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Content Analysis of Volunteer Youth Training Programs in the U.S.

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Abstract

Despite the apparent positive impact that coaching education programs have on the attitudes and behaviors of volunteer youth sport coaches, few programs exist to actually educate these coaches (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001; Gould et al., 1990). The organizations that coordinate youth sport leagues have an obligation to train these volunteer coaches, but few coaches receive training and if they do receive training, it is often lacking in specific developmental areas. There are also often differences between the coaching education programs that do exist and what volunteer coaches actually want to learn and need to learn.

Our research consists of a content analysis of youth volunteer coaching programs in the U.S. with a focus on the following points:

1. Curriculum training areas for volunteer youth coaches (e.g. motor development, first aid and safety)
2. Who provides the training for volunteer youth coaches
3. Evaluation and assessment of volunteer youth coaches
4. Curriculum delivery methods (on-line, face-to-face)
5. Costs associated with training
6. Coaching certification levels
7. Organizational requirements for volunteer youth coaches

Our presentation aligns with the theme for the 2011 of promoting a national standard of coaching and coach training. Over 40 million children aged 6-18 participate in American youth sport programs that are not associated with a school, and the experience can have a profound influence on their lives (Smith & Smoll, 2002). The performance of coaches, many of whom volunteer can have a large impact on this experience and overall youth development. Given the tremendous number of athletes who can be affected by volunteer youth coaches, it is critical that volunteer coaches are included in the development of a national standard of coaching.