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Q: How does an athletics director control team rules to ensure they are reasonable and avoid litigation?

There should be an athletic department policy that specifies that all 'team rules' or 'codes of conduct' must be approved by the athletics director or his/her designee. That policy should include the following elements:

1. standard provisions that must be included in the team rules of every team such as:

- a positive statement of the department's philosophy of educational sport
- eligibility requirements for participation and awards
- rules governing transportation to contests
- care and responsibility for uniforms and equipment
- try-outs/team selection standards
- due process rights of student-athletes
- drug testing and substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco, etc.)
- prohibition of hazing
- permission forms/release from liability/assumption of risk
- conditions under which the right to participate or an athletics scholarship may be terminated (sexual harassment, commission of felony, etc.)

2. development of behavioral or conduct codes, including policies regarding the participation of student-athletes in the determination of such codes

3. policies regarding appropriate enforcement of team rules

The development of behavioral or conduct codes by teams can be an important educational and team-building process. Coaches require training in how to guide this process so that important topics are addressed by students and covered in the code. Some institutions prefer to have a standard code of conduct developed by the captains of all teams or an athletes' advisory committee.

See Mackinnon, L. (2007) Coaches' Guide to Team Policies: Codes of Conduct for Creating A Positive

Environment. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL., a great resource.

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Topics

Ethics

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