

Every child has the right to play sports and, when in the care of adults, the human rights they are born with need to be respected. This simple idea informs the Children's Bill of Rights in Sports, designed to create a shared cultural understanding that all youth should have the opportunity to develop as people through sports.

When delivered well, sports participation is one of society's best tools for addressing a range of larger challenges – from obesity prevention to cancer risk reduction, gender equity to the social inclusion of people with disabilities, racial bias to the restoration of civic trust across communities.

Recognizing the human rights of children is key to closing gaps in the availability and quality of sport programs.

Developed by the Aspen Institute through its Project Play initiative, with a working group of human rights and sports policy experts, the Children's Bill of Rights in Sports identifies eight rights:

1. To play sports.  
Organizations should make every effort to accommodate children's interests to participate, and to help them play with peers from diverse backgrounds.
2. To safe and healthy environments.  
Children have the right to play in settings free from all forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), hazing, violence, and neglect.
3. To qualified program leaders.  
Children have the right to play under the care of coaches and other adults who pass background checks and are trained in key competencies.
4. To developmentally appropriate play.  
Children have a right to play at a level commensurate with their physical, mental and emotional maturity, and their emerging athletic ability. They should be treated as young people first, athletes second.

5. To share in the planning and delivery of their activities.  
Children have the right to share their viewpoints with coaches and for their insights to be incorporated into activities.
6. To an equal opportunity for personal growth.  
Programs should invest equally in all child athletes, free of discrimination based on any personal or family characteristic.
7. To be treated with dignity.  
Children have the right to participate in environments that promote the values of sportsmanship, of respect for opponents, officials, and the game.
8. To enjoy themselves.  
Children have the right to participate in activities they consider fun, and which foster the development of friendships and social bonds.