

Respect in Sports

www.sportsalliancemn.org

A monthly newsletter for everyone interested in supporting a positive youth sports experience.



The Sports Alliance of Minnesota is a coalition of sports organizations whose mission is to provide tools for creating a positive sports environment.

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Celebrate World No Tobacco Day on May 31, 2010.

Does your youth organization have tobacco and alcohol policies in place?

If not, learn why you should and find [sample policies here](#).

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Tobacco and Alcohol Policies for Youth Sports Environments: Is Your Team Covered? By: Brittany McFadden

The Sports Alliance of Minnesota was founded on a set of Guiding Principles, that when adhered to, will improve the youth sports environment for Minnesota youth. One of these principles addresses the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in relation to youth sports. It states, "To safeguard the health of the athletes and the integrity of the sport, sports programs must prohibit the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and performance enhancing substances, as well as demand compliance with all the laws and regulations, including those related to gambling and use of drugs."

Why tobacco and alcohol policies are important

Providing sports environments that are free of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs benefit our youth and communities for a number of reasons. First, youth tend to model adult behavior; role models such as coaches, officials, and spectators who use these harmful products at athletic facilities or during youth sports tournaments send the message to youth that chemical substance use is OK. Instead one of the messages we should be sending is that sports improve our health and well being. Second, establishing tobacco-free and alcohol-free policies for community athletic facilities helps to create the social norm that these substances are dangerous and the community does not support their use in these settings. Third, tobacco-free policies protect every involved in youth sports from exposure to secondhand smoke.

Minnesota is making progress

How is Minnesota doing in this area? Are we protecting our young athletes? While there is no known database on alcohol policies for athletic venues in Minnesota, Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation, one of the Founding Members of SAM, maintains a database of tobacco-free policies for local park and recreation areas. Currently, 114 communities in Minnesota have adopted policies restricting or prohibiting the use of tobacco in some or all of their park facilities. Since most athletic fields and park areas are owned by local governments, encouraging cities and counties to adopt such policies protects all the sports participants, officials, and spectators using those venues. Minnesota's newest sports stadiums are also following suit. The Minnesota Twins' new home, Target Field, and the new University of Minnesota TCF Bank Stadium have tobacco-free policies that cover the entire interior of each stadium.

What can you do?

Whether you are a youth sports coach, official, association board member, or a parent, you can help improve the youth sports environment through alcohol, tobacco, and other drug policies.

For the complete article, [click here](#).

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What can you do?

Whether you are a youth sports coach, official, association board member, or a parent, you can help improve the youth sports environment through alcohol, tobacco, and other drug policies.

1. Check to see what policies your youth sports organization has
 - Does the policy prohibit tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use by participants and spectators?
 - Does the policy cover all youth sports events and tournaments? Does it address use during weekend tournaments, hotel stays, and team meals?
2. Check to see what policies are in place for the facilities and venues your team uses
 - Is there a policy for the fields, bleachers, and concession areas?
 - Are building entrances to gyms and hockey arenas designated smoke free?

- Ask the community park and recreation director to describe the specific policy language
 - Visit www.tobaccofreeparks.org for a list of Minnesota communities with tobacco-free policies for their park and recreation areas
3. If policies are in place, check to see if they are being enforced
- Are there signs posted in the athletic venues?
 - Is the policy language included on your Codes of Conduct?
 - Does everyone in your organization know about the policies?
 - Is there a plan in place for dealing with violations?
4. If there are no policies in place, work to get them established
- Work with your youth sports association board to implement policies for your association
 - Work with your local park and recreation department and elected officials to implement policies for your park system
 - Model and sample tobacco-free policies can be found at www.tobaccofreeparks.org
 - Visit SAM's "Members Only" section at www.sportsalliancemn.org for additional tools