

club  
development  
club  
development  
scheme  
club  
development  
scheme

# Keep it fun

SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT



*Clubs guide to encouraging positive parent behaviour*



Department of Sport and Recreation  
Government of Western Australia

# Keep it fun

## SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT



Department of Sport and Recreation  
Government of Western Australia

### inside...

#### **Strategies for clubs**

A summary of strategies to encourage positive parent involvement.

#### **Strategies in action**

Examples of how some groups have encouraged positive parent behaviour.

#### **1 The benefits**

The benefits sport provides parents and their children.

#### **2 What to do**

What kids want from their parents.

#### **3 Helpful tips**

Some practical tips for parents.

#### **4 The 10 Commitments**

A contract between clubs and parents to raise parent awareness about how to better encourage their children. Also supplied in wallet sized card.

#### **5 Parent etiquette in sport**

How parents should communicate with coaches and officials.

#### **6 Supporter of the Week certificate**

A parent's behaviour on the sporting sideline can determine whether their child has a good time playing sport.

Helping parents to be better role models and supporters means we can build nurturing environments for our kids to play sport and encourage their life long participation.

Some parents take all the fun out of sport by the way they behave while watching their kids.

We have all seen the parent who:

- Puts too much emphasis on winning rather than the fun of competing
- Forces their child into a sport they don't want to play
- Enrols their child at a highly competitive level, rather than a level they are comfortable with
- Criticises their child's mistakes during a game
- Yells abuse at players, officials or the coach
- Tries to coach and/or referee from the sideline
- Constantly focuses on negative rather than positive play

The Department of Sport and Recreation has developed *The Clubs Guide to Encouraging Positive Parent Behaviour* to help your organisation to promote good behaviour among parents so that they can learn to be a positive influence on their child's sporting experience.

The information sheets in this kit can be copied and used by your organisation to help guide parents to be great sports.

These sheets are also available at [www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au) or you may obtain hardcopies from the Department of Sport and Recreation on 9387 9700.

## Clubs guide to encouraging positive parent behaviour

### DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND RECREATION

Perry Lakes Stadium, Meagher Drive

Floreat Western Australia

PO Box 66, Wembley WA 6913

Tel: 9387 9700 Fax: 9387 9726

info@dsr.wa.gov.au [www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au)



### Strategies for clubs

Having identified the significant role parents play in their child's sporting life, it is important to work with parents to foster a positive sporting environment for young people in which to participate.

Strategies your club can implement include:

- **Make parents part of the team** Promote the fact that you need parents to volunteer as managers, fundraisers, club administrators, coaches or officials. Once they're on board they'll better understand the positive behaviours required of them as a parent.
- **Enhance the social aspects of the club for parents** Clubs often arrange social events for the children, but it might help to provide functions for parents as well.
- **Awards and Rewards** Every parent would like to be acknowledged as Supporter of the Week, so why not present them with a certificate? (See enclosed Certificate of Appreciation, also available at [www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au)).

You could also consider:

- Best Conduct table (alongside premiership table)
- Most supportive parent award (voted by the kids)
- Most supportive team environment (voted by the umpires)
- **Catchy slogan** Develop a slogan to be used on all handouts, sporting schedules, hats, t-shirts to reinforce positive parent behaviour, e.g. *Cool Parents = Cool Kids* or *For Kids Sake!*
- **Write to parents** Send out a letter at the start of the season stating your club's expectation of parents and the consequences for unacceptable parent behaviour. Use some of the ideas from this resource.
- **The 10 Commitments** Get your parents to sign the 10 Commitments Sheet on registration day. The sheet can be kept on the fridge as a friendly reminder.
- **Information nights** Run a coaching or officiating awareness course for parents with a social aspect. You'll give them a better understanding of the game and you may even recruit more volunteers.
- **In the beginning!** Get your parents together at the start of the season and run through your club's philosophy, e.g. every kid gets an equal run, participation is the name of the game, what you expect of parents, consequences of inappropriate parent behaviour and any new rules.

### 10 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

(Rigby Cooke Lawyers, 2002)

- 1 *Clearly state to whom the code applies.*
- 2 *Specify what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.*
- 3 *Determine what authority the club or organisation has to enforce the code (constitution).*
- 4 *Decide how parents will be bound by the code, e.g. a contractual relationship through membership or registration forms.*
- 5 *Establish the penalties for contravening the code.*
- 6 *Establish who will deal with offending parents.*
- 7 *State the procedure to deal with persons contravening the code.*
- 8 *Consider how the parents will be educated about the code.*
- 9 *Encourage parents to be actively involved in implementing the code, e.g. a sideline monitor to encourage positive support from spectators.*
- 10 *Consider the impact on the children participating.*

- **Fun sports** If your club is large enough, try running a semi-structured sport alternative that is less competitive so the kids can play for fun and parents can watch for enjoyment rather than putting pressure on their child.
- **Nip it in the bud** If you find you have a real problem with parent behaviour at your club, address the issue promptly:
  - Meet with the parent to discuss their behaviour and the effect it is having on the players
  - Ban the parent from the ground for one game
  - Video tape the parent and play it back to them in a controlled environment
  - Parent to attend coaching or official course
  - Parent to umpire the next fixture.
- **Develop a code** Establish an effective code of conduct and make sure parents know about it. See above for an example on how to develop a code.



# Keep it fun

SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT

## Strategies in action

### AFL Queensland

The AFL in Queensland put in place a 'Parents for AFL' program to curb the ugly parent syndrome. The program included compulsory parent information sessions, parental sign-off on a code of conduct, designated spectator-free areas at coaches' boxes and a zero-tolerance policy on umpire abuse. The program also includes awards for the team with the best behaviour on and off the field and a three-phase process to deal with problem parents. The focus of this process is counselling the parent and only removes the parent's membership as a last resort.

AFL Queensland (07) 3394 2433

### TennisWest

TennisWest has trained match supervisors to monitor behaviour at tournaments. Each club has a volunteer trained with the skills required for the role. Court supervisors are specifically trained to monitor matches during tournaments. Match supervisors are trained to supervise pennant matches. They will oversee three to four courts at tournaments and are required to sign the scorecard at pennant games. The match supervisor's role will be to encourage better sportsmanship behaviours on the court and the sideline.

TennisWest (08) 9361 1112

### Western Australian Rugby Union

Junior rugby referees promote the message *Just Let the Kids Have Fun* as a friendly reminder of the codes of behaviour expected in junior sport. The slogan has been printed on brightly coloured shirts and caps to improve the sideline behaviour of spectators. A pathway referee course is also provided to officials to better promote junior sport as being an enjoyable experience.

Western Australian Rugby Union (08) 9383 7714

### American Youth Soccer Organisation (AYSO)

The American Youth Soccer Organisation created a program called *Kids Zone*, which has three basic elements:

- **The badge** – with the *Kids Zone* logo that spectators wear at the game, which remind others of positive sideline behaviour.
- **The sign** – located at the entrance to playing fields that lists positive behaviour standards. Parents and spectators willing to abide by these standards are welcome others are not.
- **The Pledge** – all AYSO parents are requested to sign a pledge that holds them to the *Kids Zone* standards. This pledge is similar to the 10 Commitments (Sheet 4).

More soccer guidelines for parents are available at: [www.down-the-line.com](http://www.down-the-line.com)

More information:

[www.soccer.org/programs/kz/kz\\_main.html](http://www.soccer.org/programs/kz/kz_main.html)

### El Paso, Texas

The El Paso Recreation Department has implemented a training program that is mandatory for all parents whose children participate in city-sponsored sports or plays on city-owned fields. By the end of 2001 approximately 15,000 parents had completed the three-hour program that promotes parents as a solution rather than treating them as a problem. Parents are shown how they can positively affect the performance of the team and create a healthy, positive sideline environment for their children.

### National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS), America

NAYS is a voluntary organisation that represents 150,000 coaches and administrators of youth sports leagues in the United States. It has created "Time Out! For Better Sports For Kids". This program requires parents and coaches to take part in a short orientation course on good behaviour and sports ethics as well as requiring owners of sports facilities to withdraw permits for competition if the alliance's code of conduct is violated. Other methods to control the conduct of fans include signs and public announcements that outline behaviour that will not be tolerated and that will lead to removal from the facility.

More information: [www.nays.org](http://www.nays.org)

### Dr. Darrell J. Burnett

Dr Burnett, an American Clinical and Sport Psychologist, has several publications in the area of Youth Sports. One of his suggestions for positive parent behaviour is for coaches to write to all parents outlining the key elements needed from them to support their child. Sheet 2 lists some of these reinforcing elements.

### Codes of Behaviour

Additional copies of the enclosed Australian Sports Commission *Codes of Behaviour* can be downloaded from the Department of Sport and Recreation website at [www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au)

Information and codes of practice for sport organisations can be found at [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)



Department of Sport and Recreation  
Government of Western Australia



# Keep it fun

## SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT

### What my child may gain from sport

#### Physical benefits:

- Improve fitness, strength, flexibility and co-ordination
- Improve general health and helps weight management
- Develop a wide range of motor skills
- Establish healthy behaviours that young people will carry throughout their lives

#### Social benefits:

- Develop communication and interpersonal skills
- Develop leadership and co-operation skills
- Create lasting friendships
- Increase interest in accepting responsibility
- How to deal with winning and losing
- Provide a vehicle for responsible risk taking

#### Personal benefits:

- Enjoyment factor – a biggy!!
- Improve self-esteem and confidence
- Improve ability to concentrate: facilitating better performance at school
- Learn self-discipline, commitment and responsibility
- Learn organisational skills and how to share
- Learn how to deal with pressures and stress
- Encourage health related behaviours i.e. better eating habits, less likely to smoke

#### HOW DO I BENEFIT?

##### Its not just your kids who will benefit from playing sport

- You get to be a bigger part of their lives by sharing more of their experiences
- Appreciate that your children are having fun, being active and healthy
- Healthy children means a reduction in medical costs
- You know where your children are, that they are being supervised and having fun
- Research has shown that children who are involved in sport tend to stay in school longer and get better grades
- Assist in developing behaviours that will encourage life long health and well being

*In the last 10 years the number of overweight Australian children has doubled.*

*Today one in five children are overweight or obese.*

*Getting involved in regular sporting activities will help your child maintain a healthy weight.*



# Keep it fun

## SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT

## What to do

### WHAT KIDS WANT

(Taken from ASC *Your Kids, Their Game*)

#### **This is what kids have told us they want from their parents**

- Support and encouragement
- To let them know you are proud of them
- Watch them play
- Praise for their efforts
- Understand their sport and show an interest in being involved
- Have realistic expectations of their capabilities

#### **What kids *don't* want from their parents**

- To yell at them during or after the game.
- Swearing or sledging.
- Abusing the referee or coach.
- Being pushy and pressuring.
- Being critical.

#### **What kids want from sport**

- Have fun.
- Learn and improve.
- Be with their friends.

*Did you know that Australian children watch an average of three to four hours of TV every day?*

*By swapping just one hour of TV for physical activity a day your child will be getting all the physical activity they need.*

### WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- ✓ Encourage your child's participation, don't force it (don't choose a sport for them)
- ✓ Praise their efforts
- ✓ Be proud of them

Children love to have 'grown ups' on the sidelines. If you can't be there, then let them know why and explain

- ✓ Talk to your child about what they want from their sport
- ✓ Ensure the first question you ask is **not** "did you win?" Instead ask "did you have fun?"
- ✓ Volunteer to help with team or club as a:
  - Referee
  - Coach
  - Manager
- ✓ Get to know the coach
- ✓ Offer children support in different ways
  - Practice with them if you can
  - Drive them to training when you can (and stay to watch)
  - Organise equipment for them
  - Make yourself available to watch the game
- ✓ Limit the time your child spends watching television and playing on the computer
- ✓ Encourage your children to play at home



# Keep it fun

## SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT

### Game day tips for parents

#### Before the game:

- Tell your child you love them regardless of the outcome.
- You don't need to tell your child that winning doesn't matter because they know it has some meaning. Instead, help them to develop a healthy competitive attitude for trying hard and having fun.
- Tell your child to "go for it, give it your best shot and have fun".

#### During the game:

- Don't yell instructions at your child during the game. The coach has given them instructions and their team mates are also calling out to them; too much input is confusing.
- Cheer and acknowledge good play by both teams
- Never criticise a mistake, only make motivational comments
- Respect the decisions made by the officials. Your child will learn to respect authority by seeing you do the same.

#### After the game:

- Thank the officials and the coach.
- Thank the other team for a good game.
- Congratulate your child and their team mates on their efforts.
- Compliment individual players on good plays they made during the game.
- Focus on the way your child played rather than winning or losing.
- If your child is upset with losing, help them not to focus on the outcome.

#### During the car ride home:

- Point out a good play your child made during the game.
- Avoid criticising or correcting mistakes.
- Ask questions like:
  - Did you have fun?
  - Did you give it your best effort?
  - What did you learn from the game?
  - What was the best play you made and how did it feel?

Remember it is more important to be a good person than be a good anything else.



# Keep it fun

SUPPORTING YOUTH SPORT

## The 10 Commitments

- 1** I will encourage my child to participate — not force them into anything.
- 2** I love my child and I will focus on their efforts and performance — not the score.
- 3** I will encourage my child to play within the rules and respect officials and coaches decisions — no matter what.
- 4** I will enjoy the game — cheer and clap the good efforts of all the players.
- 5** I will appreciate good performances by all participants at different skill levels.
- 6** I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person regardless of their gender, cultural background or religion.
- 7** I will appreciate the efforts of all volunteers in my sport and enjoy the company of other parents.
- 8** I won't embarrass my child by yelling abuse from the sideline.
- 9** I won't criticise my child's performance after the game — I realise that good fun is more important than a good win.
- 10** I won't pressure my child in any way. I know that it is **their game, not mine!!**

I promise to do all the above

---

Parent Signature





## Parent etiquette in sport

Remember the Golden Rule — treat opposing players, coaches and officials the way you'd like to be treated.

### Dealing with coaches

- Parents should avoid asking a coach to clarify a decision during the course of a game. Support the coach in public, in front of other parents and fans.
- If a parent wishes to seek clarification or have a discussion with a coach after the game, then the following guidelines should be applied:
  1. Allow high emotions to subside **before** engaging in any discussion.
  2. Listen.
  3. Avoid interrupting.
  4. Clarify the issue.
  5. Obtain closure.
  6. Leave the door open for future discussion.
- Parents should leave the coaching to the coaches. Players should be able to hear the coach's instructions, from coaches only, during play, half time and practice sessions.
- Parents should find opportunities to recognise the effort their child's coach puts into developing their children and the sport.
- Avoid speaking negatively about the coach, especially in front of your child.

### Dealing with officials

- Parents should not question the decision of an official during the course of a game. If a parent needs to seek clarification they should approach the team coach or manager and apply similar guidelines to those above.
- It is never appropriate to question or abuse officials during or after a game.
  1. Remember that officials are doing the best they can.
  2. In most instances, officials have received training and have a better understanding of the rules.
  3. Officials make mistakes, as do players. Even officials aren't perfect.
  4. Officials may have a different view of the game to those of spectators and so may see something that you cannot, or vice versa.
  5. Most officials are volunteers who give up their time to do the job. In fact, many officials are out there because nobody else will offer to do it.
- Your child may be asked to officiate in the future. How would you feel if they are abused for making a mistake? Officials deserve your respect and support.
- Remember, without officials there would be no game. Abusing officials will not change the outcome of the game but it will lead to fewer and less qualified officials.

Parents are role models for their children – so your children will reflect your attitude towards coaches and officials.

### Have you ever offered to officiate or coach?





# Certificate of Appreciation

## **Supporter of the Week**

Presented to

---

From

---

for positively encouraging and supporting our team