

**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH  
SPORTS PROGRAM STRUCTURE  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE  
SCHOOL**

**PASTOR**



**SPORTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**(Chairperson)**



**SPORTS DIRECTOR**



**COACHES**

## **ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH SPORTS PROGRAM**

This **Handbook** is intended as a guide for those who govern, manage and participate in the sports program at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. It is a reflection of the ongoing growth of the parish sports program and the challenges and opportunities that come with that growth.

The directives given here are offered to promote an active integration of Christian values into the entire athletic program. Participation in sports at any level requires adherence to rules; the guidelines and procedures in this handbook, including all appendices added by the Sports Advisory Board, are rules for the uniform governance, management, and maintenance of a comprehensive athletic program. The rules and guidelines in this handbook shall supersede those of other organizations. It is hoped that the presentation of and adherence to these guidelines will improve and strengthen the program offered at St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON**

“The first priority of our Catholic education program is to seek personal commitment to Jesus Christ. This commitment should lead in turn to the creation of a Christian environment in which commitment can grow and develop in the Father’s loving care and can be nurtured and strengthened through the power of the Spirit. It comes to full flower in the form of total involvement in the sacramental life of the church.”

## **ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH MISSION STATEMENT**

The parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi will live as a people who know, love, and serve God and the community, in which they live, in the Franciscan tradition of the Roman Catholic faith.

## **SPORTS PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT**

The St. Francis of Assisi (SFA) Sports Program is an important component of the comprehensive approach to youth ministry in the Diocese of Arlington, including the parish of St. Francis of Assisi. The purpose of these programs is to encourage healthy physical activity while promoting Christian attitudes. The elementary and middle school sports activities should foster:

- Cooperation
- Respect
- Sportsmanship
- Responsibility
- Leadership
- Maturity
- Competitiveness
- Fairness
- Courtesy

They should:

- Set a positive learning experience for Christian development.
- Emphasize sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline, and physical well-being.

- Help each individual understand competition and to cope properly with the results of that competition whether win or lose.
- Provide an opportunity for all participants to develop and share knowledge and skills appropriate for their grade level, both mental and physical.
- Foster parish spirit and provide an opportunity for the children to have some fun.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The impact of participating in a sports program is unique. Participation in sports can:

- Improve and educate for life-long health
- Increase self esteem
- Nurture the development of an inner sense of fair play and good sportsmanship
- Provide a bridge to unify different populations
- Contribute to the “sound body, sound mind” philosophy so essential in the character-building process
- Foster self-discipline and self-sacrifice
- Teach student-athletes to handle the rigors of physical competition spiritually, physically, intellectually, and morally.

## **SPORTS PROGRAM**

The extracurricular sports program has long been synonymous with a well-rounded academic experience. The Sports Advisory Board aids the Pastor by making recommendations concerning all activities, as well as the future direction of the program. The Advisory Board acts as liaison with the Pastor and oversees the scope and direction of the program. The Sports Director leads and manages the program on a daily basis to ensure compliance with league rules and regulations and create an atmosphere conducive to skills development, fun, and competitive play.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM**

The Sports Program at St. Francis of Assisi currently supports participation in the Northern Virginia Junior CYO in the following sports:

- Track and Field (Fall – grades 5-8; Spring – grades 3-4)
- Cross Country (Fall and Spring – grades 6-8)
- Basketball (Winter – grades 4 through 8)
- Cheerleading (Winter – grades 4 through 8)
- Softball (Spring – grades 5 through 8)

Additionally, the SFA Sports Program supports Volleyball in the Fall season for girls in grades 6 through 8. Teams may schedule non-NVJCYO games.

Generally, individual sports seasons will be categorized as Fall, Winter, and Spring sports seasons. Normally, these seasons will begin on the following dates:

Fall season – September 1

Winter season – November 1

Spring season – March 1

The continuing success of the Sports Program through the years can be attributed to effective leadership, encouragement by the parish staff, and most importantly, the tremendous support of our parents, not only financially, but in acting as volunteer coaches and providing supervision at home events. It is the intention of the Sports Advisory Board to elevate the program to include more opportunities for our children through both extracurricular activities and an intramural sports program.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SPORTS PROGRAM**

The parish sports programs are an extension of the parish mission and these programs are subject to the **authority of the Pastor** by virtue of his office (Diocesan Policy).

**The Pastor** is the ultimate level of authority and responsibility regarding the Sports Program. It is the duty of the Pastor to be the Chief Administrator of the Program. Final approval for all aspects of the program is at the sole discretion of the Pastor.

## **ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM**

The organization of the Sports Program is the responsibility of the Sports Advisory Board. It sets rules, regulations and policy regarding sports participation, season length, and coaching criteria, among other things.

## **SPORTS ADVISORY BOARD**

An advisory board of parents appointed by the Pastor oversees the Sports Program. The board will consist of six members. The initial board members are: Kevin Herrmann (Chairperson), Maria Kitchens, Sharon Joy, Rich Coyle, Chuck Taylor, and Irene Morales Ward. These names are listed here for the purpose of providing a historical record for this document. This denotes the first full year of participation in this capacity. All board members will serve two year terms, with three members rotating out every year. Nothing shall prevent the Pastor from appointing individuals to serve consecutive terms, as he deems appropriate.

The areas of responsibility include:

- Develop and maintain a handbook for the St. Francis of Assisi Sports Program, establishing clear guidelines to be used by student-athletes, parents, coaches, and administrators;
- Define and pursue the goals and objectives of the Sports Program;
- Serve as grievance authority for the Sports Program;
- In coordination with the Sports Director, set policy and procedures for various aspects of the Sports Program including, but not limited to:
  - student eligibility
  - season length (per sport)
  - coaching requirements
  - sports offered
  - grievance procedure
  - financial management
  - scheduling of allotted gym time

Regarding issues or concerns brought to the Sports Advisory Board for resolution, the following apply:

- Resolution of all issues shall first be attempted informally with the coach, then the Sports Director.
- After attempting informal resolution, all issues or concerns shall be presented by parents, coaches, or other concerned party, in writing by letter, email, etc., to the chairperson of the Board.

- The Board will review and deliberate over and resolve issues by a vote. Each Board member is entitled to one vote. A majority vote, 51% of members present, resolves an issue.
- The Pastor, as the ultimate level of authority and responsibility for this program, may override the majority vote of the Board.
- All Board deliberations are confidential and actions will be announced as “the decision of the Sports Advisory Board.”
- The Board may take no action at a meeting unless a quorum is present. A quorum is defined as more than half of the appointed Board members.

The Sports Advisory Board shall meet quarterly, at a minimum in February, May, August, and November. They shall review the financial management of the Sports Program, as presented by the Sports Director at each quarterly meeting. The board shall request additional information deemed necessary for this review from the parish Business Manager.

### **SPORTS DIRECTOR**

The Pastor shall appoint a Sports Director responsible for the day-to-day management of the Sports Program. For historical record, the initial Sports Director is Mrs. Terry DeVito. The Sports Director shall:

- Manage the Sports Program in accordance with the latest edition of the NVJCYO Parish Representative Handbook and any policies and procedures set forth by the Sports Advisory Board;
- Ensure that all members of the Sports Advisory Board receive the latest edition of the NVJCYO Parish Representative handbook;
- Appoint Sports Coordinators for each sport in which the parish participates;
- Report **all** Code of Conduct (Appendix 2) issues involving players, parents, and coaches to the Sports Advisory Board;
- Provide support, including resources, for non-NVJCYO sports activities within the parish, as directed by the Board;
- Secure advance approval of the Board for all expenditures in excess of \$500.00;
- Provide first aid supplies and equipment to all coaches at the start of each season.

### **SPORTS COORDINATORS – SELECTION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Sports Coordinators will be appointed by the Sports Director for each sport and will assist the Sports Director, as needed. The goal of the program is to have one Sports Coordinator for each sport in which St. Francis of Assisi Sports Program participates, to alleviate the workload of the Sports Director and assist the coaches. The Sports Coordinators may select parent volunteers and delegate their duties.

### **COACHES – SELECTION, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The coach has the greatest responsibility as well as the greatest opportunity to guide and influence the student athletes. Coaches assume the role of teacher, mentor, and minister to the young people in their charge. A coach’s attitude and behavior are critical to modeling good Christian Catholic sportsmanship, both in word and in deed. The careful selection of coaches is vital if the Sports Program is to reflect the mission/philosophy of the parish.

## **Selection of Coaches**

The Sports Director chooses coaches with nominations coming from the Sport Coordinators and the Sports Advisory Board after candidates have submitted:

- a volunteer application – to include criminal background check
- a letter of intent to coach with experience included

### **Criteria for the selection of coaches includes:**

- Current coaches will have right of first refusal for returning the following season to their current coaching positions;
- parent, adult family member over 21, or staff member of St. Francis of Assisi;
- the ability to model Catholic Christian values;
- the ability to articulate and model the philosophy and goals of the program;
- the ability to supervise and instruct the youth in his or her care;
- an understanding of the basics of the sport to be coached;
- the ability to develop the potential, confidence, and skills of each athlete;
- the ability to separate winning from the more important goals and values of the program.

## **Coaching – Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Coaches must:**

- Be familiar with, adhere to, and support the Mission Statement of St. Francis of Assisi Parish and the Sports Program Mission Statement, as stated above, as well as all league policies and guidelines.
- Be knowledgeable of the rules of the sport and techniques for teaching the fundamentals of the sport. They should use tactics and strategies that are appropriate for the age and skill levels of their athletes.
- Model Christian sportsmanship, knowing that the program is judged more by the coach's sportsmanship than by his/her record. The coach should teach and guide the team members with a sense of fair play and model winning and losing in a respectful, courteous, and gracious Christian manner.
- Hold a preseason mandatory parents' meeting to personally discuss expectations.
- Show respect for game officials and opponents; publicly shaking hands with the officials and the opposing coach before and after a game gives clear witness to this respect.
- Refrain from public protest, which may lead to similar behavior from students, parents, and other spectators.
- Be responsible for the safety and welfare of the team. They are responsible for the equipment issued to them, and for the proper use of the facilities where practices and games are held.
- Have in their possession at all sporting events an emergency form for each athlete in their care, in

case of emergency. The emergency form should list obvious problems such as asthma, heart problems, and diabetes, as well as parent contact information and emergency consent for treatment.

- Have in their possession at all sporting events first aid supplies and equipment.
- Never administer medication.
- Be responsible to make sure that there is proper adult (a person of at least 21 years of age) supervision in their absence. This includes ensuring adult supervision during emergencies.
- Teach the rules of the sport and develop each player's skills within the framework of team concept. They must help each player develop self-confidence, discipline, and sportsmanship and make participation a learning experience for all.
- Strive to be fair and unprejudiced in their relationships with student athletes and their parents.
- Ensure that students wear the uniform, all proper safety equipment, and any other expected attire.
- Discipline inappropriate student behavior or disrespect. However, the coach may *never* resort to physical or verbal abuse or profanity. Coaches should know the difference between punitive touching (physical discipline) and corrective touching (correcting a student's hold on a ball or bat); one is prohibited while the other is not. Coaches must use common sense and maturity in resolving problems and conflict.
- Communicate the schedule of practices, games, or any cancellations or alteration to the students and their parents in a timely manner. Coaches cannot assume that players will get the message home.
- Document any discipline problems and then notify the parent of the participant, as well as the Sports Director and Sports Advisory Board with regards to the offending behavior.
- Complete a NVJCYO Accident Report for all accidents and injuries, and submit it to the Sports Director within 48 hours. Parents shall be immediately notified of all injuries.
- Serve notice of intent to continue as a coach for the following season, to the Sports Director, within 30 days of completion of the current season. If the current coach does not wish to return, or fails to notify his/her intent to return, the Sports Director will make immediate plans to find a replacement.
- Be required to attend a mandatory Coaching Clinic for their particular sport.
- Be monitored periodically by the Sports Director, members of the Sports Advisory Board, and the Pastor to ensure the environment in which they teach our children is consistent with the Catholic Christian philosophy of the program.
- Must meet the guidelines set forth by the Archdiocese for child protection

### **Playing Time**

All players will receive playing time in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Fourth and fifth grade teams are developmental in nature. Coaches will strive to ensure an equal amount of playing time for all players.
- Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade players shall be provided playing time in accordance with the guidelines provided in the NVJCYO Parish Representative Handbook.

**Coaches will not:**

- Deny playing time to students who are cooperative in effort and attendance;
- Have practices scheduled when there is early dismissal from school prior to a holiday (does not include regular Thursday early dismissal unless prior to a holiday);
- Play students who are not on their regular roster.
- Join an additional league or tournament without express written consent from the Sports Advisory Board and the Sports Director.
- Serve as head coach for more than one team in one season.

**STUDENT ATHLETES – ELIGIBILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Criteria for Eligibility:**

- Submit all documentation to the Sports Director within an established time line;
- Present completed permission forms;
- Sign an agreement of support of the guidelines and policies of the Sports Program expectations;
- Must be a student at St. Francis of Assisi Elementary and Middle School or an elementary or middle school student enrolled and currently participating in the Religious Education program at St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

**Athlete's Responsibilities**

- Participating in an athletic program and playing sports is a privilege not a right. Athletes will be held to personal and disciplinary standards.
- Students who choose to participate in the Parish Sports Program are representing St. Francis of Assisi at all times. They must act in a manner that reflects favorably upon the Parish and on themselves.
- The athlete is responsible for the uniform issued. If it is lost, stolen, or damaged an appropriate assessment can be made to replace the uniform. At the end of the season, uniforms should be returned in good, clean, reusable condition.
- The student athlete shows respect for coaches and cooperates with them fully. This respect is also given to members of their team, opponents, and officials of the sport.
- Athletes are expected to show good sportsmanship and play by the rules. They should be supportive of the members of their team.
- Losing self-control, using inappropriate gestures or tone of voice, or foul and abusive language, arguing a referee's call or a coach's decision or other signs of disrespect are reasons for disciplinary

action. Consequences of such behavior could be reduced playing time, or even suspension or expulsion from the team.

- An athlete may be asked to submit to a search of gym bags, uniforms, and other athletic gear when the athletic director, the coach, or another school official suspects that the student possesses anything that might be detrimental to the health and safety of the student or the team.
- Athletes are expected to be present and on time for all practices and games. Not attending practices affects the entire team and detracts from the sense of teamwork that the coaches are striving to achieve. An “excused” absence would be for professional appointments, family emergencies and parish sacramental preparations or church related functions. These excused absences would not affect a player’s status. This must be *directly* communicated to the coach.
- An “unexcused” absence will jeopardize the athlete’s playing time based on the coaches’ discretion.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN – EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents play an important role in the success of the student athlete and also in the success of the team. The Sports Director and Sports Advisory Board hold an orientation session before the beginning of the fall, winter and spring seasons to review the programs’ policies and expectations. Parental attendance at these orientation sessions is expected.

#### **Parents’ Responsibilities**

- Parents are expected to support and encourage their child’s efforts. Attending games and cheering the team on is a show of support, however parents are always reminded to act in a responsible manner and show good Christian sportsmanship.
- Parents should not attempt to instruct or direct the play of an athlete or of the team during games. They should not criticize the playing efforts of any athlete or of the team.
- Parents can be a model for putting losses in perspective and moving on. Questioning, criticizing, or berating the coach, the referees, or any other officials is inappropriate behavior.
- Parents should realize that they can and may be asked to leave a game or tournament if they are not able to maintain a standard of acceptable behavior.
- Parents are also expected to contribute their time and service in support of the team and the Sports Program. A volunteer program is dependent upon everyone’s support to maintain a high level of quality and success. Parents will be asked to assist in a variety of ways, including coaching (assistants), fundraising, etc.
- One or two parents may be asked to serve as team liaison and assist with phone calls and/or emails, or provide a schedule to see that all tasks are filled and rotated in an equitable manner.
- Parents will provide transportation for their children to and from games and practices.
- Parents should assist the student in maintaining the athletic uniform.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

All issues of concern between players/parents and coaches/Sports Director will first be addressed informally between the two parties involved. All resultant grievances will be made in writing to the Chairperson of the Sports Advisory Board. It is our goal to provide a fair and equitable solution to any concerns that arise within the Sports Program.

## **FEDERAL LAW AND THE SPORTS PROGRAM**

Federal law prohibits sex discrimination in private schools' education programs or activities. The law allows only one exception; the private school that can prove that compliance with the statute and its regulations would conflict with its religious tenants. The Diocese of Arlington, following the Roman Catholic Church, encourages equal treatment of the sexes. Consequently, all Diocesan parishes must provide equal athletic opportunity for both sexes.

The United States' courts that have considered the meaning of "equal athletic opportunity" judge organizations' compliance with federal law by these factors:

- whether the selection of sports and levels of competition effectively accommodates the interests and abilities of members of both sexes;
- the provision of the equipment and supplies;
- the scheduling of games and practice times;
- the travel and per diem allowance;
- the opportunity to receive coaching and academic tutoring;
- the assignment and compensation of coaches and/or tutors;
- the provision of locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities;
- the provision of medical and training facilities and services;
- the provision of housing and dining facilities and services; and publicity.

The courts apply one of three tests to find whether organizations have complied with factor one. These tests are: whether male and female level of participation opportunities are proportionate to the male and female enrollment percentages; where one sex is under-represented, whether the school can show history and continuing improvement in program expansion that is responsive to the developing interest and abilities of the under represented sex; where one sex is under represented and the school cannot show improvement in program expansion, whether the present program fully and effectively accommodates the interests and abilities of the under represented sex. Accordingly, Diocesan schools provide co-educational athletic programs where possible or comparable programs, according to the factors and tests outlined above.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Policy for Fielding Basketball Teams**

In order to avoid cutting players, to meet the NVJCYO minimum requirement of eight players, and to attain the SFA Sports Program goal of a maximum of 12 players, the following procedures will be followed:

- The Sports Director will notify the Sports Advisory Board that it has become necessary to move players up to form/balance the rosters.
- The Sports Director, along with the affected coaches, will decide on which players are candidates to move up, based on their skills and maturity.
- The Sports Director will then approach parents/guardian of players who have been considered candidates to be moved up and inform them of this decision. If the parent agrees that the best course of action is to move their child up one level, the parent/guardian will sign an acknowledgement form that they approve the move.
- If the parent/guardian does not consent to move their child up, then the Sports Director will continue to the next step.
- The Sports Director will then try to find other means to field the roster based on the guidelines set forth in the NVJCYO handbook under "finding players." This is only a recommended guideline. Obviously the player must have the skills and maturity to be moved up.
- If the Sports Director, after following the handbook guidelines for finding players still cannot find players to field/balance a team, then it may become necessary to move a player(s) up for the good of the Parish Sports Program without parental approval. If this becomes necessary, the Sports Director, along with the Sports Advisory Board, will meet and ensure all other options have been explored. If all options have been exhausted, then the Sports Director will notify the Pastor that it is necessary to move a player up without parental approval. If the Pastor concurs with the Board's and Sports Director's decision, the parent/guardian will be notified that their child will be moved up. The parent/guardian will then have an opportunity to decide if their child will play up or not at all.

NOTE - Sometimes there are tough choices that have to be made in order to preserve the entire program. This is one of them. This procedure for fielding teams in our Parish Sports Program is based on making the best decision for the St. Francis of Assisi Sports Program as a whole and not solely on the individual.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Code of Conduct**

1. At no time is a parent or fan allowed to approach an official, timekeeper, or scorekeeper in a confrontational manner before, during, or after the game. Any violation of this rule will result in forfeiture by the team and the parent or fan barred from the games for the rest of the year.
2. No parent or fan is allowed in the playing court at any time. Spectators are to remain in the bleachers.
3. Parents and fans should cheer in a positive manner for both teams. No uncharitable or unchristian-like comments will be made about your own team players or the opposing team.
4. No child is to roam free or play pickup ball at any facility, including but not limited to the playing court, on top of or under bleachers, in hallways, foyers, restrooms, on stages, on parish grounds or in parking lots.
5. Players, coaches and fans will refrain from yelling or attempting to distract the shooter while either team is attempting free throws. This is not high school, college, or the NBA. It is very unsportsmanlike.
6. There is no smoking, eating, or drinking of (anything you can put in your mouth and/or digest) in any gym at any time in any facility used by the NVJCYO.
7. In facilities where there is a stage, no one is allowed on the stage at anytime.
8. No team is allowed to meet in the hallways prior to, during, or after the game. There is plenty of room in the gyms.
9. Cheerleaders are not to be meeting or warming up in the hallways of any facility used by the NVJCYO.
10. No one may congregate in the playing area, near team benches, or in foyer areas of any gym after a game has completed.
11. Any fan accompanying a coach, player and/or family will be made aware of these rules by the same.