

Sports, when led by a supportive coach, have the potential to greatly impact athletes and help them develop a variety of life skills while having fun! This impact cannot happen without coaches. So, how does an organization effectively recruit coaches to ensure every child who wants to play in a positive sports environment has the opportunity?

Here are some elements to consider in your coach recruitment:

Dedicate Staff Time

If resources allow, assign someone within the organization to focus on recruiting and managing coaches. Provide them with clear expectations, ample training, equitable resources, and community connections to help them in their pursuit of prospective coaches. Having someone dedicated to finding and supporting coaches demonstrates the value the organization places in coaches and can help with retention rates.

Develop Your Message

Using ideas from the organization's mission statement, develop the message that you want to use in your recruitment campaign. For example: "We are a sports organization that is developing young people on the field and off. We're looking for people that care about kids and love this sport and want to be part of an exciting organization that strives to provide positive, impactful sports experiences." Emphasize the benefits your organization provides for coaches (e.g., coaching clinics and support, the opportunity to make a difference, the community and relationships that they will build...).

Advertise

Social media, newspapers, parent/caregiver magazines, radio public service announcements (PSAs), local high schools, city colleges and universities are potential targets for sharing your coaching opportunities. For those who haven't considered coaching, it may take several asks and exposure to the idea before it sets in that coaching is something they can do!

*As a PCA partner, you can tag PCA in your coach recruitment posts on social media, and we will share them with our vast network of coaches, as well!

Be Intentional and Equitable in Your Recruitment Strategy

Representation matters! In your ads and messaging, include a diverse set of images (i.e., all genders and races) of coaches that are a reflection of the kids that you serve and want to serve. Expand your recruitment strategy to include all community members. By focusing on the power of mentorship, you can develop your coaching talent by allowing new coaches to start as assistants to more seasoned coaches and provide them with the training they need to successfully guide young people. Be mindful of barriers that may disproportionately affect women (i.e., childcare) and be intentional about the perks you can offer. For example, provide childcare for coaches or let them know they can bring their children to practice.



Enlist Current Coaches as Recruiters

Encourage your current coaches to bring a friend or family member into the organization to coach. Many coaches get started because a friend asked them. They then go on to coach their own team. You might even experiment with a reward system in which a current coach would receive a benefit (i.e. a t-shirt or gift card) if they successfully recruit additional coaches.

Target High-Potential Areas

Request to set up a recruitment table at local institutions or community events where potential coaches congregate. Local colleges and universities are filled with young people who played sports and want to give back while connecting to their local community. Community colleges and universities often offer recreation and education courses that require service learning hours directly supporting youth. Coaching is an excellent opportunity for students to gain teaching and mentorship skills. Local high school athletes may be interested in becoming assistant coaches. No matter where you go, make sure your table is engaging and that you have a way to capture interest, and follow-up immediately.

Host Information Sessions

Consider holding one or more informational sessions for prospective coaches. This is a low-barrier opportunity for people to get to know you, get a better sense of what your program is all about, and have their questions answered before making a commitment. These can be offered during a standing date and time each week or month in-person or online. Or, it could be that a staff member provides a 'tour' during a game day or clinic, so interested individuals get a true sense of the coaching experience.

Start Early

Get the word out well before you need coaches. You will want to begin recruitment at least two months prior to allow time for onboarding, background checks, and training.

Follow Up

Once a prospective coach expresses interest, be sure to follow up within 48 hours whenever possible via email, phone, and/or text message. Today, one email is rarely enough. Be persistent and find a way to personally connect with each coach and share their next steps. Keep them engaged all the way to the season start date!

Evaluate

At the end of the season, pull together a focus group of coaches and ask them how the season went, what they appreciated about the organization, what could be improved, and what ideas they have for getting more coaches. Also solicit testimonials from coaches that can be used in the next season's marketing materials.

