

Youth Sports

Good Practice Guide



Department of Sport and Recreation
Government of Western Australia

INTRODUCTION

In May 2002 the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) conducted a workshop of key stakeholders within youth sport to discuss issues and strategies to enhance youth sport programs within WA.

The workshop identified the difficulty of retaining youth in their sport as a major issue. Research into the drop out rates of youth from sport echoes these concerns.

- A survey of WA school children in 1996 (Taggart and Sharp) found that although 80 per cent of children aged 11-12 participated in sport, by the time they reached 16-17 years the figures had dropped to 57 per cent. These figures include school, club and social sport.
- This survey also acknowledged that of the total number of youth who dropped out of sport, 42 per cent did so during the transition between Years 7 and 8.
- More recent research indicates these trends are continuing. At the end of 2003 a large scale survey of WA children's physical activity levels and sports participation will be conducted by the Premiers Physical Activity Taskforce.

To ensure sport is attractive to young people, organisations delivering youth sport must fully understand why young people participate in and drop out of sport.

Why do young people play sport?

- Fun and socialisation – many are drawn to organised club sport through friends, and value the sense of belonging associated with the club;
- Physical, emotional and mental benefits (eg enhanced physical fitness and ability to deal with stress);
- Learning new skills; and
- Being part of a team and working together.

Why do they drop out?

- Time clash with other activities (i.e. leisure, social or work);
- The sport becomes boring;
- Conflict with study and work commitments;
- Over emphasis on winning by coaches or parents;
- Change to another sport;
- Transport difficulties, costs; and
- Young person experiences or witnesses bias or discrimination.



LISTENING IS THE KEY

To continue the success of your junior sporting club it is important that you listen to what youth are telling you and adapt your programs so that they are relevant to the youth market. It is not always easy to move away from tradition, but there are a number of simple changes that you can make to your club that will make it more youth friendly.

This resource provides some simple guidelines for making sport more youth friendly as well as show casing initiatives that have successfully addressed youth participation.

Checklist

(Adapted from Team Vol 4, Issue 5, Nov 2002)

✓ **Ask participants what they want from sport**

✓ **Be Flexible**

- Be prepared to change
 - Length and timing of season
 - Times of training and games
 - Length of games
 - Rules
 - Clothing Requirements
- Consider young people's study and work commitments
- Consider working parents and their schedules

✓ **Reduce the competitive element and enhance the fun aspect of your sport**

- Discuss with club, coaches and parents the positives of focussing on participation rather than the result
- Develop and promote policies of equality – equal field time for all

- Focus on developing each individual to achieve his or her best
- Ignore premiership points and fairest and best trophies for primary aged competitors
- Improve professionalism by providing coaching courses to all junior coaches

✓ **Provide a welcoming environment**

- Use a young existing member to welcome all new youth members
- Provide for, support and engage parents

✓ **Revitalise the social aspect**

- Provide opportunities for members to bring friends to the club
- Gear social functions to the youth age group – get their input

✓ **Provide learning opportunities for all volunteers**

- Provide opportunities for young members and parent volunteers to acquire and practice coaching, officiating and administrative skills, this will build individual confidence and enhance the quality of the program you're delivering

✓ **Facilitate transport**

- Organise car-pooling between members and parents

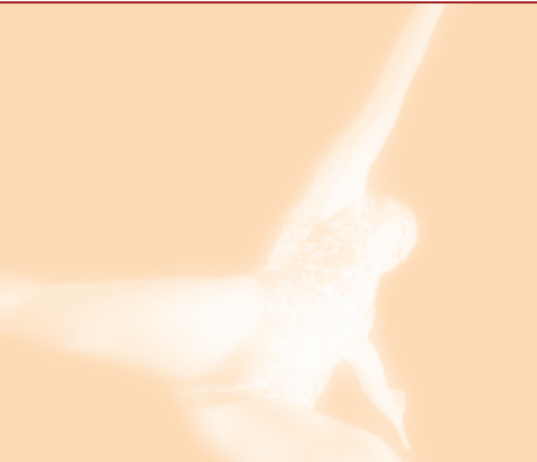
✓ **Offer different pathways for competition and participation**

- Twilight, midweek or shortened competitions

✓ **Provide a link between junior and senior club**

✓ **When working with schools**

- Coincide school clinics with the school physical education program
- Shorten seasons to coincide with school terms
- Run shortened programs in schools prior to registration dates



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES - SPORT

The following are examples of programs that have proven to be successful in implementing youth friendly strategies.

They were collected from a variety of organisations and reflect the great work being done in the community.

You are free to contact these organisations if you need further information.

Incentive Scheme/Certificate Program (Squash)

Problem: Squash WA identified a lack of junior players registering for tournaments due to the perceived elitism associated with tournament events. They needed to implement a program that would attract and retain the non-elite junior squash player.

Program: A certificate program was established in 2001 based on skill development and knowledge of the game. Six levels were created to cater for kids aged 7 to 16. Kids move on to the next level once they have fulfilled the requirements of the previous level. An independent coach conducts assessments.

The program is run at the club level. The State Sporting Association (SSA) provides administrative support in the form of registering the players and providing the certificates. The SSA secured sponsorship for the program that pays for a logo t-shirt to accompany each level.

Events (modified tournaments) are organised that allows the same level kids to play against each other. These events are a lot shorter and more social than tournament play.

An extra step following the certificates is the Platinum Rating that incorporates the administration side of the sport. Satisfying all this criteria entitles the participant to a 50 per cent subsidy on a Level 1 Coaching Course.

The program and its levels are reassessed every six months.

Benefits:

- 30 per cent increase in registered junior players;
- Increased numbers participating in tournaments;
- Improvement in skill levels;
- Assists coaches in planning progress of their players;
- Provides developmental feedback for participants; and
- Increased motivation of participants.

Contact: Squash WA
Ph: 9367 9600

Linking with the School Curriculum (Rugby League)

Problem: Introducing an unfamiliar sport to primary school children
Increased demands on school teachers to deliver quality sport programs

Program: A CD-ROM entitled Pass, Catch, Kick was developed by the Australian Rugby League Foundation to meet the educational outcomes for each primary school age group.

Eight sequential lessons for each age group are outlined in both diagrammatic and video format.

Also included are teaching notes for each exercise, equipment needs and exercise variations.

Each lesson is broken down into warm-up exercises, skill acquisition and skill application. Each lesson prints out in a one-button process.

The exercises included are all fun/games based rather than being simply drills.

- Benefits:**
- Provides fun activities to develop fundamental skills of passing, catching and kicking for primary aged children;
 - Provides teachers a user-friendly means of providing lessons that meet educational outcomes;
 - Rugby League increases and enhances the delivery and development of their sport throughout the state; and
 - The CD-ROM is complimented with teacher in-servicing.

Contact: WA Rugby League
Ph: 9277 3055

Tracking Participant Information (Netball)

Problem: WA Netball wanted to be able to pass on local information about clinics and competitions direct to interested young netballers

Program: Scoolnet Membership Program - database of primary school participants
Every student who participates in a school based netball program is given a membership form that is completed and returned to WA Netball. Each membership receives three passes to Oriole games.

Benefits:

- Improved communication lines by allowing information to be passed directly to interested participants about special events, clinics etc in their area;
- Database of interested primary school participants established;
- Assists with funding opportunities; and
- Provides opportunity to connect participants to their local clubs, developing links between the schools and the local netball association.

Contact: WA Netball
Ph: 9284 5411

Improving Transition from School Program to Club Program (Tennis)

Problem: Tennis West identified that even though they had large numbers participating in their schools program, they did not enjoy much success in attracting these participants into club programs.

Program: A four-staged process was introduced;
Stage 1 - School Visit by local club coach providing tuition and show bag for students, Level 0 coaching course for teachers and website competition
Stage 2 – Free Fun Day at local club to introduce students to the club environment
Stage 3 – Inexpensive three week introductory club coaching program
Stage 4 – Rolling eight week club coaching program with a strong focus on skill development. Six certificate levels for achievement.

Benefits: Tennis West achieved a 10 per cent uptake from the school visit to the free fun day at the club and a 75 per cent uptake from the free fun day to the three-week club-coaching program. Tennis West also experienced increased retention rates from their rolling eight-week certificate program. It also provides feedback and incentives to the participants.

Contact: Tennis West
Ph: 9361 1112

Incorporating School and Club Teams (Volleyball)

Problem: Rossmoyne Volleyball Club needed to increase its junior numbers.

Program: Approached local high school as to how the club and school could unite forces so both groups benefited.

School teams play in the club competition under the club name allowing participants to play with their friends

Older players coach the younger age groups (education outcomes)

Training occurs after school at school and games on the weekend

- Benefits:**
- Training sessions are at the school (easy access for participants);
 - Discounted gym hire (greater use of facilities);
 - Club purchases balls for both club and school to use (sharing resources);
 - Club provides coaches for school teams and national competitions;
 - School uniform is club uniform (saves on costs); and
 - Club members who coach school teams get discounted fees (encourage volunteerism).

Contact: Melville Volleyball Club
Ph: 9457 4702

Retaining Non-Competitive Participants (Royal Life Saving)

Problem: Losing children that no longer want the structure of swimming and water safety lessons and are not interested in the competitive nature of squad swimming.

Program: The Junior Lifeguard Club provides alternatives for these participants with the emphasis on fun while maintaining strong club feelings and loyalties. Program opportunities include swimming skills, fitness, competition, lifesaving knowledge, leadership, teamwork and community education programs. Members record their achievements in their personal waterlog.

Benefits:

- Friends can join together and not be differentiated on the grounds of performance;
- Awards and feedback on individual progress is provided;
- Results in members becoming competent in swimming and life saving skills while participating in an atmosphere that is fun; and
- Retains non-competitive participants within the club structure.

Contact: Royal Life Saving Society
Ph: 9383 9988

Facilitating Transition from Junior to Senior Ranks (University Hockey Club)

Problem: The University Hockey Club found a large number of players were lost or disenchanted during the transition from junior to senior competition

Program: A program was introduced to ensure a smooth transition between junior and senior ranks:

- Senior coach regularly attends junior training and games
- Club captain speaks to the juniors, outlining the make up of the senior teams and the opportunities available to them the following year (social v competitive)
- Development team of juniors entered into a senior competition
- Opportunity provided to train with the second top senior side
- Junior training times immediately precede senior training
- Top squad members coach junior grades
- Personal invitation to senior preseason and trials

Benefits:

- Junior members already feel part of the senior club as they are familiar with their teammates and routine;
- Junior members have been made welcome and aware of the opportunities ahead of them, so are informed to make their own decision; and
- Senior members involvement with the junior teams promotes volunteerism culture within the club.

Contact: University Hockey Club
Ph: 9383 9652

Promoting Junior Program through Schools (Touch)

Problem: No junior competitions were being run for young competitors by the local touch associations.

Program: The state body worked with each local association to tailor a schools program specific to their situation. Each program was based on a 10-week course coinciding with the school term, focussing on skill development and concluding with a competition. Cost was kept to a minimum and covered affiliation and insurance. The program was conducted at the association grounds one afternoon a week. The local association provided coaching and the state body had a representative present as professional support and to talk with parents. The state body promoted the program by sending letters to P.E. teachers and flyers specific to each program to the schools within the area. Flyers emphasised the fun factor of the course, including lucky dip prizes for the kids.

Benefits:

- First program received 31 enrolments;
- Increased volunteer base, as parents were eager to get involved;
- Parents were happy to get involved as it didn't interfere with school holidays.

Contact: TouchWest
Ph: 9387 8279

Retention Strategies (South West Football League)

Problem: Large drop out rates between juniors and colts in the south west region of WA.

Program: The Football Development Trust (FDT) commissioned a research project to investigate drop out rates. Recommendations from the report included;

- Where the likelihood of an uneven competition is identified, the junior associations undertake to split the age level into two divisions (aim – even competitions)
- Increase access to elite players (WAFL) to attend training sessions and junior club functions (aim – role modelling)
- That colts coaches and senior players regularly attend junior training sessions and hold joint training sessions with colts and under 16 teams towards the end of the season (aim - ease transition)
- Provide appropriate joint senior/junior social functions for last year junior players (aim – ease transition)
- That senior players be selected as mentors to support and provide advice to last year junior players (aim – role modelling)

Benefits: Surveys, workshops and interviews with youth and other key stakeholders were conducted to investigate reasons why players do not continue with their football once they have completed junior football. The data obtained provides the league with relevant information and issues on which the South West Football League can formulate future directions that are relevant and cater for young peoples' needs.

Contact: FDT South West
Ph: 9791 7973

Servicing Youth Coaches (University Hockey Club)

Problem: Both young and adult volunteer coaches of youth teams were not well resourced or supported, making their role more difficult.

Program: The club utilised the expertise within its ranks to develop and present its youth coach program. There were four components:

- Three hour seminar – equivalent to Level 0;
- Support resource – included club philosophies, policies, appropriate planning, warm ups and first aid, managing team discipline and training activities;
- Mentor program – mentor coaches were provided to all continuing coaches; and
- Pathway provided to complete Level 1 accreditation (subsidised).

Benefits:

- Better skilled coaches;
- Support structure in place, making the role of volunteer coach more attractive and less stressful;
- All coaches following club philosophies and policies; and
- Consistent and high coaching standards for youth members.

Contact: University Hockey Club
Ph: 9383 9652



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES - LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The following are examples of programs implemented by local government that have proven to be successful. They were collected from a variety of organisations and are no way exhaustive of the great work being done in the community. All contributors were happy to be contacted by those wishing further information.

Recreational Equipment Voucher Scheme (Town of Kwinana)

Problem: Access to youth sports for financially disadvantaged families.

Program: The scheme aims to assist low-income families to access junior sports. The vouchers allow ratepayers to nominate \$3.50 of their rates directly to a participating junior organisation to help them purchase equipment. The Kwinana Community Recreation Development Trust (KCRDT) manages the scheme.

The role of the KCRDT is to act as a liaison between Council and local recreation clubs and organisations. Research found that the high cost of participation to families with more than one child was a barrier. The Recreation Voucher Scheme was devised as a strategy to assist parents and clubs with the cost of junior sport.

The Town of Kwinana sets aside a fund to facilitate the Recreation Voucher Scheme. The vouchers are distributed along with the annual rate notice. When all rates are received the face value of vouchers for each club is calculated and a cheque sent to the club. Clubs must provide an annual statement of how funds have been spent.

Benefits: Local clubs are provided with financial assistance to provide equipment for junior participants. It has shown to be of great benefit to an area that has a low socio-economic population. The Town of Kwinana now has a high proportion of participating juniors. Juniors also have the opportunity to try new sports because fees are kept to a minimum.

The scheme has proved to be very popular with both clubs and ratepayers. When the scheme first started there was a budget of \$4000 and 16 participating clubs. This has grown to 24 clubs and a budget of \$15000. It has enjoyed continued support from ratepayers and Council.

Contact: Manager Community and Recreation Services, Town of Kwinana
Ph: 9419 2222

Calunga Aboriginal School Sports Program (City of Swan)

Problem: Access to sport programs and facilities for students of Calunga Aboriginal School

Program: Altone Park Leisure Centre (City of Swan) and Calunga Aboriginal School have developed a term program to provide sports and coaching lessons for students of the school. A variety of sports and activities run for 4-5 weeks each and then change to a new sport. The program caters for up to 40 students from 5 to 14 years of age. Altone Park Leisure Centre provides court space and a minimum of two instructors with a third on standby if required. The sports are chosen to coincide with seasonal sports. Instructors conduct coaching and games on the program.

Benefit: The program has been operating since October 2001. Staff are now looking at incorporating aquatic programs.

Contact: Program Development Officer, Altone Park Leisure Centre,
City of Swan.
Ph: 92679040

Access ALL Areas (City of Swan)

Problem: Access to youth sports for disadvantaged youth.

Program: Access All Areas is the operational name for the City of Swan's Youth Recreation Fund. It is a flexible and responsive way to target individual barriers that inhibit or exclude young people from participating in recreation and leisure activities. How does it work?

- Organisation identifies a young person who cannot equitably access normal recreational activities;
- Organisation and young person refers to the Access All Areas Activity Register to consider available options;
- An Access All Areas Pass is issued;
- Young person presents the pass as valid tender for the chosen activity;
- Recipient service provider invoices the City of Swan for the total value of passes received; and
- Invoice paid by City of Swan.

Benefits:

- Increase opportunities for young people to recreate where barriers to participation exist;
- Increase health, well being, skill development and sense of community for young people;
- Overcome significant barriers that contribute to income inequalities;
- Improve coordination and communication between youth agencies, recreation providers, community groups, government and local businesses; and
- Improve the general level of understanding and acceptance of young people within the community.

Contact: Program Development Officer, Altone Park Leisure Centre, City of Swan. Ph: 92679040

How Local Governments are assisting Junior Sport

Easy access to facilities for youth sports

- Introduction of policy that junior sporting teams can have use of the Council buildings or active recreation areas free of charge (City of Nedlands, Joondalup, Town of Kwinana)
- Introduction of policy that school groups can use their active recreation areas free of charge prior to 3.30pm (City of Nedlands)

Recognition and support of junior athletes and sporting clubs

- Annual Sports Club Awards that recognise both individual achievement and junior club management (City of Nedlands)
- Provision of scholarships to young athletes of free access to local government's recreation facilities (City of Melville)
- Provision of small grants to sporting organisations wishing to develop new youth initiatives (City of Nedlands)
- Provision of small grants to individual athletes who are selected in state or national teams (City of Joondalup, City of Swan, City of Melville)
- Establish a community fund to provide one-off grants for equipment and start up costs for junior sport groups (Joint venture between City of Swan, LWP P/L and Ellenbrook Community Committee)

Program Development

- Council Recreation Officers assist schools within the area to design, access and conduct junior sport programs (City of Joondalup)

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Youth sport organisations offer valuable opportunities for the youth of WA. They are generally run by hard working, committed volunteers with the goal of providing the same life enriching experiences that they themselves were given in their youth. However it must be realised that the lifestyles and pressures on youth today have changed and that these changes must be reflected in the programs our industry delivers.

By understanding the varied issues accompanying youth participation in sport and by sharing information and ideas, youth sport organisations can successfully modify their programs and provide relevant and vibrant sport programs for the youth of today.

This resource is a collation of some of the successful programs many sport groups have already implemented that your organisation can adapt. Listed here are further resources and websites where you can get more ideas and assistance to deliver successful youth sport programs.

Department of Sport and Recreation

www.dsr.wa.gov.au

- Challenge, Achievements and Pathways in Sport
- Sportsfun
- Codes of Conduct
- Keep It Fun
- Game Sense
- Active Australia Schools Network

Australian Sports Commission

www.ausport.gov.au

- Kelloggs Ready Set Go
- Sport Start
- Sport It
- Your Kids, Their Game

Victorian – Department of Sport and Recreation

www.sport.vic.gov.au

- User-friendly Sport – An ideas book to help sport and recreation clubs grow

WA Disabled Sports Association

reception@wadsa.org.au

- Willing and Able

Sports Medicine Australia

www.sport.net.au/smawa

Play By the Rules

www.playbytherules.net.au

Arts Sport Recreation Industry Training Council

www.asritic.com.au

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

As a proactive member of your club you can take on board the ideas and programs relevant to your organisation and adapt them to suit your specific needs. Clubs are only as vibrant as the people they have on board!



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