

Northwest Lacrosse Handbook 2026

Mission Statement

Northwest Sharpshooters aspires to promote and maintain a positive and high quality educational-athletic experience for each student-athlete. A positive educational-athletic experience is one in which every athlete:

- Is firmly planted with the ideals of good sportsmanship, respect, honor, honesty, loyalty, humor and courage in order to become better citizens.
- Is coached using these same principles and has fun at practice and games.
- Feels like an important part of the team regardless of experience or expertise.
- Learns life lessons that have value beyond the playing field.
- Learns the skills, tactics and strategies of the game and improves as a player.

Philosophy

The NWLA program is a dynamic and integral part of the youth experience. It provides meaningful learning opportunities not otherwise offered in a classroom. It assists athletes in developing habits, attitudes, and ideals necessary for ethical competition and cooperation in our society. It also provides athletes with lifelong lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, perseverance, commitment, loyalty, self-discipline, pride, cooperation, responsibility, and leadership skills. NWLA encourages all athletes to continue participating in lacrosse by offering a well-rounded program for area boys and girls.

NWLA Theme “ONE TEAM”

Idea behind the Theme:

1. We understand ourselves and each other. We know our roles and fulfill them to reach our goals.
2. There is no division within the organization. Coaches, athletes, family and Board are joined together as one TEAM. Remember there is no “I” in TEAM.
3. Everyone is treated equally.
4. Sacrifices are made for the betterment of the TEAM.
5. We look after each other and provide positive support for our teammates. This is OUR TEAM.

Fundamental beliefs

1. Each player on the team is a student-athlete, so academics come first.
2. Individual/Team athletic discipline is a top priority.
3. Organization and time management are key points at practice.

4. A focus on fundamentals/technique and player development brings results.
5. Everyone has something to contribute to the team.
6. The TEAM comes BEFORE the INDIVIDUAL.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE + 100% EFFORT = TEAM SUCCESS

Players

Player's Role

1. Always have a positive attitude – we are who we think we are.
2. Be a loyal teammate- there is no room for doubters.
3. Don't complain- complaining takes too much energy, if you have a concern, see the head coach.
4. Learn, work hard, and have fun. Hustling is free and requires no skill.

What coaches expect of the players

1. Maintain a commitment as a representative of the program. Be self-motivated and self-disciplined. Be prepared both mentally and physically.
2. Show respect for coaches, teammates, opponents, parents & officials.
3. Keep lacrosse in perspective – FAMILY – SCHOOL – NWLA.
4. Place the needs of the TEAM before his/her own needs.
5. Show good sportsmanship on and away from fields.
6. Be a positive influence to younger players and in school.
7. Have honest communication with coaches, teammates and
 - i. parents/guardians.
8. Be gracious in victory and accept defeat with dignity - must be a gracious loser to be an incredible winner.
9. Exercise self-control – no fighting, excessive displays of anger or frustration.
10. Honor the spirit and rules of the game – avoid improper gamesmanship techniques that violate the highest traditions of sportsmanship (ie. no taunting, hazing, poking fun of another player).

Violations of the rules and expectations may reduce playing time for the athlete. Continued violations after corrective actions have been provided/recommended may extend to temporary suspension from the program.

Parents

What the NWLA Expects of Parents/Guardians

1. Allow our coaches to coach your children, we want them to improve. Athletics are a process - please trust the process.
2. Allow your children to make mistakes and fail - it helps them learn about life.
3. When something doesn't go right, have perspective. Don't blame the coach or other teammates. Stay positive!
4. Our organization is a volunteer organization. Please find a way to help out and give back to NWLA.

What Coaches Expect of Parents/Guardians

1. Be a positive supporter of the program, the players and coaches.
2. Recognize that coaches strive to coach without prejudice.
3. Let the coach do the coaching, however you can do some teaching – teach sportsmanship and how to deal with success and failure.
4. Develop player character and teach life skills that sports bring to the forefront.
5. Contact coaches with open and honest concerns about players role in the program, while always obeying our **5 Step Process**.
6. Look at each player as a part of the team rather than as a separate individual.
7. Get to know your coach, however, respect the coach's personal time.
8. Have all parents/guardians in attendance at requested meetings.
9. Have realistic expectations in order to keep lacrosse in perspective – **FAMILY – SCHOOL – NWLA**.

Everyone is entitled to a positive experience when they attend a NWLA event. If you see poor behavior, correct it. Otherwise seek a Program Director or Board Member to intervene. **Remember, if we permit it, we promote it.**

Coaches

What Parents/Guardians Expect of Coaches

1. Utilize clean, honest, open communications.
2. Set clear goals and expectations and then explain these items at the start of the season.
3. Establish a safe, fair, and positive environment with proper supervision.
4. Demonstrate professional role modeling while treating each player with understanding, respect and dignity.
5. Provide an enthusiastic, fun, and organized practice and game experience.
6. Maintain current knowledge of lacrosse.

What Players Expect of Coaches

1. Be a positive role model who is enthusiastic and encouraging.
2. Be treated fairly and with respect.
3. Provide an atmosphere for open communication.
4. Understand that the player has a personal life and has commitments outside lacrosse.
5. Create a safe environment and be knowledgeable about health and accident issues.
7. Be knowledgeable about lacrosse.

Hazing

Hazing is defined as any conduct or method of initiation into any organization that willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or person. No player shall conspire to engage in hazing, participate in hazing, or commit any act that causes, or is likely to cause bodily danger, physical harm, or personal degradation, or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to any fellow athlete or person. Hazing is absolutely forbidden and will result in immediate suspension from the team and a hearing of the executive committee.

Player Ejection

It is the NWLAX policy that If any player is ejected from a game for any reason by an official (does not include fouling out), that player may not participate in the next half of the following game. A coach may lengthen this timeline at their discretion. Example; if a player is ejected in the first half, then that player will not be able to play until the second half of the following game.

Practices

Start/stop times: Practices will start at the scheduled time. Coaches will make every effort to end practices on time, however, the athletes will be responsible for field breakdown and clean up and will not be released until the Program Directors are satisfied that the fields meet the standards set for the end of practice.

Practice Length:

Boys 3rd/4th, 5th/6th, 7th/8th grade divisions = 1 ½ hours (3 days a week)

Girls 3rd/4th, 5th/6th, 7th/8th grade divisions = 1 ½ hours (2 days a week)

Girls & Boys 1st/2nd grade division = 1-1 ½ hours (2-3 days a week)

Coaches may schedule additional practice periods with notification of the Program Directors and parents.

Uniforms / Equipment

Players are expected to wear proper equipment for all practices and games.

For girls this includes:

- Helmet (optional)

- Eye protection goggles
- **Mouthpiece
- Cleated shoes (optional)
- Gloves (optional)

For boys this includes:

- Helmet (black preferably)
- Shoulder pads (NOCSAE Approved starting 2022)
- Elbow pads
- Gloves
- *MYLA/USL approved Lacrosse Stick
- **Mouthpiece (not clear or white)
- Cup
- Cleated shoes (optional)
- Goalies must wear a chest protector (NOCSAE Approved starting 2021) • Jersey (game days)

**Note - Boys that play Close Defense or Long Stick Middie (LSM) will ALSO have a short stick available for all practices and games.*

***Note- All players must have their mouthpiece fully IN their mouth anytime they are on the field.*

Coaches certify that all players are properly equipped prior to each game. If a player is found to not be properly equipped, the TEAM may receive a 3-minute, non-releasable penalty.

Playing Time

Equal playing time is encouraged at all levels below 7th/8th level. Lacrosse Athlete Development Model substitution rules shall be followed.

At the 5th/6th and 7th/8th levels, it is important to note that we are a competitive program. Coaches should make every effort to play all of their players in a fair manner, but equal playing time is not required. Please note that fair and equal are not the same thing.

Players do become more specialized by position as they get older. NWLAX requires development of players per the LADM at the 1st-6th grade levels. Progression with athletes should be as follows:

1st/2nd grade- Equal play

3rd/4th grade- Equal play, equal opportunity for attack, defense, mid fielder, & goalie.

5th/6th grade- Each player should play meaningful minutes in each half with emphasis on team success in the 2nd half. Equal opportunity for attack, defense, mid fielder, including goalie but limited to 3-4 players.

7th/8th grade

A Team- Each player should play meaningful minutes in each half. Playing time after that is earned. Emphasis on position playing with additional opportunity play when games allow for depth and development.

B Team- Each player should play meaningful minutes in each half. Playing time after that is earned. Emphasis on opportunity for attack, defense, mid field, including goalie. Although competitive, placement on the team is for developing first year players and developing veteran player skills.

Academics

The association keeps lacrosse in perspective **FAMILY – SCHOOL – NWLA**. Parents are encouraged to discuss a player's academic needs with their coach or the Board Member Representative if we can better accommodate students-athletes.

Informed Consent

By its very nature, competitive athletics can put athletes in situations in which serious, catastrophic and perhaps fatal accidents could occur.

Athletes and parents/guardians must assess the risks involved in such participation and make their choice to participate in spite of those risks. No amount of instruction, precaution, or supervision will totally eliminate all risk of injury. The obligation of parents and athletes in making this choice to participate cannot be overstated. There have been accidents resulting in death, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other very serious permanent impairments as a result of athletic participation.

By granting permission to your son/daughter to participate in athletic competition, a parent/guardian acknowledges that playing or participating in any sport can be a dangerous activity involving many risks of injury.

Conflict Resolution 5-Step Communication Process

24 Hour Rule: For parents, it is important to separate game emotions from the best interests of their child's sports development. For this reason, NWLA has adopted the "24 Hour Rule". The intent of this rule is to move an emotional and confrontational discussion away from the presence of the players, and to allow the parties to "cool off", compose themselves and put the provoking incident or situation that occurred in the game in perspective before meeting to discuss it.

NWLA has a 5-step process of communication to use in resolving conflicts. Communication in this order helps to ensure strong relationships and trust amongst all who are involved in resolving problems. The process is as follows:

1. Player meets with the coach. (If a player is uncomfortable meeting with the coach by himself or herself, a teammate can assist in starting the dialogue with the coach.

2. Player and parent meet with the coach.
3. Player, parent, and coach meet with the Member Representative.
4. Player, parent, coach, and Member Representative meet with the Board Member that directly runs the related area.
5. Player, parent, coach, Member Representative, and Board Member meet with the President.

Northwest Lacrosse Policy on “Playing Up”*

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to define the exceptions and procedures that would allow any NWLax player to be moved up to a team that is different than the one the player’s grade dictates (ex: allowing a child in who is age eligible for the 3rd/4th grade level to play on a 5th/6th grade team.)

US Lacrosse Position Statement:

“Due to the increased potential for injury and lack of evidence supporting any benefit in the long-term development of a youth level player, USA Lacrosse strongly discourages allowing children below 8th grade to ‘play-up’.”

POLICY:

It is the policy of Northwest Lacrosse that, subject to the exceptions listed below, players are not permitted to play on a team outside the child’s grade level for a given season.

Exceptions:

1. **When the parent is asked by Northwest Lacrosse to coach a different team:** If so desired by the parent-coach, a player may move up one grade level if the parent who is also a NWLax coach is asked by NWLax to coach a team that is different than the one the parent-coach’s child age dictates. (ex: If the parent of a 5/6 player is asked to coach a 7/8 level team) In the circumstance the child is permitted to play on the 7/8 level team as an accommodation to the parent-coach.
2. **When a coach of the older team extends an invitation to play in a game:** A player is permitted to play in a game for a team above age level if invited to by the coach of the older team. The game must not interfere with the player’s age appropriate team’s schedule. Typically, this is done when the older team is missing their regular players.
3. **When approved by the NWLax Board:** The NWLax Board reserves the right to allow a player to move up an age level permanently if requested by the parent/guardian, is agreed to by the coaches of both the age appropriate team, older team, and approved by a majority vote of the NWLax Board.

“Playing-Up” Request Procedure: No requests will be considered until the player in question has registered, paid in full, and been assigned to an age appropriate team. Once that criterion has been met the following procedure must be followed.

1. The player’s parent or guardian needs to make a formal request in writing to the NWLax board of directors. Requests must include the rationale for why it is in the best interest of all parties to have the child play-up.
2. The appropriate age level director (boys/girls) along with the coaches will review to decide if a move is warranted. Criteria used may be but not restricted to the following:
 - a. Input from parent/guardian
 - b. Feedback from previous coaches
 - c. Input from both head coaches of the impacted teams
 - d. Impact on team sizes
 - e. Player’s size and maturity level
3. If the appropriate age level director and coaches do not support the request, the request is denied.
4. If the appropriate age level directors and coaches support the parent’s request they will present it to the NWLax Board for formal approval. Simple majority approves or denies the request.
 - a. Any board members that are the parent must abstain.
 - b. Following the vote the NWLax Board will provide a formal written response of the final decision to the parent/guardian requesting the move.

**Adapted from Tolland Lacrosse Club’s Policy on “Playing Up”*

Website and Photo Release:

NWLA will utilize our website and selected social media forms to communicate with the community about our program. Team rosters will be posted and photographs from our events may be posted to these mediums.

Concussion Policy, Procedure and Forms

Concussions are defined as traumatic brain injuries. Concussions are usually associated with a blow to the head and can occur in athletics. As more research is done on head injuries, the athletic community is taking more precautions to prevent them and more vigilance to treat them. US Lacrosse, the Montana Youth Lacrosse Association and the NWLA have developed a very stringent concussion policy to protect our student athletes. When an athlete sustains a suspected head injury the following Forms and Procedures shall be followed.

NORTHWEST LACROSSE ASSOCIATION CONCUSSION PROTOCOL PARENT/ATHLETE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Season: _____

Athlete Name
(Print): _____

Grade: _____

1. I understand that Northwest Lacrosse Association, affiliate of US Lacrosse has adopted concussion-related education, awareness and protocol into their policies and procedures.

2. I understand the following guidelines and protocol exist, and will respect them if they must be instituted with the above-named athlete:

- a. An athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury shall be immediately removed from participation for the remainder of the day. Removal can be at the request of a coach, official, team manager, parent/guardian, or the athlete.
- a. Athlete shall not be permitted to return to participation until he/she is evaluated and released by a medical professional trained in the management of concussions and acting within the scope of his/her practice.
- a. An athlete removed from participation for evaluation shall not be permitted to return to participation until a medical release by an appropriate medical professional (trained in the management of concussions and acting within the scope of his/her practice) is provided to the team manager.

3. Should it be determined that above-named athlete needs to be removed from participation, I/we understand that the protocol outlined herein must and will be followed for the safety of the athlete.

4. I/we understand that if a suspected concussion has occurred and protocol has been enacted for the above-named athlete, there is no review period or negotiation as to the course of action and return to participation outside of the recommendations of the evaluating medical professional who has been selected to treat the athlete.

5. I/we understand that if I/we suspect the above-named athlete has experienced a concussion or exhibits behavior that suggests concussion-like symptoms, I/we have the authority to remove the athlete from participation and begin the concussion protocol with a medical professional of my/our selection who meets the criteria of an acceptable evaluator.

By the signature/s below, I/we acknowledge responsibility for the above-named athlete in the current season and agree to all the information stated herein.

Athlete

Date

Parent/Guardian

Date

NORTHWEST LACROSSE ASSOCIATION CONCUSSION PROTOCOL COACH
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Season: _____

Coach Name (Print):

Team(s): _____

1. I understand that Northwest Lacrosse Association, affiliate of US Lacrosse has adopted concussion-related education, awareness and protocol into their policies and procedures.

2. I understand the following guidelines and protocol exist, and will respect them if they must be instituted for any athlete on the team:

a. An athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury shall be immediately removed from participation for the remainder of the day. Removal can be at the request of a coach, official, team manager, parent/guardian, or the athlete.

a. Athlete shall not be permitted to return to participation until he/she is evaluated and released by a medical professional trained in the management of concussions and acting within the scope of his/her practice.

a. An athlete removed from participation for evaluation shall not be permitted to return to participation until a medical release by an appropriate medical professional (trained in the management of concussions and acting within the scope of his/her practice) is provided to the team manager.

3. Should it be determined that an athlete needs to be removed from participation, I understand that the protocol outlined herein must and will be followed for the safety of the athlete.

4. I understand that if a suspected concussion has occurred and protocol has been enacted for an athlete, there is no review period or negotiation as to the course of action and return to participation outside of the recommendations of the evaluating medical professional who has been selected to treat the athlete.

By the signature below, I acknowledge and agree to all the information stated herein.

Name

Date

NORTHWEST LACROSSE ASSOCIATION CONCUSSION - RETURN TO PARTICIPATION
MEDICAL RELEASE

If an athlete sustains a concussion during athletic participation, or sustains an injury and exhibits the signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, the athlete must be immediately removed from all athletic participation. The athlete may only return to physical activity if/when the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and receives the following written clearance to return to sport.

The following athlete has been evaluated and diagnosed with a concussion by a medical professional trained in the evaluation of concussions. The following steps must be completed under the supervision of a medical professional (MD, DO, PA, Advanced Practice Nurse) who **IS TRAINED IN THE EVALUATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSIONS.** This form must be signed by the above referenced medical professional and returned to the league, organization, or athletic trainer for the athlete to return to participation.

Athlete Name: _____ DOB: _____
_____/_____/_____

Injury Date: ____/____/____ Sport: _____
Level/Grade _____

Mechanism of Injury: _____

Symptoms upon evaluation: _____

Sideline evaluation completed: Yes ☐ No ☐

Evaluation completed by: _____

In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Return-to-Sport Strategy begins with Return-to-Learn (successfully tolerating school- resumption of full cognitive workload) and there is a six step process gradually returning the athlete to normal activities. There is a minimum 24-hour period between each step. If at any time the athlete's concussion symptoms reoccur, they must return to the previous asymptomatic level and reattempt progression after a further 24 hour period of rest has passed.

Graduated Return-to-Sport (RTS)- (For Lacrosse specific Return-to-Sport progression see table below)

An initial period of 24-48 hours of both relative physical rest and cognitive rest is recommended before beginning RTS progression.

Stage 1 – Symptom limited activity (Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms)

Stage 2 – Light aerobic exercise (Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace. No resistance training)

Stage 3 – Sport-specific exercise (Running or skating drills. No head impact activities)

Stage 4 – Non-contact training drills (Harder training drills, e.g., passing drills. May start progressive resistance training)

Stage 5 – Full-contact practice with MEDICAL CLEARANCE (Participate in normal training activities)

Stage 6 – Return to sport (Normal game play)

I (treating MD/DO/PA/Advanced Practice Nurse) certify that the a fore mentioned athlete has completed the above Return to Sport Strategy and is cleared for full contact drills and training, and, **IF ASYMPTOMATIC**, may return to competition.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Today's
Date: _____

I (parent/guardian) attest that my child has successfully completed the full Return to Sport Strategy as outlined above and has been cleared to return to participation by a medical professional **trained in concussion management**. I understand that sports are inherently dangerous and realize that concussions are an injury that can occur. I also understand that this process/protocol is in place to protect my child, that any deviation from this process/protocol is under my volition, and I take full responsibility for any and all consequences of that decision.

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Signature: _____

Phone: _____ Today's Date: _____

A Graduated Return-to-Sport Strategy – Lacrosse			
Stage #	Aim	Lacrosse Specific Activity	Goal of each step
Initial period of 24-48 hours of both relative physical & cognitive rest is recommended before beginning the Return to Sport Progression			
1	Symptom limited activity	Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms	Gradual reintroduction of work/school activities
If symptoms re-emerge with this level of exertion, then return to previous stage. If the student remains symptom free for 24 hours after this level of exertion then proceed to the next stage.			
2	Light aerobic exercise	Walking, swimming, stationary cycling at slow to medium pace. No resistance training	Add light aerobic activity with an increased heart rate and monitor for symptom return
If symptoms re-emerge with this level of exertion, then return to previous stage. If the student remains symptom free for 24 hours after this level of exertion then proceed to the next stage.			

3	Sport-specific exercise	Running drills with no head contact	Increase aerobic activity and monitor for symptom return
If symptoms re-emerge with this level of exertion, then return to previous stage. If the student remains symptom free for 24 hours after this level of exertion then proceed to the next stage.			
4	Non-contact lacrosse specific drills	- Harder training drills, Running forwards & backwards, stick handling, face off, passing, shooting, shadow positioning without other players, goal keeper positioning - May begin progressive resistance training	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking and monitor for symptoms
If symptoms re-emerge with this level of exertion, then return to previous stage. If the student remains symptom free for 24 hours after this level of exertion then proceed to the next stage.			
5	Full-contact practice (after medical clearance)	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities	Assess frequently during line changes, monitor for symptoms
If symptoms re-emerge with this level of exertion, then return to previous stage. If the student remains symptom free for 24 hours after this level of exertion then proceed to the next stage <i>with physician clearance.</i>			
6	Return to Sport	Normal game play	Fully back to sport

McCrory P, et al. Br J Sports Med 2017;0:1-10.doi:10.1136/bjsports-2017-097699. May KH, Marshall DL, Burns TG, Popoli DM, Polikandriotis JA. PEDIATRIC SPORTS SPECIFIC RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES FOLLOWING CONCUSSION. *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy*. 2014;9(2):242-255.

****A neurocognitive post-injury test should be administered once the athlete is experiencing no symptoms, and always before the athlete begins contact drills. When referring to the Return-to-Sport Strategy above, a neurocognitive post-injury test should be administered before stage 5 of the progression, and only if the athlete is asymptomatic.**