

A Guide to the Fair Treatment of High School Basketball Coaches

Endorsed by the Board of Directors of the National High School Basketball Coaches Association

I. Purpose

High school basketball coaches are typically employed as at-will employees, capable of being dismissed by their employer without cause. The unsecure nature of the employment arrangement creates the potential for the unfair treatment of high school coaches. The following guidelines are intended to supplement employment requirements imposed by state statutes, local regulations and athletic association rules in order to establish a best practices approach to building and maintaining positive and equitable relationships between high school athletic departments and basketball coaches.¹

II. Hiring Process

- Consider the input of student-athletes and other program stakeholders throughout the hiring process.
- Distribute and make publicly available, as appropriate, a job posting that aligns with applicable statutory requirements and contains a detailed description of the desired qualifications and responsibilities of the coaching position.²
- Take into consideration the compensation and benefits of coaches at comparative high schools as well as applicable statutes, regulations and athletic association rules when developing the compensation and benefits packages for coaching positions.
- Interview a diverse set of candidates that express interest in the coaching position and document the interview process for each candidate.³
- Disclose the athletic and ancillary expectations for the coaching position, taking into account the current competitive landscape of the conference and expectations of the student-athletes outside of the sport.
- Provide a list of the training obligations and a copy of the school's athletic coaching policy.
- Encourage the candidate to read and consider any employment documentation, including, if applicable, any contract, schedule or appointment letter, and obtain assistance and/or counsel if desired.
- Circulate an announcement introducing the newly hired coach to the school and community, and provide opportunities for the coach to become assimilated into the community.

III. Maintaining the Relationship

¹ See Appendix A detailing the statutory and athletic association requirements of selected states with respect to the regulation of high school coaches.

² See Appendix B for a sample job posting created by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference.

³ Diversity includes, but is not limited to, experience, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and socioeconomic status.

- Encourage open communication between the coach and administration by establishing administrative guidelines that include a schedule of periodic formal meetings and a procedure to request informal meetings to discuss pertinent matters.
- Develop a long-term program plan soliciting and incorporating the coach's suggestions regarding athletic, academic and ancillary matters.
- Implement ongoing evaluation of the coach and the program taking into consideration, as applicable, the views of the student-athletes, school faculty and independent examiners.
- Ensure the coach is meeting continuing educational training requirements set forth by entities including the state, the athletic league, conference, and/or the school district.
- Communicate material concerns about coach's performance, collaborating with coach to identify areas of improvement as well as actions steps in order to achieve improvement in these areas
- Demonstrate support for the coach by promoting increased attendance and administrative participation at sporting events.

IV. Termination of the Relationship

- Determine and document the factors supporting a decision of termination (with or without cause).
- Consider the effect of a termination, including the timing (e.g., pre-season, mid-season, post-season), taking into account the principle of fairness to student-athletes and coaches. Only under rare circumstances should a coach be terminated without cause prior to the conclusion of the full season.
- Inform stakeholders in the school or athletic program of the potential for termination and consider their input prior to making a conclusive decision.
- Once the decision to terminate is made, develop a plan of termination and replacement hiring that is compliant with applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual obligations.⁴
- Inform the coach of the decision to terminate within 14 days of making the decision and provide the coach with at least 14 days notice of the effectiveness of the termination, unless the termination is for cause and such notice would be contrary to the interest of the school and/or program.
- Disclose the reason for termination in an exit interview with the coach, specifically providing whether termination was based on failure to meet performance standards, fundamental flaws in ability to foster a positive team environment, off-court infractions unrelated to athletics, or an alternative justifiable basis.
- Provide the coach with details regarding any available appeal process or additional steps involved in the termination.
- Evaluate and discuss with the coach the possibility of resignation as an alternative to termination.

⁴ A decision of termination is made when, after an evaluation of facts and law, a conclusion has been reached that the termination of the coach will definitively occur.

- Identify the appropriate person to meet with assistant coaches and student-athletes to discuss the termination of the coach's employment and the plan for hiring a new coach.
- Circulate a considerate public statement regarding the termination or resignation.

These guidelines were prepared for the National High School Basketball Coaches Associations by Ropes & Gray LLP, the legal counsel to the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

Appendix A

State	Statutory Authority	Athletic Association	Hiring Qualifications and Requirements	Relationship Requirements	Termination Requirements
California	California Education Code 33190 – 33192 , 45125.01 , 45125.1	California Interscholastic Federation	Yes	No	No
Connecticut	Connecticut General Statutes Title 10	Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	Iowa Code Chapter 279	Iowa High School Athletic Association	Yes	No	Yes
Minnesota	Minnesota Statutes Chapter 122A	Minnesota State High School League	Yes	No	Yes
New York	New York Consolidated Laws Education Title 4 Article 61	New York State Public High School Athletic Association	Yes	No	No

State	Statutory Authority	Athletic Association	Hiring Qualifications and Requirements	Relationship Requirements	Termination Requirements
North Carolina	North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 115C	North Carolina High School Athletic Association	Yes	No	No
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Statutes Title 70	Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association	Yes	No	No
Ohio	Ohio Revised Code Title 33	Ohio High School Athletic Association	Yes	No	No
Texas	Texas Education Code Title 2 Subtitle D	Texas University Interscholastic League	Yes	No	No

Appendix B

(Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference Handbook)

9.0 PERSONNEL

9.11 SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION – HEAD COACH

Title: Head Coach

Qualifications:

1. Possess proper Connecticut certification.
2. Should have background in the sport.
3. Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the board may find appropriate and acceptable.

Primary Function:

To help each participating student achieve a high level of skill, an appreciation for the values of discipline and sportsmanship and an increased level of self-esteem.

Reports to: Athletic Director and/or Principal

Supervises: Students

Major Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Coaches individual participants in the skills necessary for excellent achievement in the sport involved.
2. Plans and schedules with the Athletic Director and regular program of practice in season (including holiday or vacation periods).
3. Works closely with the Athletic Director in scheduling interscholastic contests.
4. Recommends purchase of equipment, supplies and uniforms as appropriate.
5. Maintains and completes necessary attendance forms, insurance records, accident reports and similar paperwork.
6. Oversees the safety conditions of the facility or area in which assigned sport is conducted at all times that students are present.
7. Establishes written rules and regulations in consultation with the athletic director and/or principal, for distribution to all squad members prior to the start of the season. Enforces discipline and sportsmanlike behavior at all times and imposes penalties for breach of such standards by individual students.
8. Provides for the orderly distribution and collection of all athletic equipment.
9. Will evaluate their assistant coaches and program and submit written reports to the athletic director at the conclusion of their season.
10. Conforms to the rules and regulations as stated in the coaches manual and/or teachers manual.
11. Performs such other duties as are consistent with the nature of the position and as may be requested by the athletic director and/or principal.
12. Follow all applicable state laws and CIAC regulations related to concussion and sports injury.

Terms of Employment:

Salary and work period to be established by the board of education.

Evaluation:

Will be conducted by athletic director and reviewed by the principal in accordance with the performance responsibilities.