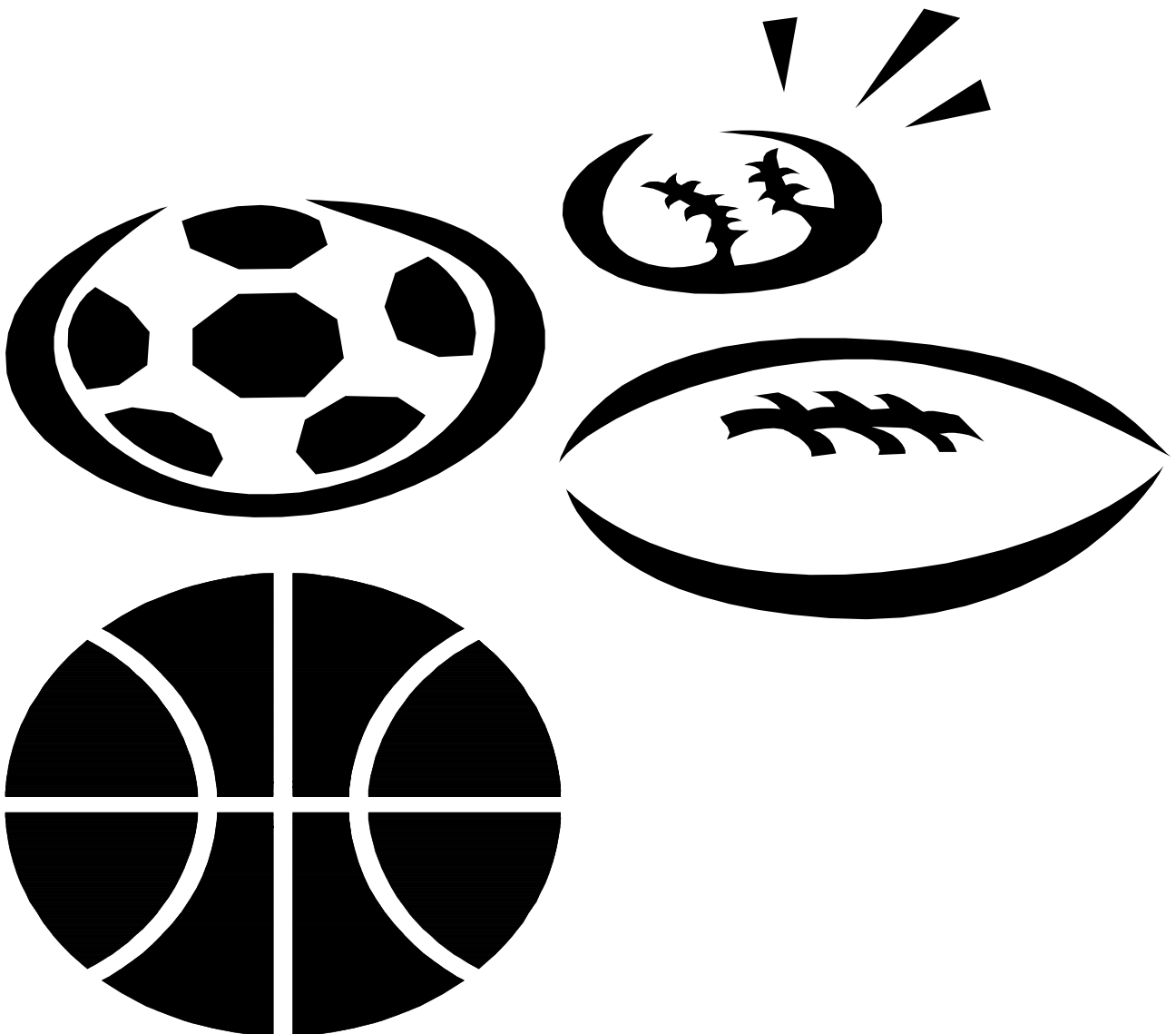


# Airway Heights Recreation Department Youth Sports Program

## Guidelines



## Informational Handbook

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Our sports program is community oriented and developed to provide an opportunity for youngsters, regardless of ability, to play, learn, and enjoy each sport. Adults participating in our program are encouraged to maintain this perspective in order to achieve our mutual objective, kids learning to play sports and enjoying the experience.

**PURPOSE OF YOUTH SPORTS:** The youth program offers a wide array of organized sports activities for youth to help them develop desirable physical skills and to mature emotionally and socially. The sports program provides opportunities for children to have contact with other youths, volunteer leaders, and youth program staff. It also provides opportunities for parents to socialize with other parents and for adults to contribute to the community by serving as volunteers in youth programs.

**PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY:** The philosophy of the Recreation Department Youth Sports program is to teach the basic skills which young people need to play various youth sports in a safe and nurturing environment, where all children get an equal chance to play regardless of skill level. Every child has the right to have fun while participating in the program, and we will not tolerate any abusive behavior that jeopardizes a child's well being.

**DESIRED OUTCOMES:** The outcome we desire to achieve through the youth sports program is skill improvement by every child who participates, acquisition of assets, and a demonstrated reflection of fun through smiles, laughter, and newly acquired friendship.

**INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT DESIRED OUTCOMES:** All coaches and parents are required to "buy in" to the program philosophy and mission. By doing this they will put the kid's needs first which will result in each child having a fun and positive sports experience. Initiatives include minimum play rules for each league, smaller teams, more opportunities for success through rule modifications, de-emphasizing of scores and emphasizing participation, fun, and teaching of basic sports skills.

**TRAINING:** The Youth sports director is a qualified National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) trained clinician and is qualified to teach and train our coaches as NYSCA certified coaches.

**COACH/VOLUNTEER RECRUITING PROGRAM:** An active volunteer coach recruitment program is utilized to recruit volunteers as coaches and assistant coaches for our programs. Once recruited all volunteers will be required to fill out a volunteer application form and be required to undergo a background check.

**COACHES TRAINING PROGRAM:** Coaches are trained using the NYSCA youth sports training program. All volunteers are required to attend this training, which is offered several times throughout the year.

**GAME OFFICIALS AND TRAINING OF OFFICIALS:** Currently the Airway Heights Youth Sports Program utilizes certified official associations who provide trained and certified officials. Some sports and leagues may utilize volunteer officials in an effort to keep costs down. For example 3 on 3 Basketball & Volleyball leagues.

**PARENT TRAINING:** A youth sports parent training handout/Spectator Policy is issued to all parents. The handout covers the following areas: Philosophy of Youth Sports, role of the parent, role of the coach, how to discuss concerns, providing assistance, program goals, providing positive reinforcement, role modeling, expected parent behavior, and getting more involved in your child's youth sports experience. In addition all parents registering children in our program must sign a "Parents Code of Ethics" promising to uphold the objectives of the youth sports program, support their child, and uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship. Coaches hold parent meetings throughout the season to keep parents up to date on the team, season, and their child's progress.

**DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS/PLAYERS/SPECTATORS:** Parents are expected to abide by the Parents Code Of Ethics throughout the season by practicing good sportsmanship at all times. The officials will also ensure all parents are acting appropriately by issuing warning to parents who are acting

inappropriately at games. In extreme cases the official will eject the person and the person will be asked to leave the facility or have the police called to escort them from the facility.

**PROVIDING A SAFE PLAYING ENVIRONMENT:** The Youth Sports Director, recreation staff, coaches and officials will ensure all areas are safe for children to play on. Annual inspections are done at all facilities and continuous upkeep is scheduled. Parents, coaches, and players are asked to assist in this effort by reporting safety hazards, by picking up litter, debris, and items that could pose potential safety risks to participants. Every child has a right to safe play conditions, therefore prompt action is requested to report any safety concerns to the recreation department staff.

**SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT:** The following written guidelines are provided to ensure all participants in the youth sports program are at the lowest possible risk of injury, safety concerns, and have the highest potential for enjoyment in their youth sports experience:

**BANNING OF RAPID WEIGHT LOSS/GAIN SOLELY FOR PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH SPORTS:** Under no circumstances will any recreation department youth sports program be offered which requires pre-determined weight limits or encourages unhealthy weight loss or gain in order to participate. (Example: wrestling programs that uses weight categories or a football program with weight limits).

**PUNISHMENT OF OPPONENTS THROUGH PHYSICAL CONTACT OR EXCESSIVE SCORE DOMINATION:** Under no circumstances will coaches or players attempt to inflict punishment (physical, psychological, or emotional) by excessive physical contact or by purposely running up a score to humiliate the other team.) In addition, no coach will punish a player by forcing him or her to do physically exerting activities as means of punishment.

**PROHIBITION OF SINGLE SPORTS SPECIALIZATION AS A CONDITION OF PARTICIPATION:** Neither the league nor it's coaches will require any child to limit his or her sports participation to a single sport as a condition of participation. In other words a soccer coach cannot require his players to only play soccer during the year as a condition of being on his/her team. Also no league within the sports program can require sports specialization. In addition to prohibiting sports specialization, coaches should not attempt to label a child as a "shortstop, pitcher, catcher, attacker, etc. Coaches and parents should encourage children to play and learn a variety of positions for each sport the children participate in.

**LIMITED COLLISION POTENTIAL FOR YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 11:** The youth sports program will ensure that the league rules are modified in such a way to ensure there is limited collision potential to each child. In football, for example, younger leagues will modify the rule to ensure any blocking allowed is done safely and in a way that poses little collision potential. This will change at older divisions as youth grow, mature, and skills improve.

**RULES THAT SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE CHANCES OF INJURY:** Rules will be modified in all age groups to ensure that chances of injury are greatly reduced. Tee-ball, for example, will use safety balls or soft rag balls to cut down on injuries by players being hit with the ball. In addition, low injury potential increases the likelihood that youth will learn proper techniques and not be afraid of the ball.

**EQUIPMENT DESIGNED TO ENSURE INJURY REDUCTION:** Whenever possible equipment and supplies purchased for the youth sports program meets age requirements and designed to reduce injuries.

**SAFETY INSPECTION OF ALL EQUIPMENT:** All sports equipment is inspected before the start of each season to ensure it is safe and in usable condition. When equipment or facilities are found to be unsafe, please notify the Youth Sports office immediately.

**FIRST AID KITS:** All coaches are provided a first aid kit.

**UNSAFE PLAYING CONDITIONS:** The Recreation Department will cancel or postpone any game, practice, or sports event when it is determined to be unsafe for use. In the absence of a Recreation Department staff or administrator, coaches or officials should use common sense and consider the safety of players, parents, and coaches in determining if fields are safe to play on. Under no circumstances will fields be used when there is

thunder or lightening in the vicinity or when there is any other condition that would increase the chance for injury.

**MINIMUM PLAY RULES:** Every league within the Recreation Department youth sports program will have specific minimum play rules. As a minimum every coach will be required to play each child equal time. Every effort must be made to play each player equally to ensure that the children are given an opportunity to experience the expected outcomes desired by participating in the program.

**AGE RANGES OF SPORTS LEAGUES:** Whenever possible a youth sports league will have no more than a 2-year age range such as 5 & 6, 7 & 8, 9 & 10, etc. In cases where there are not enough players to conduct a league or form a team every effort will be made to keep the age range as small as possible.

**REGULAR SEASON PLAY:** All sports are limited to six weeks of regular play. No elite or “all-star” teams will be formed for leagues under age 12.

**AWARDS:** Only participation awards are given in the youth sports program. Awards for 1<sup>st</sup> place, for example, are not authorized, as it tends to put improper emphasis on winning instead of participation and fun. Sportsmanship awards may be given and awards that reward hard work, determination, and other positive attributes (this is up to the coach and his parents). The Recreation Department provides all players with a participation certificate.

#### **General Agency Policies:**

**PARTICIPATION IN SEVERAL PROGRAMS:** The Recreation Department encourages youngsters to participate in a variety of youth activities in addition to the child’s particular sports program. This will ensure a well-rounded recreational/educational experience and do far more to prepare each child for adult life. The development of numerous assets is critical to developing successful adults.

**EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Sports is only one part of a child’s life and no coach shall punish a child in any way if he or she misses practice or game due to family related activities and events such as church, school, and other family activities. These will be considered excused absences and may not result in punishment to the child such as less playing time, extra practice, physical punishment (laps, pushups, etc.).

**OPEN PARTICIPATION:** It is the policy of the youth sports program that no child will be excluded from the league due to his or her race, creed, sex, economic status, financial ability to pay, or ability.

**RECRUITMENT OF QUALIFIED MINORITIES AND WOMEN AS VOLUNTEERS:** There will be no discrimination in any way of qualified individuals to coach and volunteer based on creed, race, or gender. The program will attempt to select coaches from those qualified who resemble the cultural and racial make up of the community and participants in the league.

**ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES:** All coaches, officials, and parents must refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal substances at any youth sports event. Violators will be removed from the program.

**EVALUATIONS:** In an effort to continually improve the quality of our programs, parents are asked to complete an evaluation at the conclusion of each sport program. This will allow parents to have input to the program and give them a vehicle in which to make suggestions, comments, or express concerns.