



League Excellence Program: Verification

While USA Football does not run or operate any youth football leagues, it does, through its League Excellence Program, seek to recognize leagues across the nation that verify compliance with certain minimum operational standards. Each youth football organization enrolled with USA Football and seeking recognition through USA Football's League Excellence Program (each a "League") will need to verify the following each year in order to obtain and maintain such recognition.

USA Football will provide an online procedure to make such verifications. All verifications must be made no later than September 30th each year, with corresponding recognition and benefits provided for 6 months from the time awarded. Note that when a parent organization has several clubs operating within such parent organization, verification will need to be made on behalf of each club and the parent will reach a certain tier's recognition only if all clubs also reach such recognition.

Tier 1: BRONZE

1. League has validly enrolled with USA Football and has signed a valid and current Organization Services and Recognition Agreement with USA Football.
2. All League coaches who engage in regular contact with minor athletes (under the age of 18) during the year, including without limitation all head coaches and assistant coaches either in regular contact with minor athletes and/or who have sole supervisory responsibility and/or custody of such athletes, have been certified by USA Football prior to participating in League activities.
3. League has obtained and keeps current the levels of insurance as League has agreed to in its Organization Services and Recognition Agreement with USA Football.

Tier 2: SILVER

1. League has verified all BRONZE requirements.
2. League offers game types in two of the three "Non-Contact," "Limited Contact," and "Contact" categories.
 - a. Definition and requirements of USA Football's Game Categories and Game Types can be found **here**.
3. League has, follows, and educates each administrator, coach, official, and other on-field individuals on concussion recognition, response, and return-to-play protocols that follow applicable laws, including without limitation the immediate removal from play of an affected athlete and the examination and clearance of that athlete by a qualified medical professional (according to applicable law) prior to allowing the athlete to return to practice or game action.
4. League clears for participation in League activities, in a manner consistent with applicable law, each administrator, coach, and volunteer who engages in regular contact with minor athletes (under the age of 18) after conducting a background check of such individual consistent with USA Football's Minimum Background Check Standard. *NOTE: Unless prohibited by applicable law, USA Football recommends a presumption of disqualification for any individual whose background check results in a "red light" for any of the areas listed within the standard. USA Football also recommends that League consider any known non-criminal factors as provided at the end of the standard.*

USA FOOTBALL MINIMUM BACKGROUND CHECK STANDARD (CRITERIA AND SEARCH COMPONENTS)

League should ensure that results of each Background Check remain valid for no more than two (2) years provided that if the results of the Background Check remain valid for a period of longer than one (1) year, League should ensure that its Background Check provider provides a re-check after the initial 12- month period as described below.

Reports of any of the following criminal offenses/registrations should prompt a “red light” or equivalent flag from the provider.

Criminal offenses are defined on the basis of the offense for which the defendant was convicted, plead guilty or pled nolo contendere or, if plead down, then the crime to which the defendant ultimately plead. Felony offenses are defined as all crimes punishable by greater than one year in jail or prison, regardless of how characterized by jurisdiction and regardless of the actual sentence imposed (or if range, alternate sentencing, or indeterminate sentencing is applicable, the outer range is greater than one year).

R1. Offenses:

(a) Any felony of violence regardless of the amount of time since the offense,

OR

(b) one (1) non-violent felony within the past ten years, or more than one (1) non-violent felony regardless of the amount of time since the offenses.

R2. Any lesser crime involving force or threat of force against a person within the past ten years or more than one (1) regardless of the amount of time since the offenses.

R3. Any crime (felony or lesser) of a sexual nature or classified as a sex offense including but not limited to crimes of a sexual nature such as prostitution, pornography, indecent exposure; and crimes in which sexual relations is an element regardless of the amount of time since the offense.

R4. Any lesser crime involving controlled substances (not paraphernalia, alcohol, or marijuana) within the past ten years or more than one (1) regardless of the amount of time since the offenses.

R5. Any crime (felony or lesser) involving cruelty to animals regardless of the amount of time since the offenses.

R6. Any sex offender registrant.

R7. Any crime (felony or lesser) involving harm to a minor regardless of the amount of time since the offense.

R8. Any combination of two (2) or more offenses defined in R1(b), R2, or R4, regardless of the amount of time since the offenses.

Criminal offenses include “Attempted Crimes” in the above classifications.

USA Football Background Check Search Components

The background check should be run against at a *minimum* the following search components:

- 2 Multi-Jurisdictional Criminal Databases (“MJDs”) covering 50 States plus District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico
- 2 National Sex Offender Registries
- Social Security Number validation
- Name and Address history records
- County criminal records search – based on county of longest residence within the last 5-year period
- An additional country criminal records search based on MJD result
- (If background check results are effective for more than one year) Re-check each 12 months of MJD and Sex Offender Registries

Other Potentially Disqualifying Factors

Even if an applicant passes a criminal background check, League may determine on its own that other factors disqualify an applicant, for instance if the individual is known to have:

- Been held liable for civil penalties or damages involving sexual or physical abuse of a minor
- Been subject to any court order involving any sexual or physical abuse of a minor, including but not limited to domestic order or protection
- A history with another organization (employment, volunteer, etc.) of complaints of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- Resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position - paid or unpaid – due to complaint(s) of sexual or physical abuse of minors
- A history of other behavior that indicates they may be a danger to League participants.

5. League (a) has a League-wide Emergency Action Plan (EAP) covering, at minimum, the items listed below; (b) reviews and updates its EAP at least annually (or as operational changes dictate) to ensure it meets the current needs and structure of its operations, facilities, personnel, and athletes; and (c) makes its EAP broadly available and ensures that on at least an annual basis each League administrator, coach, and volunteer is educated on, has reviewed, and understands the EAP. *NOTE: USA Football may periodically provide information on and/or examples of EAPs, but a League’s EAP is necessarily specific to its operations as it must include, among other things, specific device locations, safe locations, and personnel contact information. USA Football recommends that all League administrators, coaches, and volunteers practice application of the EAP annually.*

- a. The EAP covers and is specific to all venues and locations included in League activities.
- b. The EAP addresses the areas generally recommended by the Korey Stringer Institute (<https://ksi.uconn.edu/prevention/emergency-action-plans/>), plus and including without limitation all of the following:
 - i. Names and Contact Information of Key Personnel
 - ii. Locations of Key Devices and Equipment (including without limitation AEDs, fire extinguishers, first aid supplies, etc.)
 - iii. Weather Contingencies

- iv. Medical Emergencies Procedures (including without limitation Concussion Response, Heat and Hydration Incidents and Cardiac Arrest Incidents)
 - v. Lockdown/Secure Perimeter/Containment Procedures; and
 - vi. Defined access points and entry ways into and out of the participation area (i.e., field) for emergency equipment and vehicles
6. League follows and monitors its coaches' adherence to USA Football's Levels of Contact in all league activities, including without limitation all practices and games.
 7. League follows and monitors its coaches' adherence to USA Football's Practice Guidelines in all league activities, including without limitation all practices and games.

Tier 3: GOLD

1. League has verified all BRONZE and SILVER requirements above.
2. League offers game types in each of the "Non-Contact," "Limited Contact," and "Contact" categories.
 - a. Definition and requirements of USA Football's Game Categories and Game Types can be found **here**.
3. League agrees to follow and implements USA Football's FDM Practice Plans (available on the FDM Coach Planner App).
4. League agrees to integrate USA Football's Skills Assessments into its annual operations to assess and report player progress to parents throughout the football season.
5. League agrees to follow and monitor its coaches' utilization of USA Football's Player Progression Guide and Contact Manual.

ADDITIONAL PATHWAYS

Find additional ways to increase your League Excellence Program Level through Inclusive Opportunities and USA Football Sponsored Game Types by clicking **here**.