

Dutch Lacrosse Association

Manual for a successful youth program



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Organization and Structure of the Youth Program	4
Vision and Objectives.....	4
Structure and Organization	4
Financial Management and Sponsorship	5
Training and Competition in the Youth Program.....	6
Training and Competition Planning.....	6
Safety and Injury Prevention.....	7
Recruiting and Retaining Youth players.....	8
Player Recruitment and Retention	8
Conclusion.....	9



Introduction

Welcome to the Youth Lacrosse Program Guide

This guide is specifically designed for clubs, coaches, and volunteers who want to introduce and develop lacrosse within their youth division. The goal is to establish a strong foundation for young players, allowing them to grow both athletically and personally within a structured and stimulating program.

In this guide, you will find essential aspects for running a successful youth lacrosse program. Topics covered include organization, coaching, player recruitment, and competition development. Additionally, we provide practical tips on creating a **safe and inclusive environment** where children can enjoy the game and improve their skills.

A well-structured youth program not only contributes to the growth of the sport but also fosters **teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship** among young players. Whether you are starting a new program or looking to enhance an existing one, this guide offers the tools to make lacrosse accessible and engaging for young athletes.

Disclaimer: Each club or coach is responsible for the **safety and execution** of training sessions and matches. The Dutch Lacrosse Association is **not liable** for any accidents or injuries resulting from the implementation of this guide.

Organization and Structure of the Youth Program

Vision and Objectives

Every successful program starts with a **clear vision and well-defined objectives**. This helps determine the program's direction and ensures that all stakeholders—coaches, parents, and players—are working toward the same goals. Consider the following questions:

- **What do we want to achieve with our youth program?**
- **What are our core values?** (e.g., fun, development, inclusivity)
- **How do we measure success?** (e.g., number of members, skill development, transition to senior teams)

By establishing these goals, you create a **strong foundation** for the program and ensure that all participants understand the common objectives.

Structure and Organization

A well-organized youth program requires a **clear structure** with defined responsibilities. This can be achieved by:

- Appointing a **Youth Program Coordinator** to oversee the program (Head Coach or Youth Coordinator).
- Assigning a **dedicated coach and trainer** with the necessary knowledge and experience.
- Ensuring **good communication** between the youth program and the club's board.
- Collaborating with senior teams to encourage **player development and mentorship**.

A clear **organizational structure** prevents confusion and ensures that the program runs smoothly and efficiently.

It is advisable for the Youth Coordinator to request a **Certificate of Good Conduct (VOG)** to ensure a safe environment for youth players.

Communication and Engagement

Effective **communication** with players, parents, coaches, and volunteers is **essential**. This can be achieved by:

- Setting up an **online platform or newsletter** for training, match, and event updates.
- Hosting **parent meetings** to inform them about the program and increase their involvement.
- Conducting **regular evaluation meetings** with coaches and players to collect feedback and implement improvements.

Maintaining **open and transparent communication** keeps everyone engaged and motivated. A **WhatsApp group** and involvement in general **club activities** are great ways to strengthen engagement!

Ensure that the youth program is an **integral part of your lacrosse club**. This also means that other club members can occasionally step in to support and help grow and improve the youth players

Financial Management and Sponsorship

A **strong financial plan** is key to covering costs for equipment, training, and events. Important actions include:

- Establishing a **transparent budget** outlining expenses and revenue.
- Keeping **membership fees affordable** and offering financial support if needed.

It is recommended to introduce a lower membership fee for youth players.

- **Seeking sponsorships** from local businesses or sports foundations.

By creating a **stable financial foundation**, the program remains **accessible and sustainable** for all players.

Training and Competition in the Youth Program

Training and Competition Planning

A well-structured program maintains a **balance between training and competition**. This can be achieved through:

- **A structured training plan** that helps players develop both fundamental and advanced skills.
 - Work with **training themes** and a **season-long development plan** to ensure that individual players and the team improve over time.
 - The **ultimate goal** is to transition youth players into **men's and women's teams**.
 - The **U20 program** is also an option for players with ambitions to compete **internationally** and represent the **national team** in tournaments.
- **A balanced competition schedule**, giving teams opportunities to play as many matches as possible, both **friendly and competitive**.
 - Set fixed moments in the **competition calendar** where **all youth coordinators and the national youth coordinator (NLB)** come together to plan the season's schedule and structure.
- **Participation in tournaments**, which provides additional **challenges and motivation** for players.
 - Tournaments are **ideal** for youth teams, but it is essential to assess whether participation has a **positive impact** on players and the program.
 - Avoid making it a **financial burden** on the club or players.

A **clear training and competition plan** helps both **coaches and players** prepare effectively and **develop their skills** throughout the season.

Safety and Injury Prevention

Ensuring the **safety of young players** is a top priority. This can be achieved by:

- **Using proper protective equipment** and ensuring that all players have the right gear.
 - It is useful for clubs to maintain an **inventory** of high-quality equipment.
 - **Good equipment** is essential for a successful youth program.
- **Integrating injury prevention** into training sessions, including **warm-ups, stretching, and mobility exercises**.
 - Young players may not have enough knowledge or experience to warm up properly.
 - **Coaching and guidance** in this area are **crucial** for injury prevention.
- **Training coaches and volunteers in first aid (EHBO) and injury management.**
- **Implementing clear safety guidelines**, such as protocols for **extreme weather conditions**.

Recommended Equipment for a Successful Youth Program

To ensure high-quality training sessions and player development, we recommend investing in the following:

- **Good, legal lacrosse sticks**
- **A dedicated ball bag + cones** for the youth team
- **A team goal + crease**
- **Youth-sized pinnies**

By prioritizing **safety and injury prevention**, the program can create a **secure and positive environment** for young players to develop their skills.

Recruiting and Retaining Youth players

Player Recruitment and Retention

A successful youth program grows through **effective recruitment strategies** and by **creating an environment where players want to stay**. Key actions include:

- **Organizing introductory clinics** at schools or sports events.
- **Collaborating with schools** to include lacrosse as part of physical education classes.

The club should have a dedicated group of members available to run clinics.

CLINICS = EXPOSURE = OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW MEMBERS

- **Providing extra support for beginners** to ensure they feel **welcome and encouraged**.

Make sure there is a plan in place for onboarding new members.

- **Developing a strong team culture** centered on **fun and respect**.

Once players join, it is crucial to keep them motivated with engaging training sessions, social activities, and competitive opportunities.

- **Providing team clothing** to create a sense of **unity and motivation** among youth players.

A reversible jersey or club apparel (in youth sizes) is a great way to promote team spirit and commitment.

Teamwear helps foster equality, belonging, and encourages players to keep coming back.

Conclusion

A successful **youth lacrosse program** relies on **strong organization**. By setting **clear objectives, establishing a solid structure, implementing effective recruitment strategies, ensuring safe and engaging training sessions, and maintaining sound financial planning**, you create a program where young players can **develop their skills and enjoy the sport**.

Through **continuous evaluation and adaptation** to the needs of players and coaches, the program will continue to **grow and contribute to the future of lacrosse**.

