



Guidelines for Funding Sports Programs with Enhanced Safety Risks

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) encourages municipal youth bureaus to fund a wide range of youth sports programming for underserved youth with the Youth Sports and Education Opportunity Funding (YSEF) and Youth Team Sports (YTS) allocations. While all physical activity has some level of risk, some activities have more risk than others. These guidelines serve as a tool to help youth bureaus better support, evaluate, and monitor youth sports programming with enhanced safety risks to support safe programming for all.

What kinds of sports programming have enhanced safety risks?

There is no definitive list of all types of sporting activities with enhanced safety risks; however, there are categories of programming with an enhanced risk of physical injury. These categories include but are not limited to:

- Sports with forcible physical contact (football, boxing, lacrosse, etc.)
- Sports with potentially dangerous equipment (archery, air riflery, axe throwing, etc.)
- Sports that have a high risk of traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other physical injury (equine sports, skiing, gymnastics, etc.)

What should youth bureaus look for when reviewing applications for sports programs with enhanced safety risks?

Programs should demonstrate in their written application an ability to safely administer sports programming with enhanced safety risks. Municipal youth bureaus should look for the following information in a program application for YSEF or YTS:

1. Staff competency
 - Has the program demonstrated that program staff are competent in sports safety, first aid, and are qualified to use applicable equipment?
 - Does the program require staff be trained or have relevant credentials related to protecting the safety of youth participants?
2. Safety training and procedures
 - Does the program properly inform youth and guardians about the risks associated with their activity?
 - How does the program educate youth about the activity in a manner that prevents injuries and encourages safe participation?
 - Does the program have clear procedures on how to respond to an accident or injury?
3. Environment and equipment
 - Does the program conduct their activities at an appropriate site using proper equipment?
 - For potentially dangerous equipment, does the program have policies on how that equipment will be stored and transported?
 - How does the program ensure their equipment is properly cleaned and maintained to prevent accidental injury?



4. Adequate supervision

- Does the program provide adequate structure and support for staff supervision of youth?
- Does the program maintain records of accidents and incidents and review these documents to prevent future accidents?

If this information cannot be found in a program's application materials, the youth bureau should request this information from the applicant before making a funding decision.

How should youth bureaus monitor sports programs with enhanced safety risks?

For sports programs with enhanced safety risks, youth bureaus are strongly encouraged to conduct site visit(s). The purpose of site visits is to monitor program implementation and assess the extent to which programming is occurring in the way it was described in its application materials. While conducting site visits, youth bureaus are encouraged to assess:

- [Eight features of positive youth development](#)
 - Does the program promote positive youth development with an emphasis on physical and psychological safety?
- Administration and personnel
 - Does the program follow its child protection policy/procedures?
 - Are staff providing the level of supervision described in the program's application materials?
- Incident review
 - Were there any accidents or incidents in the program? Review those records and ask what has changed as a result to prevent future incidents.
- Youth input
 - Do youth feel safe and agree that the program ensures physical and psychological safety? Consider asking questions related to the How Much/ How Well/ Better Off measurements selected for the program in the [Quality Youth Development System \(QYDS\)](#).