

Experts on the Field, Partners in the Game.
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Top 10 Tips on How to Create a Successful Partnership with your Field Provider

One of the most important elements of a youth sports program is finding quality field locations for practices and games. Many programs turn to their local parks and recreation department or to their school district to provide well-maintained playing fields for practices and games. Missed expectations by either party can create a contentious atmosphere, which can negatively impact your players' experience.

Following is advice from STMA sports turf managers on how to create a "win-win" relationship with your field providers.

Top 10 Tips for Success

1. **Communicate.** Two-way, verbal communication is the most important tool you can use to help you achieve your goal of scheduling safe and available fields. You should meet face-to-face with the parks and recreation or the school district coordinator responsible for field use scheduling. Only using e-mail communication is not effective. Even if your parks and recreation department or school district coordinator does not hold an in-person meeting with user groups, make an appointment to stop by and meet him or her. Being able to begin building a relationship with this person will be of great value to your program. It is also a good idea to document in writing all verbal discussion and share that document with all participants.
2. **Be Accessible.** Be certain you have provided your complete contact information to the field coordinator and that you can be easily reached throughout the season.
3. **Plan Ahead.** Develop your schedule for practices, games, rainout dates and any tournaments as early as possible and provide the comprehensive list to the field coordinator. Be realistic and flexible, and avoid furnishing handwritten information.
4. **Recognize Supply and Demand.** There are many demands for fields, especially for parks and recreation fields. Your local parks and recreation department serves all populations, from youth to senior leagues. Their goal is to provide community residents with as many quality recreational opportunities as possible. Your program is just one of many; that is why planning ahead and creating good relationships are so important.
5. **Have a clear understanding of the Field Use Agreement and adhere to it.** Field providers typically require an agreement between their organization and yours. If you are not offered one, it is in your program's best interest to develop one. The agreement defines policies, what each party agrees to do, and the timing for the actions. Typical items include liability insurance requirements, fee payments, ADA compliance, indemnification, field care responsibilities, etc. Some field providers require a 'coaches training session' to teach them about field maintenance, i.e. how to deal with divots, wear areas, wet areas, overused areas, infield maintenance, even parking lots. Coaches who desire to learn more about field care can join the STMA in the Affiliate category, for a rate of \$50.

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Meet all deadlines and requirements noted in the agreement. Your attention to these conditions and the corresponding deadlines will build trust in you and in your program. Missed deadlines or failure to meet the terms may limit your ability to secure fields for the future. There is a sample copy of an agreement at the end of this bulletin.

6. **Ask Questions.** Be certain you understand your program's responsibilities to the fields and the department or district providing them. Are you asked to inspect them? What is the lightning policy? Who has the authority to call/delay the game for rain? Where is emergency contact information (medical, fire, police) posted? Are you or an assistant required to hold CPR certification? Being informed means appropriate and faster responses to situations.
7. **Be Cooperative.** There may be situations when the field simply is not playable due to weather issues, vandalism or other conditions. Understand that safety of your players is paramount for your program and the field provider. Being unpleasant and demanding will not reopen the field any quicker and will damage your relationship with the provider.
8. **Document your work.** You may not be the liaison in charge of the field locations forever. To pass on your knowledge, keep records for the next volunteer. Ideally, you would want a historical file of the field use agreements so that you and future liaisons can see if and how requirements for your program have changed. Keep track of any challenges presented and the solutions to those challenges.
9. **Find out how you can help the department or district.** Are there recommended ways to conduct warm ups and practices that limit wear on the field? What does the sports turf manager recommend? Does the district need volunteers to pick up trash, clear weeds by fences, or repair bleachers? Can you schedule a work/clean-up day in which the entire team and other volunteers can participate? Even if your volunteers are not needed to do these tasks, your willingness to take ownership of the field builds confidence and trust in your program.

10. **Be considerate of the site.** Educate everyone connected to the participating teams (players, coaches and parents/guardians) that they have a responsibility to pick up trash when they see it, rather than just walking over it. Appoint someone to police the area for litter after each use. Communicate to parents and guardians that they are responsible for supervising their children who come to watch the game and controlling their pets (if allowed) at all times.

The more you understand the needs of the field providers and they understand your needs, the stronger likelihood of a successful partnership.

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AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE XYZ PARK DISTRICT
AND
THE ABC YOUTH ASSOCIATION

This agreement between the XYZ Park District, 100 Anystreet, Any City, State, herein after referred to as the District, and the ABC Youth Association, Any City, State, hereinafter referred to as the Association for the consideration set forth herein agree as follows:

I. District agrees to:

- A. Grant permission to the Association to charge registration and other seasonal fees for participation in the Association.
- B. Allow use of District facilities to conduct registration and organizational meetings for Association.
- C. Designate a District staff person as liaison to Association.

II. Association agrees to:

- A. Provide an adult supervised youth sports program.
- B. Submit requests for use of District facilities to the Recreation Supervisor/Athletics prior to the beginning of the Season. Abide by the rules and guidelines of the District as it pertains to using the District's facilities.
- C. Submit all league rosters, including participants complete address, and collect all non-resident registration fees and transfer those fees to the District by (Date) of the respective season.
- D. Provide the name, address and telephone number of each officer of the Association by (Date) of the respective season.
- E. Designate a representative of the Association as the official liaison to the District.
- F. Abide by the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any other federal and/or state regulations that may apply.
- G. Inspect the field for potential hazards. The field includes the playing field, bleachers, and any other area that players, coaches, and/or spectators would be using. Document inspections of the field on a weekly basis. Any problems must be reported to the District the next business day. The Association will be maintaining files of all inspection reports for two years, and will supply to District upon request.
- H. Send all coaches to the coaches field training annually, to be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time.
- I. Provide General Liability Insurance with limits of not less than One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00) CGL insurance shall be written on Insurance Services Office (ISO) occurrence form #XX or a substitute form providing equivalent coverage, and shall cover liability arising from premises, operations, independent contractors, products-completed operations, personal injury and advertising injury, liability assumed under an insured contract (including the tort liability of another assumed in a business contract).

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The District must be named as an additional insured using ISO additional insured endorsement #XX or a substitute. The insurance policy shall not be suspended, voided, canceled, reduced in coverage, or in limit except after thirty days prior written notice has been given to the District by certified mail and a return receipt requested. Insurance forms must be submitted to the District prior to use of the fields.

J. Association shall indemnify and hold harmless the District and its officers, officials, employees, volunteers and agents from and against all claims, damages, losses and expenses, including but not limited to legal fees (attorney's and paralegals' fees and court costs), arising from or in any way connected with (i) the conduct or management of the premises or of any business or activity therein, or any work or thing whatsoever done, or condition created in or about the premises during the term of this agreement; (ii) any act, omission wrongful act or negligence of Association or any of Association subtenants or licensees (if applicable), or the partners, directors, officers, agents, employees, invitees, or contractors of Association or Association's subtenants or licensees; (iii) any accident, injury or damage whatsoever occurring in or at the premises regardless of whether or not it is caused in part by a party indemnified hereunder. Such obligation shall not be construed to negate, abridge, or otherwise reduce any other right or obligation of indemnity which would otherwise exist as to any party or person described in this Paragraph. Association shall similarly protect, indemnify and hold and save harmless the District, its officers, officials, employees, volunteers and agents against and from any and all claims, costs, causes, actions and expenses including but not limited to legal fees, incurred by reason of Association's breach of any of its obligations under, or Association's default of, any provision of the Contract.

K. Failure to furnish by Date of the respective year the required certificate of insurance, endorsement, and executed agreement by league officials will result in forfeiture of field usage.

III. District and Youth Association mutually agree that:

- A. This agreement shall be in force from Date and automatically renew annually on the anniversary date until either party initiates termination of the agreement.
- B. Either party hereto may cancel this agreement by giving the other party a notice in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the intended date of cancellation.
- C. This agreement has been discussed and approved by each party hereto prior to the date of execution thereof, and that this agreement is executed by each party through proper corporate action authorizing same.

In witness thereof of the parties have hereunto set their hands and seals.

Park District

Youth Association

Printed Name: _____ Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Signature: _____

Title: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____