



Jr. NBA Respect The Game Youth Basketball Administrator Guide

Introduction

The Jr. NBA is committed to improving the youth basketball experience for all and ensuring the game is being played the right way at the grassroots level. *Respect The Game* promotes healthy and respectful relationships between players, coaches, parents, fans, and referees.

The current youth sporting experience is often overshadowed by poor behavior and a lack of focus for the long-term and holistic development of young athletes. Below are a few data points that highlight the concern.

The average child today spends less than three years playing a sport, quitting by age 11. (Project Play)

Declining youth sports participation rates are tied to lack of enjoyment. 36% of girls and 39% of boys say the biggest reason kids quit sports is because they are not having fun. (ESPN)

37% of kids wish no parents would watch them play and 45% have been called names or insulted by coaches. (USA Today)

96% of survey respondents “witnessed adults at a youth or high school sporting event behaving in a manner that made you feel uncomfortable.” (The Journal News)

In an effort to combat the elements highlighted above, the Jr. NBA is promoting the *Respect The Game* initiative, which includes content, resources, and live events, all designed to promote a positive youth sports culture and advance the Jr. NBA’s core values of teamwork, determination, respect, and community.

- **Jr. NBA Parent Forums** featuring shared knowledge from NBA players and parents are held across the country in partnership with [Positive Coaching Alliance](#) (PCA), NBA teams, and/or the [Jr. NBA Flagship Network](#).
- **Jr. NBA Coaches Forums** are designed to help coaches develop young athletes of character. These in-person forums in partnership with [A CALL TO MEN](#) and [Athlete Ally](#) emphasize the power that coaches have as influencers, and how to use that influence to impart lessons around diversity, teamwork, and inclusion.
- **Jr. NBA Referee Clinics** represent an increased commitment to the professional development of youth basketball referees on and off the court. Clinics include tips and insight from NBA officials, resources and all-access content to provide a complete understanding of the job.
- **Off-Court Youth Programs** including the Jr. NBA Global Championship and the Jr. NBA Respect The Game Youth Forum empower and engage youth in creating a positive basketball experience.
- The **Jr. NBA Respect The Game Pledge** encourages parents, coaches, and players to honor the game by maintaining a positive attitude, embracing diversity, and competing ethically.



In addition to engaging with the Jr. NBA at the national level, there are a number of ways you can incorporate *Respect The Game* into your program to create a positive youth basketball experience for your players, coaches, and families.

Parents

“A 2016 study in the Journal of Family Relations by Dr. Travis Dorsch and colleagues found an inverse relationship between a child’s perception of their family’s commitment to youth athletics and their enjoyment of the sport...Rather, children who perceived their parents as investing heavily in their sport tended to report a greater sense of parental pressure and a reduced sense of enjoyment.” ([New York Times](#))

TALK TO PARENTS AND UNDERSTAND THEIR GOALS

From the first practice, talk with parents. Explain your program philosophy. Encourage open communication between parents, coaches, and program administrators. Get to know parents and their triggers. If a parent has a particular concern, give them the opportunity to discuss it with you.

Parents come to games to see their kids play. Make sure every player has the opportunity to make a contribution. Encourage parents to empower their child to advocate on their own behalf when questions of playing time arise. Clearly state the goals of the program and ensure they are aligned with the goals of each parent.

SET EXPECTATIONS OF PARENT CONDUCT

Inform parents that their behavior can have unintended consequences for their child and your program. Actively discourage negative comments and behavior toward officials and opponents when attending games.

When hosting tournaments or competitive events, post or distribute a spectator code of conduct to help communicate a standard of behavior that you expect parents and spectators to adhere to.

Offer specific praise when parents represent your program or event in a positive manner.

HOST PARENT-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES

Create opportunities to engage parents as more than spectators. Allow parents to serve as volunteers in capacities that benefit your program including fundraising, marketing, managing concessions at games, or serving as a team manager. Host a parent-child 2v2 tournament, holiday party, or parent breakfast.

Invite local referees to a pre-season event or practice to educate parents on the rules of gameplay and provide insight into the responsibilities of an official.

CONNECT PARENTS TO JR. NBA RESOURCES

Providing parents with resources to support their athletes can be a positive way to build rapport and relationships. Helpful tips on addressing sideline behavior, post-game conversation, and playing time are available on jrnbacom.com. Urge parents to access these research-based tools to help them navigate the youth sports landscape. Integrate *Respect The Game* principles into your social media messaging.



Coaches

“Physical activity, and sports in particular, can positively affect aspects of personal development among young people, such as self-esteem, goal-setting, and leadership. However, evidence indicates that the quality of coaching is a key factor in maximizing positive effects.” ([Project Play](#))

ENCOURAGE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Partner with local organizations and nonprofits in your community to train your coaches in youth development best practices, including safety and communication. Emphasize the importance of your coach’s role as a leader and influencer of youth on and off the court.

Help coaches define their goals prior to the start of the season. Notify coaches of Jr. NBA events in their area, including coach clinics and forums. Encourage your coaches to attend the **Jr. NBA Youth Leadership Conference** and become USA Basketball Licensed.

EMPHASIZE POSITIVE CONDUCT TOWARD OFFICIALS

Join your local youth basketball officiating organization. Invite referees to pre-season coaches meetings to educate coaches on the rules of gameplay and ways to increase positive communication between coaches and officials.

The pre-season is also a great time to host a [Positive Coaching Alliance](#) workshop for your coaches and staff.

SET EXPECTATIONS OF COACH BEHAVIOR

Prior to the start of the season, have your coaches take the **Jr. NBA Respect The Game Pledge** and commit to the [Coach Code of Conduct](#). Hold your coaches accountable for their behavior in the same way you expect your coaches to promote accountability amongst players. Encourage coaches to consider developing separate social media accounts for their personal and coaching activity. Communicate standards that you expect all associated with your program to commit and adhere to.

CONNECT COACHES TO JR. NBA RESOURCES

Integrate **Respect The Game** principles into your key messaging on social media.

Utilize resources from the Jr. NBA including developmentally appropriate curricula, tips, coaching tools, drills, and the [Jr. NBA Coach App](#), which includes NBA-approved practice plans and instructional videos from NBA/WNBA players and coaches.

Jrnba.com also includes resources from national partners including Athlete Ally and A CALL TO MEN to help coaches develop and promote an inclusive and diverse environment.



Officials

"80% of youth sports officials quit after two years, with 75% pointing to the hostile behavior of adults on the sidelines as a reason for leaving the profession." ([National Association of Sports Officials](#))

HIGHLIGHT OFFICIATING AS A CAREER PATHWAY

There are many ways to remain connected to the game other than playing. Expose youth players and alumni to these opportunities, including officiating. Connect current and aspiring youth basketball officials to Jr. NBA and NBA resources including [jrnba.com](#) and **Jr. NBA Referee Clinics**. Youth basketball officials are needed at all levels across the country – encourage certification and professional development.

INCORPORATE OFFICIALS INTO YOUR PROGRAM

Often, disagreements between officials and other stakeholders arise due to lack of clarity on the rules of the game and miscommunication in competitive, sometimes heated situations. Partner with your local youth basketball officiating organization to invite referees to pre-season meetings to speak with parents, coaches, and players. Use these meetings as an opportunity to teach those in your program the rules of gameplay, referee positioning and roles, and ways to communicate with officials during the course of the game.

Allow parents to officiate a scrimmage to gain a firsthand experience in the challenges of making quick, accurate decisions.

ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION WITH OFFICIALS

Players often model the behavior and demeanor of their coaches. Urge coaches to be aware of their tone, body language, and words when on the sideline, and to refrain from disparaging officials to their players.

Encourage coaches to meet with officials during pre-game to introduce themselves, at halftime to go over points of emphasis, and post-game to shake hands.

MITIGATE NEGATIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN OFFICIALS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

If hosting a tournament or other competitive event, communicate openly with referee assignors to ensure their officials have been certified, understand your expectations of behavior, and meet the expectations of your event. When conflict between officials and spectators, players, or coaches arises, act quickly to prevent the situation from continuing by removing the offending party.

Develop a policy of interacting with officials. Communicate your standards of behavior with the parents, players, and coaches in your program.



Jr. NBA Respect The Game Pledge

Players

I pledge to honor the game by exhibiting a positive attitude toward all players, coaches, parents, and officials, treating them in the same manner I want to be treated.

I understand that working hard and competing to the best of my ability is more important than the outcome of games.

I will play the right way by competing ethically and honestly, with fairness, hustle, and enthusiasm.

I pledge to celebrate and encourage diversity and inclusion at all levels, **because the game welcomes all.**

Coaches

I pledge to honor the game by exhibiting a positive attitude toward all players, coaches, parents, and officials, treating them in the same manner I want to be treated.

I understand that working hard and competing to the best of my ability is more important than the outcome of games, and embrace that my words and actions are an example to my players.

I will coach the right way by preparing and encouraging my players to compete ethically and honestly, with fairness, hustle, and enthusiasm.

I will prioritize the mental and physical wellness and safety of all players above all else.

I pledge to celebrate and encourage diversity and inclusion at all levels, **because the game welcomes all.**

Parents

I pledge to honor the game by exhibiting a positive attitude toward all players, coaches, parents, and officials, treating them in the same manner I want to be treated.

I understand that my child working hard and competing to the best of his/her ability is more important than the outcome of games.

I will show my support in a fair and ethical manner, encouraging my child and his/her teammates through positive reinforcement, patience, and honesty, leaving the coaching to the coaches and the officiating to the officials.

I pledge to celebrate and encourage diversity and inclusion at all levels, **because the game welcomes all.**