

Shooting Stars Participant Parents Information

(updated 5/2025)



First, before I jump into the Shooting Stars information below, let me thank you and your Great kids for helping to make this program such a success! Thank you for being part of our Team and family!

Mission

Our mission is for our kids to learn about sports, teamwork and social skills in a fun and engaging environment.

Your Role as a Parent

We would like, as much as is possible, for you to be able to do something with our program that you rarely get...a choice...you can jump in and coach/help out (don't be shy...no experience required) or sit on the sidelines and watch your child have a great time! If you choose to watch, you may have to jump in here and there...but hopefully you get to sit back and enjoy most of the time. Please be respectful at all times to our buddies and coaches (and organizers)...**as they are primarily volunteers** and have made a big commitment to our program and your kids.

Our Program

1. This is our 20th year and we have grown to 200+ players with basketball...and are now venturing out into other activities. It was started by my wife Emmie and I for our son Jacob, who has Autism.
2. We strive to help the players be a part of a team/group...something they might otherwise never experience.
3. This program is tailored to each child. One size does not fit all. Each age group/team will function differently based on their age and abilities.
4. Activities can be one day or many. Either way, this is a big commitment, but it is important. Our kids thrive on familiarity.
5. Our programs are not competitive...volunteers will not win a game...but we will have fun!
6. There will be a 1:1 buddy/player pairing (for the most part, where we can, depending on the number of buddies). We will see what works but reserve the right to change anything that is not working.
7. We are open to suggestions.

Volunteers---Their Role and Responsibilities

The main role of the volunteers is, just like the mission statement, to help the kids have fun and learn the fundamentals of the sport or activity. They will be acting as buddies and "coaches" for most games as the opposing team for the second half. Since we all know our kids best, you may be asked to help if we are short of volunteers one week or if your child is having a particularly rough day.

As I may have mentioned, this will not look exactly like a typical sports. When the volunteers are the opposing team, their job is still to help. We do this by playing "soft" on defense and offense. We ask the buddies to let the players score/be successful, even help them if need be. Another thing, we ask that the buddies do their best to make sure that their player is safe, as much as possible, and doesn't get hit with the ball.

What we have told the Buddies...

1. Your main job is to engage. Be a cheerleader. Be flexible. Try anything and everything. Be persistent.
2. Follow the lead of the coaches and experienced buddies.
3. Don't be afraid to ask coaches or parents for help and advice. Also, let us know if something is happening that we should know about...communication is key.
4. Help the kids have fun (1st) and learn the activity/game (2nd).
5. Keep the kids moving.
6. We would like to ask that you be very patient and gentle with the special needs kids. The kids will have various levels of skills and abilities. Their actions may seem a bit strange or different...or they may react to things differently than others might or that you would expect. It is important that you not "react". Please be patient and know that parents and other volunteers are always there to help. Always be supportive, using positive feedback. *What you say and how you say it makes a HUGE difference.*

7. In any game...you are "buddies" and "coaches" for the practice part and the "opposing team" for the game. When you are the opposing team your job is still to help. Buddies will play "soft" on offense and defense. Your #1 job in either role is protect your player from flying balls/items as much as possible, as some of their reaction times may not be the fastest.
8. We will also ask for your flexibility. Your player may not be there every week or may only last a short while...for a variety of reasons. You may be asked to help out with another player, another team or even be a coach for a day. Please be open to anything we ask you to do...all jobs are important. Just say Yes!
9. Always focus on your player first.
10. Expectations...please expect the most from your player and push them to do a little bit more every week. Many times they will surprise us (and themselves) with the things they can do.
11. Get to know your player. Find out from them or parents what motivates them or what their interests are.
12. It is OK to "redirect your player" by gently moving them with your hands. If you have questions on this, please ask parents or coaches how to do it.

Practice and Games...and the Rules

1. We teach the kids the basics of any activity.
2. We try to teach the basic rules, but most are very lightly enforced.
3. We use trial and error...eventually you or we will find something that works.
4. Each game and division will look different, but we go with what works.
5. The game may look like chaos at times but just go with it.

After the Game

Please stay for after the activity for wrap up, game balls, snacks, etc...It is very important to the kids.

Schedule, Uniforms and Communication

1. We have various activities at different times. Please make sure you know which one you have. If you cannot make it to any game, please let me know ASAP (email: coachrick@shootingstarsgroup.org).
2. Flow and time between sessions will be tight. We ask for your help in keeping on schedule.
3. Please be on time and have your child wear their uniform/shirt (if we have one) to every event.
4. We will post information to our Facebook page and website www.shootingstarsgroup.org, but we prefer to send our communications by e-mail, so please check regularly.

"Other Random Points to Cover"

1. ***Before I go further, let me stress that no matter how old your child is, there is absolutely no "drop off and pick up."***
A responsible **adult** must stay the entire time as each of our kids has their own individual quirks and issues...and parents are best suited to help should they melt down or have a medical issue (**unless specified otherwise**).
2. It is OK if your kids "act out", act differently, scream, do something unexpected, etc...This is a safe environment and there are parents here going through the same things. We will work through it and be OK. We look for small victories that add up.
3. Snacks: We will buy snacks for the group. *We try to stay away from major food allergies and/or sensitivity, but if your child does have an allergy or sensitivity, it is your responsibility to make sure they do not eat something they shouldn't and/or to bring a snack for them.* Please do not put this responsibility on the buddies/volunteers. You can communicate it to them so they are aware, but we know how fast our kids can be at grabbing something and putting it in their mouth.
4. We try to "color code" everyone by shirt color where possible. (Coaches, Volunteers, Players)
5. It will not always be easy for the players, buddies, coaches (and parents), but seeing the kids (and their buddies) light up with those great big smiles on their faces...there is nothing like it! That is why we have this program!

Thank You Again,

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