

# ASAP news



Continuing the Little League tradition of making it "safer for the kids."

## Proper Training for Safety

*Want to reduce injuries? Take a tip from "Big Al" and help stress the fundamentals.*

"It was just an accident; nothing could have prevented it."

If you've been safety officer for at least a year, you've heard or read those words on an injury report. Accidents happen, but in the majority of cases, proper training could have avoided the injury.

Al Price, "Big Al" to the host of coaches he's trained over the years, will tell you: proper training improves both the skills and safety of players. "There is a safety aspect to every position," he notes. And with 30-plus years of training coaches, on top of the years he spent coaching players, he is an authority on this topic.

"You really need to think of the safety aspect from the institutional level," Al stressed, and make sure it is passed down to all divisions of players.

"When players master skills, they are more confident, and safe, in making plays that could otherwise be dangerous," Al stated. "There really is a dual focus: a player can't be a high-performance player if they don't have the safety aspect covered."

### Batted Ball Issues

Some training seems elementary, but for new coaches, or haven't learned these lessons, the learning curve is player injuries. "Most coaches build their safety on the bad experiences

they've had, which is the wrong way to go about safety," Al stressed.

Here are just some basics: "Some kids are never taught that their feet need to be moving before the ball is hit," he said.

Bringing a hit ground ball into the body should be done with the glove hand low, palm up, and the throwing hand above it, palm down. This "alligator" position not only allows the fielder to cover the ball and keep it in the glove, but adds protection for the face from bad hops.

Certain positions have the "right of way" in a given situation, Al notes, and collisions are one result of players not knowing who should take the ball.

Al Price and his partner Al Herbeck ("Little Al") make up the team of Al & Al "Know Your Baseball and Softball." They cross the country teaching volunteers in Little League how to make players better, which makes them safer. For more information on training clinics or materials, you may contact Al & Al at [www.alandalbaseball.com](http://www.alandalbaseball.com).

### Thrown Ball Safety

Catching: start with both hands out, thumbs together, Al said, and catch the ball between the thumb and forefinger, not out in the webbing of your glove. "That way, if the ball isn't exactly

where they think, it won't come off the end of their glove and hit them in the face." And teach the thrower to have eye contact with the player catching before he/she throws.

Proper warm-ups should be stressed for all players. "It used to be that coaches let their kids throw from any distance when they first showed up. Now it's recognized that arms need to warm up before players throw from a distance or with speed," Al noted.

When you teach a new skill, have one coach just watch for safety issues: are the players properly spaced, is anyone goofing around or being careless? It's difficult to teach and see everything that is going on.

Make sure the equipment is sound and fits the player properly, Al noted. A big, dangly chest protector isn't good for the performance or safety of a player. The same is true for batting helmets, bats, and other gear. Train yourself to check these things before your team plays.

And finally, he points out it takes players time and repetition to learn new skills properly, so practice, practice, practice for proficiency *and* safety. And that goes for training coaches, too. Don't expect one training to prepare your coaches for everything that years of experience has taught people like Big Al.

# Give Players Safety Options – Prevent Injuries

*Optional equipment helps players protect themselves from a multitude of potential injuries*

Helmets are standard for batters and catchers in Little League, and have long been required equipment to protect players while they perform critical functions. The league provides this equipment without thinking: it's just required.

However, you can provide other optional safety equipment to make your players more safe when taking the field at any position. Or make the information known that the equipment is available if parents want to purchase it for their child's safety.

Extra protection while batting and fielding can help reduce or prevent severe facial injuries or even deadly chest injuries, while also making sure young ball players feel secure and have the confidence to do their best without worrying about getting hurt.

## Facemasks & Helmets

Facemasks on batting helmets are increasing in popularity around the country and come in several different styles, from a clear polycarbonate or hardened wire cage, to the C-Flap® jaw protector. The proportion of injuries to batters' faces (including teeth, nose, eyes, face) is 29% of all batters' injuries, roughly equal to the proportion of batters' finger, hand, wrist, arm and elbow injuries combined (34%). So batting gloves with some protection are a good option, too, to reduce the chance of those injuries. And no one who has

watched professional baseball can miss the assortment of ankle, shin, and elbow guards that these elite athletes protect themselves with while batting, that are also available.

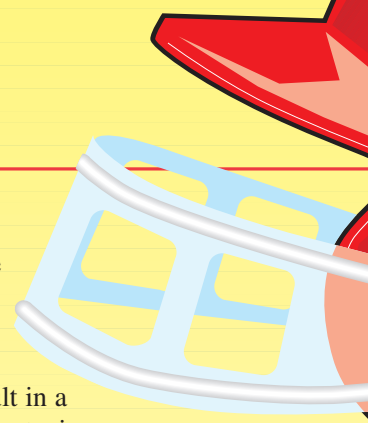
Many leagues are mandating facemasks for their younger batters, as they develop the proper training skills to protect themselves. Helmets with facemasks attached can be purchased in almost any sporting goods store and there are even facemasks available that can attach to previously purchased helmets as well. Facemasks protect against facial injuries that can occur when a child is hit in the face with a pitch or foul-tip and cost about \$13.

## Chest Protectors

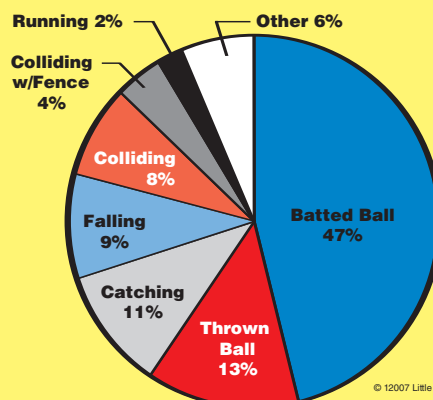
Players should be trained to twist their leading shoulder toward home plate to bring their side and back toward inside pitches, not open up their body by pulling the shoulder away from the plate, exposing the chest and heart. But while they are learning this, batting vests and other protection are also available.

Getting hit in the chest with a ball, whether while batting or on defense, can result in a deadly or life-threatening injury, and there are now many products designed to help decrease the risk of a severe injury like commotio cordis. This condition can occur when a child is hit in the heart area by even a low-speed ball or object, causing the heart to either stop beating or beat erratically, causing the player to lose consciousness and die unless treated quickly by CPR and AED.

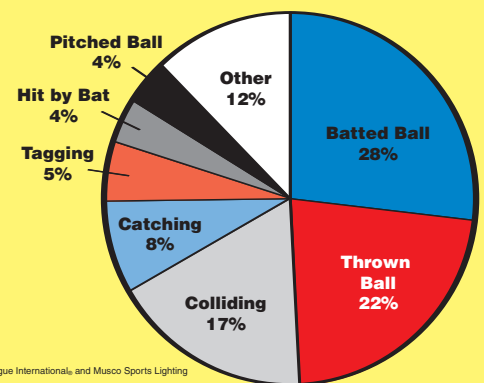
Protective chest gear for players comes in many different forms. There is the Pro-Vest® batting vest for \$40 that straps on over or under the uniform, or the Heart-Gard® and XO's HeartShield® – both rigid pieces worn over the chest and under the shirt. To make these more comfortable, they can be purchased with a t-shirt that has a pocket to slide the piece into, better keeping it in place, also about \$40. Aside from these, there are many other



## Little Leaguer Injury Data 2004-06

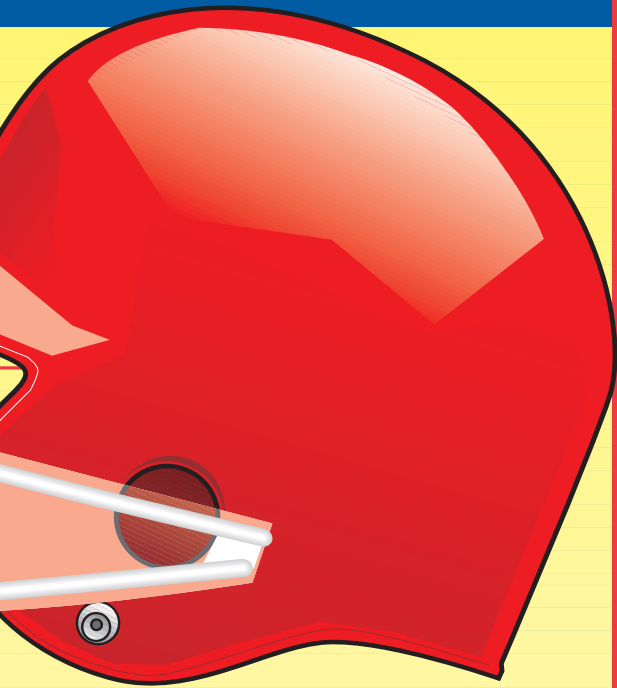


Top Causes of Injuries to Outfielders



Top Causes of Injuries to Infielders

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products that protect the heart and chest area while players are batting or fielding.

Facemasks for fielding are also becoming more popular. Young ballplayers in the infield can't always react in time to protect their faces from line drives or bad hops. GameFace® is a facemask that allows fielders to see to make their plays but also protects their faces from serious injuries. GameFace costs around \$40. These are especially good ideas for players who have already had a facial or eye injury, for both protection and confidence.

### Eye & Mouth Protection

Eye protection can be an important part of safety equipment as well. Sports goggles help protect the eyes while maximizing visibility to play. For most sunny days, players should be encouraged to wear sunglasses that are made of shatter-proof plastic, or tinted sports goggles.

Also, with dental injuries making up 18% of all Little League injuries, players should be encouraged to always wear mouthguards during practices and games. A blow to the face could knock out or move teeth. Mouthguards are available in sporting stores for just a few dollars, but the more effective versions are made and customized by a player's dentist.

## Should Your League Use Reduced-Impact Factor Balls?

Company Name



Company Name	Tee Ball/Coach Pitch Level 1 Age: 5-8	Non-Competitive Minors/Coach Pitch Level 5 Age: 7-10	Competitive Minors Level 10 Age: 9-12
Worth®	RIF® Level 1 RIF-1L	RIF® Level 5 RIF-5L	RIF® Level 10 RIF-10L
Wilson®	Soft Compression Level 1 - A1217B	Soft Compression Level 5 - A1228B	
Riddell®	Flex Core Level 1 BB-FL1	Flex Core Level 5 BB-FL5	
Rawlings®	TVB (Tee Ball) SCOR1	SCOR5	SCOR10
MacGregor® (Sport Supply Group)	Safe/Soft Level 1	Safe/Soft Level 5	Safe/Soft Level 10
Easton®	IncrediBall® SofTouch® A122 311	IncrediBall® SofTouch® A122 311	
Diamond®	DFX-L1 or FlexiBall®	DFX-L5or FlexiBall®	
A.D. Starr®	STARR•1 Safety 1-S	STARR•5 Safety 5-S	STARR•10 Safety 10-S/SP

Source: Little League ball manufacturers.

\* These are just a sample. Other manufacturers also carry soft/safety/reduced impact balls. Check with your favorite supplier for details.

Division	Participants per Year	Compensated Injury Claims, per Year	Leagues Using Safety Ball, per Year	Leagues Using Faceguards, per Year
Tee Ball	615,765	39	3,226	995
Little League Minor	827,440	302	701	1,211
Little League Regular	519,350	676	404	1,069
Upper League	285,525	394	682	969
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,248,080</b>	<b>1,411*</b>	<b>3,675</b>	<b>1,625</b>

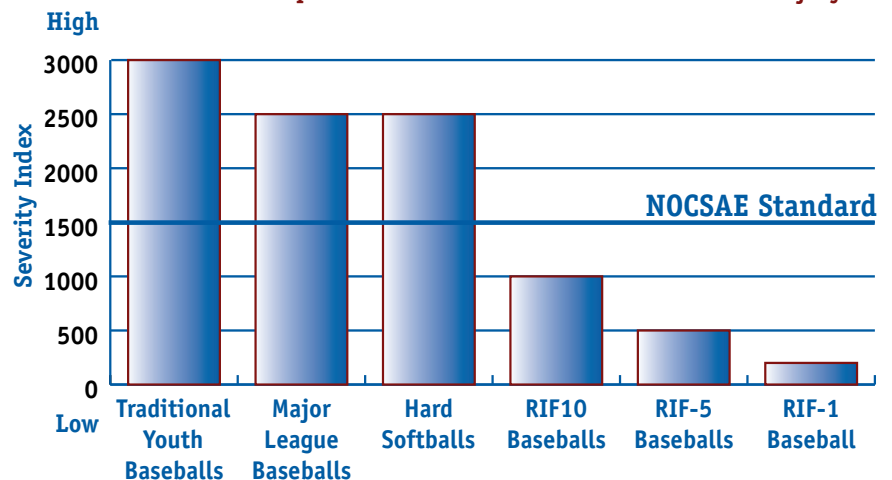
Source: JAMA, (Journal of the American Medical Association) Feb. 5, 2003 — Vol. 289, No.5

Note: There is a correlation between the number of injury claims and the number of Leagues using safety equipment in each division.

\* Number of total injuries for 2003 is greater than the number of compensated injury claims for 2003.

## Ball Type and Head Impact Severity

Relationship Between Ball Hardness and Risk of Head Injury



Source: NOCSAE - the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment.



# Ride Right! And Keep It Covered

*Follow these tips in helping to educate the players in your league about bicycle safety*

With the arrival of summer, many kids find themselves enjoying summer vacation while their parents are still going to work. In some cases, kids must find their own ways to get to pools, friends' houses, and even Little League practices/games. Without rides from parents, many kids rely on riding bikes to get around quickly. While riding bikes is a good way for children to have some independence and save parents from driving them, kids on bikes face many safety risks.

## **Wear Helmet for Safety**

To prevent bicycle injuries you should strongly emphasize wearing helmets. It is up to parents to insist that their children wear helmets every time they get on a bike. Parents should wear helmets as role models for children as well as to protect themselves. After all, it would be hard to convince children that they have to wear a helmet if the parents don't. Also ask your coaches to remind players who ride to practice to wear their helmet; they wouldn't bat without a helmet, so they shouldn't ride without one, either.

Helmet use is very important in preventing bicycling injuries and deaths. Half of the bicycling injuries that occur to children ages 10 and under involved the head or face. Studies have shown that helmets may reduce the risk of head injury to bikers by up to 85 percent. The lives of many children have been saved due to helmets.

For example, a thirteen-year-old girl's life was saved by a helmet when she lost control of her bike and went off

the trail she was riding on and landed in a creek. As she was thrown from the bike, her head hit several large rocks, causing her helmet to split in two and sustain some other large dents. If she hadn't been wearing her helmet, she could have been knocked unconscious and drowned.

## **Ride Safely, Follow Rules**

The clothing children wear when riding bikes is important. They should wear light-colored clothes that make them easily visible to pedestrians and motorists. The clothing should also be close-fitting so that it won't get caught in moving parts of the bike. Books and other loose items should be carried securely in a backpack and that is on the child's back while the bike is being ridden. Most importantly, children should never be allowed to wear headphones or listen to music while riding, as this prevents them from hearing what's going on around them.

Other important safety factors to consider when teaching children bicycle safety are teaching them the rules of the road and instilling good bike-riding habits.

## **Know Your Bike**

In many accidents, the bike involved was borrowed, and the rider was unfamiliar with the brakes and control system. In addition, a borrowed bike may come with mechanical problems or modifications that the user is unaware of.

Children should be made aware of the importance of keeping a bike in good condition. Many bike accidents could be avoided if the bicycle involved had

been kept in good repair. Parents should help children inspect their bike, especially the brakes, before they ride.

Many accidents involving children, particularly young boys, occur when they try to challenge each other and show off in front of their friends. In one case, two 9-year-old boys were riding their bikes down a residential street. One began riding too fast and refused to slow down, challenging his friend to catch him. His friend also sped up in an attempt to pass his friend and lost control of his bike. The boy broke his leg, and cracked his head open. He wound up with 60 stitches in his head and a cast on his leg.

Children should be encouraged to use their good judgment and always wear helmets when riding this summer. Help your league's parents understand that it is important for them to also instruct their children to ensure everyone will have a fun and safe summer.

**use your head**  
BEFORE YOU BUY A BICYCLE HELMET,  
**MAKE SURE  
IT FITS!**

Wear it low on your forehead — 2 finger widths above your eyebrows. Sit it evenly between your ears and flat on your head. Tighten the chin strap and adjust the pads inside so it feels snug and secure and doesn't move up and down or from side to side.

After March 1999, all bicycle helmets made in or imported to the United States must meet a uniform safety standard issued by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Among other things, this means that bike helmets for children ages 1 to 5 will cover more of their heads, giving them more protection. After March 1999, look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets the new CPSC standard.\*

**CORRECT WAY TO WEAR YOUR HELMET**

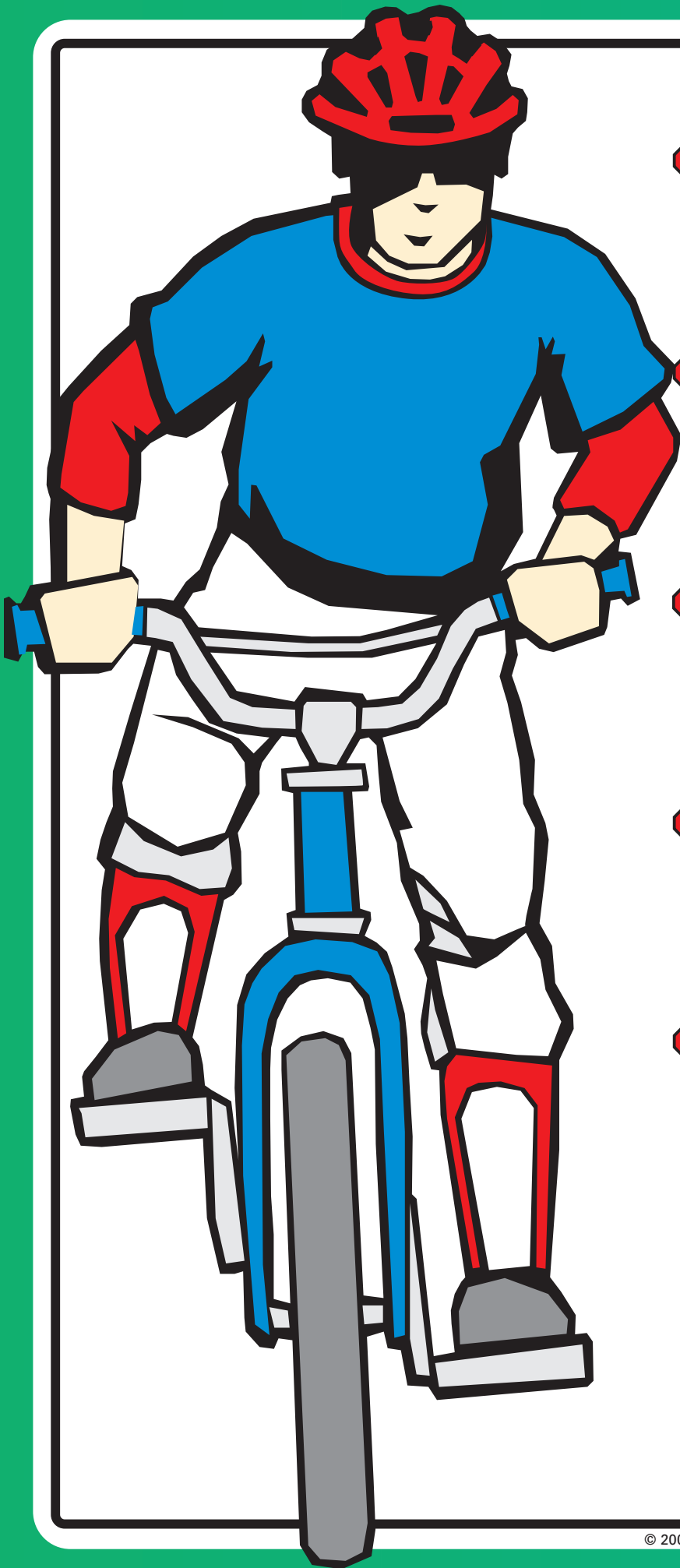
**HEY KIDS - REMIND GROWNUPS TO WEAR THEIR HELMETS TOO!**

\* Some manufacturers may offer helmets meeting this standard before March 1999.

U.S. Department of Transportation  
NHTSA  
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

CPSC Web site: <http://www.cpsc.gov>  
CPSC hotline: 1(800) 638-2772 & (800) 638-8270 (tty)

DOT HS 808 707 AUGUST 1999



- **Wear your helmet**
- **Only one on a bike**
- **Watch for cars**
- **Yield to pedestrians**
- **Ride with traffic**



# Try Full Background Checks Again

**ChoicePoint website improved!**

*ChoicePoint provides leagues better information and accountability for all volunteers' backgrounds*

If you have tried ChoicePoint before and didn't like it, please try it again.

That's the message Dan Kirby, Risk Management Director at Little League International, would like to get out to league officials across the country. "ChoicePoint is so much easier to use now," Kirby stressed. "I hope people will give this a second chance, for all the good it can do for their league."

## **ChoicePoint Benefits:**

- Nearly instant results on checks
- Over 7 million more sex-related crime records checked than on national sex offender registry (SOR)
- *Criminal* background check of over 200 million records – drug, assault, robbery and murder crimes do not show up on an SOR check
- Social Security number no longer required
- Credit card not required until exceed the 80 free checks already purchased by Little League for each league
- Surpasses Little League's minimum standard for volunteer checks for added safety of all participants

## **REMEMBER:**

- Little League has provided 80 FREE background checks through ChoicePoint to every league and District in the country. Did you use yours?
- To date, almost 1300 leagues have not run even ONE check through ChoicePoint.
- You don't have to do the checks yourself; find a reliable person to delegate this to (police officer or other screened person) or split it up with a small group.
- Statistics show an average league will have 10-15 people with criminal records; do you know what those are in your league?
- Protect yourself from yourself; double-check that you really know what you need to for everyone's protection.

## **Limits of NPSOR Check**

When you ran your background checks this year, did you use the National Public Sex Offender Registry? Did you know it only contains 1.7 million people's records? ChoicePoint has over 88 million people listed with over 209 million records, and 8.9 million of those are sex-related.

If you are new this year, it's important you know that a check run by your local police department or even a state agency does not meet the minimum requirement, since it is not a national check. You can't rely on another group (like your city's recreation department or police) to handle these, unless they will conduct the full check of all states' sex offender registries *at a minimum*.

## **Social Security Number Not Required**

People have had issues with obtaining a Social Security number from volunteers, but it is no longer required

to conduct a ChoicePoint check. You will have more inaccurate hits, due to a wider list of potential names without the verification of Social Security number, but your league can still conduct the check and rule out the "same name, different person" hits. This is no different than using the national sex offender registry, but there are just more records that are being compared against, for greater surety that your volunteers don't have criminal histories.

With the greater mobility of people today, moving from state to state is not questioned. But can you be sure you know everything you need to about your league's volunteers? ChoicePoint gives you better information to base decisions.

If you are questioned in the future for any reason on the type of check you did, will you be confident with your answer?

# League Praises Benefit, Ease of CP

*80 free checks give leagues much more information to base decisions on who should interact with players*

If you didn't use ChoicePoint this spring for a criminal background check of your volunteers, you can still do so.

That's what Adam Breen, safety and information officer for Hollister Little League, was actively doing in May to follow-up on a fingerprint check they had done earlier through the Department of Justice. The earlier check had cost the league \$15 per check, where the ChoicePoint check is free for the first 80 names checked, and only \$1 for each check after that.

"(The fingerprint check) does a good job, but it isn't as convenient," said Breen. "That's another benefit, to the volunteer, that they don't have to spend the time in their day to go be checked."

## Checking On ChoicePoint

When Breen originally called the ASAP Hotline to ask about ChoicePoint, he said he "was under the impression that we couldn't use ChoicePoint if we didn't have the Social Security number." Once he had used the website, accessed from Little League's home page ([www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org)), he knew better and was pleased with the results.

Breen said the league used ChoicePoint because "adding the extra reassurance that we didn't have any concerns with our volunteers was important; we just felt it was necessary," he explained. "We have so many adult/child interactions, it's our job, our responsibility, to do as comprehensive a background check as we can."

## Getting Started is Biggest Hurdle

Hollister, Calif., has over 600 children in their league, and the city has two leagues with a shared board, so "adding up the number (of required checks), it can be intimidating," when you start out, he noted. "After doing the checks, it wasn't that difficult.

"When you run the checks, having the instant feedback is important. On the other check, you have to wait for the results," Breen said. He noted that the volunteer application form is structured well, so "as long as people are giving their drivers license (as needed to verify the volunteer's information), you have

everything you need. We are volunteering our time, too, but it's our responsibility to make sure the people on the field belong there. It's worth the minimal effort."

Getting set up initially took some time, but once he did that, the checks went well. "Because it was my first year, I was a little intimidated with the number of volunteers to check. (But) literally for some people's checks, it took 10 seconds.

"There were some hits on some names, but we were able to use the information on the site to see that the photo or address didn't match," he said. "That's another benefit, that not only did we run the check, but we had reassurance that the league didn't have any offenders.

"If you have the Social Security number it's even better, but even without it, you get good results," he noted. "You have to check everybody; it's for the protection of the kids."

## Been Checked? Badge 'Em!

After you've gone to all the work of approving managers and coaches and then checking the backgrounds of these volunteers, do you still see people who have not been checked "helping" teams on your fields? Most leagues have been faced with this issue, and only a pro-active approach will help you keep a handle on it.

Here is a badge the Redrock Little League of District 4 Nevada uses to show who has been checked. This simple badge clearly demonstrates who has permission to be on your fields and who needs to still get permission. In this case, a local photography studio sponsored the badges and has their information on the back, a win-win in protecting the players and not driving costs through the roof.

*(Do you have an idea on this to share? Send it to [asap@musco.com](mailto:asap@musco.com) today!)*



# Common Sense Ideas from 2008 Safety Plans

“A net will be hung over the minor and major fields spectator areas to avoid foul balls from falling into the stands.”

**Bristol Little League**  
*Bristol, IN*

“All volunteers are required to wear their volunteer badge. Badges are provided by the Redrock LL.”

**Redrock Little League**  
*Las Vegas, NV*

“Batting helmets may not have paint or stickers on them – the acrylics in these products weaken the strength of the helmet.”

**Memorial Ashford Little League**  
*Houston, TX*

“3 to 5 bags of ice will be prepared and kept ready in freezer for potential injury use.”

**Roberto Clemente Little League**  
*Jersey City, NJ*

“Any witnessed loose chemicals or materials within these sheds should be cleaned up and disposed of as soon as possible to prevent accidental poisoning.”

**Brandon Little League**  
*Williamsport, PA*

“All emergency agencies, fire and police, will be supplied with directions to our league facilities. An entrance will be designated and left open at all times for emergency vehicles. Coaching staff will be given a key to the league building for use of the phone during times when no league official is present. Coaching staffs are urged to encourage parents who attend practices to make cell phones available if in their possession.”

**Ty Cobb Little League**  
*Worcester, MA*

“Cracked helmets are to be destroyed so that they cannot be repaired or played with again and disposed of immediately upon discovery.”

**Old Lycoming Little League**  
*Williamsport, PA*

“Umpires shall not wear shoes with metal spikes or cleats.”

**Haverford Township Little League**  
*Havertown, PA*

“Make sure you know who a player has left with, if it is not a parent.”

**Lampeter-Strasburg Little League**  
*Lampeter, PA*

“No honking of horns or use of artificial noise makers during the games.”

**Belen Little League**  
*Belen, NM*

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