

# Soccer Association for Youth, U.S.A. National Volunteer Screening Program



## NOTICE to AREAS

It is understood that many Areas, having a large number of players, have a structure of smaller operating units defined as “Districts”. However, the operating agreements of the Soccer Association for Youth, U.S.A (SAY) are with each Area, not with individual Districts. Therefore, the responsibility of the implementation and administration of the **SAY Volunteer Screening Program** rests with each Area Board.

- An Area has the latitude to set up their volunteer screening structure as they wish. However, it is **STRONGLY** suggested that the fewer people involved the better. The Area Volunteer Administrator (AVA) (or a specially chosen Assistant) should contact each District President in his/her Area to put in place a screening program for volunteers. The District President or an appointed individual will serve as the District’s Volunteer Administrator (DVA). The President or (DVA) should provide SAY Volunteer Applications/Screening forms to each person interested in or currently performing volunteer functions for SAY. The DVA must maintain all Volunteer Applications/Screening Forms in a safe and confidential location for at least two (2) years. The DVA should immediately forward to the Area Volunteer Administrator all original completed applications with “YES” responses to questions under the “Personal History” heading. The AVA in turn, will forward to the National Office all area applications with “YES” responses. The AVA is responsible for processing these forms in a completely confidential manner. SAY will only work with an administrator from the Area level. **Each Area will identify, annually to the SAY National Office, their Area Volunteer Administrator.** If not identified otherwise the Area President will be assumed to have that role. Remember, this is a sensitive matter and should be considered **proprietary** at all levels.
- **EXISTING SCREENING PROGRAMS.** Any Area having a volunteer screening program in place shall forward that program to the SAY National Office for review and acceptance. The steps defined herein would be considered minimal to meeting the volunteer screening requirements of SAY.

## SAY Volunteer Screening Program GOALS:

- *Protection* of players – Primary concern.
- *Protection* and well being of volunteers.
- *Protection* of Area and National organizations.

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## Step One

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**Action:** All Areas to Implement **"Times Two"** program.

**Implementation Date:** Immediately

**All Areas establish and implement a procedure to assure that no less than two adults (suggested as unrelated), per team, be present at all team functions such as games, practices, picnics, etc. No Exceptions!**

### NOTES:

1. The adults to be present can be a combination of coaches, parents, board members, etc.
2. While the focus of this policy is the child, it also provides protection for the volunteers in case of misunderstandings.
3. It is important that your Area review your policy on car-pooling. SAY has for a long time recommended that volunteers not provide transportation for non-family members. This was more of an insurance issue but now has implications as regards the intent of the **"Times Two"** policy.

**IMPORTANT!** Failure to implement the **"Times Two"** program may adversely impact an Area's liability insurance coverage.

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## Step Two

**Action:** All **coaches** will complete a SAY “Volunteer Application Form.”

**Implementation Date:** Spring-2003

**All coaches, 18 years and older, will complete a SAY “Volunteer Application Form” prior to being assigned any team responsibilities or Area duties.**

### NOTES:

1. The application form can be used to include ALL volunteers within an Area’s program. However, because this is a new program, it will start with the coaches, including any and all assistant coaches. SAY has set its focus on **“Any adult having unsupervised access to children.”** Coaches best fit this description. However, the process defined herein could apply to ALL volunteers having access to children.
2. The form will be an official SAY document and will be provided to all Areas.
3. The form will have the appropriate personnel information (name, address, Area identification, etc.) plus **“YES/NO”** questions as to possible criminal history or history of violence. Finally there will be an **agreement**/statement\*\* that all coaches must read and sign. That statement will notify the applicant that he/she may be required to be finger printed and submit to a criminal background check.

**IMPORTANT!** SAY does NOT want the “Volunteer Application Form” returned to the SAY National Office unless it meets the conditions as described in **Step Three**. Keep each completed form on file for at least two (2) years.

At the end of each season each Area will be required to submit a statement, in writing, confirming that all coaches had, in fact, completed the SAY Volunteer Application Form. This statement must be sent to the attention of the SAY Executive Director, in Cincinnati, Ohio in order to qualify for a certificate of liability insurance for the next playing season.

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## Step Three

**Action:** Any completed application form that meets the particular criteria defined below shall be forwarded to the SAY National Office for review.

**Implementation:** Immediately upon receipt by the Area administrator.

**Any completed SAY Volunteer Application/Screening Form sent to the Say National Office with a “YES” response to questions concerning criminal history or history of violence, will trigger the requirement that the applicant submit to a criminal background check which could include a request for fingerprinting, prior to being considered for any volunteer position within SAY**

### IMPORTANT:

- All the completed forms from the applicants containing a “YES” response to any question under the “Personal History” heading, should be sent directly to the AVA (as defined in the above NOTICE:). All forms received are to be reviewed to make sure that all questions have been answered.
  - At no time should the Area/District attempt to obtain ANY supplementary information with regard to a “YES” response on the SAY Volunteer Application Form. This is proprietary information that should not be in the possession of any individual in the Area. Dissemination of this type of information could lead to liability for SAY and for the Area involved.
  - If an applicant, having a “YES” response, is required to become active prior to the screening process being completed the Area may choose to allow a temporary variance to that applicant. This variance should ONLY be given to those applicants who have previously participated without incidence in the Area’s program. New applicants having a “YES” response to questions under the “Personal History” heading should not be allowed access to their teams until the process has been completed.
  - An applicant may, at any time, withdraw their application. The form shall be immediately returned to the applicant. **IMPORTANT:** All information on the form must be considered proprietary in nature and its content must not be disclosed to anyone at any time.
1. If, to questions under the “Personal History” heading a completed form is received with a “YES” response that applicant’s form should be immediately sent to the SAY National Office.
    - a. The AVA should sign and date the form.
    - b. Mark the envelope as CONFIDENTIAL and mail it to the attention of the SAY Executive Director, Cincinnati, OH
    - c. Unless the Area is confident that it has a secure place to maintain proprietary information a copy of that completed form should NOT be kept by the Area once it has been received by the SAY Executive Director.

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## STEP THREE (cont.)

- d. Contact the SAY National Office by phone and alert them that a Volunteer Application Form(s) (indicate specific number) is on its way. No other information should be volunteered at that time.
2. The SAY Executive Director, immediately upon receiving the completed form(s), will send to the subject volunteer applicant a follow-up document requesting additional information as to the “YES” response. The questions in that form will concern type of conviction, location, and date. Additionally, the applicant will be provided an opportunity to state anything they feel is relevant to the matter.
3. Because there was a “YES” response, the volunteer applicant will be advised, in that same mailing, that he/she will be required to submit to a criminal history report. The volunteer applicant will be given five (7) working days to return the follow-up report.
4. Once the follow-up report is received, the SAY Executive Director will contact the AVA and request information as to what police agency (specific contact name and phone number) within the Area will perform the finger printing and criminal history check .
5. The SAY Executive Director will then contact the local police agency and start the process.
6. SAY will request that all information obtained be sent directly and only to the SAY Executive Director At this point SAY assumes this is possible. If not, SAY will adjust the procedure accordingly.
7. Please note, the cost to do the finger printing and background check by the local police agency will be the responsibility of the Area involved. The SAY Executive Director will ask that it be billed directly to the Area or if need be, SAY will invoice the Area accordingly. The Area will not be charged for the involvement of the SAY National Office.

### NOTE:

The volunteer screening program requires that all Areas be proactive and develop a working relationship with their local police agencies. Since the SAY National Office will need specific contacts as a part of the process, it is recommended that AVA's obtain basic information immediately from the local law enforcement agencies. Additionally, since volunteer screening is a growing trend in sports (actually many organizations are far ahead in this matter), the local police agency may offer educational assistance if the Area wishes to expand this program on their own. Each Area should provide a copy of any additional screening policies or procedures which it implements to the SAY National Office.

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## Step Four

**Action:** Review final report with the Area Volunteer Administrator.

**Implementation:** As soon as possible, when police report is received.

**Based on the results of criminal history check the volunteer applicant will be advised, in a confidential writing, as to those results.”**

**NOTE:** Up to this point, potentially only three people would be aware of an issue with a volunteer application. Only ONE has any knowledge as to specifics of the applicant’s personnel background history. This is **VERY** important, not only for SAY, the Area, and the individual administrator, but also for the protection of the applicant, should it be so warranted.

SAY is very sensitive to the fact that people may have made mistakes in their past that may not necessarily be a reflection of who they are today. However, up to this point, all volunteer applicants will be treated exactly the same in regards to identifying potential “disqualifiers” related to becoming a volunteer and their subsequent “eligibility” in working with youth in the SAY program.

The SAY National Office has on file a list of potential “disqualifying offenses” as stated within the Ohio Senate Bill 187. This list will be used as the guide by SAY in determining action from this point.

- Once the police report is received by the SAY Executive Director, the AVA will be contacted and informed that the report indicates an issue that is being referred to the SAY Volunteer Committee. **AGAIN, this is proprietary information and must not be shared with anyone.**
- If the SAY Executive Director determines that there are sufficient mitigating circumstances, he/she has the discretion to leave the final decision regarding the acceptance of the volunteer to the Area. The SAY Executive Director will have the final determination as to which procedure is applicable.

**EXAMPLE:** The applicant at the age of 19 was convicted of a “misdemeanor assault”. The applicant is now 35, a family man and has coached in SAY for 4 years. The police history shows no violations since the assault conviction and the history in SAY has been satisfactory. The SAY Executive Director advises the AVA that he/she is leaving the final determination regarding acceptance to the Area. There are now several options open to the Area.

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## STEP FOUR (cont.)

Option	Action	Considerations
1	Do nothing and simply accept the applicant. This must be an Area Board decision.	This carries with it an extreme amount of risk. If the applicant does something and the criminal history is made known the Area Board, collectively and individually may be open to legal action.
2	Accept the applicant but conditionally. With the applicant's permission identify to the team parents the criminal history. Effectively, the parents make the choice. THIS option may require further consideration based on your state law.	This is a very difficult thing for any one to do, permission or not. However, if the applicants desire to coach is strong enough it would be essentially their choice.  <b>NOTE:</b> No information is released, in this case, unless the volunteer signs a "consent" form.
3	Disqualify the applicant.	This is the simplest path to take. In some cases it may also be very difficult to do.

The volunteer applicant should be advised in writing whether he/she has been accepted as a SAY Volunteer utilizing the following guidelines:

1. . If the decision to disqualify was made by the Volunteer Screening Committee, the notification shall be made in writing by SAY's Executive Director, with a copy sent to the AVA, .
2. If the decision was made by the Area Board of Directors, the AVA shall notify the potential volunteer in writing. The AVA shall copy SAY's Executive Director on any notification to potential volunteers. It is strongly suggested that the reason for being rejected not be stated. Simply say thank you, but no thank you.

### APPEALS

- No one has an absolute right to volunteer for SAY Soccer. There is no appeal from the decision to accept or reject an applicant..

### Summary Comment!

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Going through the screening process and making the final choices necessary in the selection of SAY volunteers is a serious part of an Area Board's administrative function. In terms of all the work necessary to operate a successful program, screening is probably now the most important part of that program. It must be the protection of the children that is the motivating factor in all of this. To that end, the GOALS remain the same!