

January 2, 2019

West Virginia Wrestling Coaches and Parents,

There has been a lot of discussion, questions, and concerns regarding the announcement that USA Wrestling Leader Cards would be required to coach at the West Virginia Youth Wrestling Association State Championships in Huntington this year. Collectively, your Region Chairman and the Officers have spent dozens of hours trying to tackle this issue that, as will be explained below, is not of our/their making.

The WVYWA was brought together for three guiding principles as follows:

1. To promote youth wrestling in this great State.
2. To give every parent, coach, and club a voice in the management of youth wrestling in West Virginia.
3. To be inclusive of wrestlers, parents, coaches, clubs.

So, let's get to the point - Why background cards and why now?

Recently, a new law was passed by Congress entitled "Protecting Youth Victims From Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017" (hereinafter, the "Act"). The Act requires/mandates a lot of things that each of you will be hearing about in the coming months and years from the sports that your children are involved in. Suffice it to say, the Act changes what is expected of youth coaches to be allowed to coach youth sports. This applies nationwide and sports wide. In sum, the Act irrevocably changes the world we operate in.

Although there is some debate as to how the Act may or may not apply to specific clubs, various industry authorities and organization feel that it applies either directly or indirectly to all amateur youth sports organizations.

We, as parents, coaches, clubs, and an organization need to be responsive to the requirements of the Act. Two of those requirements are background checks and training on child abuse.

USA Wrestling Leader cards are an "easy fix" to help meet the requirements of the Act and set our clubs and organization up for compliance. The BOD strongly recommends getting these cards and the training that goes along with them. It has been reported that receiving your background check takes 3 to 5 days after you have submitted it.

With all that said, the Board of the West Virginia Youth Wrestling Association has listened to the coaches and parents and their concerns. The Board is trying to both act in accordance with the guiding principles that this Organization was founded upon and comply with the Act. It has not been easy. It has not been pleasant. It is not a decision that we wish to have to deal with. There has been compromise and debate. Your Region Chairs have spent incredible amounts of time trying to come up with a solution that is best for this sport and this state.

The requirement/solution this year is as follows:

At the State Championships, you will have to have a wristband to coach on the floor. To get the wristband, you will have to have a certification that includes a background check (that is what the minimum level of compliance with the Act requires). Acceptable certifications (that require background checks) are as follows:

1. USA Wrestling Leader Cards.
2. WVSSAC Cards.

There are two other ways to potentially receive a wristband.

1. If you have another background check (such as another national youth sports organization), please get in touch with your Region Chair. These will be looked at on a case by case basis. The BOD does not want to put layer of layer of requirements on our volunteer coaches.
2. If you are only coaching your child and no other children, then get in touch with your Region Chair.

Hard or Electronic copies of your card will suffice. Please show the certification card when you request your wristband. Please wear your wristband while at the State Championship.

In the future, there will be continued debate. Please come to the summer meeting when it is scheduled. The BOD is trying to obtain a lecturer that can come to Regional Meetings in the Summer of 2019 that can talk to our Coaches and Parents about the requirements of the Act and how it effects your clubs. Expect considerable debate about how to move forward for the 2020 WVYWA State Championships. One of the proposals will be the adoption of a state-wide policy that every coach has a USA Wrestling Leader card. As an organization, we need to provide uniformity, a mechanism, and verification for whatever is adopted. USA Wrestling Leader cards provides these requirements. Get involved. Help. This is a big issue. Not only for wrestling but for all sports and all coaches.

There are some links below to the Act and its effect. Please take the time to read them. Contact your Region Chair for more information or if you have questions.

<https://www.sadlersports.com/new-safe-sport-act-applies-amateur-sports-organizations/>

<https://abusepreventionsystems.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/New-Legislation-Sexual-Abuse-in-Youth-Sport-2-2-2018.pdf>

<https://website.praesidiuminc.com/wp/wp/everything-need-know-safe-sport-act/>

https://community.sportsengine.com/news_article/show/934789

<https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/protecting-young-victims-from-sexual-abuse-and-safe-sport-authorization-act-of-2017/>