



# **The Arlington Soccer Association**

## *Player Safety Policies & Guidelines*

*Updated March 2015*

**We love our kids!** At the Arlington Soccer Association, we strive to provide quality soccer experiences for our members in a safe and healthy environment.

In an effort to achieve this goal, the ASA has compiled the following safety policies and guidelines regarding several areas of the association. The objective is to outline procedures that can be followed by players, coaches, parents and others to provide a safe, enjoyable place for our children.

The following pages provide information and procedures on the following topics, most of which are new at this time:

- Parent Responsibilities at Practices and Games *(updated)*
- Transportation
- Inclement Weather Procedures
- Check-in and Check-out Procedures
- Bathroom Breaks at Practices and Games
- Medical Releases and Situations
- ASA's "KidSafe" Program (Background Checks)
- Movement of Soccer Goals
- Injury Information

ASA takes a number of steps to help ensure the safety of the children who participate in ASA events. *We are serious about the safety of all involved in our programs.* For example, all ASA Staff and volunteer coaches are put through “KidSafe” background checks each season. ASA Staff are frequently reminded of various ways we can help promote the safety of players, coaches and volunteers. We offer coaching education courses that, in part, focus on the safe conduct of coaches during soccer activities. At the start of each season, parents of players must read and agree to the Parents Code of Conduct, and the players must agree to the Players Code of Conduct. In turn, volunteer coaches must agree to abide by the Coach Code of Conduct.

In addition, ASA further promotes safety by providing the following policies and guidelines. These apply to all ASA events (practices, games, etc.) except in some cases for camps and clinics. These policies and guidelines are in effect presently, and should be read and adhered to by all ASA participants and their families. Any questions should be directed to your team’s coach or manager. Thank you for helping keep the safety of our players paramount!

## **1 -- AT LEAST ONE PARENT MUST BE PRESENT DURING ALL ASA TEAM ACTIVITIES**

**Parent Presence Policy:** ASA expects all teams (Travel, Developmental and Recreational) to put together a Parent Volunteer schedule at the beginning of each season. The Parent Volunteer can be the same person for the whole season or a rotation of all or several parents. The Parent Volunteer will remain on the sideline or in an area adjacent to where the practice or event is being conducted. For Recreational and Developmental teams, the presence of an assistant coach will satisfy this requirement.

The purpose of the Parent Volunteer is that he/she will be at the practice (or other related events) and able to help the coach with any non-coaching tasks which may arise. These tasks could include walking players (in groups of 2 or 3) to the restroom, helping with a minor injury, calling a player’s parent if necessary, tying shoes or waiting for the last player to be picked up from practice. Our expectation is that the Parent Volunteer will just get to watch practice most of the time, but we want to have another set of hands (and eyes) available in case the coach should need help.

One exception to this is when a team has multiple coaches AND at least two coaches are present at the activity. In this case the needs of this policy are satisfied (as two adults are present during the activity).

The other exception to this is ASA Camps and Clinics. At these sessions, multiple staff members are typically present, thus providing the safety backup that this policy addresses.

If a coach is running an ASA event and finds that he/she is the sole adult present, that coach has the right to cancel the remainder of that event unless another adult appears and serves as the second adult needed per this policy.

***New for 2014 - Here are the things that the parent at practice may be asked to do at the field:***

1. Walk a pair of players to the restroom.
2. Assist an injured player and make a phone call if needed.
3. Watch for and report any severe weather that may go unnoticed by an involved coaching staff.
4. Ask the players to organize their bags in one area at the field and keep an eye on bags when not busy with other responsibilities.
5. Stay at the field until all players on the team have been picked up by their parent or carpool.

In addition here are our suggestions for teams, coaches and parent volunteers who have practices at Gunston MS or Virginia Highlands and then any other practice field.

#### Gunston Suggestions

1. Please have players set all their bags behind the goal closest to the school.
2. Please have players who are practicing at the far end of the field or in the middle of the field take their water bottles out of their bags and set them together at a location near where they are training.
3. After warming up and at a time when fewer balls are needed have players return some of the balls to their bags so there will be fewer balls to keep track of during the rest of the practice.

4. If your team is able to provide 2 volunteers at Gunston that would be helpful. Or if not ask the volunteers from each of the teams scheduled at the field to coordinate with the other and help each other during the session.

#### Virginia Highland Suggestions

1. Please have players set all their bags together near the fence as you approach the field from the parking lot.
2. Please have players take their water bottles out of their bags and set them together at a location near where they are training.
3. After warming up and at a time when fewer balls are needed have players return some of the balls to their bags so there will be fewer balls to keep track of during the rest of the practice.
4. Please work with the volunteers from the other team at the field to help each other during the session.

#### Suggestions for All Fields

1. Always group bags together.
2. If the parent at practice is not doing other things they can position themselves near the team bags. (Not necessary at Gunston but they can keep an eye on the bags)
3. Remind players not to take their personal items out of their bags during practice unless there is a need that cannot be avoided.
4. If players don't need their phones encourage them to leave them at home.
5. Put balls away when they are not needed.

#### **2 -- STAFF ARE NOT TO GIVE PLAYERS RIDES TO OR FROM ASA EVENTS; VOLUNTEER COACHES SHOULD GET WRITTEN PERMISSION**

**Transportation Policy for ASA Staff:** This ASA policy states that ASA staff cannot provide transportation to ASA players (for any ASA program or activity) going to or from games, practices and other team or ASA-related activities. Of course, a coach may provide rides to his or her own child for such activities.

**Transportation Guideline for Volunteer Coaches:** Volunteer coaches may provide transportation to or from games, practices or other ASA events when the provider of

transportation has permission to do so (from the parent(s) of the child(ren) involved). It is preferable that this permission is secured in writing; an email will suffice. Volunteer coaches are also permitted to carpool with another parent and their child(ren).

### 3 -- ASA WEATHER POLICY

**Inclement Weather Policy:** If fields are closed by Arlington County (due to weather or other reasons), they cannot be used. To check for field closures, call the County's Weather Line at 703-228-4715. The Weather Line is updated around 3pm during the week, sometimes later in the day as needed, and by 7:00am on weekends. NOTE: If it has rained in the recent past, please check the Weather Line to make sure fields are open. Sometimes heavy precipitation or other factors mean that some fields may be closed even on gorgeous days.

- Thunder and Lighting: If lighting is seen or thunder is heard by anyone at a field, players should stop practice and immediately get under cover in buildings or in cars, and NOT under trees. Practice cannot resume until 30 minutes has passed since the last lighting strike or thunder is heard. NO EXCEPTIONS
- At any time, for any event, if you witness any weather or field condition that you feel presents a danger, please notify the coach or referee.
- For games, the referee is responsible for stopping play for weather reasons. Anyone in attendance at games is encouraged to notify the referee if lightning or thunder is noted in the area.

### 4 -- CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT REQUIREMENTS FOR ASA ACTIVITIES

**Check-In and Check-Out Policy:** ASA requires that specific check-in and check-out processes are implemented for every ASA activity. Coaches, team managers and team parents should work together to develop workable processes.

**Guideline for Check-In and Check-Out:** With regards to players arriving and being picked up from soccer events (practices, games, etc), the ASA recommends the following procedures:

1. The coach or team leader establishes a designated time and place for the team to gather before the event. Parents know not to drop off kids and leave before the

established time. At the established time, and at the established place, at least 2 adults should be present with the kids.

Example: If your team practices at the same field at 6:00pm, everyone knows that the coach/team leader will arrive at 5:45. The team will meet by the big tree next to the fence. Each player must go there to meet with the coach/team leader before the practice.

2. That as players arrive, they are checked in by an adult from the team. This can be an informal “Hi, I’m here.” “OK, nice to see you.” Or it can be a more formal process of checking the player in on an attendance sheet. Having the attendance sheet can be useful for other areas of team management.

3. As players arrive late, they can join the team on the field. The person dropping off the player must check in the player with the coach/team leader (there may be important information that the adult needs to know).

Players arriving late SHOULD NOT just be dropped off in the parking lot.

4. Once the player has checked in with the team, the player can be left with the team. It is then the responsibility of the team coach/leader to care for the player.

5. During the event, each team should have at least 2 adults present at all times. This should include the team coach(es) and the designated Parent Volunteer.

6. At the end of the event, the coach or team leader establishes a designated time and location for the team to gather for pick up. All players must stay in this area until they are picked up by the correct person. Again, it can be a simple wave from the pickup person, or a more formal process of coming to the team area and checking the player out. It is important that all players know that they must stay in the established team area until their pick up person arrives to get them.

7. As the players leave, at least 2 adults (one coach and one parent) should stay with the last player to be picked up. Once all the players are accounted for, the adults can leave.

8. In the event that the player gets to practice on his/her own (on foot, by bike, etc.), that player’s parent should notify the team’s coach or Team Manager when the season starts. The player should check-in upon arrival as noted in #2 above, and they should let the same person know prior to departing that they are leaving.

## 5 -- BREAKS DURING ACTIVITIES – BUDDY SYSTEM IS IN PLACE

**Buddy System Used for Bathroom Breaks Policy:** At no time should a coach or an assistant coach accompany an individual player to bathroom facilities. The exception is when the assistant coach is also a player's parent, and is serving as the designated Parent Volunteer for that activity.

First, all players should be advised to use the facilities prior to arrival at practices and games.

All Rec and Travel teams require parents to volunteer to stay for an entire practice time and or game day, depending on the number of players and number of practice day. One of the duties of the Parent Volunteer is to accompanying players needing to use the facilities.

Upon a request by a player to use the facilities, the Parent Volunteer will locate another player (buddy) to accompany the Parent Volunteer and the player to the closest facility. The Parent Volunteer will remain in the hallway or outside the immediate area while the two players use the facilities. The buddy will remain inside the facility with the other player until they are both ready to exit. At that time, the three will proceed back to the practice, remaining together at all times, i.e., crossing a street, if necessary.

If the closest facility is a Porta-John, the Parent Volunteer, after soliciting a buddy to accompany the Parent Volunteer and the player, will lead the two players to the Porta-John and stand 10 feet from the facility. Upon completion, the three will proceed back to the practice or event, remaining together at all times, i.e., crossing a street, if necessary.

The exception to this is ASA Camps and Clinics. At these sessions multiple staff members are typically present, thus providing the safety backup that this policy addresses.



## **6 -- ASA WILL PROVIDE MEDICAL RELEASE INFO TO ALL TEAMS; THAT INFO SHOULD BE AT ALL ASA PRACTICES AND GAMES**

**Medical Release Policy:** ASA will provide medical release rosters for all teams (Rec and Travel). These rosters are produced by the GroupNet Solutions registration system. These rosters list the following information that is provided during player registration: player name, emergency contact name, contact phone, family physician, contact phone, and specified medical problems. There is also a space for a parental signature for each player, as well as general info about the names and contact info for team coaches.

All ASA Rec and Developmental coaches should print copies of this roster at the season's start, and again any time roster changes are made. For Travel teams, the Team Manager is in charge of printing these out and providing them to the appropriate coach(es). A copy of this roster should be with the coach at all team activities. As early as possible each season, the coach should obtain parents' signatures on the roster. That way, in case of any emergency when the parents are not present, this roster may be presented as proof of authorization to provide emergency medical and/or transportation services for the players listed.

For Travel teams, an additional step is to make sure that each Team Manager also has a copy of the complete, up-to-date, signed form. This helps support the team coaches and helps ensure that at least one copy of this roster will be present at all events.

## **7 – KIDSAFE CHECKS FOR ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

**Background Check Policy:** All ASA Staff, volunteer coaches and other volunteers must undergo background checks ("Kidsafe" checks). Those participants must register online (typically via the same system we use for player registration). ASA will then submit the data collected on those registrations to have background checks performed. The results are known only by ASA's Risk Management staffer and the Executive Director. Anyone whose check produces anything questionable must have an interview with the Executive Director to resolve the past issue and ensure that no repeat issues will occur. In some instances, the decision may be made to remove the person in question from all ASA activities. All such discussions are handled in strict confidence.

## 8 – MOVEMENT OF SOCCER GOALS

**Goal Movement Policy:** ASA players should not move soccer goals. Players should not be asked to help adults move goals either.

All goals used by ASA should be anchored or secured in some fashion so that they are less susceptible to tipping over. If goals are not properly anchored please contact ASA immediately and under no circumstances should that goal be used until secured. Additionally, all coaches and parents should work together to keep players and other children from playing on or climbing on goals or goal nets.

*New for 2014* – Here is the link to ASA’s full [Goal Safety Policy](#)

## 9 – INJURY INFORMATION POLICY

**Injury Information Policy:** Parents or guardians of ASA players must inform in writing the player’s coach if the player is injured (beyond minor injuries like scrapes or bruises) during any ASA game, practice, or other event. It is up to the parent or guardian to notify the coach when the injured player has been medically cleared to resume participating in the ASA activity and whether there are any restrictions on such participation.

In the event of serious injuries (to include breaks/fractures, muscle/ligament/cartilage tears (including partial tears), head injuries (including concussions), anything requiring surgery, or any illness that requires doctor’s release to play), a note from the doctor must be presented to the coach (by the player’s parent) specifically clearing that player’s return to action. The note must be the result of a post-recovery review by the doctor.

Due to the serious nature of any head injury/concussion, medical clearance from a doctor/neurological specialist who is properly trained and experienced in diagnosing and treating these injuries is required for return to play. An exception to this is for high school athletes who have been cleared to return to play by their high school’s athletic trainer.

For players diagnosed with a concussion, any medical clearance provided by a specialist (as noted above) should be accompanied by a specific return-to-play protocol / process. This protocol should be followed from the start, in its entirety, until the player is truly ready to play.

As appropriate, please also review these important ASA documents:

- ASA Concussion waiver ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- ASA Concussion return-to-play info ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))