

# Empowering Safe Coaching and Mentoring with *FIRST*®



**OVERVIEW:** *FIRST*® is dedicated to fostering a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment for young participants globally. Coaches and mentors play a critical role in fostering a safe environment for youth participants and this document provides an overview of Youth Protection expectations for coaches and mentors.

## Youth Protection Program (YPP) Requirements for Coaches/Mentors

- Lead coaches/mentors in the US and Canada must undergo a background screening every four years. *FIRST* also expects that the standards set forth in the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program be applied outside of the United States and Canada to the extent possible based on local laws and regulations. Note: Your local Program Delivery Partner may have other requirements including additional background checks and training required by law in your jurisdiction.
- Non-lead coaches/mentors should be screened if they are involved with participants more than 30% of the time. Lead coaches/mentors can request screening of non-lead mentors via the team Dashboard.
- YPP Training is required every year, and it is available to coaches and mentors via their Dashboard.
- Mentor/Coach Age Requirements. Coach/mentors must be 18 and it is recommended that one be at least 25 years old.
- Update team rosters every season. If a mentor or coach is no longer active, remove them from the roster.

## Youth Protection Program Highlights:

- All participants must adhere to the [FIRST Code of Conduct](#) and coaches/mentors are responsible for ensuring team knowledge of and compliance with the Code of Conduct.
- **Follow the “Rule of Two”**
  - No adult should be alone or communicate one on one with a youth participant.
  - Every team must have two adult lead coaches/mentors who oversee team’s activities.
  - Interactions between adults and youth participants should be **observable and interruptible**.
- Plan to have adequate supervision in all team meetings and events to ensure the rule of two is followed.  
**When traveling, implement the buddy system for youth participants.**

- **Set and maintain healthy personal boundaries** with student participants.
  - No dating or romantic relationships between adult volunteers and youth participants under 18.
  - No relationships between mentors/coaches and youth participants on their team regardless of age.
  - Be alert to the imbalance of power that exists in relationships between adults and youth participants.
  - Remember that adult mentors and coaches are role models for youth participants.
- **Internet Safety**
  - Apply the Code of Conduct and “Rule of Two” to online activities just as you would for in-person activities.
  - Online interactions and communications between adult mentors/coaches with youth should be *FIRST* related and be observable with other adults (mentors, parents and guardians, etc.), where possible/practical.
  - Social media shall not be used in any manner that harasses, discriminates against, retaliates against, threatens, bullies, or intimidates any *FIRST* employee, volunteer, or participant.
- **“See Something, Say Something”**
  - Mandatory Reporting: All coaches/mentors, and event volunteers are mandatory reporters and must understand and comply with applicable state or country laws on reporting child abuse and neglect
  - Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect **must** be reported to child protection agencies and *FIRST* Youth Protection.
  - Reporting Concerns to *FIRST* Headquarters:
    - [FIRST Reporting Portal](#)
    - [Email FIRST Youth Protection](#)
    - Phone (603) 206-2050



24/7 call, text and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress.

REPORT A CONCERN

