



The **S.A.G.E.** / **V.C.R.C.** Sportsmanship Program (please note that we may not be able to implement all parts of this program)

The Mission:

To remind us that the game is for the kids, that respect for others is a lesson we can help teach, and that setting a good example is more important than winning.

Program Outline

- Parents, coaches and players should sign a Sportsmanship Pledge form spelling out appropriate conduct and the reasons good sportsmanship is so important.
- Coaches must attend and complete the NYSCA certification requirements, and they reinforce **S.A.G.E.**
- Preseason team meetings are to be held to discuss the **S.A.G.E.** program and if possible, show the **Kids Come First** video, in which players, psychologists, coaches and others explain how to make youth sports a positive experience which helps kids' self-esteem and promotes respect by and for everyone.
- Parent representatives are chosen from each team (we ask that each team have a minimum of 2 parents) who become a visual reminder of the program at games. The parent representatives will attend a seminar on sportsmanship and be certified through the PAYS (Parent's Association for Youth Sports) and be given a colorful **S.A.G.E.** t-shirt. We ask that the parent representatives wear their t-shirt to all games.
- The **S.A.G.E.** parent representatives are not enforcers of the program. There should be no confrontations. We are encouraging all adults who hear negative comments to NOT react quickly and/or emotionally. After a pause, no reaction or a pleasant "relax and enjoy the game" is often best. We thank all parents and coaches who are helping us help the kids by reporting disrespectful behavior.
- The VCRC will take whatever action is necessary and prudent concerning poor sportsmanship and in compliance with the VCRC Code of Conduct. Consequences for inappropriate behavior by spectators, players, or coaches may include a conversation with those involved and/or suggesting, or mandating that they attend a sportsmanship seminar or meeting with VCRC staff. They may also include, but not limited to, suspension from attending games.
- Parent representatives will be asked to periodically distribute sportsmanship brochures, literature, cards, etc... to spectators as reminders of the do's and don'ts of good sportsmanship.



Team S.A.G.E. Representatives

By becoming a S.A.G.E. Representative, you are helping us provide a better sports experience for our children.

Kids consistently say that their main goal in playing sports is having fun. If we adults can subdue our egos, eliminate the disrespect for officials and others, and stop putting pressure on the kids, their youth sports experience can be a good one, regardless of whether they are great athletes. Most adults behave well, but a relative few can negatively influence our children's behavior.

Many of the difficulties arise because we adults sometimes overemphasize the importance of winning. We also may have unrealistic expectations about our children's ability and their chances of playing in or after high school. In these next few pages, we will give you the tools to help make the youth sports experience a positive one for all the kids involved.

S.A.G.E. T-shirts

We ask that you wear your S.A.G.E. t-shirt anytime you are at a VCRC youth sports activity or any youth sports activity for that matter. By wearing your t-shirt, you are demonstrating your support for the program, and that you are trying to help the VCRC provide a better experience for the kids.

Meetings

We will try to have periodic "drop-in" meetings to discuss issues that may arise. Please stay tuned.

What to do if a problem arises at the game

First, we want to emphasize that we do not want confrontational situations. In addition, we will have a "field supervisor" at the games, and it is their responsibility to handle adverse situations. If someone is criticizing the coaches, players, officials, or otherwise acting in a negative emotional manner, that may not be the best time to talk to them. Remember – there should be no confrontations. Think of yourself as a gentle reminder of the S.A.G.E. program.

If the "someone" is from your team, and you feel comfortable in talking to them during the game, pleasantly suggest that he/she relax and enjoy the game. You may feel more comfortable talking to them at halftime or talking to all the parents either after the game, or before the next game. Also, when conversing away from the game, you can mention that the coaches, kids and/or referees are doing the best they can, that our sportsmanship pledge explains why he/she needs to be respectful, and that their behavior can embarrass the team and their child.

If the "someone" is from the other team, their S.A.G.E. representative (if present), should try in a friendly way to deal with it. If their representative, or another parent from their team does not calmly try to deal with it, you can use the "Relax and enjoy the game" line or another that you feel comfortable with. If not, NOT talking further to the offender is generally the best way to avoid an argument. **If necessary, remind your team's parents not to respond.** Not responding to the offender, can help quiet down some of the inappropriate behavior.



**What to do if a problem arises at the game
- continued -**

To reiterate, in any of these situations, remain calm and use a positive tone and if this does not bring an end to the situation or a positive response, do not proceed and get into an argument.

Periodically, the VCRC will supply the S.A.G.E. representatives with “sportsmanship literature” that can be handed out and possibly defuse a situation before it ever happens.

At the conclusion of the game, make a written assessment of what happened and what was said. You should inform the coach and forward the written assessment to the VCRC. Be careful not to exaggerate or overgeneralize. This communication is kept anonymous. We do not view this as tattletaling, but rather an effort to set a better example for the kids and help their self-esteem by eliminating disrespect for everyone and pressure to perform.

Too often in dealing with these types of situations, we get conflicting stories about what happened. Nonetheless, once informed that something occurred the VCRC is usually able to take steps to prevent a recurrence.

Try to discourage folks from being negative by setting the example yourself with positive comments (FOR BOTH TEAMS) like “good try,” “great effort,” “nice pass,” “you’ll get it next time,” “don’t worry about it,” etc... Praise should be directed to **ALL PLAYERS**.

While you are at it, go shake the hand of the coaches and officials after the game.

Let’s hope more folks than ever can relax, have fun and **RESPECT** everyone and enjoy the game.

