



Parenting Tips: Safety in the Game: Make Your Child the Top Priority

Adults volunteer to become coaches for a variety of reasons. While screening mechanisms such as interviewing prospective coaches, checking on previous coaching experiences and following up on references are good ways to ensure that you get the best coach possible. Here are a couple of other ideas that will help protect your child:

- Talk to your child's coach. What is their coaching philosophy? What techniques will the coach employ to motivate children? What expectations does the coach have for the children?
- Check references from other parents and children. Does the coach have a community reputation? Is it positive or negative?
- Never leave your child alone with the coach in compromising places or situations such as bathrooms or showers. Always have two adults or other children present, even in a car traveling to or from practice or going out for ice cream after the game.
- Never let your child go over to the home of the coach for a "one-to-one" practice session. Let all one-to-one instruction occur at your home where you can observe the lesson.
- Be aware of a coach who has an "extra special" interest in your child. Again do not be misled and believe all the things the coach says about potential, giftedness, and talent. While these statements may be true, the intent to enhance those talents may entail exploitation of your child.
- Ask your child how he or she likes the coach. Without being overbearing, get information about the coach's behavior with your child and other children.

While there is not one way to ensure your child's safety, using all the ideas listed above and always acting in your child's best interest will increase the chances of your child fully enjoying the experience without being victimized.

Safety at the Playground: Seven Easy Ways to Identify a Safe Playground

- Is good lighting available for nighttime play?
- Are there fences around the play area to stop children and balls from going into the streets?
- Do gangs use the area? Do you notice gang symbols on buildings? Is equipment damaged or defaced?
- Is there drug activity in the area? Evidence includes needles, vials, empty beer and liquor bottles.
- Is the play area next to a busy or well-traveled road used by cars and trucks? Are there guardrails to protect an uncontrolled car from entering the play area?
- Is there a phone nearby to call for emergency assistance?
 - Does the play area have a history of tragedies or accidents? Remember, history unfortunately often repeats itself.