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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS – LEAGUES**

**PROGRESS UPDATE**

**Submitted to US Lacrosse Board of Directors**

**June, 9 2012**

**Submitted by: Joshua Christian – Managing Director, Sport Development**

**Board of Directors Note:**

Information contained within this document demonstrates the progress made, and process followed, to develop a set of national US Lacrosse Gold Stick Standards for lacrosse leagues.

As you will see, some final edits and additional information must be added, but we felt it vitally important to provide the Board of Directors with this update to inform of progress and direction at the June meeting, allowing us the ability to finalize and release the Standards this summer.

In addition to USL staff, volunteer leaders and league leaders noted in the documents, this information was also shared with the USL Executive Committee at their May 2012 meeting.

***Action Requested: Per review of the information, we are seeking endorsement and support of the Standards and for the direction we are going.***

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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS – LEAGUES**

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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS - LEAGUES**

**PART 1: Explanation, Development History, Timeline**

**EXPLANTION**

In order to provide the best experience possible for the youth who currently or will be playing the sport of lacrosse, the US Lacrosse Gold Stick Standards of Excellence represent the Best Practices that should be incorporated by quality youth lacrosse programs, whether they are in established, well-resourced areas or serving emerging, less resourced communities. At their best, youth sports programs provide young people with a safe environment in which to have fun, build character, learn sportsmanship and develop life skills that help them become responsible adults.

Adoption of the US Lacrosse Gold Stick Standards of Excellence provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, coaches and sports administrators to positively influence the development and growth of the next generation of lacrosse players. The Gold Stick Standards embody the “Honor the Game” culture of our sport, and articulate the most worthy objectives of youth sports programs. The Gold Stick Standards present a framework of values that establish high but attainable standards of quality, standards to which all youth sports programs should aspire. Lacrosse leagues that adopt and practice these standards are US Lacrosse Gold Stick programs.

The Gold Stick program is a critical element of US Lacrosse’s effort to develop and deploy national standards for the youth game. The first step in this endeavor was the US Lacrosse Youth Rules rolled out in 2012. Part of the continued deployment of USL National Standards will be solidifying US Lacrosse regional and Chapter infrastructure. US Lacrosse is moving to an 8 region structure, in which 8 regional staff will be launched by 2015. The USL regional staff will be the key point people to work with our Chapter network to ensure that US Lacrosse programs and services are being deployed to the local constituent organizations embodied by groups/leagues. Supporting the Gold Stick program will be a critical point of emphasis for the regional staff and Chapters.

**DEVELOPMENT HISTORY**

Headed by the Sport Development department, through a series of numerous engagements and strategy sessions over the past six months, a core team of US Lacrosse Programs, Education & Training, Membership & Groups, Games Administration, Marketing & Communications, IT and COO staff lead the development of these Standards. Target focus groups were conducted to vet the purpose, definition, appropriateness and desired impact of each Standard, with specific focus place on the boy’s and girl’s youth game constituents. Furthermore, to ensure the integrity and viability of the Standards, countless calls, meetings and interactions were made to vet the Standards and future self-recognition program with a large and diverse group of USL Board, Game and Chapter leaders, as well as youth league leadership across the country. This group included:

**US Leadership**

Specific Board of Directors

Specific M&W Game Committee/Subcommittee Members

Sport Development Committee/Subcommittees

**Chapter Leadership**

CT, North TX, NorCal, Utah Lacrosse Assoc, Hampton Roads, Colorado

**Team/Program Leadership**

Past BRIDGE Affiliates, First Stick Program Pilot Groups, Cockeysville Boys (MYLA), Hereford (MYLA), MAYLA town (GA), Smithtown Township (LI)

**League Leadership**

MBYLL, MBGLL, NCJLA, CONNY, JGLA, North Jersey Junior Boys, SEPYLA (Philly), PAGLA (Philly), Hampton Roads (VA), Youth Lacrosse Minnesota, Minnesota Schoolgirls, Metro Atlanta Youth Lacrosse, Atlanta Youth Lacrosse, Northern Virginia Youth Lacrosse, North Texas Youth Lacrosse League, South Florida Youth Lacrosse, Treasure Valley Youth Lacrosse (ID), CYLA and CGLA (CO), Orange County Lacrosse Assoc, Hudson Valley Lacrosse Assoc, Triad Youth Lacrosse (NC)

**GENERAL PROJECT TIMELINE w/NOTABLE DATES**

**June:**  Progress report to USL BOD – seek endorsement of Standards

**July:**  Release of finalized Standards to public

**April-Aug:** Event “sanctioning” research – Sept research analysis and decision

**Sept:** AMS Transition

**Aug-Jan:** Conduct pilot league study, finalize self-recognition program components, develop web interface, direct marketing of standards to youth leagues

**Jan:** Convention promotion and integration

**Jan-March:** Conclude pilot program study thought Spring education & training season

**2013 TBD:** Launch self-recognition program

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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS - LEAGUES**

**PART 2: Standards – Condensed Summary**

**SUMMARY**

*A League is defined as:*

* *An organizing entity that oversees and manages lacrosse play for multiple lacrosse teams within a designated geographic area and/or age group and level of play.*
	+ *League has current, written policies for league governance and operations that are publically available and regularly communicated to program administrators, coaches, parents and players.*
	+ *League has a multi-faceted communication system, specifically including: a website, email platform, and standardized in-person meetings.*

**US Lacrosse Gold Stick Standards for Leagues (Summary)**

1. **Rules**: *League must adhere to all current US Lacrosse youth rules and age guidelines, have them publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents.*
2. **League Administration:** *League has current, written policies for league governance that are publically available and regularly communicated to program administrators, coaches, parents and players through a multi-faceted communication system.*
3. **Safety and Risk Management:** *League has written policies and plans for safety and risk management that are publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents. Unless specifically noted, all policies are followed during all practices and games.*
4. **Player Safety and Sportsmanship:** *League demonstrates a commitment to the safety of their players by publishing and promoting current information related to healthy lacrosse activity. League provides a detailed, written sportsmanship policy to players, parents, coaches, officials and administrators.*
5. **Screened, Trained and Certified US Lacrosse Coaches:** *All head coaches are NCSI background checked, trained, and at least Level 1 certified through the US Lacrosse Coaching Education Program.*
6. **Trained/Certified US Lacrosse Officials:** *Leagues must require, at a minimum that all officials assigned to league games are certified by their Local Board, and hold a current on-field rating prior to any assignment to the programs contests. All contests (with the exception of U-9 on a shortened field) will have a minimum of two officials assigned to each contest.*
7. **Membership:** *All players, coaches, officials and administrators are current US lacrosse members.*

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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS - LEAGUES**

**PART 3: Standards – Expanded with Requirements**

1. **Rules**: *League must adhere to all current US Lacrosse youth rules and age guidelines, have them publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents.*
	1. *Note: leagues that implement additional rules to further emphasis and “exceed” the published rules will be considered as meeting this requirement (i.e. no body contact at all levels U15 and below, grouping players for competition by individual age/year – U15, U14, U13, U12, etc).*
	2. *Leagues may implement exceptions or special circumstance clauses regarding age guidelines if those exceptions relate to player safety or cognitive/physical development. For example: Players should not be excluded from play in an appropriate age group determined by league administrators.*
2. **League Administration:** *League must have current, written policies for league governance that are publically available and regularly communicated to program administrators, coaches, parents and players through a multi-faceted communication system.*

*Required:*

* Current By-laws
	+ Must include and define; purposes, governance, committee/officer structure, eligibility, grievance, conflict of interest, legal matters (?)
* Communication Systems
	+ All required policies and educational information as defined within the Gold Stick Standards for Leagues must be posted on the organization’s website and available to all leagues participants
	+ All required policies and educational information as defined within the Gold Stick Standards for Leagues must be shared with parents and coaches and distributed in a tangible manner
	+ Required Electronic Platforms:
		- League website (USLaxteams.com or other)
			* *Note: Platform for Gold Stick monitoring and promotion (US Lacrosse will rely on the integrity of member organizations to ensure compliance with Gold Stick Standards)*
		- Email communication platform – to all coaches and parents
			* *Note: Gold Stick Standards compliance “report cards” will be sent to all league parents, coaches and administrators for compliance oversight*
	+ Required In-Person Platforms:
		- Pre-season Coaches meeting
		- Pre-season Parent meeting
1. **Safety and Risk Management:** *League has written policies and plans for safety and risk management that are publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents. Unless specifically noted, all policies are followed during all practices and games.*

*Required:*

* Codes of conduct: annually sign by all players, coaches and parents
* Alcohol/Drug/PED policies for players, coaches and parents/spectators
* Emergency Plan, includes (minimum):
	+ Coach on-field checklist: includes items coaches need to have at all times such as emergency contact list, first aid kit, etc.
	+ Sudden cardiac arrest and commotio cordis protocol
	+ CPR: Awareness and educational resources (standard), training for all head coaches (exceed)
	+ AED: Awareness and educational resources and one unit (standard), training for all head coaches and multiple units (exceed)
	+ First aid plan, including how to handle blood
	+ Heat and dehydration policy
	+ Return to Play policy for suspected head injury (mandatory to follow USL policy?)
* Safe Sport Environment Policies, includes: – (define)
	+ Abuse awareness and prevention
	+ Appropriate communication
	+ Safe team practices
* Extreme weather policies: Lightning, Tornado/Severe weather
* Playing time statement/policy
* Field inspection checklist
* Practice policy (max duration, required elements such as dynamic warm-up, water breaks)
* Game day policy (includes post-game procedures such as hand-shake and pre-game procedures as per officials)
1. **Player Safety and Sportsmanship:** *League demonstrates a commitment to the safety of their players by publishing and promoting current information related to healthy lacrosse activity. League provides a detailed, written sportsmanship policy to players, parents, coaches, officials and administrators.*

*Required:*

* Program publishes information in a consolidated format for players, coaches and parents: (all provided by USL)
	+ USL Sports Science & Safety Committee recommendations for age appropriate youth lacrosse participation
	+ Youth lacrosse rules, rule differences (b/g) and USL’s recommended best practices for age appropriate play
	+ Concussion awareness, signs and symptoms
	+ Equipment guidelines/Helmet reconditioning recommendations/Appropriate mouth guard usage/Eyewear
	+ Implement League required preseason rules/safety/sportsmanship meeting with coaches and parents (per team(s) or per league)
	+ Overuse injury and burnout prevention
	+ Nutrition information
	+ Hydration guidelines
* Implement USL game specific Sportsmanship programs (Honor the Game, BFF)
* Being a 2nd goal parent—emphasizing winning after life-lessons and enjoyment of the game
1. **Screened, trained and certified US Lacrosse Coaches:** *All head coaches are NCSI background checked, trained, and at least Level 1 certified through the US Lacrosse Coaching Education Program.*
2. **Trained/Certified US Lacrosse Officials:** *Leagues must require, at a minimum that all officials assigned to league games are certified by their Local Board, and hold a current on-field rating prior to any assignment to the programs contests. All contests (with the exception of U-9 on a shortened field) will have a minimum of two officials assigned to each contest.*
3. **Membership:** *All players, coaches, officials and administrators are current US lacrosse members.*

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**US LACROSSE GOLD STICK STANDARDS - LEAGUES**

**PART 4: Standards – Details and Justification**

**Standard #1: Rules**

***League must adhere to all current US Lacrosse youth rules and age guidelines, have them publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse Youth Rules for boys and girls are age appropriate regulations designed to emphasize player safety, enjoyment and retention through the development of individual stick skills, team play, safety and sportsmanship. US Lacrosse firmly believes that in order to establish the safest and most positive playing environment for youth players that all coaches, officials, league administrators and parents have a responsibility to know and appropriately implement the rules within all aspect of youth play.

US Lacrosse establishes eligibility standards in order to promote the game of lacrosse among the youth of America in a safe and sportsmanlike environment. This goal can be best achieved by facilitating playing opportunities that seek to establish a “level playing field” among players of similar age, size and ability. Teams should be balanced as to physical size, cognitive, and developmental stages.

**Meeting the standard:**

* League must adhere to all current US Lacrosse youth rules and age guidelines, have them publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents.
* Leagues may implement exceptions or special circumstance clauses regarding age guidelines if those exceptions relate to player safety or cognitive/physical development. For example: Players should not be excluded from play in an appropriate age group determined by league administrators.

**Best Practices/Exceeding the standard:**

* Implementation of additional rules to further emphasis and “exceed” the published rules (i.e. no body contact at all levels U15 and below, grouping players for competition by individual age/year – U15, U14, U13, U12, etc).
* League commitment to providing league representation at USL Convention (Rules Interp, Coaching certification opportunities etc)

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/Rules.aspx> - Rules
* <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/Rules/Guidebook.aspx> - Boy’s and Girl’s Guidebooks
* Recommended calendar and guidelines to changing from grade-based play to age-based play structure
* FAQ link for girls/boys updated by USL as necessary
* Supply annual update to guidebooks either in print or via download on website (print guidebooks may have monetary cost in future)
* Supply rule difference update (boys/girls)

**Cost for this standard:**

* TBD

**Assessing the standard:**

* INTERNAL USL: Compare leagues/townships that have adopted GS standards and/or official youth rules compared to over leagues/townships within USL membership and participation data.
* PROGRAM: Full adoption and implementation of rules and age eligibility guidelines.

**Time and effort scale:**

* Playing rules – LOW
* Age play rules – HIGH

**Standard #2: League Administration**

***League has current, written policies for league governance that are publically available and regularly communicated to program administrators, coaches, parents and players through a multi-faceted communication system.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse believes that in order to provide the optimal lacrosse experience for all lacrosse participants, leagues need to have:

1. Publically available and agreed upon bylaws and operational procedures specifically defining: purposes, governance, committee/officer structure, eligibility, league membership, grievance procedures, conflict of interest, etc. which will ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency.
2. A multi-faceted communication system in order to keep players, coaches, administrators, and parents clear on league’s policies, practices, and Gold Stick progress.

**Meeting the standard:**

1. Leagues and programs must have a written and publicly available set of bylaws. *These bylaws must define and address:*
	1. Purpose, governance, committee/officer structure, eligibility, league membership, rules, grievance procedures, conflict of interest, ethics *– define/add others*
2. Leagues and programs must establish and utilize a Communication System *that must include at least the following fully functioning elements:*
	1. Web site
		1. Provides public/league-wide access to all league administrative, contact, rule, emergency, safety and schedule information
		2. Site is updated regularly to house current and accurate league information
	2. Email platform
		1. Current and accurate email contact information for all parents, coaches and player
		2. Annually confirms accuracy of list
	3. Templated/standardized face-to-face meetings – at a minimum, the following must be conducted annually:
		1. League board/leadership pre-season/off season meeting
			1. Focus:
		2. Pre-season coaches meeting
			1. Focus:
		3. Pre-season parents meeting
			1. Focus:

**Best practices/Exceeding the standard:**

1. Bylaws
	1. 501c3 status
	2. Official entity (LLC, etc.)
	3. Additional “non-required” bylaws/policies *- determine*
2. Communication system
	1. Use of USLaxTeams websites (recommended)
	2. Monthly newsletter (for parents and players) – printed or electronic

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* Bylaws template
* Suggested email schedule
* Meeting agenda template
* USL recommended proper ways to communicate with 1) parents and 2) coaches

**Related resources and information:**

* TBD

**Cost for this standard:**

* If league already has a web site – limited to no financial burden
	+ Administering a web site, sending emails, and enforcing proper face-to-face meetings all require time/energy commitments
* If league does not have a web site – $350+
	+ Cost varies by product (USLT.com $350 per year + $100 start up fee)
	+ Administering a web site, sending emails, and enforcing proper face-to-face meetings all require time/energy commitments

**Assessing the standard:**

* INTERNAL USL: TBD, compliance
* PROGRAM: Almost entirely self-assessed: Regular assessment to gauge awareness of and accuracy of bylaws – leagues must hold their leadership, coaches and parents accountable to adherence to bylaws. Regular test of communications platform to ensure effectiveness.

**Time and effort scale: MEDIUM**

1. Bylaws
	1. If need to create or edit bylaws
	2. High effort initially to determine structure, board, voting members, etc.
	3. Once bylaws created or updated, little to no effort necessary
2. Communications
	1. Already have a site – increased time administering
	2. Do not already have a site – higher initial effort for getting site up and running, but then regular maintenance.

**Standard #3: Safety & Risk Management**

***League has written policies and plans for safety and risk management that are publicly available and regularly communicated to program coaches, administrators, and parents. Unless specifically noted, all policies are followed during all practices and games.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse believes all leagues/organizations/programs need publicly stated policies that are regularly communicated to all stakeholders to ensure the safest possible environment is provided for its athletes.

**Meeting the standard:**

US lacrosse believes all leagues/organizations should have a committee whose sole focus is creating and managing safety and risk management issues. This committee should be represented by local coaches, league board members, parents and medical professionals; they should be charged with not only creating the standards but ensuring compliance at every level.

This board should create minimum safety certification standards for all head coaches to be met before commencement of their first season, and those same standards must be met by all on-field personnel before commencement of their second season *at the latest* (this includes non-concurrent seasons)(standard)

**Meeting the standard:**

Leagues and programs must have documented, promoted and publicly available policies and resources that at a minimum must include the following safety and risk management components:

* Alcohol/Drug/PED policies for players, coaches and parents/spectators
* NCSI background check requirement for all head (?) coaches
* Emergency Plan in place, including (minimum):
	+ Coach on-field checklist: includes items coaches need to have at all times such as emergency contact list, first aid kit, etc.
	+ Sudden cardiac arrest and commotio cordis protocol
	+ CPR: Awareness and educational resources training for all head coaches(standard) as well as all on field personnel (exceed)
	+ AED: Awareness and educational resources and one unit (standard), training for all head coaches and multiple units (exceed)
	+ First aid plan, including how to handle blood
	+ Concussion awareness training
	+ Heat and dehydration policy and training
* Return to Play policy for suspected head injury
* Safe Sport Environment Policies, including:
	+ Abuse awareness and prevention
	+ Appropriate communication
	+ Safe team practices
	+ Drop off/pickup time policies
* Age appropriate policy for maximum duration/frequency of practices and games
* Extreme weather policies: Lightning, Tornado/Severe weather
* Field inspection checklist
* Practice policy
	+ Dynamic warm-up
	+ Duration
	+ Water breaks
	+ Number of required coaches

**Exceeding the standard:**

Safety certification standards met by head coaches *and all on-field personnel* before commencement of their first season.

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* USL Policy Templates (in development)
	+ Severe Weather Policy
	+ Drop off / pick up policy
	+ Coach/Player/parent ejection policies
	+ Return to Play policy for suspected head injury (in development)
* Available web resources:
	+ USL Risk Management & Emergency Plan
		- Risk Management Manual
			* Guide to prevention of abuse
			* Background Screening Recommendations (NCSI)
			* The Preventing Physical and Sexual Abuse Guide
		- Emergency Plan
			* Guidelines
			* Lightening
		- Additional Web Resources
			* Field & Facility Inspection Checklist
			* Incident Report
			* Liability
			* Safety Tools for Coaches
			* Coach as Supervisor
			* Chaperoning Team Travel
			* Vehicle Safety
			* Risk management for Parents
			* Financial Responsibility
		- USL Health and Safety web resource
			* Concussion awareness training
			* Injury prevention & Conditioning
			* Equipment
			* Nutrition
			* Athlete Development
			* USL research
			* Heat and dehydration policy
			* US Lacrosse Position Statement: Boys and Girls Youth Lacrosse Participation Recommendations
			* USL Research

**Related resources and information:**

* USL Risk management & Emergency Plan
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety/RiskManagement.aspx>
* The Preventing Physical and Sexual Abuse Guide (contained in new Start Kit)
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/ProgramsGrants/NewStartProgram.aspx>
* USOC Safe Sport Program
	+ www.safesport.org
* USL Health and Safety web resources resource
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety.aspx>
* US Lacrosse Position Statement: Boys and Girls Youth Lacrosse Participation Recommendations
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/Portals/0/safety/pdf/PositionPaperYouthParticipation.pdf>
* USL Research
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety/USLResearch.aspx>

**Cost for this standard**

TBD - Minimal

**Assessing the standard:**

* INTERNAL USL: TBD, compliance
* PROGRAM: Almost entirely self-assessed: Regular assessment to gauge awareness, accuracy and compliance – leagues must hold their leadership, coaches and parents accountable to adherence to policies. Regular test of communications platform to ensure effectiveness.

**Time and effort scale:**

* HIGH – initial establishment of policies and procedures, coordinate training, collate resources and establish lines of communication
* Time commitment for coaches and on-field personnel would be up to 2 full days (estimate)
* MED - effort to enforce and track compliance

**Standard #4: Player Safety & Sportsmanship**

***League demonstrates a commitment to the safety of their players by publishing and promoting current information related to healthy lacrosse activity.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse believes that all lacrosse players, coaches, officials, parents and fans have a responsibility to prioritize player safety and sportsmanship as a fundamental tenant of their lacrosse programs. We also believe that each constituent should embrace and be held accountable to know the appropriate on-field and league rules and support the health development of the youth player and league culture by adhering and supporting these rules. To create and maintain the most safe and positive playing environment, this includes, but is not limited to: age-specific rule adherence, codes of conduct, use of appropriate fitted equipment, positive sportsmanship, constituent education and injury awareness and prevention.

**Meeting the standard:**

Leagues and programs must have documented, promoted and publicly available policies and resources that at a minimum must include the following safety and risk management components:

* Program publishes information in a consolidated format for players, coaches and parents: (all provided by USL)
	+ USL Sports Science & Safety Committee recommendations for age appropriate youth lacrosse participation
	+ Youth lacrosse rules, rule differences (b/g) and USL’s recommended best practices for age appropriate play
	+ Concussion awareness, signs and symptoms
	+ Overuse injury and burnout prevention
	+ Nutrition information
	+ Hydration guidelines
* Implement USL game specific Sportsmanship programs (Honor the Game, BFF)
* Codes of conduct: annually sign by all players, coaches and parents
* Game day policy (includes post-game procedures such as hand-shake and pre-game procedures as per officials)
* Sportsmanship Card program
	+ Sideline managers at all games
	+ Culture keepers
* Fair Playing Time policies
* Positive Coaching Alliance
	+ Double Goal Coach
	+ Second Goal parent
	+ Triple Impact Competitor
* Properly equipped players
	+ Program follows all guidelines for refurbished or used equipment
	+ Meets all safety requirements
	+ Designed specifically for lacrosse
	+ Proper fit (including mouth guard)
* Age appropriate rules
* Age appropriate physical contact
* Participation limits/rest guidelines
* Parent Education
	+ Overuse/burnout issues
	+ Avoid specialization
	+ Positive parent

**Exceeding the standard**:

Organizations can require (1) coaches to be fully USL Level certified before their first season (2) all parents to complete the PCA 2nd Goal Coach training (emphasizing winning after life-lessons and enjoyment of the game.

Organizations can have in place (1) Sportsmanship Card program (2) participation limits and rest guidelines (3) formal parent education program. League commitment to providing league representation at USL Convention (Rules Interp, Coaching certification opportunities etc).

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* Fair Playing Time Policy
* Coach, Parent, Player Codes of Conduct
* USL Policy Templates (in development)
	+ Fair Playing Time Policy
	+ Coach, Parent, Player Codes of Conduct
	+ Game day policies
* Positive Coaching Alliance
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/ProgramsGrants/PositiveCoachingAlliance.aspx>
* Compete with Class – Honor the Game Sportsmanship Program
* A boy’s game safety and sportsmanship initiative.
* Goal: Encourages all lacrosse players, coaches, officials/umpires and spectators to "COMPETE WITH CLASS and HONOR THE GAME**"** by adhering to the spirit of the rules, especially those that minimize risk for players and those that pertain to participant sportsmanship. Encouraged by teaching, following and enforcing the rules of the both the girls and boys game means that you share the responsibility to do the following: Honor the origins of the game,
Commit to the core values of the game’s culture, Respect all participants and Recognize the value of fair play and both the letter and the spirit of the game.
* Helmet/Stick Decal Program
* Be Fierce and Fair – Rules Rule! Posters and Umpire Coins
* <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety/CompeteWithClassHonortheGame.aspx>
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Players/HighSchool/BeFierceFair.aspx>
* Age appropriate Rules & USL Guidebook
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/Rules/YouthRules2012.aspx>
* Parent Education
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Parents.aspx>
* Participation limits & rest guidelines
	+ US Lacrosse Position Statement: Boys and Girls Youth Lacrosse Participation Recommendations
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/Portals/0/safety/pdf/PositionPaperYouthParticipation.pdf>
* USL Research
	+ <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety/USLResearch.aspx>

**Cost for this standard**

TBD – Minimal to implement programming, some cost to implement various workshops

**Assessing the standard:**

* INTERNAL USL: TBD, compliance
* PROGRAM: Almost entirely self-assessed: Regular assessment to gauge awareness and adoption of positive culture and philosophies. Assurance of accuracy and compliance to all policies and management of participation in required workshops and activities. Regular test of communications platform to ensure effectiveness.

**Time and effort scale:**

* HIGH – initial establishment of policies and procedures, coordinate training, collate resources and establish lines of communication
* Time commitment for coaches and on-field personnel would be up to 2 full days (estimate)
* MED - effort to enforce and track compliance

**Standard #5: Screened, Trained and Certified US Lacrosse Coaches**

***All head coaches are NCSI background checked, trained, and certified through the US Lacrosse Coaching Education Program.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse believes that all lacrosse coaches need to have baseline, sport-specific training in order to provide the most effective, safe and enjoyable playing environment for participants. We also believe that the US Lacrosse coaching education program provides the most comprehensive lacrosse training curriculum with a solid platform to deliver national standardized training to all lacrosse coaches in any program at any level. We also believe that full Level 1 certification represents a high standard of achievement and comprehensive suite of training, insurance coverage and screening unparalleled in the youth sports arena. The components of certification are: Current USL membership, Level 1 Online Course, Level 1 Instructional Clinic, Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) Double Goal Coach Workshop (online or in-person) and the NCSI background screening (non-expired).

**Meeting the standard:**

Leagues and programs must require, at a minimum, that all coaches complete the hold a current US Lacrosse NCSI background screening and the Level 1 online course before commencement of their first season (define commencement? First practice?). Coaches must complete the remaining Level 1 certification requirements ( PCA and the Level 1 instructional clinic) before commencement of the second season of coaching *at the latest*. (This includes non-concurrent seasons)

Certified coaches must renew membership annually and background screening every two years in order to maintain a non-expired certification.

**US Lacrosse strongly encourages most of a program’s coaches to complete the certification before the completion of the first season but also recognizes this may not be feasible.**

**Best practices:**

* To more easily meet this standard,
	+ Ensure that your program’s timeline for identifying coaches is long enough before the season that most coaches can make plans to attend the Level 1 instructional clinic, which is the only live requirement of certification.
	+ Adhere to the coaching education department’s timelines and procedures for scheduling Level 1 instructional clinics for your area. Work with your local chapter to pool resources and hosting duties.
	+ Communicate early and often with coaches how and when to complete their training requirements (resources available from US Lacrosse)
	+ Use the online tracking tools available to you from US Lacrosse to view your coaches’ training progress and certifications.
* Additionally it is recommended as best practice to:
	+ Require the passage of the background screening before engaging the coach in the program. Use this as the first “gate.” It is much easier to deny participation if this occurs before the coach is identified with the program or assigned to a team. (see MBYLL CORI model).
		- Read and know all USL policies regarding background screenings. View USL on-demand webinar on this topic at www.uslacrosse.org/xxxxx - must develop
	+ Before “hiring” a coach, it is strongly recommended that programs have a formal application process, interview process, and reference check of last coaching positions (see USOC SafeSports handbook)
	+ Require coaches to complete a free concussion awareness course. Currently there are several on the market and USL does not require this as part of Level 1 certification at this time nor does it endorse one training over the other. General concussion content is touched on in the core Level 1 curriculum and Gold standard leagues have the policies and resources in their distributed materials (see Standard xxx: Program Communication)

**Exceeding the standard:**

* All head coaches have Level 1 certification before season begins
* All coaches complete all Level 1 certification requirements before their first season begins
* PCA requirement is mandated before or during coaches’ first season
* Coaches with three or more years must be Level 2 certified

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* Chapter grants/chapter sponsored Level 1 instructional clinics with underwritten registration fees
* Free PCA Double Goal Coach I online workshop access with any clinic registration
* Free Level 1 online courses as a benefit of membership
* Web-based Program Administrator views of coach training credentials and certifications available real-time online at both uslacrosse.org and at the program’s uslaxteams.com site
* Ability to purchase an NCSI background screening at [www.uslacrosse.org](http://www.uslacrosse.org)
* Personal/individual look-up online to track progress toward certification or recertification

**Related resources and information:**

[www.uslacrosse.org/cep](http://www.uslacrosse.org/cep)

[www.ncsisafe.com](http://www.ncsisafe.com)

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/HealthSafety/ConcussionAwareness.aspx>

[www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)

www.safesport.org

**Cost for this standard: Ranges from $20 to $95**

* Cost to certify a USL member (see Standard XXX: Membership):
	+ Online course: FREE with membership
	+ Level 1 instructional clinic: Can range from $0-$65 for (based on granting, underwriting or hosting model),
	+ PCA workshop $0-$20 (based on live or online, discount codes, existing program partnerships)
	+ NCSI Background screening-$20 (most states, there are a few states that have higher fees, see table at [www.uslacrosse.org](http://www.uslacrosse.org) )for exceptions.

**Assessing the standard:**

INTERNAL USL: Compare coach membership for program in the US Lacrosse database to number of coaches in that program who have achieved certification or are on track for certification

PROGRAM: Use program view in uslaxteams.com or uslacrose.org sites to view coaches training achievements.

**Time and effort scale:** HIGH

* High effort initially to establish information and communication regarding process for certification
* High effort to coordinate and host clinic trainings, if done in partnership with chapters becomes less-so
* Time commitment for coach is one 6 hour clinic plus approximately 6 more hours of online training (USL and PCA)
* High effort to enforce compliance. Online tools available make tracking easy, following up and holding coaches accountable requires commitment and effort.

**Standard #6: Trained/Certified US Lacrosse Officials**

***Leagues must require, at a minimum that all officials are certified by their Local Board, and hold a current on-field rating prior to any assignment to the programs contests. All contests (with the exception of U-9 on a shortened field) will have a minimum of two officials assigned to each contest.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse believes that all lacrosse officials need to have baseline, classroom and on-field training experience in order to provide the most effective, safe and enjoyable playing environment for participants. US Lacrosse officials education program provides the most comprehensive training curriculum and clinicians with a solid platform to deliver national standardized training to all lacrosse officials. Certification represents a base standard of on-field skills and abilities to implement the training that has been received, as well as comprehensive insurance coverage for all reasonable contests following a US Lacrosse recognized rulebook.

Officials regardless of rating(women’s game) or certification level(men’s game) are expected to be active participants in on-going educational and professional development, which means regardless of certification level, officials are current with the latest rule interpretations, and information from all relevant rule making bodies.

**Women’s Game Officials:**

The components of certification are: Current USL membership, a minimum of six hours of classroom time, a minimum of three hours of on-field instruction, hold current rating (on-field test), complete current year’s rule interpretation session, achieve a passing score on the on-line test, fulfill service requirements, pay local and state dues.

**Men’s Game Officials:**

The components of certification are: Current USL membership, a minimum of six hours of classroom time, pass an on-field evaluation, complete the current year’s rule interpretation, achieve a passing score on the on-line test and pay local and state dues.

**Meeting the standard:**

* **Women’s Game Officials:**

Leagues and programs must require, at a minimum that all officials are certified by their Local Board and hold a current on-field rating prior to any assignment to the programs contests. Leagues or programs should either utilize the services of the Local Board Assignor, or should be in compliance with the standards set forth for appropriately assigning games by both the level of play and rules the players will be using, as well as the level of rating the official has. All contests (with the exception of U-9 on a shortened field) will have a minimum of two officials assigned to each contest.

* **Men’s Game Officials:**

Leagues and programs must require, at a minimum that all officials are certified by their Local Officials Association and hold at minimum a Level 1 Certification. Leagues and or programs should utilize the services of the Local Associations Assignor who should be in compliance with the standards for appropriately assigning games by both the level of play and rules the players will be using. The certification level and experience of the official should also be taken into consideration when assigning officials to particular contests. All contests (with the exception of U-9 on a shortened field) will have a minimum of two officials assigned to each contest.

*Through a comprehensive partnership with ArbiterSports.com PA assignors will be able to view officials certification completion and level in ArbiterSports.com – hopefully established by time of program launch*

**Best practices:**

* To more easily meet this standard,
	+ Meet with the Local Board Chair or Local Officials Association executive committee to establish a relationship and rapport.
	+ When recruiting staff for the league also recruit and refer people to the officials training program. The responsibility to service the game is shared by all participants, so when you’re recruiting parents to coach and volunteer, also recruit them to officiate.
	+ Communicate early and often with the Local Board or Local Officials Association regarding your play dates and tournaments
	+ Use the online tracking tools available to you from US Lacrosse to view your officials’ training progress and certifications. *(see Arbiter note above)*
* Additionally it is recommended as best practice to:
	+ Implement and encourage the older youth player participants to be junior officials to service your league
	+ Establish guidelines for conduct regarding parent/coach interactions with officials
	+ If and when using junior officials on contests implement a game administrator at every field and/or a silent sideline protocol.

**Exceeding the standard:**

* In concert with the Local Board or Local Officials Association, utilize the ala carte background check feature of the new database system, and require all officials to have a current background screening through NCSI
* Provide scholarships for promising officials to attend ongoing training opportunities through US Lacrosse
* Recognize officials for their part in the success of your program by including them in any award or recognition programs
* Provide or offset the cost the Local Board or Local Officials Association incurs to put on the officials training – classroom space, clinician compensation, classroom materials, new officials registration fees.

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* Chapter grants/chapter sponsored Developmental instructional clinics with underwritten registration fees
* Personal/individual look-up online to track progress toward certification or recertification. *(see Arbiter note above)*

**Related resources and information:**

* **Women’s Officials:**

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Officials/WomensOfficialsInformation.aspx>

* **Men’s Officials:**

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Officials/MensOfficialsInformation.aspx>

**Cost for this standard: Ranges from $50 to $150 (check with your Local Board or Local Officials Association to find out exact amounts)**

* Cost to certify an individual as a men’s or women’s game official:
	+ Individual Membership $50
	+ In-person and on-field instruction (this varies widely by region) $20-$100
	+ Uniform, approximately $35-$50 – this does not include black sneakers
	+ Local Board, Local Officials Association and/or State Association Dues (again varies by group and state) $20 - $135

**Assessing the standard:**

* INTERNAL USL: Compare USL Certified officials utilized by program versus non USL Certified Officials utilized by program. Also monitor assignments of the program (i.e. appropriately certified or rated officials for age level being worked, as well as two officials on all U11 and above contests). *(Pretty contingent on the arbiter deal allowing us to see the groups account, and officials who are not USL members)*
* PROGRAM: Use ArbiterSports.com to view official’s certifications and make appropriate game assignments.

**Time and effort scale:** Medium

* Medium effort to establish a working relationship with the Local Board or Local Officials Association, and ways to partner to appropriately cover games
* Medium effort to allocate resources for the Local Board or Local Officials Association, and individuals looking to become trained, or increase their training.
* Time commitment on the officials part is large to become trained (usually a minimum of 20 hours before accepting game assignments), then consider the time to hone their craft on your league/programs games – this varies, but is usually at least 2-4 games per week.
* Medium effort to enforce compliance. Online tools available make tracking easy, following up and holding the Assignors accountable requires commitment and effort.

**Standard #7: Membership**

***All players, coaches, officials and administrators are current US lacrosse members.***

**Rationale:**

US Lacrosse firmly believes that the optimal lacrosse experience includes a US Lacrosse membership. US Lacrosse is dedicated to providing our members with the opportunity to discover and ultimately embrace the shared passion of the lacrosse experience. Membership provides leagues the opportunity to impact their participants through growth and development by teaching the values of respect, fairness, teamwork, communication, responsibility, truthfulness, non-discrimination, honesty and integrity. Additionally, as a member of US Lacrosse, you receive benefits that will enhance your game and directly connect you to the greater lacrosse community. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

* US Lacrosse team and league development resources and best practices
* Direct connection to safety initiatives, breaking lacrosse news and ties back to the communal aspect of lacrosse.
* [Educational training for coaches and officials](http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/EducationTraining.aspx)
* A comprehensive lacrosse [insurance program](http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav/Membership/Insurance.aspx)
* Direct assistance and relationship with local US Lacrosse Chapters
* [*Lacrosse Magazine*](http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav/LacrosseMagazine/GeneralInformation.aspx) and access to [LaxMagazine.com](http://www.LaxMagazine.com)
* Exclusive invitations to clinics, [games and special events](http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Right/Events.aspx)
* Constituent specific newsletters
* Member discounts, grant programs and much more!

*(Update text to reflect current vernacular used by retention program and marketing dept. Essentially just needs to explain WHY membership)*

**Meeting the standard:**

Leagues / Programs must *require, and verify to the best of their ability,* 100%US Lacrosse membership of all participants, (players, coaches, administrators), within their scope of operation.

**Best practices:**

* To more easily meet this standard,
	+ Properly maintain group and PA’s record in the USL database in order to assure that information is accurate *(Can/should be reworded to external terms rather than internal)*
	+ Initiate and complete registration with enough lead time to ensure proper membership well before the season begins.
	+ Use the online tracking tools available to you from US Lacrosse to view your participants’ membership information
* Additionally it is recommended as best practice to:
	+ Use USLaxTeams.com / LeagueAthletics to integrate registration process to include membership workflow

**Tools and resources available to support programs seeking to meet this standard:**

* USLaxTeams.com / League Athletics – online League Management / Registration tool
* Administrator Login to database *(url TBD – personify)*
* Team roster check and Individual member check *(url TBD – personify)*

**Related resources and information:**

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Administrators/Welcome.aspx>

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Administrators/GroupRegistration.aspx>

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav/Membership/USLacrosseMembership.aspx>

<http://www.uslacrosse.org/TopNav2Left/Administrators/WebSites.aspx>

**Cost for this standard: Varies per group**

* If the costs are absorbed by the program:
	+ $25 per youth, $35 per HS, $50 per adult
* If the costs are added to the overall registration cost
	+ The cost to the individuals is $25 per youth, $35 per HS, $50 per adult
	+ The cost to the group is the inherent challenges/risks associated with raising costs

**Assessing the standard:**

INTERNAL USL: Compare membership numbers and affiliations in the USL database with the reported number of participants, and assess the gap. *(Tightening of infrastructure to help boost leagues from 90% compliance to 100% will be necessary)*

PROGRAM: Use available tools to assess the gap between number of participants and number of USL members *(Tightening of infrastructure to help boost leagues from 90% compliance to 100% will be necessary)*

**Time and effort scale:** Varies by League

* For leagues who already require membership in some form – LOW
	+ Emphasis will be on tightening compliance and potentially brining more coaches into the fold.
	+ Online tools that are available make tracking easy, but following up and holding towns/clubs accountable requires commitment and effort.
* For leagues who currently *do not* require membership in some form – MID to HIGH
	+ Challenges will include:
		- Rationalizing price hikes
		- Rationalizing value of USL membership to constituents
		- Developing the capacity to enforce “top-down” compliance
	+ Online tools that are available make tracking easy, but following up and holding towns/clubs accountable requires commitment and effort.