

CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM

PURPOSE

The safety and well-being of all participants in VGF Softball® is paramount. VGF Softball promotes a player-centric program where young people grow up happy, healthy, and, above all, safe. VGF Softball strives to create an environment that is as safe as possible both on and off the field. VGF Softball does not tolerate any type of abuse against a minor, including, but not limited to, sexual, physical, mental, and emotional (as well as any type of bullying, hazing, or harassment). VGF Softball's goal is to prevent child abuse from occurring through required screenings, mandatory training and education, awareness, and mandated reporting of abuse.

Local VGF Softball programs should establish a zero-tolerance culture that does not allow any type of activity that promotes or allows any form of misconduct or abuse (mental, physical, emotional, or sexual) between players, coaches, parents/guardians/caretakers, spectators, volunteers, and/or any other individual. League officials should remove an individual that is exhibiting any type of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct and must report the individual to the authorities immediately. Local VGF Softball programs that fail to enforce the zero-tolerance culture or fail to abide by the terms of this policy could face potential revocation or termination of their Tournament eligibility and/or of their VGF Softball charter.

APPLICABILITY

The Child Protection Program applies to anyone who has any involvement in a local VGF Softball program, as well as anyone who participates in VGF Softball-approved programs and activities, including, but not limited to, Board of Directors members, volunteers, managers, coaches, umpires, spectators, players, or anyone who provides regular services to the league and/or has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams. Anyone with questions on who the Child Protection Program applies to should contact VGF Softball.

ENFORCEMENT

Local leagues must establish a culture prohibiting any type of activity that promotes or allows any form of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct behavior between players, coaches, parents, volunteers, and any other individual. League officials must remove any individual that is exhibiting any type of mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct and must report the individual to the authorities immediately.

Any violation of the Child Protection Program may result in the suspension or revocation of a local league's tournament privileges and/or charter by action of the VGF Board.

Any questions regarding the interpretation of the Child Protection Program should be directed to VGF Softball. The VGF Softball Child Protection Program will be updated and modified as necessary.

DEFINITIONS

Defining child abuse is the first step in battling it. Child abuse can take several different forms, and it is important to understand what is considered child abuse and other terms that are mentioned herein.

Abuse or Neglect: The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A §5106g), as amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, defines child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum, "any recent act or failure to

act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation;" or "an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

Different types of Child Abuse or Neglect

- Neglect is the negligent failure of a minor's caretaker to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision which threatens harm to a minor's health, safety, or welfare.
- Physical Abuse is any non-accidental, intentional, deliberate act that results in physical injury.
- Emotional and Psychological Abuse is any act that diminishes the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth by humiliation, intimidation, verbal assault, and emotional deprivation.
- Sexual Abuse is any type of maltreatment, violation, or exploitation that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator.
- Bullying is the intentional, repetitive harmful act, words, and behavior that makes the victim feel hurt, scared, and/or ashamed. Bullying can also be an imbalance of real or perceived power between the bully and the victim. Different types of bullying include, but are not limited to, physical bullying, verbal bullying, emotional bullying, harassment, and hazing.
- Grooming is the process where an individual creates a relationship with a minor or the minor's family to gain trust so he or she can take advantage of a minor for a sexual purpose.

Child/Minor: Any individual who is younger than 18 years of age or who is not an emancipated minor.

League Programs and Activities: Any games, practices, tournaments, approved activities, and/or approved special games

are considered VGF Softball programs and activities.

Volunteer: Any person in the organization who provides regular service to the league and has contact with minors: coaches, managers, the Board of Directors, program workers, concession volunteers or workers, bus and carpool drivers, maintenance workers, or anyone that has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams.

LOCAL LEAGUE CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

All chartered VGF Softball programs **must** adhere to the following requirements to remain affiliated with VGF Softball:

1. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Utilize the VGF Softball volunteer application form to conduct annual background checks on volunteers and prohibit anyone with any offenses that would disqualify them as a participant in any VGF Softball activity.

2. MANDATORY TRAINING & CONTINUING EDUCATION

Require all volunteers to complete the VGF Softball Abuse Awareness Training and state concussion training.

3. MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Report Child Abuse, including sexual abuse involving a minor, to the proper authorities within 24 hours.

4. NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING

Adopt a policy that prohibits retaliation against “good faith” reports of child abuse.

5. PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Adopt a policy that limits one-on-one contact with minors without being in an observable and interruptible distance from another adult.

1. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

1. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

All local leagues are required to use the VGF enrollment system for all managers, coaches, members on the Board of Directors, and any other person, or volunteer, who provides regular service to the league and/or has access to minors. The VGF Softball Official Volunteer Application is available within the VGF Softball registration platform. The applicant must submit a government-issued photo identification card for the league to verify that the information on his/her volunteer application is correct. The completed volunteer application enables the local VGF Softball program to complete and review a background check.

An annual or in some cases 3year background check, in compliance with VGF Softball Regulation is required to be conducted on every individual before the applicant assumes **any** of his/her duties for the current season. All background checks must be completed through VGF and will not be accepted through any other providers.

VGF shall have the right to interview applicants. The applicant must be interviewed by an approved board member. All volunteers selected to participate must be educated on VGF Softball's Child Protection Program and his/her role in the protection of minors in the program. The volunteer must also be advised that as a volunteer, he/she is a mandatory reporter per the [SafeSport](#) Law.

The board shall have the right to have an approved board member conduct reference checks before a new volunteer is allowed participation in a VGF Softball program. All information from reference checks should be documented, dated, and signed by the board member conducting the reference check. Reviewing the reference check is important to determine if any information from the reference differs from what is represented on the volunteer application and/or during the review.

2. BACKGROUND CHECK PROCESS

Per VGF Softball Regulation every individual is required to complete a volunteer application **every year or sometimes every 3years** before the applicant assumes **any** of his/her duties for the current season. The individual is required to consent to a background check during the volunteer application process. The local league Board of Directors must conduct, review, and verify that the background check process is completed.

The league's Board elected reviewer must review the results of the background check with the VGF Softball Official Volunteer Application and a government-issued photo identification card to verify that the information provided on both is identical (full name, DOB, and address). The league should confirm that the full **legal** name is correct (for example, John J Smith JR. not Johnny Smith). Some states and local counties only provide full legal name, and DOB as identifiers for the National Criminal Database.

On August 15th each year, the background check system will reset for the upcoming season.

NOTE: Local leagues are required to satisfy both the state-specific requirements and the VGF Softball requirements.

C. OFFENSES THAT PROHIBIT PARTICIPATION

Local Leagues shall not permit any person to participate in any manner whose background check reveals a pending charge, conviction for, guilty plea, no contest plea, or admission to any crime involving or against a minor. An individual is also prohibited from participating as a volunteer if he/she appears on the [U.S. Center for SafeSport's Centralized Disciplinary Database](#) and/or VGF Softball Ineligible/Suspended List. A local league may impose stricter guidelines and

prohibit any individual from participating as a volunteer if the league deems the individual unfit or inappropriate to work or volunteer in the league. If a potential volunteer appears on the National Sex Offender Registry, the league will immediately disqualify this person from participation.

NOTE: If an individual involved with a league, or any activity of the VGF Softball program, is under investigation for any type of child abuse, or has a pending charge against, or involving, a minor, that individual must be suspended until the outcome of the investigation or pending charges are complete and the allegations are resolved.

If a local league becomes aware of information at any time, by any means whatsoever, that an individual, including, but not limited to, volunteers, or players has a pending charge for , been convicted of, pled guilty, pled no contest, or admitted to any crime involving or against a minor, the local league must immediately contact the applicable governmental agency to confirm the accuracy of the information before allowing the volunteer to participate in their position or per their VGF Softball Constitution suspend the volunteer until the information is received and reviewed.

D. Properly Handling Sensitive Documents

The local VGF Softball program must exercise due diligence to protect any information that is provided. To protect the privacy of volunteers and others, the following best practices have been established:

- The local League President shall only share, on a need-to-know basis, any personal, non-public record or information contained in the volunteer application or attached documents, with other League Officers to make personnel decisions.
- The records of a volunteer will remain on the fingerprinting agency Portal as long as the local league is an active user with the agency.

2. MANDATORY TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Training and Education are important tools in the prevention of abuse. In 2018, the “Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017” became Federal law. As part of SafeSport, abuse awareness training has been highly encouraged for participants and volunteers in the VGF Softball program. All individuals who complete the volunteer application for a league **must complete** Abuse Awareness Training. This includes anyone who wishes to be a manager, coach, member of the Board of Directors, volunteer, and any other person who provides regular services to the league and/or has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams. As part of creating a player-centric environment, each local league should also provide ongoing education to its members beyond the minimal required training. Each league should create a program within its league to keep parents, volunteers, and players informed in all aspects of player protection and safety.

1. Mandatory Abuse Awareness Training

The VGF Softball Abuse Awareness Training, in compliance with VGF Softball Regulation is required to be completed by every individual before assuming **any** of his/her duties for the current season. The Abuse Awareness Training provides resources to create a positive and safe environment for all athletes, coaches, parents, legal guardians, and umpires by understanding how to recognize misconduct and abuse of all types. Topics covered include how to identify and report incidents and what abuse awareness policies should be in place. The league is responsible for ensuring all volunteers have completed the training. Upon completion of the training, volunteers should print out a copy of the certification of completion for their records and provide a copy to the league. League Officials will also be able to access a list of those who have completed the Abuse Awareness Training. The training must be completed on or after August 1st of each year or sometimes every 3years to be considered valid for the upcoming season.

It is important that all volunteers in a league complete the training on a required basis. Even though it may be a training the individual has completed in the past, it is important to keep the information that comes from this training fresh in everyone's mind. The more individuals in a league or involved in a league that have the information that the Abuse Awareness Training provides, the better.

2. Recommended Continuing Education Opportunities for Leagues:

To help create a player-centric environment, each league should implement the following continuing education for its members:

- **Meet with Volunteers:** As VGF Softball is a volunteer-led program, membership in local leagues changes from year to year. It is important to hold regular meetings in which both volunteers and parents

can talk about child abuse and ask questions. The Child Protection Program should be reviewed with participants annually. Since VGF Softball could not exist without the time and effort from volunteers and parents, it is important to communicate directly with the volunteers. For that reason, the VGF Softball Child Protection Program should be freely copied and distributed to all adults in the local league. Local Leagues are encouraged to maintain a link on their local league website to the VGF Softball Child Protection Program.

- **Make Your Position Clear:** VGF Softball has clearly defined rules for dealing with child abuse. Make adults and minors aware that the local league will not tolerate child abuse in any form. Suspected abuse must be reported and retaliation for good faith reporting is prohibited.
- **Stress the Role of Adults in Your League:** Minors should be encouraged to take an active role in protecting themselves, but the responsibility for ensuring their safety ultimately rests with the adults. Adults can identify potentially uncomfortable situations, for themselves, as well as for children. The welfare of the players in your league is the highest priority in any situation.
- **Provide Additional Resources:** Many organizations will gladly assist your efforts to protect your players, several of which are listed below. Feel free to provide the name of the below organizations and the websites to parents, volunteers, umpires, as well as minors.

- [SafeSport](#)
- [SafetoCompete.org](#)
- [USABase.org](#)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) ○ [American SPCC](#)

C. Grooming

Grooming is a tactic used by sexual predators to methodically build a trusting relationship with victims, parents, and the community to place themselves in a position of trust, which the perpetrator then uses to draw the victim into a sexual relationship. Many times, the perpetrator becomes a family friend. Grooming can be subtle and hard to recognize. It's important to bring awareness of grooming to all individuals in the league. Understanding the grooming process and behaviors of grooming can help prevent abuse from occurring. The required Abuse Awareness training for all volunteers is one way to begin to raise awareness within the league of grooming. The more individuals in the league that are equipped with knowledge to understand and recognize grooming, the better protected the children are within the league.

Leagues can use the following resources to help educate the members of the league on grooming:

USA Center for SafeSport:

- [What Parents Need to Know: Grooming in Sport](#)

Safe to Compete:

- [The Discussion Guide \(Ages 5-10\)](#)
- [The Discussion Guide \(Ages 11-17\)](#)
- [Tips for Protecting Child Athletes from Sexual Abuse](#)

D. Bullying

Any type of bullying can have serious effects on players. Anyone who engages in harassment, in any form (verbal, physical, cyber, etc.), or commits violence or acts of intimidation shall be prohibited from participating in VGF Softball. This applies to player-to-player, adult-to-player, player-to-adult, and adult-to-adult interactions. The League should strive to have a safe and encouraging environment for all individuals participating in the league. The following types of behavior are not accepted in the VGF Softball culture and should not be tolerated.

- **Physical Bullying:** Hitting, pushing, shoving, punching, strangling, hair-pulling, stealing, excessive tickling, or any other deliberate and inappropriate touching.
- **Verbal Bullying:** Hurtful, deliberate name-calling, banter, taunting, intimidating, threatening, gossiping, and teasing.
- **Emotional Bullying:** Rejection, terrorizing, extorting, humiliating, blackmailing, rating/ranking of personal characteristics, such as race, disability, ethnicity, or perceived sexual orientation, manipulating friendships, isolating, and peer pressure.
- **Social/Cyber Bullying:** Deliberately excluding, alienating, ignoring, spreading rumors, impersonation, inappropriate photographs, video shaming, and hacking social media accounts.

- **Harassment:** Harassment includes bullying, and all of the actions listed above, as well as subjecting someone to unwanted sexual advances, involving physical contact or explicit written or verbal language.
- **Hazing:** An initiation, ritual process involving different types of harassment that intentionally humiliates the individual or a group.

Leagues can use the following resources to help educate members of the league on bullying:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

E. Creating a Player-Centric Environment

Both children and adults may experience frustration at times. It is important to recognize when a person needs to take a break from activities to calm down. Adult volunteers should never escalate a situation when someone is upset. Instead, he/she should attempt to de-escalate any stressful situation.

VGF Softball create and issue a “Code of Conduct” that is upheld by players, managers, coaches, board members, umpires, other volunteers, and parents. This should be reviewed each season to establish a safe environment for everyone involved with the local VGF Softball season.

If an individual (player, volunteer, or parent) feels stressed out and cannot handle the situation, he/she should remove themselves from the area until the issue is de-escalated. These situations might include:

- A coach screaming at an umpire - the game should be paused until the coach and umpire can remove themselves until the issue is de-escalated.
- A player gets emotional about a bad play and starts to break down on his teammates - The coach should remove the player from the dugout until he can resolve the issue.
- A parent in the crowd that does not agree with the placement of their child in the lineup/field - A volunteer should remind the parent about respecting the game and ask them to step away or to respect the coach's decision.
- Create a positive area for players to enjoy the game and have fun by implementing a “Cheer Only Zone” at the field to remove the negativity for players. Leagues can utilize training tools for their board members on how to implement a positive coaching experience through:

3. MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

When an allegation of abuse is made against a local VGF Softball volunteer, the league must protect the child from any further potential abuse by keeping the alleged abuser away from all children in the program until the incident is reported to one or more of the below outlets **and** completely investigated. The Safe Sport Act extends mandatory reporting to all volunteers in the league. All fifty (50) States and the District of Columbia have enacted laws which address mandatory reporting of child abuse to protect the health and safety of children. VGF Softball has compiled a summary of all currently existing federal and state laws regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse at <https://mandatedreporter.com/child-abuse/>. It is strongly recommended that local leagues consult with legal counsel in their jurisdiction to determine the applicability, if any, of federal, state and local requirements and laws to its programs regarding the reporting of child abuse. **An individual who is required, but fails to report suspected child abuse, is subject to criminal and civil penalties.**

1. Investigating Suspected Abuse

Once a report of abuse has been made, the league should promptly notify the alleged abuser that he/she is suspended from any involvement with the league until the investigation is completed. VGF Softball may work with a lawyer who can advise them regarding the obligations of the league and advise about the rights of an alleged abuser. If the investigation substantiates the allegations, the local league must assure that the individual will not have any further contact with the children in the local league.

All information and statements received from the parties involved with the incident (suspect, victim, witness, etc.) must be passed onto the proper authorities. **Local VGF Softball officials should not attempt to investigate suspected abuse. Let law enforcement and child services professionals conduct the investigation.**

2. Reporting of Suspected Abuse

As child abuse reporting laws vary from state to state, each league should refer to the law of its specific state for guidance. Federal law establishes a nationwide standard of duty to report suspected child abuse. Any volunteer who participates in the league must report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to the proper authorities. If a case of abuse is suspected within a league, it must be reported to the appropriate child services organizations and/or local law enforcement, as well as to the League President and /or League Board.

REMEMBER: If you or someone else is in immediate and serious danger, you should call 911.

After making a report to law enforcement, the league may also consider contacting one of the following organizations for additional support:

- [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)
- [The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's](#)
- [The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](#)

After making a report of abuse or becoming aware of a report of abuse involving a volunteer in the league, the VGF Board must also be notified.

Suspension/Termination

If allegations of abuse are made against an individual in the league, the local league must take steps to assure that the individual will not have any further contact with the children in the local league.

While allegations of abuse are under investigation or if criminal charges are pending, the league must promptly notify the individual that he/she is suspended until the matter is resolved by an external investigation or through the court system. While an individual is suspended, he/she may not volunteer in any local league activity.

If the allegations of abuse against an individual are substantiated, the local league must notify the individual that he/she is terminated from their position and may no longer volunteer for VGF Softball in any capacity. The Board of Directors should communicate with the members of their local league about the termination.

3. Communication from the League

The local league's Board must be prepared to contact parents if a substantiated abuse allegation is made against a volunteer or participant within their league. The league must remember that both parties (suspect and victim) have privacy rights. The league must only provide information available in a public record, without any commentary. Public records are documents that are received from a governmental body/agency and are available to the general public (such as police or sheriff's records, court records, a statement from the arresting police department). If a league is contacted by the media, assistance is available by contacting VGF Softball.

4. NON-RETALIATION FOR REPORTING

A local league may not retaliate against any individual within the league who makes a good faith report of suspected abuse, even if the allegation is later determined to be unsubstantiated. Reporters of abuse cannot be afraid to come forward in cases where he/she either has firsthand knowledge of or a good faith belief that abuse has occurred, even if there is a possibility that the report is wrong. The local league should encourage all individuals in the league to be vigilant and observant in regard to the safety and protection of the children in the league. Many states provide immunity to those who report suspected child abuse in "good faith."

5. PROHIBIT ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Most child sexual abuse or grooming is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between players and adult volunteers, you reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. However, one-on-one time with trusted adults is also healthy and valuable for a child. Policies concerning one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relationships. To minimize the chance of an individual's opportunity to groom or abuse a player, the league must adopt a one-on-one policy relating to the interactions between a player and any adult volunteer of the league during the league's programs and activities. The League should adopt a policy prior to the start of the season and provide a copy to all volunteers within the league. At a minimum, the policy should include the following:

- Volunteers are prohibited from being alone with a minor athlete during the league's programs and events unless:
 - There is an emergency.
 - There is written permission from the player's parent/legal guardian.
 - The volunteer is the player's parent/legal guardian, sibling, or personal care assistant.
- A Volunteer's interactions with players must be observable and interruptible by another adult.
- Volunteers are prohibited from contacting players directly through social media or electronic communication unless another adult volunteer or the player's parent/legal guardian is copied.
- Volunteers are discouraged from interacting one-on-one with unrelated minor athletes in settings outside of local league program and activities (such as the volunteer's home, a restaurant, a vehicle, personal communication including electronic communication).

- Players may not reside with unrelated volunteers for the purpose of participation qualification within the league.
- If a volunteer is in a position where he/she is left alone with a player, he/she should not leave the child so long as the volunteer has exhausted all the options above to comply with the guidelines of the policy. Likewise, if a child is injured and must be transported to a hospital, urgent care, or treatment center, the volunteer should not leave the child alone if all options have been exhausted to comply with the policy in an emergency where medical treatment is necessary.
- Physical contact between volunteers and players should be very limited. Some examples of appropriate physical touch include high fives or administering appropriate first aid.

SUMMARY

The safety and well-being of all participants in the VGF Softball program is paramount. The VGF Softball Child Protection Program provides the necessary tools to create an environment that is as safe as possible for its players. Protection begins at the local league level. Every local VGF Softball program must place the safety and well-being of its players above all else. Each league must adhere to the requirements of the Child Protection Program and utilize the additional resources provided to customize its own program to protect its participants which meets the unique needs of the league. Parents/Guardians play a critical role in assuring the safety of their players. It is critical that leagues arm parents/guardians with awareness and share the Child Protection Program with everyone within the league.

AB-506 VOLUNTEER PROCESS

Volunteers and staff must be registered members of the BSA.

1. REQUIRED STATE MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING

- All Employees, Registered Adult Volunteers, and Regular Volunteer positions identified as requiring training shall complete California-mandated training (2 hours) beginning January 1, 2022. The training is available at <https://mandatedreporter.ca.com/training/volunteers>

Regular Volunteer means a volunteer with the BSA who is 18 years of age or older and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

NOTE: This training is in addition to BSA Youth Protection Training.

<https://www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/>

2. STATE TRAINING COMPLETED

- Upload your state Mandated Reporter Training Certificate to your Council. Click on your Council's link below.
- Upload the **Background Check Consent Form (CLICK HERE to Download)** to your council. Click on your council's link below.
- Unsure of your Council? Links to your Council's upload portal can be found here: [CLICK HERE](#)

3. LIVE SCAN BACKGROUND CHECK

Option 1 (no paperwork)

- Complete the transaction by visiting <https://ApplicantServices.com/CaliforniaScouting> and click on button representing your Council.
- Each individual must pay online a fixed fingerprint rolling fee of \$26 and FBI background check fee (\$17)

Option 2 (must complete and bring Live Scan form)

- Fill out the Request for Live Scan Service form below.
- Find the Live Scan site nearest you <https://oag.ca.gov/fingerprints/locations>
- Bring the complete Request for Live Scan Service form to a service provider. It is critical that you use your Council's Live Scan form, as it includes your Council's routing information for your background check.
- Each individual must pay a fingerprint rolling fee (\$20 – \$40) and FBI background check fee (\$17) to the Live Scan service provider.