

# INCLUSIVE COACH RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Inclusive coach recruitment isn't just good practice - it's good for athletes. When programs intentionally recruit coaches who reflect the diversity of their communities, they build environments where all young people feel a sense of support, belonging, and the ability to succeed. Coaches with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences strengthen relationships, bring fresh perspectives to program leadership, and make the positive sports experience more accessible to every athlete.



Despite this, coaches who reflect the full diversity of the athletes they serve - across race, ethnicity, gender, language, and lived experience - remain underrepresented in youth sports across many communities. Addressing that gap requires sports leaders to examine their recruitment practices and take intentional steps to reach, welcome, and retain them. **Sports leaders can...**

## MAKE REPRESENTATION VISIBLE

When people don't see coaches who look like them, they may see coaching as inaccessible or not for them. Sports leaders can send a powerful message to their whole community that everyone belongs by:

- Ensuring diversity in program staff and coach recruitment materials.
- Advertising and offering mentorship programs for young, diverse coaches to bring them into the fold.

## REMOVE FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO COACHING

For many aspiring coaches, the cost of getting involved can be the deciding factor. Expenses related to training, certifications, equipment, and travel can put coaching out of reach, regardless of how much someone wants to show up for young people. Sports leaders can:

- Provide parent/caregiver coaches free enrollment for their athletes in exchange for a season of coaching.
- Offer paid stipends to cover travel and equipment expenses
- Connect coaches to free resources, like those available in [PCA's Resource Zone](#) - or even free coach trainings where possible.

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## CREATE PATHWAYS INTO COACHING

Coaching opportunities often come through personal connections, and not everyone has equal access to networks within the sports community. Sports leaders can level the playing field by actively building pathways into coaching for people across their community. Sports leaders can:

- Host in-person information sessions to build knowledge of the program, advertise coaching needs, and provide a forum for community members to connect.
- Ask a few veteran coaches to connect one-on-one with all prospective coaches.
- Formalize leadership roles for athletes that can progress into coaching roles as they get older - i.e., establish a Jr. Coach Program.

## CHECK THEIR ASSUMPTIONS

Unconscious bias and stereotypes can shape recruitment decisions, even among well-meaning leaders. When left unexamined, these assumptions can cause qualified coaches to be overlooked or pigeon-holed into specific roles, limiting both coach and program potential. Taking time to reflect on those biases is one of the most important steps a sports leader can take. Sports leaders can:

- Acknowledge and assess their own implicit biases by reflecting regularly on their decisions and interactions. This reflection guide can easily translate to our interactions and perceptions of coaches: [Recognizing Bias Through Self-Reflection](#)
- Get to know prospective coaches as individuals before making decisions.
- Invite honest feedback from colleagues and coaches about where their perspective may be limited.

## BE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

Coaches come from diverse communities, each with their own obligations, family responsibilities, work schedules, community commitments, and cultural norms. Sports leaders who take the time to understand the communities they serve are better positioned to build roles that work for more people. Sports leaders can:

- Engage community members as consultants to learn about local cultures and contexts they may not be familiar with.
- Build flexibility into coaching roles to accommodate a range of schedules and responsibilities.
- Be open to adjusting program norms and expectations to better reflect the cultures of the coaches they hope to attract.