bring extra water/electrolytes with them to the outdoor activity.
 - Frequent breaks and substitutions are encouraged to keep players hydrated and avoid prolonged exertion.
- Heat Index of 100 and above
 - Valparaiso Parks and Recreation will cancel all youth sports practices, games, and other outdoor youth recreational activities.

Cold Weather Policy: *Decisions for cold will be made approximately 2 hours prior to program start time.*

- Wind Chill of 46 or above
 - All youth sports and outdoor recreation activities will proceed as normal.
- Wind Chill of 36 – 45
 - All youth sports and outdoor recreation activities will proceed as normal.
 - Participants and staff are encouraged to bring/wear extra layers of clothing with them to the outdoor activity.
 - Participants should avoid long periods of standing or waiting without activity in order to keep their body heat up.
 - Participants should avoid playing in wet conditions and change out of wet clothes immediately.
- Wind Chill of 35 or below
 - Valparaiso Parks and Recreation will cancel all youth sports games and other outdoor youth recreational activities. **(This does not include hockey or ice-skating lessons)**
 - *Ice-skating and hockey are cancelled if the wind chill is 0 or below.*

Lightning Policy:

- All play will be suspended for 30-minutes if there is visible lightning observed or thunder heard within 40 seconds of the flash (8 miles away) by the official or a coach.
 - To resume athletics activities, lightning safety experts recommend waiting 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and after the last flash of lightning is at least six miles away (30 seconds between flash and sound) and moving away from the venue.

General Information

Registration and Related Terms

- All registrations are processed online through our RecDesk software. Registrations for all youth sports programs can be done online, over the phone, or by coming into our Valpo Parks main office.
- All programs have registration deadlines that determine the last possible day to sign up.
 - Please note, programs with limited space may fill up prior to the deadline date.

Waitlist - If a program is full and the registration deadline has not passed, you can place your athlete on the waitlist for that program.

- Waitlists serve as a queue for participants, listing them in the order they joined, free of any charge.
- If a spot opens for that specific program, we will contact the people on the waitlist in order until we fill that spot.

Note Section - The note section of the registration process is to include notes for your coach/program director prior to the season start. These notes often include allergies, disabilities, or specific information about your athlete.

- This box is **NOT** for making coach or friend requests or program clarifications.

Maximum Numbers - Maximum numbers on our sports programs are set based on the following:

- Camps with instructors have maximum numbers to provide the best quality program and appropriate staffing.
- Programs that involve team sports have maximum numbers that allow for teams to be split evenly and appropriately per sport.

Age Restrictions - Age restrictions are set age ranges that are governed by the “age as of” date on the program.

- We do not allow athletes to play down in any of our team sports, however, we will allow for players to play up into an older age bracket at the discretion of the Youth Sport Director.
 - This must be done prior to registration.

Roster Splitting and Practices

- Rosters for all sports are developed by splitting teams into equal numbers of ages for that program and boys and girls per team.
 - I.E., 4–5-year-old t-ball teams all have a healthy (and equal as possible) mix of 4- and 5-year-olds.
 - Co-ed sports leagues split teams with equal numbers of girls and boys per team (as much as possible).
- All team sports have the potential of practicing any day of the week, which is decided by the coach.
 - By signing up for a team sport, you are subject to attending the day/time of practice your volunteer coach has assigned to your team.
- Rosters cannot be switched once created, even if the practice day/time does not fit your personal schedule.
- To create a fair and equal experience for all players, all coach or friend requests will not be guaranteed for any of our youth sports programs.

Communication

- All initial communication for any youth sport program will come from the Sports Coordinator.
- Communication will come through email and updates on our Valpo Parks Website.
- Depending on the type of program, you will receive the following communication:
 - Camps or Individual Programs
 - Communication will come directly from the Sports Coordinator during the program.
 - Any issues regarding the structure of the camp, drills, etc. can be directed to the Sports Coordinator at any time throughout the program.
 - Team Sports
 - **Initial** communication will come directly from the Sports Coordinator.
 - Further communication regarding practice/games times/days and cancellations of practices will come directly from your volunteer coach.
 - Any issues regarding the drills and practice instruction can be directed to your coach.
- Upon the cancellation of a game/camp session, the potential make-up will be communicated through the Sports Coordinator.
 - Depending on the program, number of days allocated to program, time frame of program extension, and field/instructor availability not all sessions of a program may be made up if cancelled due to weather/outside circumstances.

Contact Information

Cassey Knight

Sports Coordinator

- Phone – 219-462-5144 Ex. 6301
- Email – cknight@valpo.us
 - Contact for program information and questions, as well as field reservations.

Madison Bell

Recreation Superintendent

- Phone – 219-462-5144 Ex. 6310
- Email – mbell@valpo.us

Other Contact Information

- Customer Service/Registration for Programs – 219-462-5144
- Main Website – <https://valpoparks.org/239/Youth-Sports>

Corrective Action Plan

1st offense - Verbal Warning with Written Record

- Sports Coordinator will communicate with the individual in question regarding the undesirable conduct and stress the importance of positive behavior going forward to create a more positive environment for everyone involved.
- The purpose of this step is to discuss problems the individual may be facing and find a solution that works for everyone to move forward.
 - If the incident involves an athlete, parents will be communicated with to address the behavior.

2nd offense - In-Person Meeting with Written Record

- If the issue persists, the individual in question will be subject to an in-person meeting with the Sports Coordinator regarding the undesirable conduct.

3rd offense - Single Suspension with Written Record

- The individual in question will be suspended from the next game or instructional session and have an in-person meeting with the Sports Coordinator to discuss the incident and consequences.

4th offense - Season Suspension with Written Record

- The individual in question will be banned from attending all league games/sessions for the remainder of that season.
- Any individual that is suspended for the remainder of a season will have a *ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY* for all behaviors during any future youth sports programs and will have a phone or in-person meeting prior to the next registered season to discuss the terms of our policy.

Any behavior labeled ZERO TOLERANCE will result in an immediate season suspension (see page 3).

- *Failure to comply with the above steps will result in suspension from games/instructional sessions for the remainder of the season.*
- *Any individual that is suspended and attends a game or instructional session will be suspended for the remainder of that season and faces potential suspension from future seasons.*
- *These guidelines are not absolute in dealing with behavioral problems that exceeded the negative behaviors in this handbook. Some situations could merit harsher sanctions.*
- *Refunds will not be given for individuals who are subject to the corrective action plan or suspended for the season.*