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BC BASEBALL UMPIRES ASSOCIATION (BCBUA) / BC BASEBALL

BCBUA Grassroots Mentorship Handbook

Our Mission

“Developing Umpires for Success”

Our Vision

*“Building community for baseball umpires by providing
leadership, education, mentorship and opportunities”*

2018 Edition



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Acknowledgement

In the world of volunteer organizations, there is nothing without the generosity, passion and commitment of its members. This Grassroots Mentorship Handbook would not have been possible without the many contributions of individuals who took the time to work with the BCBUA Education Committee to produce this document. Special thanks goes to Gord McFarlane for his time, patience and commitment to mentorship in this province.

Foreword

It is a well-known fact that retaining youth sport officials is a challenging endeavor. Minor Baseball has struggled for years to retain entry-level umpires. As many as 50% of youth umpires either do not return for a second year, or leave mid-season.

As entry level umpires with little to no experience and an 8-hour clinic at the beginning of the season, they are not yet equipped to face many of the challenges that present themselves on the field.



In 2012, The BCBUA decided it was time to create a mentorship program to support them after, their initial training.

“The BC Baseball Umpires Association is committed to growing the Grassroots Portfolio. The goal of the program is to develop and implement curriculum, programs, policies and procedures to enhance umpiring at the initiation level to the national level in Canada (Level I, Level II and Level III). Our current focus is at the beginning of an Umpire's career, as we need to be able to retain umpires prior to growing them.” Sean Sullivan, President, BCBUA

We now have the BCBUA Grassroots Mentorship Program.

“It is imperative that we create a safe learning environment for these young officials on the field if we want them to have positive experiences. As an organization, we must lead by example and devote our attention to the support and development of our entry-level umpires. Talking about it is not enough; we need experienced umpires to be a physical presence on the field to help these young umpires. We need to challenge the system, and build a culture that values and respects umpires at all stages of development.” Rhonda Pauls, Vice-President BCBUA

How it all works:

1) **Local Association Support**

Before deciding on whether the Grassroots Program is right for your Association, you as the UIC need to first, as a matter of importance, explore the attitude of your executive towards implementing a comprehensive training program for younger umpires. The support of your Executive will ensure you have cooperation from allocators and are able to secure funding and equipment.

When soliciting support it should be clear this is not a short-term process. Although some improvements are immediate, it will take 2-3 years to fully implement all the training, change philosophy, and have a well-oiled machine. A long-term association commitment is the key!



2) What can my Association do?

Philosophical support of the program is the most important! When an executive endorses this with the coaches in the organization, your umpires should have a safer environment.

Financial support is also an important element to ensuring your program is successful. Work with your Board to fund mentorship through its budget allocation. This will ensure a healthy program moving forward. **The budget allocation will vary depending on the number of umpires in your association. There is also a BCBUA subsidy available up to \$500 per year per Association. (outlined below in THE ADMINISTRATIVE END 4.d.)*

3) Pre-Season Coaches Meeting

****This is preferred, but not a requirement. This is about ensuring your coaches understand and support the spirit of this kind of development.***

Teamwork is essential in order to get your Mentorships up and running. Bringing awareness of the program's philosophy, its operations and everyone's role in its achievement is imperative in working collaboratively. Their buy-in and support will enhance the success of this program.

At the beginning of the season, arrange to speak with coaches during their annual pre-season meeting. Cover the following things when you meet with them;

1. Explain that the role of UIC is similar to coaching– that the umpires are your “team” and that you and your Mentor crew are their “coaches”.
2. Explain how the mentorship program works
3. Let them know that as the UIC, you are available to discuss on-field situations and concerns. ***That they are not to give feedback to the umpires directly.*** Provide them with your preferred contact information and ensure them that your team of Mentors will be working together to build umpire competencies.
4. Ensure they understand that under the ***Baseball Canada Umpire Development*** structure that it will take 3 years of clinics for a new umpire to be exposed to all the rules. It is unreasonable to expect they will have received all the content until they have completed their 3rd year.
5. Walk them through BC Minor Rule 13.11.2 and convey the intent of the rule. **NOTE:** Rule 13.11 was established by BC Minor Baseball to ensure that young umpires would not be threatened or intimidated by coaches or players. We suggest you mention the contents of rule 13.11.2 be an “Adopted Association Policy” designed to protect your young umpires and increase retention rates. The exact rule and examples of this rule are attached as an Appendix.



Coaches need to be aware you support them when their intent is to help improve umpire performance through positive reinforcement off the field.

4) Training and Support for UIC & Association Mentors

The BCBUA Grassroots Program training adheres to Baseball Canada Official Rotations and Mechanics. Our goal is to maintain consistent training for young umpires throughout the Province, ensuring the consistent development of key fundamentals from the beginning of their careers.

Using Baseball Canada/BCBUA approved training and pedagogy of skill development will ensure your young umpires will have a solid base to succeed and eventually move on to higher levels.

The Process

1. Select your potential Mentors. These individuals need to have the maturity to be a role model on and off field, follow the direction of the program, and be able to teach Baseball Canada and BCBUA mechanics and methodologies.
2. Your association will host a short clinic. It is important to ensure your Mentors can all attend. This clinic will provide your mentors the opportunity to:
 - a. Learn about the philosophy of mentorship
 - b. Learn and apply the criteria for feedback
 - c. Learn how to deliver constructive feedback
 - d. Work with and support new young umpires.
 - e. Practice applying these skills and ask questions.
3. Having this training will ensure you provide consistent instruction to your Umpires as per the BCBUA and Baseball Canada mandate. In addition, once your program expands and you begin adding more in-house Mentors, you will be able to pass down your knowledge and maintain consistency for all your Association Mentorships.
4. There is also a “paperwork” component to this process. The purpose of this is to:
 - a. ensures that criteria and format are consistently followed by each Mentor



- b. track the games and progress of the umpires
- c. enable the association to claim back the subsidy that the BCBUA will pay out when you submit it at the end of the season.
- d. Provide Baseball BC, Baseball Canada, BCBUA and partner associations statistics in an effort to enhance the program

The Administrative end

1. Every Mentor is responsible for filling out a “Mentorship Feedback Form” for each of the umpires he mentors. (Currently, we are working on a “writable” document that can be done on a smart phone for those who do not wish to do the paperwork at the park.) The Mentor will conduct a “debrief” (Mentors are taught this at the training session) at the end of the game with his partner. He will reinforce the most important aspects of the feedback given during the game. He will then follow this up by completing a hard copy which the umpire can take home as a reference.
2. The BCBUA Mentorship Form is a 3-part document. (We now have an online version of this that can be used by UIC’s to set up distribution through Google Docs).
 - a. White given to the umpire
 - b. Yellow kept by the Mentor Coordinator
 - c. Pink kept by the Mentor
3. Each form has 5 areas requiring completion:
 - a. Umpire, Mentor & Game Information
 - b. Two things you did well today
 - c. Areas most recommended to work on for next game
 - d. Specific things you can do in the area to improve
 - e. Umpire comments
4. The UIC will keep a copy of each mentorship over the course of the season. At the end of the season:
 - a. He/She will submit the association forms to the BCBUA Grassroots Chair
 - b. The BCBUA will use these forms to track umpire development data
 - c. The BCBUA will subsidize up to 200 total local grassroots mentorships in the 2018 season.
 - d. Individual associations may redeem up to 50 subsidies (at \$10 per mentorship), or a maximum of \$500. The association then forwards this subsidy to the Mentors as a “top up” to the game fees he/she was paid to work at the Mosquito or Peewee level. ***NOTE: Associations have the flexibility to administer this as they see fit. Some pay the Mentors the “top up” up front for every game**



they do and then keep the subsidy when paid out at the end of the season, and some pay the subsidy out at the end of the season in a lump sum to the Mentors. Some associations have approved internal funding and do not need to claim the subsidy from BCBUA.

5. There are also other alternatives to utilizing the BCBUA Grassroots subsidy. Not all associations have enough umpires at each level, and in some cases, it is not possible to have their senior umpires working on lower level fields doing mentorships. Although this is the most beneficial and consistent way of conducting mentorship, we recognize that it is not the ONLY way to do it.
 - a. **Tournament Mentorships** – Work with surrounding UIC's to arrange for OTHER umpires from neighboring areas to come in and work with a targeted group of grassroots umpires for a weekend.
 - b. When no neighboring area Mentors are available, work with the BCBUA Grassroots Committee to send you a “team” to do tournament based or heavily scheduled game weekends with your new umpires. This may require planning from the start of the season. ***For the 2018 season, the BCBUA has reserved funds to allow 3 associations to partner (cost share) with us on such a weekend. It is first-come, first-served.*** We try to reserve these opportunities for rural and remote areas in the greatest need of support. The expectation on the HOST is to provide hotel accommodation for the Mentors, and the BCBUA will cover travel costs and meal per-diems whenever concession vouchers are not available for umpires.

5) In Conclusion

Through diligent grassroots development, quality resources, training opportunities, and performance feedback at all levels, the BCBUA leadership has created a team of National Level Umpires that are amongst the strongest and most proactive in developing young umpires in Canada.

The intent of the Grassroots Program is to dramatically increase the competency and improve retention rates of young Umpires across BC.

“From a Baseball Canada perspective, BC has really developed as a province in the past handful of years. We do things here that other provinces are looking to copy. Mentorship is one of those things. The umpire really benefits in this type of program. Studies have shown that people who receive positive feedback in a safe environment are most likely to enjoy their experience and actually improve. Baseball Canada supports this Grassroots initiative.” Steve Boutang, Provincial Supervisor of Umpires for the BCBUA



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Appendix I

BC Minor Rule 13.11.2 Non-Confrontational or Verbal Abuse between Coaches, Players and Umpires (for Peewee AAA and below)

13.11.2 FOR 13U AND YOUNGER (Peewee AAA and below)

*** this rule is a specific adaptation beyond the ORB**

Before, during or after a game coaches or players may not approach an umpire for any reason except that they may:

- (a) attend the plate meeting;
- (b) request the Umpire to call "Time";
- (c) raise a safety concern;
- (d) approach the Umpire to make a substitution on defense or offence;
- (e) request the plate umpire to ask their partner for help on a half swing when the plate umpire calls the pitch a ball, but not when the pitch is called a strike. The plate Umpire will consult with the other umpire for a determination which will be final;
- (f) approach the Umpire to protest a game based on an interpretation of the Rule of Baseball on terms as set out in this Rulebook. (No protests are allowed at 11U and younger divisions.)
- (g) shake the Umpires hands post-game;
- (h) thank the umpires and or offer words of encouragement;
- (h) Coaches and/or Players at any time may NOT:
 - (i) Argue any Umpire's decision which involves judgment, such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or a ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach or substitute shall object to any such judgment decisions. Players leaving their position in the field or on base, or managers or coaches leaving the bench



or coaches box, to argue on BALLS AND STRIKES will not be permitted. The umpire shall immediately eject any manager, coach, player or team representative that continues to approach an umpire after his/her decision has been made;

(ii) harass or verbally abuse any official on the field of play before, during or after any game. Contravention will result will be the person being ejected from the game subject to further possible discipline by BCBA.

(iii) on a half swing, if the manager comes out to argue with first or third base umpire he can be ejected as he is now arguing over a called ball or strike.



Appendix II

Example: GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

PLATE

Stance – Using proper Heel/Toe Stance? Good Slot Position or “Hiding” behind catcher?

Head Height – Chin just above the top of the catcher’s head

Voice – Proper use of voice on Balls and Strikes. Is He/She Loud enough?

Signals – Correct use of hands for giving count, Strike signal, Foul Tip, Putting ball into play,
Fair/Foul

Timing – Watches pitch into the glove, makes decision, announces decision

Movement – Trails Batter-Runner to 1st, Rotates to 3rd when appropriate

Communication – Signals with partner, Verbal communication during the play

BASE

Positioning – Uses proper starting positions and proper Set Position

Angles – Uses correct 90-degree angle to throw

Voice – Uses strong voice on calls

Signals – Correct signals, “Selling” a tough call

Timing – Watches throw, waits for play, sets, makes the call. **Pause Read React**

Movement – Hustles to positions, beats runners to bases

Responsibilities – Watches runners touch bases, Fly Balls, Fair/Foul

Communication – Signals with partner, Verbal communication during the play

GENERAL

Dress Code – Neat and Tidy? Shoes clean? Proper Cap? Gray pants?



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Plate Meeting – On time, Introductions, Covered Ground Rules, and Collected Lineups Properly?

Game Control – In Charge? Approachable? Confidence?

Attitude – Appears interested, shows hustle and desire



Appendix III

We provide this as evidence to the fact that this practice is research based and is used at all performance levels in a variety of sports internationally.

**The following excerpts are taken from an article written by the Australian Sports Commission after conducting studies on the benefits of coaching/mentoring sport officials for better performance*

Author: Australian Sports Commission

Issue: Volume 5 Number 1

Mentoring is nothing new, particularly in sport. Most sportspeople and many coaches and officials would freely admit that they have sought the advice of an experienced player, coach or official at some point in their career.

Mentoring is a highly effective way for new coaches and officials to learn the 'art' of their role, and apply theory that they may have learnt in a classroom or through independent study. Mentoring relationships can be formally structured, with mentors assigned to officials, or they can grow out of a chance encounter with a like-minded official and remain very informal.

Mentoring for officials' development can serve a variety of purposes. It can be used as a:

- key learning experience for officials to gain their accreditation
- means of supervising officiating practice associated with accreditation
- means of professional development for officials at any level of accreditation
- means to 'fast track' officials with potential, through their accreditation.

The benefits to the organization of establishing a mentoring program include:

- easing the difficulty and costs involved in conducting lengthy residential training courses
- tapping into the expertise of experienced officials in your sport
- re-energizing experienced officials who take on mentoring roles
- developing officials so they become future mentors and better people managers



- encouraging officials to progress to next level of accreditation through the motivation and assistance they receive from a mentor
- being a particularly useful tool to recruit, educate and retain female officials.

The benefits to the mentor include:

- renewed enthusiasm and commitment to their own work
- opportunities to share their knowledge and skills
- recognition of personal expertise
- new learning for themselves
- promotes lifelong learning through relationships

The benefits to the official include:

- increased confidence and motivation
- constructive feedback on performance
- helps translate theory into practice
- networking opportunities and enhanced career prospects
- promotion of lifelong learning through relationships
- Minimizing the difficulties of attending training courses.

Some do's and don'ts for officials being mentored:

- Be clear about your goals and desires and be able to express your needs and accept responsibility for your decisions and choices.
- Take responsibility for 'driving' the relationship – don't wait for your mentor to initiate action.
- Have reasonable expectations of your mentor – respect your mentor's time and needs.
- Look for a mentor with similar values and with the skills that you wish to gain.
- Acknowledge your mentor's role in your achievements.

When can mentoring occur?

Some opportunities for mentoring include:

- **At training** - a mentor can be invited to observe some of the officials training sessions, or they may even take a part of a session to give the official an opportunity to see them in action.
- **At competitions** - you need to consider, however, the effect that any mentoring will have on the performance of the athletes. Perhaps scheduling some time with a mentor after competition to review the officials performance is the best compromise.



- **Video analysis** - it may be difficult to have a mentor attend a practice session or competition, particularly for officials in rural areas. A good alternative is to video tape the official in action and send the tape to the mentor for comment. It is also important to provide the mentor with some background, as they will not be aware of the context in which the video is taken. The video process should ideally be a catalyst for discussion of the officials performance, not become the focus of the exercise in itself.

Characteristics of successful mentoring relationships

- Good rapport between mentor and the official
- Trust and confidentiality
- Demonstrated interest and enthusiasm
- Clear objectives and goals
- Mutual respect
- Clear communication and feedback – the mentor becomes a ‘critical friend’
- Physical environment for meetings is comfortable
- A shared experience
- Fun and enjoyment
- Acknowledgment and celebration of achievements
- Others are aware and supportive of the mentoring relationship

Adapted from *Making Mentors: a guide to establishing a successful mentoring program for coaches and officials*, Australian Sports Commission, Canberra 2002



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