

Safety Tools for Coaches

As a coach, you rely on many tools for success: education, leadership skills, good sportsmanship and the organizational ability to run an effective program. A well-run lacrosse program is often judged by its winning record, and by your ability to instill discipline, teamwork and a love for the game in your players. But what about safety? Many coaches don't think beyond getting players properly geared up in the appropriate safety equipment before they take the field. Some might not think about safety until after a claim occurs.

Protect your players

The first step in running a safe lacrosse program is to make sure that all participants are members of US Lacrosse. By joining US Lacrosse, you can be certain that if any of your players gets hurt, they will automatically be covered by the \$1,000,000 US Lacrosse Accident Insurance Plan. Further, if all coaches and players are members, your team and its volunteers are automatically protected by the \$2,000,000 US Lacrosse Liability Plan. This insurance program provides important protection against serious injury and the rising threat of liability lawsuits targeted at youth sports organizations.

Four-Part Safety Plan

The next step is to implement a safety program. At Bollinger, we have seen thousands of amateur sports claims, from the sensational to the mundane, that might have been prevented had teams taken the time to put a simple risk management plan in place. For this reason, Bollinger and US Lacrosse have developed a four-part safety program to help lacrosse organizations identify and minimize hazards found in their everyday activities.

- 1. Emergency Plan for US Lacrosse Organizations** - The Emergency Plan is a template that you can use to document the necessary information you need to have on hand in the event of an emergency. It provides information such as phone numbers for coaches and medical staff, directions to the nearest medical center, the location of AED's (Automated External Defibrillator) at the facility and a list of emergency medical and first aid training within your organization. This form should be completed for each facility or field you use on a regular basis. Also included is a Participant Emergency Medical Card to have on hand for each player so that you have medical history and the parent's medical release allowing for emergency medical treatment in the event of a serious injury.
- 2. US Lacrosse Facility & Field Inspection Checklist** - These safety checklists should be used as the basis for safety inspections of your facilities, fields, restrooms, concession stands and parking areas. The inspection forms will help you evaluate the contracts or lease agreements that may be required when leasing fields or facilities, and also include information on hold harmless agreements. Field and facility inspections should be done prior to each game. If any hazardous conditions exist, document them on this form, communicate the issues to the fieldowner and make sure they are satisfactorily addressed before you use the field or facility again.

- 3. US Lacrosse Emergency Procedures: Medical Emergency & Facility Evacuation** - The third step in this program outlines procedures to follow in the event of a medical emergency or situation that requires evacuation of the premises. By communicating these procedures to coaches and team volunteers, you will all be better prepared to handle an emergency and have an established plan of action in order to effectively protect your players and other participants.

- 4. US Lacrosse Insurance Program Incident Report** - If a serious injury or other incident occurs during a lacrosse activity, the Incident Report will help you document the details while they are still fresh. It is important to have written incident reports on file for serious injuries, property damage or other events that may result in a claim or lawsuit against the team, league or US Lacrosse. Many claims alleging negligence may not be filed for years after the incident. Written reports prepared immediately after the event are invaluable in defending these types of claims. A copy of the report and related documents (witness statements, police report, doctor's statement, pre-game field inspection, etc.) should be kept on file and a separate copy should be sent to Bollinger.

Having these tools in your safety toolbox is key for coaches to develop a successful program. Always have a plan and a backup plan. Ask parents to take an active role in establishing a safety team to help compile the information above, and to assist with field inspections and equipment checks. There is room for everyone to help promote a safe and effective lacrosse program.