

A grayscale photograph of a man with a beard and a lanyard, smiling and looking towards the left. He is holding a tablet or document. The background is a blurred classroom with other people.

# 21 (Yes, 21) Forms You Should Have Your Coaches Sign Every Year

THE LEADER IN REGISTRATION, COMPLIANCE, AND DATA GOVERNANCE

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## LEGAL DISCLAIMER

*It's important for athletic departments to work with legal counsel to ensure that all forms are legally sound and in compliance with relevant regulations and laws. Additionally, the specific forms required may vary by institution, sport, and jurisdiction, so it's essential to consult with the department's policies and legal experts to determine the appropriate forms to use.*



# Introduction

Learn how coach forms can eliminate costly legal processes, reduce time-consuming documentation, and simplify organizational procedures.

Your season is going well. Your coaches are fired up about the postseason. This year will surely be a banner year for your athletic program. But wait, what if a coach has a medical incident, a parent questions staff conduct, or the state inquires about your compliance with a recent regulation?

Every athletic department should have their coaching staff sign forms for various important reasons including safety, compliance, and protections. A well crafted form set can eliminate costly legal processes, reduce time-consuming documentation, and simplify organizational procedures.

*Do you have forms in place that distribute medical information to the right hands at the right time?*

*Do you have a time-stamped paper trail of staff signatures on key departmental documents?*

*Do you have proof-positive compliance with state regulations?*

## Factors to consider when creating your coach form set...

### **Liability and Legal Protection**

Athletic departments deal with activities that carry inherent risks every day. Having staff sign forms, such as liability waivers, releases, and assumption of risk agreements, can help protect the department from legal liabilities in case of accidents or injuries.

### **Compliance with Regulations**

Many athletic departments are subject to various regulations, including those state, district, or department requirements related to safety, health, and student-athlete welfare. Having staff sign forms ensures that they are aware of these regulations.

### **Emergency Contacts and Medical Information**

Emergency medical forms, including contacts and medical conditions, are often part of the paperwork that staff members must complete. This information is crucial for the department to have in case of injuries or other emergencies.

In summary, having your coaching staff sign forms is a standard practice in athletic departments to ensure legal compliance, protect against liabilities, maintain a safe and organized environment, and establish clear expectations and guidelines for staff behavior and responsibilities.

### **Code of Conduct and Ethics**

Some forms may include codes of conduct or ethical guidelines that staff members must agree to follow. This helps maintain a positive and respectful environment within the athletic department.

### **Governing Requirements and Policies**

Athletic departments are typically members of state athletic associations, which may have specific policies and requirements for coaches, parents, and athletes. Signing forms helps ensure that coaches know and agree to comply with these policies.

### **Record-Keeping and Documentation**

Having signed forms on file is crucial for record-keeping and documentation purposes. It provides a clear record of agreements, consents, and acknowledgments, which can be helpful in the case of disputes or audits.

# 21 (Yes, 21) Forms You Should Have Your Coaches Sign Every Year

***“Forms and documents go beyond onboarding,  
they are a resource that our coaches use every day.”***

*– John Appelgate, Director of Athletics and Activities,  
Lake Washington School District (WA)*

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# 1-3: Health & Safety

## 1. Contact Information

### What is it?

This form includes home addresses, phone numbers, and general demographic information.

### Why use it?

Staff contact information may be shared within your district to contact, pay, or snail mail your coach.

### When is it helpful?

It is helpful when you can simply click to find basic contact information.

## 2. Emergency Contacts

### What is it?

This form requires that your coach to input their emergency contacts on file in case of medical incidents or other emergencies.

### Why use it?

If a coach becomes seriously ill or is involved in an accident, their emergency contact form can provide crucial information and assistance if the coach is unable to do so.

### When is it helpful?

When a coach is unable to communicate, the school can notify the coach's family or loved ones to ensure they are aware of the situation or can offer support.

## 3. Health History & Medical Profile

### What is it?

This form allows your coach to input their critical medical conditions and emergency actions plans, as well as permission to seek medical treatment in case of an emergency.

### Why use it?

A perfectly healthy-looking coach may have diabetes, seizures, or a heart condition. Furthermore, even a coach with no critical medical factors may be injured on the job.

### When is it helpful?

Having critical medical information on file when one of your coaches experiences a medical incident can lessen the severity of the incident, improve the outcome, or even save a life.



# 4-7: Requirements & Duties

## 4. 14 Legal Duties of a Coach

### What is it?

This document lists the obligations or duties identified as absolute requirements for coaches and athletic administrators.

### Why use it?

*14 Legal Duties of a Coach* is the gold standard in interscholastic coaching. Every coach should know their duties to plan, supervise, instruct, assess readiness, prepare athletes, provide emergency care, and more.

### When is it helpful?

It's always helpful when your coaches understand the *14 Legal Duties of a Coach*, which outline the core responsibilities of a high school coach.

See p13 for a complete list of the 14 legal duties.

## 5. State Coaching Requirements

### What is it?

This resource for coaches ensures that they understand the requirements of the governing athletic association which may include continuing education, professional development, and other required coursework.

### Why use it?

It provides coaches with a reliable resource to understand their requirements and expectations as a coach.

### When is it helpful?

Before the season or prior to the playoffs, coaches are often required to complete paperwork or coursework in order to be eligible to coach.

## 6. Athletic Supervision Guide

### What is it?

Coaches are responsible for supervising student-athletes at all times in all places, including locker rooms, off campus running, off-site practices, bus trips, competitions, medical emergencies, emergency transportation, and even ejection-related situations.

### Why use it?

Appropriate supervision can prevent injuries, bullying, poor bus behavior, and even unthinkable acts or events.

### When is it helpful?

Coaches can always use a reminder to guide them with guidance to keep students safe, especially since they are visible to the community.

## 7. Athletic Eligibility & Academic Standards

### What is it?

This agreement supports and ensures that student-athletes meet both athletic and academic eligibility requirements and maintain standards.

### Why use it?

Eligibility isn't simple. The state, district, and athletic department may have forms and clearance requirements; the school may have academic, discipline, and other paperwork requirements, especially for home schooled, foreign exchange, or transfer students; plus, a student may be within a medical return-to-play protocol which could exclude or limit them from participation.

### When is it helpful?

A coach can not allow an ineligible athlete to participate. The risks include forfeits for a team, poor academic performance for the individual, and even medical risks for the individual if the eligibility issue is health-related.



# 8-9: Rules & Responsibilities

## 8. Sport-Specific Rules

### What is it?

A sport-specific listing of rules and regulations can be assigned to coaches based on their sport(s), which may include rule changes and modifications for the upcoming season.

### Why use it?

Coaches are not always aware of year-to-year rule changes that may impact their strategy or how the game is played, coached, or officiated.

### When is it helpful?

When the referee makes a call based on a new rule, awareness of that rule certainly helps prevent an embarrassing argument or even an ejection.

## 9. Coaching Responsibilities

### What is it?

Coaching requires a commitment to the growth of students and colleagues. This form lists what contributes to positive relationships, mutual respect, and cooperation.

### Why use it?

The coach has the unique responsibility of building relationships with the student, the team, their fellow staff, the opposing staff, officials, the community, the media, and their administration. Whether handling team selection, ejections, post-game reports, or issues like bullying or hazing, the coach must act professionally and responsibly.

### When is it helpful?

On the positive side, informing a coach of their responsibilities prepares them for service. On the other side, inevitably, a coach will be questioned at some point; that's where these responsibilities act as a reminder of how to handle relationships in that situation.



# 10-13: Guidelines, Goals, and Codes

## 10. Athletic Purpose & Philosophy

### What is it?

This document defines the athletic program as sanctioned by the school district and the state athletic association.

### Why use it?

It informs the coach about the governance structure, responsibilities, and expectations of interscholastic athletics as an integral part of the total educational program.

### When is it helpful?

A coach should know how the school district views and values education-based athletics relating to the student's educational experience.

## 11. Athletic Guidelines

### What is it?

This document lists school and level-based guidelines that set expectations for an appropriately competitive and cooperative experience for the administration, staff, parents, and student-athletes.

### Why use it?

Creating a successful athletic program stems from a positive culture at all levels as well as cooperation between those levels. This document may set the expectation for middle school programs to increase the variety of participation, for sub-varsity programs to develop athletes, and for varsity programs to be competitive in the league, region, or state. It may also set the standard to cut versus no-cut policies on a district, level, or sport basis.

### When is it helpful?

It is helpful when coaches need to be reminded of the guidelines for their specific level or their responsibilities to the level above them.

## 12. Code of Conduct

### What is it?

This document outlines the coach's commitment to ethical behavior, sportsmanship, and adherence to state, department, and league rules.

### Why use it?

The coach must understand their commitment beyond simply coaching. Coaches must model positive behavior reflecting the values of your athletic program and your school.

### When is it helpful?

It is helpful when you must hold a coach accountable for violating the code.

## 13. Goals of the Athletic Program

### What is it?

A document outlining the goals and interests of the athletics program which may include fostering positive relationships with the community, parents, and students, promoting good sportsmanship, and recognizing the role of interscholastics in the educational experience of students.

### Why use it?

Again, coaching is more than just coaching. Coaches create a connection between academics and athletics that promotes learning, growth, and positive behavior.

### When is it helpful?

Any time a community member, a parent, or a fellow student reports a coach exhibiting positive, goal-oriented behavior, it's a gold star for the entire school.



# 14-16: Policies

## 14. Social Media Policy

### What is it?

Coaches, parents, and student-athletes use social media in communication, whether positively or negatively. Social media hold value related to building and connecting communities but are also fraught with unintended consequences. Every action, such as friending, liking, following, or accepting requests has the potential for misinterpretation of the relationship and the potential for sharing protected information.

### Why use it?

It provides staff guidance as well as information and awareness of specific legal requirements.

### When is it helpful?

Every. Single. Moment.

## 15. Athletic Travel Policies

### What is it?

This document outlines athletic travel requests, requirements, policies, and procedures.

### Why use it?

There is risk and liability involved every time a student leaves campus for an event, whether using school transportation or not. The administration and the transportation department must be aware of plans to transport student-athletes in a singular event and/or throughout the entire season, as policies or laws may apply.

### When is it helpful?

The framework in this document provides the foundation for easy and efficient decision-making regarding requests and approvals, saving everyone time and headaches.

## 16. Return-to-Play Policies

### What is it?

This document outlines the medical clearance for an athlete who has been medically uncleared.

### Why use it?

Athletes want to play. Coaches want to win. It's very easy to mistake the word from an athlete or a comment from a parent as a clearance. This policy helps the coach comply with medical standards, ensures the coach is aware of the limitations of an athlete in return-to-play protocol, and protects the student-athlete from participating prior to clearance.

### When is it helpful?

If a student-athlete asks to participate in the big game, the coach can have a professional, policy based response.



# 17-18: Policies *(continued)*

## 17. Child Abuse Reporting Agreement

### What is it?

This is an acknowledgment of the responsibility to report any suspected child abuse or neglect as required by law.

### Why use it?

Providing your coach with the framework to deal with an intensely sensitive situation increases the likelihood of the situation being handled correctly.

### When is it helpful?

Coaches are experts in coaching, not family issues and communication, so this is helpful to your coaches who need the most help.

## 18. Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy

### What is it?

It is a commitment to abide by the district's policies and procedures regarding discrimination and harassment.

### Why use it?

It encourages coaches to be more aware of their words, actions, and potential implicit biases that may make student-athletes feel uncomfortable or offended.

### When is it helpful?

Before the season! It's always helpful to educate a coach before they communicate with the parents and the team.



# 19-20: Waivers

## 19. Liability Waiver

### What is it?

It is a release of liability for injuries or accidents that may occur during coaching activities, team events, or travel.

### Why use it?

This document prevents the coach, likely considered a school employee, from opening a lawsuit against the school in the event of the instances included in the waiver.

### When is it helpful?

It is beneficial if the coach files a claim against the school for something included in the release.

## 20. Waiver of Compensation for Voluntary Coaches

### What is it?

This document specifies the terms and conditions of voluntary service.

### Why use it?

In the case of volunteer coaches, a form that specifies the terms of their voluntary service and any associated expenses or stipends.

### When is it helpful?

It is helpful when a coach asks for compensation for an expense which may not be afforded to volunteers.

# 21: **BONUS** Coaching Philosophy

## 20. Coaching Philosophy Statement

### What is it?

It is a statement that outlines the coach's coaching philosophy, approach to player development, and team goals.

### Why use it?

The coach must put their philosophy into written words, which helps them prepare for the season.

### When is it helpful?

There comes a time in every season when a coach needs to rely on their philosophy to inspire their team or themselves. Plus, you will understand their philosophy and can hold them accountable to their word.



# 14 Legal Duties of a Coach

***“The 14 Legal Duties are the most critical part of every coach’s requirements, including my own.”***

***– Benji Gray, CAA, Athletic Director, Wrestling Coach, PE/Wellness,  
Page High School, Williamson County Schools (TN)***

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# 14 Legal Duties of a Coach

Several obligations or duties have been identified as absolute requirements for coaches and athletic administrators. These standards have evolved as a result of various case law proceedings and legal judgments against individuals and school districts. It is important that all coaches, including assistants and volunteers, know and understand the following duties.

## 1. Duty to Plan

A coach must demonstrate awareness of the maturity, physical development, and readiness of athletes with appropriate plans for instruction, conditioning, and supervision.

## 2. Duty to Supervise

A coach must be physically present, provide competent instruction, structure practices that are appropriate for the age and maturity of players, prevent foreseeable injuries and respond to injury or trauma in an approved manner. This duty requires supervisors to make sure facilities are locked and that students are denied access when a competent staff member cannot be physically present to supervise. This duty may also require coaches to control reckless player behaviors. Supervision responsibility also pertains to athletic administrators who are expected to be able to supervise coaches competently.

## 3. Duty to Assess Athletes' Readiness for Practice and Competition

Athletics administrators and coaches are required to assess the health and physical or maturational readiness skills and physical condition of athletes. A progression of skill development and conditioning improvement should be apparent from practice plans. Athletes must also be medically screened in accordance with state association regulations before participating in practice or competition.

## 4. Duty to Maintain Safe Playing Conditions

Coaches are considered trained professionals who possess a higher level of knowledge and skill that permits them to identify foreseeable causes of injury inherent in defective indoor and outdoor facilities or hazardous environments.

## 5. Duty to Provide Safe Equipment

Courts have held athletic supervisors responsible for improving unsafe environments, repairing or removing defective equipment, or disallowing athlete access.

## 6. Duty to Instruct Properly

Athletic practices must be characterized by instruction that accounts for a logical sequence of fundamentals that lead to an enhanced progression of player knowledge, skill, and capability.

## 7. Duty to Match Athletes

Athletes should be matched with consideration for maturity, skill, age, size, and speed. To the degree possible, mismatches should be avoided in all categories.

## 8. Duty to Condition Properly

Practices must account for a progression of cardiovascular and musculoskeletal conditioning regimens that prepare athletes sequentially for more challenging practices and competitive activities.

## 9. Duty to Warn

Coaches are required to warn parents and athletes of unsafe practices specific to a sport and the potential for injury or death. This warning should be issued in writing, and athletes and parents should be required to provide written certification of their comprehension.

## 10. Duty to Ensure Athletes are Covered by Injury Insurance

Athletics administrators and coaches must screen athletes to ensure that family and/or school insurance provides a basic level of medical coverage. Athletes should not be allowed to participate without injury insurance.

## 11. Duty to Provide Emergency Care

Coaches are expected to be able to administer standard emergency care (first aid, CPR) in response to a range of traumatic injuries.

## 12. Duty to Design a Proper Emergency Response Plan

Coaches must design plans to ensure an expedited response by EMS and an effective transition to the care and supervision of emergency medical personnel.

## 13. Duty to Provide Proper Transportation

Generally, bonded, commercial carriers should be used for out-of-town transportation. Self or family transportation for local competition may be allowed if parents have adequate insurance coverage for team members other than their family members. (Follow school district guidelines)

## 14. Duty to Select, Train, and Supervise Coaches

Administrators have the responsibility to ensure that appropriate skill and knowledge levels exist among members of the coaching staff to ensure appropriate levels of safety and well-being among athletes.

*This summary is not all-inclusive but is generally accepted as the "Legal Duties of Coaches" by the NFHS (National Federation of High Schools) and NIAAA (National Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association).*



# Your Coach Forms & Compliance Checklist

***"Our coach forms cover the basics which allows us to focus on building our culture and serving our community during our coaches meetings."***

***– Lance Gatter, Athletics, Activities, and Title IX Specialist,  
Lake Washington School District (WA)***

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# My Coach Forms & Compliance Checklist

## Health & Safety

- 1. Contact Information
- 2. Emergency Contacts
- 3. Health History & Medical Profile

## Requirements & Duties

- 4. 14 Legal Duties of a Coach
- 5. State Coaching Requirements
- 6. Athletic Supervision Guide
- 7. Athletic Eligibility & Academic Standards

## Rules & Responsibilities

- 8. Sport-Specific Rules
- 9. Coaching Responsibilities

## Guidelines, Goals, and Codes

- 10. Athletic Purpose & Philosophy
- 11. Athletic Guidelines
- 12. Code of Conduct
- 13. Goals of the Athletic Program

## Policies

- 14. Social Media Policy
- 15. Athletic Travel Policies
- 16. Return-to-Play Policies
- 17. Child Abuse Reporting Agreement
- 18. Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy

## Waivers

- 19. Liability Waiver
- 20. Waiver of Compensation for Voluntary Coaches

## BONUS

- 21. Coaching Philosophy Statement

