



USATM
LACROSSE

CERTIFIED ASSIGNERS BEST PRACTICES MANUAL





Disclosures

ArbiterSports currently holds more than 90 percent of the sports assigning market share, including lacrosse assigning. USA Lacrosse feels that ArbiterSports offers best-in-class online assigning capabilities as well as tools that support the administration of many of the recommended best practices in this manual. USA Lacrosse receives no promotional funding or revenue from ArbiterSports. USA Lacrosse, as of September 2013, entered into a strategic partnership with ArbiterSports to further assist assigners who utilize USA Lacrosse membership and training/rating data when assigning within ArbiterSports.

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Using this Manual

In certain sections you may see a tip, a note, a warning, or an ArbiterSports information block.



This is a tip! Recommendations from assigners on ways to make your life easier.



This is a note! You'll see this when we want you to remember something that is really important.



This is a warning! Pay very close attention. Seriously, don't skip these.



Information about using the USA Lacrosse-recommended assigning platform.

Help when you need it

Our member services team is available:

Mon. - Thu. 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET Fri. 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat. 10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.	410-235-6882, ext. #102 membership@usalacrosse.com
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You may also contact the Officials Development Program [at officials@usalacrosse.com](mailto:officials@usalacrosse.com).

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

"I think there's a misconception that when you're assigning, you just kind of put names on games."

- Dana Pappas, Commissioner of officials for the New Mexico Activities Association

A Balancing Act

Keeping officials happy and coaches content is a difficult task. Balancing officials' needs and wants with what is best for the game, teams, and players is no small feat. Player safety is always the priority.

Assigning is a task of variable prioritization across the entire game schedule while factoring in officials' skill levels.

- Newer officials need a game schedule that supports their growth and minimizes attrition.
- Experienced officials are needed on certain level contests, but they can also provide valuable mentoring support when paired with newer officials.
- The pool of officials available for certain games will vary depending on the day, time, unexpected conflicts, and when scheduling multiple levels.
- Assigners must be fair and impartial to all.

This requires balancing assignments, based on a number of considerations including experience, availability and expected level and projected intensity of the game.

Communicating with Officials:

- Be straightforward and honest.
- DO NOT brush off or avoid concerns. Avoiding a confrontation does not eliminate it.
- If officials want to know why they are not being assigned the number or quality of games they feel they should be, tell them why.
 - Inform officials of what they can do, such as: increasing their availability, improving their fitness, working on game management and people skills, and gaining more experience by attending clinics and meetings.
- Always encourage officials to seek out training opportunities that can help them to improve their performance, earning them more and often better games.
 - USA Lacrosse offers Level 1, 2 and 3 development clinics every offseason at different locations.

New to the Job?

As the assigner, your basic job is to:

- Put qualified, available officials on games that are appropriate to their level.
- Make sure the officials have the information necessary to arrive at the game site, and that they have all contact information for the site.
- Provide game administrators the necessary information to communicate with officials.
- Manage the scheduling of games, in some cases.

Many assigners come to the role having only been an official. Here are a few ways to get started:

- Consult with other assigners.
- Introduce yourself and communicate your goals to those with whom you contract (schools, leagues, tournaments, and officials).
 - Always share the best ways to communicate with you, and communicate a policy of only accepting requests for officials in written format.
 - Email, fax, and mail give you back-up in case of a dispute or question about time, date, and location.
- Be thorough in reviewing current policies, sharing them, and setting expectations.
 - DO NOT create new policies in a vacuum – engage the appropriate parties.
- Get to know your officials and know with whom you can pair them.
- Go out and observe the officials you assign. With ones who need more work, try observing them more than once.
- Always respect the privacy and confidentiality of others as appropriate and/or requested.
- Establish a collaborative, working relationship with your organization's board.
- Develop a support network of people who can assist if you are not available.
- Be transparent in discussing how you were selected for this position.
- Think about how you will handle your own assignments now that you are wearing an "assigner" hat. Review the section on assigning yourself in this document.

SECTION II

CONTRACTS

"If properly drafted, a written contract can often forestall or minimize legal liability. By contrast, an improperly drafted contract can lead to unpleasant and costly legal consequences. In this area, best practices include consulting counsel before entering into any contractual arrangement."

– Alan Goldberger, Counsellor at Law (reflaw.com)

Have written contracts

It is strongly recommended that assigners have a written agreement or contract with the programs they service that takes the following items into consideration.

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list:

- Mileage and distance school/program willing to pay.
- Date or terms for the agreement, termination of the agreement.
- Description of services being provided.
- Policy for assigning two officials per contest where rules or policy dictate.
- Specifics about if/how junior officials will be utilized.
- Fees/late fees when schools/programs arrive late; penalties if officials are late for the contest (and what qualifies).
- Flat fee per school/program or per game fee? Fee for changes?
- Confidentiality
 - What information you will and will not share with the contracted groups.
- How grievances and complaints should be handled

SECTION III

BEST PRACTICES

"I tend more to look at the merits of it. Are they ready for that game? You try to work them in."












- Bill Carollo, Midwest Football Officials Alliance Coordinator

Deciding Assignments

To assign officials to games fairly and equitably, many factors must be taken into account and not all of them are equal. Some are subjective, some are objective. Skilled assigners use all of the information available to make the most balanced decision possible.

ArbiterSports™	There are many ways in ArbiterSports to leverage the software functionality so that officials are first assigned by objective factors in the system before you as the assigner make subjective changes in the schedule. Some of these are highlighted throughout this document.
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In this section you will explore the following best practices that you should keep in mind. These are numbered for easier organization, and not by any perceived importance.


	I only assign USA Lacrosse-Certified officials.	1
	I understand the competency of my officials.	2
	I use observations as a measure of an official's ability.	3
	I consider my officials' fitness.	4
	I use experienced officials wisely.	5
	I maintain a pool of accessible officials and track their availability.	6
	I proactively address issues of poor attitude and professionalism.	7
	I recognize the level of commitment my officials' have for the profession.	8
	I keep officials engaged and enthusiastic.	9
	I help my officials develop professionally.	10
	I consider potential conflicts of interest.	11

Best Practice #1

I only assign USA Lacrosse-Certified officials.



USA Lacrosse has established national standards for officials' certification. Some requirements are completed during initial training, while others are annual. USA Lacrosse also has a unique partnership agreement with ArbiterSports that allows assigners to view the status of their official's USAL membership and certification status.

Full Name	Email	Signed In	Assignment Status
Joyner, Marty	marty.joyner@arbiter.com	11/1/2022	

Initial certification requirements:

1. Current USA Lacrosse membership as an "Official"
2. Complete the online rules course - <https://learning.uslacrosse.org>
3. Attend an in-person classroom training
4. Pass an online rules exam
5. Pass an on-field evaluation or rating (good for 3 years)

Icon = USAL Member

Annual re-certification requirements:

1. Current USA Lacrosse membership as an "Official"
2. Attend a classroom training for continuing education
3. Pass an online rules exam
4. Pass an on-field evaluation or rating (if a new one is due)



USA Lacrosse published certification requirements to distinguish different levels of expertise. There are checklists available at: <https://www.usalacrosse.com/officials-certification>

Some state high school lacrosse programs are governed by an interscholastic association within the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Each organization requires mandatory training requirements.

Officials in these states must meet those requirements before they can become certified to work games in their state, and these requirements may not always match up with USA Lacrosse national requirements.

Assigners in those states must take into account the differences between the state's requirements and the USA Lacrosse certification process and work with their local organizations regarding the degree to which they must accommodate and adhere to, the training standards of both entities.

Best Practice #2

I understand the competency of my officials.



Officials need to stay current so they can apply the correct rules with the appropriate mechanics. You must know that your officials are qualified for their assignments.

- USA Lacrosse encourages use of their certification level (1, 2, or 3) as a starting point.
- Use observation results, evaluations, and even factor in coach evaluations if appropriate.
- Ask officials at what level they wish to officiate.
- Challenge an official when he or she appears ready to move up to the next level.

USA Lacrosse certification levels are a short-hand way for assigners across the country to know what level of game an official can competently officiate. While not an exact measure in every area, here is how the levels are generally used:

1. **New official** – Youth games (8U-14U), middle school, JV, low-level high school.
2. **Intermediate official** – Most high school games, potential for early post-season play.
3. **Advanced official** – Any high school game as the Head Official (Referee) and playoffs.

ArbiterSports	There is an auto assign function that allows you to rank officials based on skill level, with their preferred ranking system. In the example system below, the rankings go from 100 (can do any game) to 400 (needs support)			
Corsetti, Gordon	gordoncorsetti@	Lacrosse	Field Judge	100
		Lacrosse	Referee	150
		Lacrosse	Umpire	100

ArbiterSports	There is an "Evaluation" tab feature which can be set to allow partner officials and coaches the opportunity to evaluate officials. Having this in place allows you to have additional real-time feedback regarding performance.					
Official Name	Position Worked	Official Rank	Evaluation Criteria Name	Criteria Value	Criteria Comments	Summary Comments

For more information on how to set up this functionality in ArbiterSports, visit <https://arbitersports.force.com/officials/s/article/Evaluations-Guide-for-Officials>

Best Practice #3

I use observations to measure an official's ability.



Intentional game observations are powerful tools in helping officials get better. They help the officials by providing feedback on what they are doing well and what needs improvement. Observations also provide you with information about an official's ability level and stage of development.

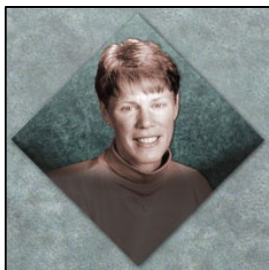
Best practices for observation programs:

- Use veteran officials and trained Certified Observers/Raters to complete observations. This lends credibility to your organization's ranking system.
- Have a system for vetting those who want to give back or earn money through observing.
 - Observers must be knowledgeable and experienced.
- Have a mechanic in place that allows coaches to provide feedback after games.

ArbiterSports

This functionality is available for \$99 (as of this printing). A coach evaluation allows you to read about any problems that occur and see what officials are doing on a game-to-game basis, as well as any patterns officials engage in, positive or negative. The coach evaluation should at least pertain to professionalism, communication, and fitness. Whatever format is used, the evaluation needs to be fair and effective.

USA Lacrosse offers Observation Grants to assist local organizations in conducting observations. Additionally, funds from the USA Lacrosse National Officiating Structure can be used to create a local grant which mirrors the structure of these national observation programs.



Susie Ganzenmuller Grant



Scott Boyle Grant

<https://www.usalacrosse.com/grants-for-officials-organizations>

Best Practice #4

I consider my officials' fitness level.


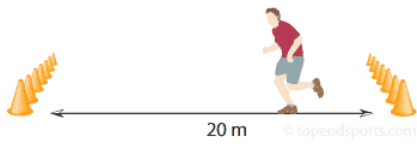



Try to make sure that officials are assigned to games in which they can keep up with the pace of play. This can be gauged through observing officials or measuring via a fitness test. Consider requesting adding a fitness component to the ranking system if your organization is amenable to the idea.

Fit officials can more consistently move to a better position to make calls than those who are unfit. Here is a generalized description of fitness levels matched with types of games.

- **Below Average** – Youth games, games on short fields, predictably slower games.
 - Should always be paired with someone of “average” or “above average” fitness.
- **Average** – Can be considered for nearly any game assignment.
 - For games that are predicted to be especially fast, consider pairing with a fit official.
- **Above Average** – Can be considered for any game assignment.

The Cooper Test and Beep Test are common tests of fitness that give a good baseline evaluation of an official's fitness, even if just used for the official as a measure for personal improvement. See the appendix for fitness test resources.

Cooper Test	
	<p>Designed by Kenneth H. Cooper in 1968 for US military use. It is a popular maximal running test of aerobic fitness, in which subjects try and cover as much distance as they can in 12 minutes.</p>
Beep Test	
	<p>The subject runs between the two lines, turning when signaled by the recorded beeps. The duration between beeps decreases over time. The subject's score is the level and number of shuttles (20m) reached before they were unable to keep up with the recording.</p>

	<p>If implementing a fitness test, associations should communicate the criteria, rationale and result usage ahead of time, and ensure that appropriate medical professionals are on site when it is being administered.</p>
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Best Practice #5

I use experienced officials wisely.



Experience cannot be taught, it must be lived.

Consider this short story about a young man's search for wisdom (in life, business, officiating, etc.):

"Tell me!" he cried. "What is the secret of wisdom?"

The Old Man replied: "Good judgment."

"But how do you get good judgment?" asked the young man.

The Old Man replied: "Experience."

"And how do you get experience?" the young man persisted.

"Ah," said the Old Man: "Bad judgment."

The challenge is developing newer officials by pairing them with more experienced veterans, but also stretching the newer official's abilities as he or she improves over time. There will be mistakes made along the way, but that is the nature of improvement and you must focus on pairing your officials well in order to increase your pool of experienced officials.

Veterans have much to offer in terms of how you strategically assign them (see mentoring/strategic assignments sections of this document).

- DO NOT assign officials just because they are veteran officials.
- Ability is more important than seniority in some cases depending on your objectives.

Becoming a Certified Trainer or Observer may be a good alternative for veterans with a wealth of experience, but who are no longer able keep up with the game.

Encourage the officials in the sunset of their careers to stay active in developing the next generation of officials by applying to one or both programs:

<https://www.usalacrosse.com/officials-trainer-certification>

<https://www.usalacrosse.com/officials-observer-certification>



Best Practice #6



I maintain a pool of accessible officials and track availability.

Officials with greater availability usually work more games than those with restricted schedules. Assigning is a two-way street; officials need to understand that they must be accessible and responsive for the system to work.

Over-communicate your need for officials to keep their blocks up-to-date. We recommend officials check their assigning platform once per day, at minimum, during the season. Inform them that those who cannot be reached; do not return calls or emails, or who do not promptly accept games should expect to get fewer games. Many assignments are time sensitive, so those who are easily accessible will earn priority consideration.

Utilize officials who are willing to travel anywhere or work extra assignments, with games close to home to balance the amount of time they spend on the road. Inform officials that if they limit their travel it will curtail the number of games available to them. Additionally, it is important to not send the same officials to the same schools over and over so that teams and officials do not become too familiar with one another.

ArbiterSports	Officials can block their schedule with full or partial-day blocks based on their availability. They can also set travel limit restrictions on mileage based on ZIP codes for home, work, etc.					
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

While there should be a common sense understanding that last-minute things happen in life, excessive turnbacks from officials make assigning difficult. If this is an issue for your organization, then consider turnback fees, especially when turnbacks happen close to the date of the scheduled contest.

Have a defined protocol for officials who consistently turn back games. This protocol should include giving a warning, one or more grace periods, and a process for ultimately notifying the official that he or she will no longer be considered for assignments.






Best Practice #7

I proactively address issues of poor attitude and professionalism.



An official's attitude is critical and should be taken into account when assigning. A professional attitude and proper decorum on and off the field should be exhibited at all times.

You can better determine attitude with these criteria:

	Professional appearance, with proper uniform.
	On-time arrival.
	An enthusiastic, positive, non-confrontational, calm, and approachable demeanor.
	Responsiveness to coaches, while maintaining that appropriate boundaries.
	Willingness to work with the other officials on the field as a unified team.

You need not tolerate officials who are egotistical, derogatory, showy, demeaning or overly argumentative with coaches, players, fans or fellow officials. Re-training and instituting professional growth and development plans are necessary for officials who demonstrate these negative behaviors in order for them to receive future assignments.

Social Media

In our increasingly connected world, social media is another factor in how officials and entire organizations are perceived by the public. Your organization should draft a social media policy with procedures describing how violations of the policy will be addressed.

Encourage your officials to simply not post anything about their games, someone else's games, or a crew they see on television. Those comments are better reserved for closed forums and private discussions.

Best Practice #8

I recognize the level of commitment my officials have for the profession.

You should consider an officials' commitment to the sport, your organization and their professional development. Commitment can be demonstrated by:

- Attending meetings.
- Working scrimmages.
- Being willing to work extra games.
- Participating in training clinics.
- Helping mentor newer officials.
- Getting additional training at a clinic.
- Helping with training, recruitment, and retention of new officials.

USA Lacrosse Development Clinics are excellent ways for officials to improve in a relatively short period of time. Under the tutelage of expert USA Lacrosse Clinicians, attendees make significant strides developing their rules application, judgment, game management, and, most importantly, their confidence.

Clinic Feedback:

I enjoyed the hard work and work hard attitude of the clinicians! They were a great resource for us to improve as officials.

The clinicians talked about things that were not typical areas of feedback. They mentioned aspects of my game that I would have never known were incorrect because no one mentioned it to me. They were also able to apply much of their teachings to specific rules in the rulebook.

My goal was to obtain honest feedback on my skills as a lacrosse official, and the clinicians were completely fair and honest in their assessments.

The level play was fantastic and provided a great opportunity for honing our game in all areas: mechanics, game management, adjudication and communication with players, coaches and crew. From start to finish, this was the best possible experience!

I was able to correct shortcomings within the next hour as opposed to a few days.

I was looking to enhance my knowledge of better techniques to referee and manage games and was thoroughly satisfied with the leadership, information, and quality of the other participants.

Being able to connect on a personal level and understand the trials that our clinicians went through allowed me to grow professionally and apply their experiences in my state.

Best Practice #9

I keep my officials engaged and enthusiastic.



Officiating takes a mental and physical toll. You must be in tune with the morale of your organization as well as that of your individual officials. Here are some ways to help preserve your officials' enjoyment of the game:

	<p>Look for signs that officials are getting burned out (change in behavior, not attentive at meetings, unusually late in finishing certification requirements, complaints from partners or coaches about attitude, etc.).</p>
	<p>Give breaks and days off when possible. Just because an official is always available, does not mean they have to officiate every day.</p>
	<p>Give the best officials a game with other high-caliber officials. Sometimes experienced officials take all the pressure on themselves when they work with less experienced partners. When they are with other top officials on a game, it spreads the load, and makes officiating fun again.</p>
	<p>Mix up the level of games an official works. A middle school game can sometimes be the best therapy to get someone back to their normal self after a string of tough high school games.</p>
	<p>Be sensitive to other pressures officials may be experiencing such as pressures from work, family, injury, etc.</p>
	<p>Be responsive. If officials need adjustments to their schedules, try to accommodate if the situation permits.</p>
	<p>Give deserving newer officials who can handle the big game the opportunity to shine. A fair chance at a tough game helps newer officials maintain their passion.</p>

Finally, remember to take care of yourself! Take an occasional break. Enlist someone to help with your responsibilities during times when you are swamped, or may be gone or hard to reach. This person may also help you recognize alternatives or solutions that you might not see at first.

Best Practice #10





I help my officials develop professionally.



Officials learn and develop the most when working with experienced officials on challenging games. Ask yourself, how can you help develop a new youth-level official into a championship-caliber official?

Make assignments doubly valuable by assigning with the purpose of an official's development in mind whenever possible. It will pay off in the long run.

- Be engaged with organizational leadership when mentor programs are put into place.
- Pair mentors with mentees throughout the season.
- Choose experienced officials who are willing to work with the new officials and who will communicate with you. This feedback is invaluable.
- Develop a relationship with experienced officials so they can freely call you with feedback or welcome your calls when you want to talk about a less-experienced officials' development.


 <p>Early Development</p>	<p>Mentor programs are extremely useful in retaining new officials.</p> <p>Early in the season, try to pair more experienced officials with the newer officials. There is tremendous value in supporting officials in the early stage of their careers. The more ways you show a new official that you care, the more likely they will stick with officiating for longer than one season.</p>
 <p>Mid-Level Development</p>	<p>Assign the newer official as the head official on a JV game, to put them in charge and learn that role under the watchful eye of the senior official. This also shows your confidence in the newer official as they improve.</p> <p>If there is a JV/varsity double-header where the JV game is a 2-person game and the varsity is a 3-person game, ask the third member of the varsity game to come early to watch the newer official and offer comments.</p>
 <p>Advanced Development</p>	<p>Find opportunities for officials to work more challenging games. Let them be the head official on good, but not critical games, with senior officials that will not let them fail. You could also make them the head official with two less-experienced officials and see if they can develop into the senior official.</p> <p>Encourage experienced officials to let newer officials step up and be the support if they need guidance. Asking for mentors' feedback is a good way for them to let them know that you value their expertise.</p>
	<p>If you are assigning newer officials with a more experienced mentor for growth and advancement, take note of these contests and make an intentional effort to follow up with the after the game.</p>

Best Practice #11

I consider potential conflicts of interest.



Encourage your officials to self-report which schools they cannot work due to a real or perceived conflict of interest. This will save you time and reduce the number of potential turnbacks.

	Officials can indicate conflicts of interest in ArbiterSports so they are not assigned certain games. The "Block" tab, sub-menu "Teams," is where officials go to indicate the schools that they do not wish to work.					
	MAIN	SCHEDULE	PAYMENTS	BLOCKS	LISTS	MOBILE
	Dates	Teams	Summary			

To avoid conflicts of interest, officials should not work a game:

- At the institution where they are employed.
- Involving a member of their family.
- Involving their alma mater.
- In the conference, league, or division in which they coach.
- If a member of their family or household is part of a team's personnel.

Other Reasons for Requesting Exceptions from Specific Games:

If coaches or administrators are given the option to request to not see a particular official, there should be a policy in place to indicate the criteria needed to honor such a request, as well as a policy to share that information with the official. Your organization should also decide whether officials can have the ability to indicate particular schools for which they no longer care to work.

Policies that Deny Assignments:

There should also be policies where your organization's leadership can determine that officials will no longer receive assignments. For example:

- Failure to pass the rules exam or other certification requirement.
- Failure to pass a background check.
- Failure to comply with association policies.
- Failure to meet performance standards.

SECTION IV

UNUSUAL

CIRCUMSTANCES

"I think it's important that we challenge referees when we give them matches but not put them in a position where they're not going to be successful."

- Brian Hemelgarn, Professional Association of Volleyball Officials Assigner

The Postseason

"Postseason," for the purposes of this document, refers to tournament play at the end of the regular season, determining a champion for a specific segment of competition.

While the postseason also represents a development opportunity for officials, it is important to have policies and procedures specific to this aspect of assigning to avoid accusations of favoritism and conflicts of interest.

Developing and Implementing a Postseason Assigning Policy:

- Policies should be transparent and effectively communicated.
- Policy development should include decision-makers such as league representatives, officiating organization leaders and any appropriate school representatives.
- The policies developed by this group should include:
 - How many people will be allowed to have input regarding postseason assignments (i.e. coaches can indicate top three preferences, but are only guaranteed one).
 - A date or deadline for submitting input should be adhered to, after which input may not be considered.
 - Criteria officials must meet in order to be assigned postseason games (i.e. a minimum number of games worked in the regular season at a particular level). These need to be communicated to officials.
 - If formal observations/evaluations are used, this criteria also could be employed to rule out certain officials from working in the postseason (i.e. must have an average evaluation with a score of "X" and no major areas of concern).
- It is strongly encouraged that your organization has an assigning committee, or someone appointed, to oversee/confer with, when assigning regular-season games and playoff games.
 - Try to use outside input from objective measures. If leagues have evaluations of officials, is your organization utilizing these evaluations to determine the playoff officials? This will help reduce perceived biases.



Assigning Games to Yourself

Ideally, you would not assign games to yourself, BUT many assigners wear multiple hats today. If it becomes necessary, you must have procedures in place to mitigate perceived bias and potential issues.

Lacrosse has grown into a national sport on the national stage, with all of the expectations that come with the larger sport industry. To protect the role and integrity of assigners, the long-term goal for the sport is that assigners should never work games at the level of the game they assign.

Conflicts of interest are easy to perceive, and true evaluations can be hard to attain if assigners are wearing more than one hat. As the assigner, you should work games at a different level from the one you assign. Thus, the collegiate assigner can go out and work youth contests, and vice versa. Working the level you assign will only bring scrutiny and make it difficult to do either job. Many organizations have current officials as assigners, and a plan should be put into place to phase this practice out.



In some areas, the best person for the assigner job also happens to be one of the most experienced officials. If you are a highly qualified individual who happens to be the assigner. Make sure you follow general guidelines and best practices.

Lacrosse is a young sport in many areas, and the number of qualified officials remains below that which the game demands. However, this is the circumstance for many well-developed sports as well. In order to minimize conflicts of interest, wear only one hat, and take care of the game with the most qualified officials, you should:

1	Establish a succession plan and mentor new individuals to become assigners.
2	Work toward not assigning yourself to games at the same level you assign. Continuing to officiate is fine, but the assigning duties should be dispersed throughout the levels, and divided among those officials who can separate their on-field activities from their assigning activities.
3	Establish a timeline for when the contract with the organization you assign for will include language that prohibits the use of active officials as assigners (with respect given to the level of play). To provide the best service to the lacrosse program, protect the sport, and prevent freelancers or assigning companies from using this opportunity to bid on these types of contracts, the job description should be written to include previous on-field experience as a lacrosse official and assigner.

Best Practices – Assigners Working Games

Determining what games you should work as an assigner can sometimes be challenging. Even the minor appearance of impropriety can ruin your credibility. Here are some best practices to consider:

- Have a statement in your contract whereby permission is granted for you to take games, and under what circumstances and situations.
- Review the assignments you have made throughout the season to ensure that you, as the assigner, have not given yourself more games when compared to others.
- Be mindful about your rating/field evaluation and certification level. Be consistent in assigning the same types of games to yourself as those with the same certification level.
- Balance the games you assign yourself amongst the schools or teams within your league. Do not assign yourself games at only one or two schools or always with the same teams. Such actions could lead to the perception that you favor certain programs over others.
 - There is some merit to working a game at each site within your league. This ensures that you see each site and can observe the field/playing conditions, game management at that site and have the opportunity to interact with each of the coaches.
- If there are enough personnel in an area, do not assign yourself to games. Only work games when an emergency occurs.
- If you, as an assigner, work a game, make it known to whom stakeholders are to report any feedback regarding your performance (i.e. the local organization's president or chair).
- If you are an experienced official and you are taking a "good" game, make sure that you are doing it for a good reason, such as mentoring a newer official.
- Ensure that you are able to communicate with officials who need to get in touch with you while you are on the field.
 - If you know you may be utilized on games, you should have a backup administrative contact who officials can call during the time you are unavailable.
- Use analytics to evaluate your assigning habits (see next section).

The Power of Analytics

Often, you are the only individual with a complete picture of the season, and the complex rhythm and reason as to why officials were assigned to certain games. Officials only see the game schedule they are assigned, and sometimes jump to conclusions regarding their assignments in comparison to what other officials received.

An easy way to deal with this situation is to be as transparent as possible with the officials. When officials have a better idea of the big picture of assigning they are more likely to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Depending on the length of the season, it may be appropriate to report to officials more than once on the following metrics:

- Number of rainouts, reschedules, and games cancelled, along with number of times a rescheduled game went to the original group assigned.
- Average number of games assigned per official (if you are an active official, disclose the number of games you assigned to yourself).
- Average distance traveled by official per contest.
- Average number of turnbacks per official. Address the acceptability of this number, and the subsequent effort involved in re-assigning.
- Number of times mentors were paired with mentees.
- Number of times Certified Observers were assigned to observe games.

ArbiterSports Support can assist you in understanding how to get this information quickly and easily so it can be reported back to officials.

Official Name	Sport Name	Count	Between
	Lacrosse	1	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	51	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	15	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	44	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	30	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	26	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	20	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	32	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	26	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	25	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	20	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	41	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	1	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	14	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20
	Lacrosse	16	2018-01-01 to 2018-05-20

Official	Total Miles	Games	Average Distance
	88	1	88.0
	4758	76	62.6
	368	15	24.5
	3062	120	25.5
	1746	31	56.3
	124	3	41.3
	1306	57	22.9
	332	19	17.5
	1932	56	34.5
	2444	52	47.0
	930	35	26.6
	2974	27	110.1
	1318	25	52.7
	1264	20	63.2
	2730	51	53.5
	208	1	208.0
	352	24	14.7

One-person games

Do not intentionally assign one-person games unless modified field and rules at the youth level allow it. USA Lacrosse and the NFHS have long supported creating a safe playing environment for all players. Both organizations have taken great steps to improve player safety through outreach, education and changes to playing rules.

The rulebooks for each game were amended to read:

“All high school lacrosse contests must be officiated by two certified officials. Three certified officials are recommended.”

USA Lacrosse feels strongly that one official is never acceptable in scholastic play and youth contests (except shortened fields in 7v7 games using USA Lacrosse youth rules at the 10U age group and below), and should not be allowed under any circumstances.

The presence of two trained officials will assist in reducing the incidence of illegal body checks and illegal hits to the head, which leads to concussions. According to the 2011-2012 statistics published through High School RIO (National High School Sports – Related Injury Surveillance Study), boys’ lacrosse ties ice hockey in leading all contact sports with injuries identified as “concussion” (42 percent). The girls’ game has seen a reduction in overall injuries, yet continues to show little improvement in head injury/concussion. Two officials are critical to maintain safe play among the thousands of players who take to the field each year, as well as to effectively manage the speed, strength, and athleticism of teams across the country.



When the rulebook language includes the word “must,” if you assign only one official to a game expose yourself, and the assigned official, to increased liability.

USA Lacrosse does not support ANY scholastic contest being played with only one assigned official. Here are some things you can do to limit the number of one-person games that occur (with a national goal being zero for any level other than shortened fields in 7v7 using USA Lacrosse youth rules at the 10U age group and below):

- Contracts with schools, teams and leagues should be coordinated to require different levels to play on different days to maximize the number of games officials can work (i.e. high school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; modified or youth of Tuesdays and Thursdays; club on Saturdays and Sundays).
- Contracts can also be coordinated to require different levels at different times so that doubleheaders may be scheduled (i.e. varsity games start at 4PM, JV games start at 6PM).
- Contract stipulates that when two officials are not available, the contest will not be played.

Addressing Shortages of Officials

Educate league administrators to consider the implications of adding teams and programs, and to think through the number of officials necessary to support their proposed growth. You can influence the leagues looking to contract them by asking the important questions and bringing all parties to the table – the official’s organization and league administrators – to discuss needs and recruiting strategies.

You also can, through contracts, dictate scheduling policies in order to meet the demand with the pool of officials that is available. Read some helpful tips for managing scheduling in the **Case Study: Mentoring Program in Central Ohio** on page 44.

USA Lacrosse developed guides to help all stakeholders in an area, recruit officials in order to service the games being played at all levels. Visit usalacrosse.com/officials for more information.



Take the high road. Have a strong two-person officiating policy. If you do not stand by the policy, organizations will take advantage of the situation (for example, instead of three games with two officials, they may want to stretch the pool and have six games). When there is a shortage, games have to be cancelled, and the assigner holds his/her ground, you’d be surprised at how willing the groups become to help recruit and cultivate more officials.



Be proactive. Create situations where the same officials can do several games at the same site. For example, make schools host a doubleheader and ask athletic directors to work out field logistics.

Strategic Pairing of New Officials

There will be days when there are many high-level games and also many lower-level youth games; therefore mentors may not be available. Here is a suggested way to pair newer officials, based on their prior experience for an optimal learning opportunity.

Most often, lacrosse officials come to the game as a player or parent, or from officiating another sport. Both bring different skill sets to officiating lacrosse.

- The lacrosse player/parent has some intrinsic knowledge of the game.
- The other-sport official may not know the game, but they do know how to officiate.

Pairing a “lacrosse experienced” officiating-novice with an “other-sport official” lacrosse-novice can yield benefits if both officials are open to learning what the other can bring to their game.

This does not guarantee that they will learn from each other, but at least you presented them the opportunity by assigning with intention.

Junior Officials

Junior officials are a great way to get young athletes involved in the game. For players, learning how to officiate can help them improve their own game while playing. Where youth programs are prolific, junior officials can ease the burden that a robust game schedule can create for an organization trying to cover all levels of lacrosse from 8U to post-collegiate. While there are many positives to engaging junior officials, it needs to be done with certain guidelines in place to assure they have a positive experience that will bring them back to officiating for many years.

Your organization must engage with leagues and tournaments to assess their willingness to utilize junior officials, determine if there are limitations or restrictions for minors to work the games, and specify the expectations for junior officials.



To comply with most state minimum age requirements for employment, junior officials must be at least 14 years of age prior to taking a game assignment.

Ask the league about certification requirements for coaches. At a minimum, coaches should be certified through Level 1 of the USA Lacrosse Coaching Education Program (this will assure that coaches passed a background check and completed the Positive Coaching Alliance class).

The league should provide additional adults, who are not coaches, to serve as game/site administrators. This is the adult who will deal with any unruly parents or fans, and who will escort the officials to their cars or assure they are picked up by an adult should the need arise.

Leagues should discuss with the assigner the abilities and requirements of junior officials working their games (Will junior officials always be paired with an adult? Will junior officials be tracked and evaluated so that two new junior officials are never together?). As with any program, time must be invested, and requirements can change as the program evolves.

Recommended Requirements for Using Junior Officials:

- Junior officials must complete the USA Lacrosse Junior Official Certification.
- Junior officials will only work games where they are, at least, two years older than the athletes.
 - 14-year-old will only work 12U play and below, a 17-year-old may work 14U and below.
- Junior officials can only work games that are played by the appropriate USA Lacrosse rules for the age level of the athletes on the game.
- For junior officials to work a full checking game (girls) or contact game (boys), an adult official with a Local rating (girls) or Level 1 (boys) needs to be on the game

Handling Complaints

Coaches may have concerns about officials that you have a responsibility to address. Examples of officials' behavior that coaches may have concerns about include:

- **Apathetic Officials** – The perception that the official does not care.
- **Unfit Officials** – The observation that the official cannot, or does not, keep up with play.
- **Confrontational Officials** – The perception that the official is unwilling to communicate or always takes offense at any question asked or observation offered.

One indication that you should investigate further is if you receive complaints from several different coaches about the same official, regarding the same concerns. Any of the concerns listed above warrants an investigation.

How to Investigate Concerns:

1. Speak to the other official(s) on the game.
 - If an observer was present, consult the observer.
2. Talk to the official(s) in question.
3. Talk to the coaches from both teams about what happened.
 - Get the coaches to put their concerns in writing.
4. If this is a repeat incident or a bad situation, schedule an observation and watch the official(s).
5. **WHEN WARRANTED, TAKE ACTION!**
 - If the concern is justified, the official must make changes. Retraining and/or reassignment may be necessary.

There will also be unwarranted criticism of officials. When it does, listen. It may be that all the coach needs is the opportunity to vent. Try not to be defensive. After the coach is done, thank the coach for their perspective. Be firm if the coach's comments turn from professional disagreement to personal attacks or questions of integrity.

Many assigners employ policies regarding who can report complaints to them, as well as the timeliness of those complaints. Outlined in the contract, there should be specifics regarding the process for reporting issues with officiating. For example, scholastic coaches may have to report the incident to their athletic director within 72 hours of the game, and then the athletic director may contact the assigner.

A cooling off period (typically 24 hours) prior to engaging in a conversation about the game, is recommended. Policies should also be in place if there are concerns regarding specific calls, knowledge, judgment, or consistency; then a game film must be reviewed and sent to the assigner prior to dealing with the complaint.

SECTION V

LIABILITY AND

INSURANCE

"When you look at the games you want to make sure you have the right people there."

- Jim Corstange, football and basketball assigner in Michigan

Liability Reduction and Risk-Management

Just like preventative officiating, following risk-management techniques will help avoid problems. Using solid risk-management practices is a proactive step in limiting liability.



Always have a written contract!

- Use checklists on all officials to make sure they meet your organization's requirements.
- Follow a defined process when making your assignments. This is the most important step to managing risk as an assigner, because the most likely lawsuit you will face is one tied to discrimination.
- Follow all local, state and federal anti-discriminatory guidelines regarding race, color, age, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, etc.



Having fitness standards in place allows for objective measurement of whether an official is able to do the job assigned.

- Be honest with officials and straightforward with answers to their questions.
- Keep written records of all conversations or incidents.
- Attempt to assign officials to games in accordance with their abilities.
- Be mindful of friendships and real or perceived favoritism.
- Analyze data regarding numbers of assignments made and to whom.
- When possible, use computer assisted software to manage your assignments and regulate your data on the type and number of assignments you make.
- Insist that ALL officials be covered by liability insurance.
 - USA Lacrosse membership satisfies this requirement.
 - Wrongdoing is not a requirement for some claims or lawsuits to be brought against officials. However, no matter what the circumstances, these claims must be investigated and defended. Follow good risk-management techniques to prevent a claim from being initiated or help defend yourself if a suit is brought.
- Do not pay officials directly.
 - You become their employer if you do, and that brings an enormous amount of legal responsibilities. Contracts between assigners and officials should specify that schools, leagues, or tournaments pay the officials directly for their services. This helps officials maintain their status as an independent contractor.

- You will have greater flexibility on who you assign if you are not the employer of all officials. That is a result of strict employment laws.
- You should be incorporated as part of the executive group for which you assign. Since discrimination and EOP law are the two areas where assigners are most vulnerable, it is extremely important they not act in the capacity of “employer.” Depending on the state in which the assigner runs his or her business, acting as the employer can leave the assigner responsible for payroll tax and disability/workman’s compensation taxes to the state. By not acting as the payer to officials, the assigner and the official more firmly maintain their “independent contractor” status.
- No cash payments should ever be distributed on the field.

ArbiterSports

Consider RefPay as a good alternative if your payment practices do not follow the recommendations in this manual. RefPay is affiliated with ArbiterSports.

- DO NOT restrict officials working for other organizations or assigners.
 - Restrictions set up an employer-employee relationship, opening you up to more liability.
 - You should have written sharing agreements with the other assigners who work in their area (i.e. when you need to promote up to fill a game slot, the lower level assigner needs to promote and backfill).
 - You and any assigners you work with should come to a written agreement regarding game hierarchy (by level, by game meaning – conference/non-conference, regular season/post-season), and work with each other to get all game assignments covered.
 - This alleviates officials’ stress trying to independently navigate between assigners and unexpectedly turning back games due to conflicting assignments. It is best to never put an official in this situation.
- Have the appropriate insurance coverage for your assigning activities.
 - <https://www.usalacrosse.com/usa-lacrosse-insurance-program>

Insurance

Listed below is the “order of succession” of insurance you and your organization need to be protected. This list is not all-inclusive. It merely serves as a starting point for organizations or assigners to investigate insurance needs. We recommend that you obtain the services of an insurance professional to determine the specialized exposures that need to be insured.

1. **General Liability Insurance (GL)** – This should be written to include Participant Liability. This protects against bodily injury and/or property damage liability. Payment could include damages for physical injury, loss of service, loss of wages, etc., when an injury claim occurs against another person and payment could also include damage to another person’s property. A minimum of one million (1,000,000) dollars of coverage is suggested.
2. **Directors and Officers Liability Insurance (D&O)** – This provides protection for the decision making by the organization’s Board of Directors and Officers for wrongful acts of errors and omissions. This should include the assigner.
3. **Professional Liability Insurance (E&O)** – Commonly called Errors and Omissions Liability, this covers instances where an assigner, for example, supervises, evaluates or trains officials and then sends them to do a game. This may cover instances that occur outside the decision-making process of an organization’s Board of Directors. This coverage can be included in D&O insurance and is in the USA Lacrosse insurance for officials program.

It is important to note that the way a claim is presented is the determining factor for which coverage is triggered by the insuring company.

Under the current USA Lacrosse insurance package structure, the easiest, most efficient and cost effective way for assigners to have D&O coverage is to be a member of the organization they are assigning for. This does not require the group to grant the assigner any additional privileges (voting or otherwise), but will protect the assigner and any possible discrimination lawsuits, which can commonly name assigners.

Assigners operating independently, running their business as a 501(c)(3) can purchase D&O insurance through USA Lacrosse Insurance Program at a reasonable rate or shop around for other comparable providers.



It is important to compare policy coverage limits and exclusions when evaluating insurance packages. Make sure you’re comparing apples to apples, as some policies have coverage gaps.



Sources of Insurance

Different insurance options are available to individuals and organizations depending on the type of coverage sought. The following is intended as a general summary. For specific questions you should check with the insurance companies, their websites or an insurance professional.

General Liability Insurance - GL

If you are a current member of USA Lacrosse as an official, you are afforded general liability insurance through USA Lacrosse Insurance Program Insurance. USA Lacrosse worked with USA Lacrosse Insurance Program Insurance to extend this protection to assigners if a claim is brought against them for assigning an official to a game where a bodily injury claim occurs. In areas where lacrosse is a state-sanctioned sport and the state is a member of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), those officials registered with the state also are provided GL protection.

The NFHS also provides liability protection to assigners in member states. GL can be purchased from other organizations and insurance companies. The National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) also offers GL protection with membership to officials when acting as an official or as an assigner, along with some coverage for unintentional Errors and Omissions.

Directors and Officers Liability Insurance - D&O

An organization with total USA Lacrosse membership can obtain D&O insurance to protect the Board of Directors and Officers including individuals, league officials and volunteers in their collective capacity as officers of your organization from the liability arising out of claims brought against them for the decisions they make. Examples of claims covered by this type of policy are:

- Lawsuits seeking damages for claims of discrimination.
- Wrongful suspension of players.
- Acts beyond the authority of the league.
- Wrongful dismissal of coaches.
- Failure to provide adequate insurance.



The organization can purchase this optional protection through USA Lacrosse's USA Lacrosse Insurance Program. This optional insurance from USA Lacrosse Insurance Program also provides Errors and Omissions insurance coverage to the Board of Directors, officers, and the assigners of the organization.

Please note, however, that most D&O insurance policies DO NOT provide E&O insurance coverage; this is an exception. Rates will vary depending on the size of the organization, prior claim history, number of people involved in the decision-making process, etc. In order for the assigner to be covered as part of D&O, the organization's by-laws must indicate that the assigner is one of the Directors and Officers, and the by-laws also should outline how the assigner is selected and compensated.

Errors and Omissions Insurance - E&O

Assigners need to have protection for the decisions they make when serving in this capacity.

E&O insurance can protect against claims brought for the selection and the assigning of officials, game evaluations, rankings and revisions of officials' abilities, reviewing each of the submitted official's qualifications and other alleged breach of duties as an official or assigner, by reason of errors and omissions occurring while acting as an official or assigner.

E&O insurance does not provide for claims brought against an assigner for a bodily injury suit. For example, if a player sues an official because of an injury sustained in a game that an official worked and sues the assigner for assigning that particular official to the game at which the injury occurred, E&O insurance would not cover that type of claim. However, USA Lacrosse member assigners do have liability coverage for bodily injury suits brought against the assigner for assigning an official to a game where a general liability claim occurs. This protection is included for assigners in the General Liability Insurance provided by USA Lacrosse with the membership package you have as an official.

Contact any of these organizations to determine what type of coverage is offered to members, what kind of coverage you currently have and what optional coverage is available to you:

- USA Lacrosse Insurance Program Insurance – <https://www.usalacrosse.com/usa-lacrosse-insurance-program>
- National Association of Sports Officials – www.naso.org
- National Federation of High School Sports Associations – www.nfhs.org

SECTION VI

TOURNAMENTS

"For someone who may have plateaued - I like to see if I can challenge them in a different way. I might encourage them to go to a clinic, attend the National Convention, or I may assign them with more experienced officials for several games."

- Rob Gross

Methodology

Tournaments can vary in size from one field with four hours of games, to twenty fields over multiple days. Assigning tournaments means considering unique factors that you may not usually think about.



Always have a contract defining the terms of the services you will be providing.

Here are some fundamental questions you should ask the organizer, and yourself, before creating a contract for assigning a tournament, knowing these games will typically not be a standard game.

- How long are the games?
- Are they full size fields?
- How many officials are needed to cover all the games safely?
 - At least two in all situations, except 10U shortened field rules in the USA Lacrosse youth rulebook.
- What are the different age levels and what rules will be used?
 - Are they aligned with the USA Lacrosse youth rules if it is a youth tournament?
- How much do the officials get paid?
- Do the officials keep time and penalties or are there table personnel?
- If these tournaments run all day, will food for the officials be considered?
- Are games in locations where there are enough local officials that the local organization can supply all of the officials, or will officials need to come in from other areas?
- Is the tournament sanctioned by USA Lacrosse?
 - <https://www.usalacrosse.com/sanctioned-tournaments>

You may be put in a difficult position. Sometimes, tournament directors will promise so many games to the teams participating without first consulting you or your organization.

New Tournaments

You may know about the large, established annual tournaments that occur regularly; sometimes you will get a call from an organizer that has a tournament coming up, or an official that wants to work a certain tournament and hopes you will use him or her.

Be proactive.

Your knowledge and experience can help the organizer have a successful tournament and the officials have a good experience if you are proactive whenever possible.

Have a conversation with the organizer of the tournament.

As much as possible determine how the tournament is run:

- Game length.
- Age levels.
- Tournament duration.

Embrace the opportunities.

Tournaments can also be a good way to mix officials that typically do not work with each other and may even be a venue to bring in officials from outside your local area to “cross pollinate” and observe other techniques.

Large Tournaments

Benefits:

- You can plan to use it for training purposes.
- You can bring in outside officials to “cross-pollinate” or get other officials familiar with techniques other officials use.
- You can bring in officials for evaluation that you may not otherwise get a chance to see.
- There are opportune times for officials to get together for social activities in the evenings to build camaraderie.

Potential Issues:

- Housing and travel costs must be negotiated.
 - When there is an annual tournament that is too large to be filled with local officials then you must reach out to other areas as well as talk to the organizer about fees to cover travel for out-of-town officials and potentially covering housing costs.
 - Often organizers will get compensated rooms for bringing in teams and the organizers can use these to house officials. Or the organizer will provide fees to compensate a portion of the housing.
 - You need to be proactive before the organizer sets their fees so that these extra fees are available to be paid to officials. If you wait too long, the organizer will say the fees are not budgeted and your job will become more difficult.
- You might need to use officials with whom you are not familiar.
 - Communicate with other assigners and get recommendations about potential officials.

Large Schedule Strategies:

- Assign no more than 3 games in a row for any official.
- Assign officials to only one field so there isn't the added stress of looking for a new field for their next assignment.
- Assign three officials to one field.
 - Two officials work one half, while the other official rests.
 - A great opportunity to practice three-person mechanics in some situations.
 - Game fees need to be adjusted if you adopt this strategy as the officials' fees need to be accounted for by halves and not by game.
- Be physically present at the tournament to address last-minute scheduling issues.

Best Practices for Tournament Assigning



Always have a contract!

- Define in the contract and stick to a maximum work per day continuum (i.e. three, one-hour games in a row; nine games maximum per official within twelve hours).
- Involve your organization on important decisions such as fees, travel, food and housing.
- Note in the contract an understanding on payment for canceled games, weather-related or not. Usually when games are scheduled and officials are there, payment goes to the officials for all scheduled contests. Payment should always go to the official for scheduled games if the teams do not receive a refund.
- Decline to work officials longer than it is safe for the officials and participants.

Fees:

If possible, negotiate the fees before team registrations are collected. If the tournament has not set the entry fees then you can work with the organizer to set the fees. Many first-time tournaments ask the assigner to provide officials after team fees have been set, and the organizer probably estimated a fee for officials that may not be correct.

Involve the Appropriate Parties:

You may already have a standing agreement that you negotiate for an organization in these cases, as well as being the sole assigner for an organization. If you have a relationship with, but are not the sole assigner for, the organization you should involve them in the negotiations with the tournament organizer.

Negotiations:

Never agree to provide officials when any organization informs you that they will pay game fees below fair market value. You can ask the organizer to reconsider and if they will not, then tell the organizer that you cannot provide officials. If the organizer suggests single-person crews on games that clearly require two people, simply decline on the grounds of safety and best practice.

Be flexible:

Most often, the best scenario is that the organization agrees to work the first year under slightly lower fees with the understanding of future negotiations. This helps the tournament organizer keep the tournament going and provide for future opportunities; while keeping your position as an advocate for the officials strong. Some flexibility also creates a beneficial bargaining position in the future, and makes you a valuable asset to the tournament organizer as well.

SECTION VII

CASE STUDIES

AND SCENARIOS

"If we expect our officials to be committed to the game, then we need to be committed to them."

- Jen Dorff



Too Much Play, Too Few Officials

Submitted by a USA Lacrosse member assigner in Ohio.

Often, we are asked to assign more than one tournament a weekend. This year I was asked to assign a new tournament on a weekend that always hosts an established tournament.

The established tournament was an end-of-season championship tournament that has been hosted for years in our area.

I informed the director of the new tournament that I was unable to assign his tournament due to the lack of officials. I offered several alternative dates for them to use.

They said they could not change the date. As it turned out, I was still short that weekend for the established tournament assignments. I would not have been able to give them any officials for that day. I decided to decline assigning their tournament.

My decision was 100 percent correct.

Now for the fun part: The director of the new tournament did not inform the teams that non-rated officials (parents and student volunteers) would be officiating.

After the weekend, I received many phone calls saying I should have called the team organizers/coaches to tell them I was not assigning the tournament. Since I work with these teams during the year, they felt I was responsible for informing them that I would not be assigning this tournament. Teams complained to me that they would not have paid the enormous entry fee and may have elected not to go at all, if I had informed them of the officiating situation.

In my defense, I explained that the tournament director never said or advertised experienced or rated officials would be used. He never advertised that my organization's officials were to be used. He never used my name when discussing his tournament. I simply turned down the assignment. I still feel shaky about my responsibility to inform my lacrosse community about tournament organizers. Next year the tournament organizers report that they are planning to move to a different weekend.



Mentoring Program in Central Ohio

Deb Welch, Central Ohio Women's Lacrosse Officials' Association (COWLOA) Youth Assigner

Last season we were able to have all first-year officials cover 5th and 6th and middle school games with an experienced official on the field with them. No first-year official worked alone or at a level they were not trained to work. This has increased our retention of first year officials.

We also try to survey new officials that leave the game. The greatest complaint was they were undertrained, and they were verbally abused. We now have a code of conduct signed by all coaches prior to the start of the season. Our verbal abused has been dramatically reduced with the enforcement of this program by the assigner.

In addition to working assignments with experienced officials, we now offer more on-field training opportunities for first-year officials.

- **Preseason Middle School Play Day:**
 - Used as the first on-field check out with experienced trainers.
- **Midseason Play Day:**
 - Experienced officials giving feedback and on-field help.
- **End of Season Tournament:**
 - Only the best first-year officials are invited to work with our experienced officials.



Tournament Cancellation

Submitted by a USA Lacrosse member assigner in Maryland.

One summer was disastrous. I had tournaments every weekend in June and July, and some tournaments missed entire days of play. While I feel you should not be paid for a service that you do not do, some officials drove/flew to do these tournaments. On the other hand, that is a chance you take when doing games. To the best of my knowledge, none of the tournaments returned money to the teams. One tournament is a 501(c)(3) and all their proceeds went to charity, so they said.

I worked it out with one tournament organizer to pay half a fee for games missed. That does not include the days that went to half games to get some of the games played. So those officials that did 25-minute games only got paid for those games. One official did one game and missed three. He received his full fee for the one and half a fee for the other three.

We don't know all the "other" expenses that a tournament has when they have to cancel: re-assigning, material to get fields playable, re-lining, etc. That being said, they are making money because why would you do this every year if you weren't?



I am in an area where there is an abundance of officials, so most of the time I don't need to use officials that travel. But I do so in order for the officials to see higher quality play and work with (usually) better officials. Frankly, I am not a fan of summer tournaments, but I use them to my advantage to help officials get better. I am amazed every weekend at what some officials think is a rule and what should be called and let go, and even how they dress.

With that being said, most officials work these tournaments to see better games, meet new people, and see new places. They understand that no one controls the weather. Very few are doing it for the money, although the money is good. I'm trying to come up with a policy that would be fair to all, but that might not be possible. I don't believe that those that traveled farthest and put out the most money should be paid more than the local officials.



Should there be a flat "travel" fee if entire days are missed? Some tournaments only closed certain fields. So some officials lost games while others did not.

I do require a full fee if a team cancels completely (in order to go home early). That happened at least a dozen times this year and the officials got the full fee and could also leave early.

Real-Life Scenarios – What Would You Do?

<p>#1</p>  <p>Prom</p>	<p>On Monday morning a high school varsity coach calls you to say that he forgot prom was this coming Friday night. Could you please move their Friday game with their cross-town rival to Thursday at 4PM? This school is a frequent competitor in the state tournament, and the rivalry game is a good one that requires two solid officials on it.</p> <p>You had already considered this when the game was on Friday, and you had scheduled this months ago to make sure it was staffed correctly. You already know that all of your available officials are assigned on Thursday, and you have no officials to move to when the coach now wants the game.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Response</p> <p>Inform the coach that this is not possible due to the number and level of contests on the Thursday he is requesting. All schools on your contract have two days at the end of the season to conduct makeup contests and you tell him that he will have to choose one of these contests. That could mean back-to-back competition days for his team; however, you remind him with the importance of the game, it will be better for the athletes to have two officials who are qualified for this level of game.</p>
<p>#2</p>  <p>Dangerous</p>	<p>An organizer contacts you to be the assigner for his tournament. He says it's going to be great: 13 fields going for 12 hours straight for three days in a row, and each team has been guaranteed to play five games each day. Four of the fields are going to be 12U play, so he's fine with just one official on the field.</p> <p>It is a tournament format, they are keeping score and each age bracket is playing for a trophy. It is going to be a big college recruiting event, but he will only pay for three officials on the championship game in each age bracket. He's fine with having junior officials work the tournament as long as he can pay them half what he pays the adult officials. You know that this format is flawed, and you don't have enough officials in your roster to cover it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Response</p> <p>Junior officials work just as hard and assume the same amount of liability that adult officials do when working a contest. The assumption is that the junior officials you are using as equally competent as the adult officials. You only have enough officials to safely cover 8 fields for 8 hours straight in any given day, and all officials will be paid based on the level of play they work.</p> <p>You explain to the organizer that staggering the level of play across more days will allow you to better schedule the tournament and ensure player safety. You also include the other immediate assigners in the area in the discussion who the organizer is likely to approach next.</p> <p>You all agree that the format must be altered in the interest of safety. The tournament organizer says this will cost him more money to have the facility for more days. You draw up a contract for your services which outlines the number of officials you have available to safely assign the tournament.</p>

Real-Life Scenarios – What Would You Do?

<p>#3</p>  <p>Bad Behavior</p>	<p>One of your newer officials calls you on the way home from a game, very upset. She tells you about a coach who was constantly yelling at her and commenting on her calls. She warned the coach, but did not escalate the foul to a card. She said the game was starting to get physical, and she and her partner did tighten up their calls, which seemed to help, but since the coach was so verbal, the kids began to get mouthy and two players carded out of the game.</p> <p>Her partner also calls you and verified her story, and indicated that the coach was unusually distracting, she suspected because she did not recognize this newer official. The coach then calls you and requests that she not see the newer official ever again because she cost her team the game.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Response</p> <p>Both officials played a role in the escalation of behavior in this game, and both need instruction on how to more effectively deal with these types of situations. The coach also must be addressed, and no promises of not using the official again should be made.</p> <p>The coach needs instruction on effective ways to communicate with officials. If there was game film available, you should request to see it, or that it is sent to the people in your organization who handle these kinds of complaints. If that part of your organization suggests not assigning that official to that coach again, only then will you make that promise.</p>
<p>#4</p>  <p>Background Check</p>	<p>A program administrator was having a hard time reading an official's address so she went searching for him on the internet, and happened to find him on a sex offender registry.</p> <p>She requests that you do not send this official to any of their contests in the future. You have never heard any complaints regarding this official, and do not have any proof of what this alleged.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Response</p> <p>All organizations should have a policy, which allows them to request a background check of any official at any time. Those members of the organization who have access to the USA Lacrosse database can see when a person has purchased a background check, and when our system has recorded a green light for that official.</p> <p>The official assumes the cost of the screen, and assumes the consequences of a red light – (USA Lacrosse membership revocation). Request that the official in question complete the screen in order to receive games.</p>

Conclusion

As an assigner, you have more influence than you may realize. Making an effort to adhere to the suggested best practices and risk management techniques outlined in this manual will help you more effectively assign officials to the right game at the right time. Additionally, you may be able to limit your liability and reduce the likelihood that a claim or suit may be brought against you. Following these strategies will help create a safer, more positive playing environment for all involved.

Summary

These best practices represent actions you can take to provide a positive, safe lacrosse experience for players and officials.

1. I only assign USA Lacrosse-Certified officials.
2. I understand the competency of my officials.
3. I use observations as a measure of an official's ability.
4. I consider my officials' fitness.
5. I use experienced officials wisely.
6. I maintain a pool of accessible officials and track their availability.
7. I proactively address issues of poor attitude and professionalism.
8. I recognize the level of commitment my officials' have for the profession.
9. I keep officials engaged and enthusiastic.
10. I help my officials develop professionally.
11. I consider potential conflicts of interest.

Certified Assigner Program Requirements

1. Current USA Lacrosse membership with "official" participation.
2. Approved application by USAL staff.
3. Pass a NCSI background check.
4. Register into the Certified Assigner Program.
5. Complete the Certified Assigner Online Course.
6. Pass the annual rule exam (NFHS or collegiate).

You can review the certification requirements and other assigning resources at <https://www.usalacrosse.com/officials-assigner-certification>