

As a coach, you have a major influence on your athletes. Not only will you affect the development of their skills and long-term enjoyment of the sport, you will also play a role in their development as individuals. It is important that you have effective resources to help you.

The Coaching Association of Canada, in partnership with the national sport organizations, compiled the following coaching tips.

Strategies for Managing Risk



INFORMATION TO GATHER

- Phone numbers and addresses of the participants, their parents, the ambulance service, the police force, the fire department, and the public safety service.
- Medical conditions of each participant (e.g. illnesses, allergies, disabilities, injuries), whom to contact in an emergency situation, and what the procedures should be in the event of an emergency (e.g. intramuscular injection with an EpiPen[®] for a severe allergic reaction, giving a specific medication).

Keep this information in a waterproof binder that you can carry with you to the training or competition site. Find out if 911 services are accessible from your facility or if there is medical support on site.

ACTIONS TO TAKE

Planning

- Ensure that the activities are appropriate for the age, fitness, and ability level of the participants.
- Ensure that the practice starts with a warm-up, and that the activities include a reasonable progression and challenge for the participants.
- Adjust activities for participants who cannot perform them as planned for the larger group.

Designing an Emergency Action Plan

- See the tool called Emergency Action Plan.
- Inspecting equipment and facilities.
- Ensure that you are fully aware of the specific safety standards related to the equipment used in your sport.
- Take an inventory of collective and individual equipment.
- Take an inventory of available first aid equipment. Carry a first aid kit at all times.
- Assess the safety of the facility itself (e.g. walls, playing area, lighting) by completing a facility safety checklist.
- Identify environmental, equipment and facilities and human risk factors.
- Ensure that the participants wear their protective equipment and that it is properly adjusted and in good condition.

Informing participants and parents

- Inform the parents and the participants of the risks inherent to the sport.
- Properly explain the safety procedures and instructions related to all activities, and check that the participants understand them.
- When giving explanations for an activity during a practice or during competition, highlight potential risks.

Examples: If participants are required to cross paths, ask them to keep their heads up and to be alert to where others are as they are moving around; if it has just rained and your team is practising on wet grass, remind your participants that the field is slippery.

Supervising activities

- Ensure that the number of participants involved is not so high as to compromise adequate supervision and safety.
- Keep in mind that participants need to be constantly supervised. Stop all activities when you have to leave the room or site.
- Look for signs of fatigue and aggression in participants and, if necessary, stop the activity.
- Stop the practice if you have to leave the site for any reason, or delegate responsibility for the group to a competent person.

Source: *Community Sport – Initiation Reference Material*, Coaching Association of Canada, 2003.

