Legal Requirements and Responsibilities for Coaching Education Internships

Melissa Murray
The University of Southern Mississippi

Rebecca Zakrjasek
Indiana State University

Kristen Dieffenbach
West Virginia University

Abstract

According to the National Coaching Report (NASPE, 2008), over 57 million youth participated in organized sport in 2006, with around eight million of those participating in interscholastic sport. While the NFHS has been a major advocate for coaching education in the interscholastic setting, the other 87% of the youth sport participants are likely being serviced by ill-prepared coaches. In response to the 1970s call for more prepared coaches (NASPE, 2008), collegiate institutions have created academic programs in coaching education. These academic programs seek to prepare qualified coaches at all levels of competition (e.g., youth, interscholastic, intercollegiate, professional, elite). In an effort to provide students with hands on, applied experiences, academic programs generally require some sort of internship. In a recent study, coaching education students reported having numerous opportunities to motivate, encourage, and build confidence in athletes during their internships (Dieffenbach, Murray, & Zakrjasek, 2010), all of which are interpersonal interactions. Given that interpersonal interactions are one of the most significant factors impacting athlete development and the athlete – coach relationship (Jowett, 2003; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003), student coaches are in a critical position. Therefore, these findings beg for a system of checks to be in place within the internship process, namely background checks, required health insurance, and university waivers. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the regulations and policies in place to protect the student-athletes, student coaches, and university programs during internships in coaching education. Issues like legal responsibilities of the universities, background check policies and procedures, school district-specific requirements, and other policies in place will be discussed in an interactive session. The discussion will also highlight what other organizations (NGBs, NFHS) are doing or could be doing to aid in the protection of their athletes and coaches.