



Dear Little League Volunteer:

The backbone of Little League Baseball is the adult volunteer. One million strong, it is this corps of dedicated people who coach the teams, umpire the games, work in the concession stands, serve on the local board of directors, and serve at the District level. These people, who live in every U.S. state and 103 other countries, make Little League the largest and most respected youth sports organization on Earth.

However, we know that the greatest treasure we have is a child. As adults, we must ensure that these young people are able to grow up happy, healthy and, above all, safe. Whether they are our children, or the children of others, each of us has a responsibility to protect them. They are our future, and an endless source of joy.

Like many national youth organizations, Little League Baseball seeks to attract the most qualified volunteers to administer our program at the local level. At the same time, we must be aware that this could make us a target for child abusers.

The Little League Child Protection Program, in place since 1997, has sought to educate children and volunteers in ways to prevent child abusers from becoming involved in the local league. Part of that education has been to assist local Little League volunteers in finding effective and inexpensive ways to conduct background checks. Use of the volunteer application became mandatory last year if leagues were participating in ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program).

Background checks were optional until now. Recent advances in computer technology – allowing increased access to public records – make it possible for these background checks (to see if an individual is a registered sex offender in a given state) to be conducted in every U.S. state.

It is now time to take the next step in that program.

Starting with the 2003 season, Little League programs nationwide will be required to annually conduct a background check of: Managers, Coaches, Board of Directors members and any other persons, volunteers or hired workers, who provide regular service to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.

The purpose of these background checks is, first and foremost, to protect children. Second, they maintain Little League as a hostile environment for those who would seek to do harm. Third, they will help to protect individuals and leagues from possible loss of personal or league assets because of litigation.

Failure to complete and submit the Volunteer Application Form by those required to do so will result in being barred from involvement in Little League. Failure by the local league to conduct the proper background checks may result in suspension or termination of the league's charter and/or tournament privileges.

In the coming weeks, you will be receiving information from Little League on how to conduct these background checks. Those who will be conducting the screenings, as well as those who will be screened, will need to be properly educated. In 43 states, a check for registered sex offenders is free. (In some of the 43 states, there is a fee, but it is waived for Little Leagues because of their non-profit status.) In seven other states, the cost ranges from \$5 to \$18 per inquiry for Little Leagues.

Whatever the cost, the local league cannot afford to ignore this new regulation. In fact, compliance is a condition of charter.

Please take the time to review the materials you will soon be receiving. You can get started now by visiting www.littleleague.org for information on the sex offender registries available in the U.S.

All volunteers must understand that the ONLY losers in this new initiative will be those who would prey on our most precious resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen D. Keener".

Stephen D. Keener
President and Chief Executive Officer