



Guidelines for securing coaches, managers, and volunteers to work with players at USTA JTT Events

Introduction

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) promotes the development of tennis as a means of healthful recreation and physical fitness, while also encouraging, sanctioning and conducting tennis tournaments and competitions under the best conditions possible so as to effectively promote the game of tennis with the general public. Through tennis, the USTA encourages the development of health, character, education, and responsible citizenship.

USTA Jr. Team Tennis is a program designed for children and adolescents ages 6-18. This flagship program brings young people together in teams to play singles, doubles and mixed doubles against other teams of similar age and ability. USTA Jr. Team Tennis promotes social skills and important values by fostering a spirit of cooperation and unity, as well as individual self-growth. Also, it's a fun environment for children and adolescents to learn that succeeding is really more about how they conduct themselves when they play - not whether they win or lose.

Safety Matters

Children and adolescents are able to play USTA Jr. Team Tennis because of the thousands of coaches, managers, and volunteers who provide opportunities for them to do so. All coaches, managers, and volunteers have responsibilities to the children and adolescents with whom they work. First and foremost, the safety of the players is paramount to the success of any program.

The recommended guidelines and safeguards outlined below provide guidance to promote and maintain a safe environment. The recommended guidelines and safeguards in this document may help to prevent incidents and may help to identify conduct that is inappropriate or unprofessional.

Recommended Guidelines

1. Be professional and maintain the highest standard of personal behavior at all times. Encourage the highest standards of sportsmanship, team unity and spirit, and good manners, and model this behavior. Recognize that your behavior with coaches, managers, volunteers, and players serves as an example. Poor sportsmanship by anyone, including but not limited to players, their parents or guardians, and volunteers should not be tolerated.

2. Recognize the trust placed in coaches, managers, and volunteers by children, adolescents, and their parents or guardians. Treat this trust with the highest moral and ethical responsibility.
3. Strive to work in an open and accountable manner at all times. Work in an observed environment with all players.
4. Be willing to accept questions or criticisms regarding best practices.
5. Any physical contact must be within the context of very well-defined boundaries, and such boundaries should be explained to the player beforehand. For example, if physical contact is needed for demonstrating a specific technique, or for first aid management, first explain what you will be doing, and change your approach if the player appears uncomfortable.
6. Be aware of situations that could be misunderstood by others.
7. Maintain a professional relationship with players.
8. Never work under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other mind-altering substances.
9. Refrain from smoking in the presence of players and other minors.
10. Use appropriate and respectful forms of discipline and communication. Physical aggression, intimidation, verbal abuse, and shouting are unacceptable. Any form of unwanted touching is unacceptable.
11. Use appropriate language. Never swear. Never make sexual or suggestive comments to others at any event. If a minor, including but not limited to a player, makes inappropriate sexual or suggestive comments, enforce proper boundaries.
12. Do not appear to favor or show preferential interest in any one player or group of players.
13. Never discriminate against a player because of age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious belief, sexual identity, or sexual orientation.
14. Do not transport players without prior permission of their parents or guardians. Never transport players under the influence of a substance that can impair you mentally or physically.

Recommended Guidelines for Recognizing Unsafe Behavior

It is the moral and ethical obligation of all coaches, managers, staff, and volunteers to help ensure the safety of the players. The following provides useful information on identifying unsafe behavior:

What are some signs of possible abuse?

- Unexplained bruising, burns or other physical injuries.
~ Sometimes the child or adolescent will wear excessive clothing in an attempt to cover such injuries.
- The child or adolescent uses sexually explicit language or actions.
- A sudden, negative change in behavior or loss of interest.
- The child or adolescent makes reference to abusive actions by an adult.

Recommended Guidelines for Reporting Safety Concerns

If someone has reported or has expressed concern about the safety and welfare of a player, you could use these Guidelines for reporting the concerns:

1. Take seriously any suspicion or allegation of abuse expressed to you.
2. Take note of relevant information.
3. Do not question or interview the people involved in the incident of concern.
4. Report all concerns such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and inappropriate language to the person in charge of the event or team in strict confidence and without delay.
5. If you are in charge of the event or team and someone has reported concerns of abuse to you, contact the local police or authorities for guidance.
6. If there appears to be immediate risk, contact the local police.
7. Be sensitive to the confidential nature of the allegations. Never discuss an allegation or suspicion with anyone other than the person in charge of the event or team and the local police or proper authorities.

What should you do if you have concerns about possible abuse?

- Do not take it upon yourself to decide if abuse has taken place.
- Understand that it is in everyone's best interest to address the situation and to work with the proper authorities.
- All action should be taken in a professional and confidential manner.
- Your reporting structure should include the person in charge of the event or team and the local police or the proper authorities.

What should you do if a player tells you he or she is being abused?

- Let the player know that you are taking the allegations seriously.
- Listen and take note of what the player tells you.
- Do not make any suggestions or suggestive comments regarding the allegation.
- Do not make any promises to the player.
- Do not take individual responsibility for what needs to be done. Your role is to try to address the situation appropriately, and to work with the appropriate authority.

Recommended Safeguards

You can put into place various safeguards to help ensure the safety of players. Below are some examples of such safeguards.

1. Before securing a coach, manager, or volunteer explain that safety concerns for players are of paramount importance.
2. If requested, coaches, managers, and/or volunteers should complete an application form that includes information about past jobs, current and prior addresses, and references.
3. If requested, coaches, managers, and/or volunteers should be willing to submit to security background checks.