



# YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

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### Organization Administration and Contact Information

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### Mission Statement

We strive to offer children an opportunity to have fun, learn sportsmanship and teamwork, and develop fundamental skills. Our goal is to enhance the quality of life by providing affordable, year-round recreation, leisure, and community activities.

### Organizational Philosophy on Youth Sports Provision

Although sports are inherently competitive in nature, our programs exist to provide children with sport introduction in a fun, safe, and positive environment. We employ a “competitive progression” developmental youth sports provision model.

- Younger divisions: the score is not kept to de-emphasize outcome, putting the focus on skill building and learning the rules of the game.
- Mid-level divisions: score is usually kept, but other competitive parameters that emphasize outcome, like tournaments, are not offered.
- Upper divisions: score and standings are kept, inter-community competition may be present, and end of season tournaments are often conducted.

Sometimes game rules are adjusted across all age divisions, like smaller playing areas or fewer players on the field to increase the amount of “touches” per player. These game administration adjustments come from national youth sport organizations, like USA Hockey or USA Volleyball, and have research-backed methodology as increasing participant engagement and skill development.

Why does AP&R value the competitive progression model?

Research shows kids who develop intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation around sports participation are more likely to enjoy participation and become lifelong participants (ref).

- Intrinsic motivation: the satisfaction from improving and mastering skills.
- Extrinsic motivation: awards, trophies, and finishing 1<sup>st</sup>.

Therefore, our primary mission is building a positive skill-mastery climate above winning games. And yet, by the time kids reach our oldest age groups, we recognize and embrace our role of preparing young athletes for scholastic sports where tryouts and expectations, “like being on time” for practice, are required. Many public agencies have ceded this role to club sports and focus solely on non-competitive programs given the all too familiar inappropriate spectator or coach behavior, like complaining about game officials’ calls or coaching decisions.

Though it can be difficult, we believe a skill-building mastery climate can be developed within an “authentic” sport context, i.e. keeping score.

**Testing oneself against peers is the essence of competition and arguable develops the traditional healthy benefits of teamwork, perseverance, humility, and hard work as long as both teams, winners and losers, are treated, praised and valued equally.**

Once kids are able to understand team dynamics (i.e. how what they and their teammates do affect each other) at about age nine or ten (ref), then keeping score and keeping standings makes sense provided winning is not over-emphasized. If hard work and skill building are the focus, “winning will take care of itself” (an often used coaching cliché). As long as the adults understand and value both teams’ process of growth through winning and losing and demonstrate it through acting appropriately at games and practices, competition is a “win-win”.

It is also important to note that research also shows that kids prefer authentic game parameters when controlled for external factors like coach and parent behavior (ref). Therefore, we promote and mandate good sportsmanship from coaches, parents, and teammates to help our kids enjoy youth sports and learn the positive lessons they provide. It's not just the "right thing to do"; it is indeed required for positive youth development through sports participation. Appropriate parent, spectator, and coach behavior is governed via the following code of conduct.

**We recognize this concept of balancing competition with skill development can be confusing, but it is our hope  
That this explanation helps you understand our goals and rationale for the current game rules and parameters  
And helps promote a positive youth sports culture.**

### **Codes of Conduct**

#### **Parent & Spectator Code of Conduct**

- I will provide positive support and encouragement for all players, coaches, and recreation staff when attending Alamosa Parks and Recreation youth program activities.
- I will encourage my child to show good sportsmanship at all games, practices, and events.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of participants ahead of any desire to win.
- I will demand a sports environment that is free of drugs, tobacco and alcohol and will refrain from their use at youth sports events.
- I will do my very best to make youth sports fun for my child.
- I will insist that events will be safe and healthy.
- I will not be involved with any altercations (verbal or physical) with any other parents, spectators, coaches and/or officials.
- I will not coach or yell instructions at players, coaches, or recreation staff from the sidelines.

#### **Participant Code of Conduct**

- I will treat all teammates, opponents, coaches, and recreation staff with respect.
- I will play the game according to the rules and I will not cheat to get ahead.
- I will do my very best at every practice and game.
- I will congratulate all opponents at the end of the game.

#### **Coach Code of Conduct**

- I will effectively communicate with team members, parents, and recreation staff.
- I will be a positive role model, promote sportsmanship, and conduct myself in a professional manner at all games and practices, putting the needs of the child over any desire to win.
- I will attempt to play each child no less than 50% of each game.
- I will respect, encourage, and listen to all participants, parents, and recreation staff.

### **Volunteers/Coaches**

Volunteer coaches are always needed, which may include parents, friends, and relatives of our youth program participants. Other, unrelated individuals from the community are welcome to volunteer as well. The coaching requirements for our programs include: the desire to coach, basic knowledge of the sport, and a dedication to the children's safety and well-being. Volunteer coaches are required to pass a background check and complete concussion training/certification annually. Volunteer coaches are offered training through coaches' meetings and clinics, as well as other materials when they are available. Coaches will also work together per division in which the coach has volunteered.

To show appreciation for our volunteer coaches, we issue a coaching credit to the head coach's account at the Recreation Center for the amount of the tuition cost of his/her dependent child(ren) in the program that he/she has volunteered to coach. Credits are issued to assistant & head coaches at the end of the season once the equipment bag has been returned and are valid for up to one year.

### **Registration Policies**

Registration for most Fall and Winter programs opens around August 1st. Registration for most Spring and Summer programs opens around March 1st. Registration is available at the Recreation Center or online at [www.AlamosaRec.org](http://www.AlamosaRec.org).

Once the official registration deadline has past, a maximum league capacity is set and the number of teams in each division is formulated. An ample number of spots are created to allow for late registration; however, once these spots fill up, the league will close and no one else will be admitted to the league unless another participant drops. Interested parties may be placed on the waiting list to be contacted if any openings become available. Also, once the official registration deadline has passed, a \$5 late fee will be added and online registration closes.

If there are not enough participants registered to form three or more teams; the program may shift into a clinic-style format. This format would still involve one or two practices per week and include all program participants. For games, coaches or Rec Staff would divide participants into two teams so that teams may change week to week for variety.

### **Youth Sports Divisions, by Age/Grade**

Children must be the minimum age (and conversely may not exceed the maximum age) by the day of the first game. Children who are older may not play “down” a division. Younger children are allowed to play “up”. Please see the ‘Player Move-Ups’ section below. Other programs are listed by grade level and are more straightforward.

### **Player Move-Ups**

Player move-ups are allowed after the child has completed one season in correct age division. Moving your child up when registering online may prove difficult. If so, register them in the correct age division and contact the league coordinator to move them up. Recreation Supervisor has the authority to keep or place a child in a division deemed appropriate.

Participants of a league may only play in one division at a time. If a player needs more of a challenge than the division they are registered in, a transfer to the next division up will be considered if space allows.

### **Policy Regarding Outside/Club Teams**

Any Outside/Club team wishing to scrimmage with AP&R teams must meet with the Recreation Supervisor at the start of a sport registration period. Fees for the scrimmages may be assessed.

### **Special Requests**

Special requests have proven problematic in regulating fair play. Previous, more accommodating policies have taught us how these requests can undermine our goal to balance teams and it is our duty to support a level playing field.

Special requests may only include:

- 1- ADA accommodations
- 2- Siblings in the same household to be on same team within a division
- 3- Avoid a specific coach

Requests must be made in writing, have valid reasons supporting what is being asked, and must be submitted by the registration deadline. Forms are available at the AFRC Front Desk or a note can be entered when registering online. All written requests will be reviewed by the league director, but not all requests can be granted.

### **Team Draft Procedures**

Our goal is to achieve non-discriminatory results in our older division that entitle a team draft. The Coach’s and Assistant Coach’s children are automatically assigned to their team, but no more than two children will be placed to one team. Only siblings of same household in same age division are guaranteed to be assigned to same team. Please indicate any family relations upon registering, especially if children have different last names.

Our primary objective is to equally distribute talent across all teams. To accomplish this, we assess participants’ skills before the season either through a formal assessment event or through a discussion and evaluation at the Coaches’ Meeting. Coaches then draft their own teams with Recreation Staff moderation. A team without a coach is drafted by Recreation Staff. Participant attendance at a Skills Assessment event is important, not mandatory; however, please try to bring your child if one is held.

Once teams are drafted, players may not freely switch teams. If you are dissatisfied with your child’s volunteer coach and cannot resolve the problem and/or if we cannot move your child to another team, we will consider a refund of the participation fee.

### **Practices**

There will be 1-2 practices per week per division. Coaches will set the days and times. A chart will then be made with all the coaches' practices days/times and then shared with parents.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

Arrive at least 15 minutes or more before games to allow for a warm-up and to prepare your child for the game and weather, if applicable. Water is essential, as well as the required uniform, footwear, and safety equipment.

Be your child's cheerleader! Leave the team strategy and play calling to the coach. Be sensible and maintain your emotions at games and practices. We expect you to respect your coach and referee. Please do not confront the coach or referee before, during, or after a game or practice. These can be emotional times for all parties involved. Meetings of this nature usually do not promote positive resolutions; instead, schedule a conference with the coach or call the Recreation Supervisor.

### **Uniforms**

Uniform shirts are no longer included in registration fee, but the required AP&R reversible jerseys (black & white) are available to purchase at the Rec Center for \$12. The reversible jersey may be used for all youth sport leagues year round, except for the baseball/softball and ice hockey programs.

Exceptions:

- Ice Hockey— the jersey is considered part of the equipment bag, which requires a deposit and must be returned.
- Baseball/Softball – team uniforms will be ordered with matching shirt and caps/visors.

### **Pictures**

The photographer's information will be provided to coaches. All handling of any sport pictures will be between the photographers and the coaches. Photos are available at an additional cost, but you are not required to take or purchase any. If you have any questions regarding pictures, please contact coach and/or the photographer. Photographer information can be found at our Front Desk, from coaches, or through the Recreation Supervisor. AFRC will not handle any pictures.

Published Pictures:

As much as possible, our organization reports program events and photographs to the local newspaper for publication.

### **Program Changes**

We reserve the right to modify program structure and details if needed. If you are not satisfied with the changes made, we will consider a refund of program tuition. Program changes are made by Recreation Staff only and will be communicated through coaches. Coaches do not have the right to cancel or reschedule games, or to transfer/accept players from other teams/divisions.

### **Insurance Information/Waiver**

We recommend that all sports program participants have insurance due to the inherent risks involved in sports. All participants must have a signed waiver/code of conduct on file before taking part in any activity.

### **Transportation policies**

We do not provide any transportation for our program participants, as most of our leagues are in-house. We prefer that parents/guardians/relatives transport children to and from games and practices. For protection of all parties, we discourage coaches from transporting any children that are not their own.

### **Emergency procedures**

Adverse weather conditions may include lightening, hail, heavy snow or rain, high winds, or extreme cold temperatures. These conditions may affect outdoor games/events. If the conditions are deemed to be unsafe by Rec Staff, the day's events will be postponed or cancelled. Participants and spectators will be asked to vacate the premises and/or seek safe shelter immediately. Coaches should use their best judgement

Currently, we adhere to the National Weather Service's Lightning policy, "When thunder roars, go indoors." Activities shall be postponed for no less than 30 minutes after the last lightning strike has been recognized within ten miles.

Indoor events are not affected greatly by weather conditions. The only exceptions would be if the roads became impassible due to weather conditions or possible equipment or facility failures.

Notification of any cancellation would occur promptly. Our procedure to disseminate this notice is as follows: staff will contact coaches and the coaches are responsible for contacting players. In situations like this, our Front desk is flooded with phone calls and yours may not get through. For this reason, we also update our website [www.AlamosaRec.org](http://www.AlamosaRec.org) and the City of Alamosa's Activities page.

#### **Make-Ups**

Due to time constraints, not all games will be made up; however, every attempt to reschedule games will be taken. Please be prepared to adjust your schedule.

#### **Complaint Procedures**

If anonymity is preferred, dissatisfaction can be detailed in an anonymous letter and mailed to the Alamosa Family Recreation Center at 2222 Old Sanford Road Alamosa, CO 81101. If anonymity is not required, communicate complaints or concerns with the Recreation Supervisor or the Recreation Division Manager.

#### **Disciplinary Procedures**

Violations of the stated codes of conduct by a parent, coach, player, or spectator will be reviewed on an individual basis. At the least, a verbal reprimand or letter of caution will be issued. At the most, the participant or coach may be removed from the program. If parents or spectators violate the code of conduct, they may be restricted from attending program events.

#### **Child Protection**

Child abuse is defined as the physical, sexual, emotional mistreatment, or neglect of a child. Coaches, officials, and recreation staff undergo a background screening before becoming responsible children. If you believe your child or any child is being mistreated by a coach, assistant coach, official, or any other person, please contact the Recreation Supervisor immediately. If the abuse is severe and/or criminal, please contact the local authorities.

Alamosa Parks & Recreation does not condone the mistreatment of any child in our programs. Every effort will be taken to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all program participants.

#### **Program Feedback**

Parent/participant feedback is always welcome, as we always hope to improve the quality of our offerings. Please do not hesitate to contact us.