

How to Build a Successful Law Enforcement Partnership

The *Badges for Baseball* program was created in partnership with the US Department of Justice in an effort to reach children residing in underserved communities and to help bridge the gap between youth and law enforcement. With that in mind, law enforcement support and participation is critical to the success of the *Badges for Baseball* program. As a community based organization participating in *Badges for Baseball*, you will need to build strong relationships with the law enforcement community as they will be your partners in the program. The following tips are provided to assist you in developing and maintaining those relationships.

If you are a NEW organization: Building relationships with law enforcement agencies

- **Identify and contact the law enforcement agencies in your area**
 - We recommend that you start with the senior leadership of the agencies in your area as a first step in engagement. (Community outreach liaisons and school resource officers are also good points of contact). You will have more success in building your partnership if you have the support and buy in of the senior officials from the start. In addition, their officers will be afforded more time and opportunity to participate in the program.
- **Explain the benefits of participating in the *Badges for Baseball* program**
 - Provide a thorough explanation of the *Badges for Baseball* program; offer materials related to *Badges for Baseball* – found on www.CRSFPortal.org
 - Most law enforcement agencies welcome opportunities to build positive relationships with the communities they serve. Stress the benefits of community engagement, youth mentoring and positive press through *Badges for Baseball*.
 - Recognize that most law enforcement agencies do not have funding to support extra programs. They should know from the start that their participation will not require agency funds.
- **Invite the leadership over for a Law Enforcement Appreciation Day at your organization**
 - This is a great way to start your relationship and show them that you support the difficult work they do every day. It's also an opportunity for them to get to know your staff, your organization, and more importantly, the kids you serve every day.
 - If you are able, consider giving the officers a small token to recognize their support of the program, such as t-shirts, framed team photos, or thank you notes from the kids.
- **Be an open and engaged partner from the beginning**
 - Learn what challenges their officers face in the community and how you might be able to work together to mitigate those challenges through *Badges for Baseball*
 - Discuss long-term plans and goals for both organizations
- **Assign a strong staff member with good communication skills to be the liaison for law enforcement**
 - This person should keep in constant contact with the officers, keeping them updated on events, programming, and other details related to the program (e.g. youth is having a problem that officer should know about ahead of time – keep them in the loop).
- **Create a schedule at the beginning of the program and stick to it.**
 - Most officers work rotating shifts, so they will need to know far in advance when programming will occur and what topics you will be covering in the *Badges for Baseball* curriculum.
- **Properly utilize the officers as coaches and mentors in the *Badges for Baseball* program**
 - The intent behind the program is to build relationships between cops and kids. The officers should play a key role in delivering the curriculum lessons, in addition to participating in Quickball and other healthy activities.

If you are a RETURNING Organization: Maintaining relationships with law enforcement agencies

- Ensuring good communication is the single most important thing you can do as an organization to maintain solid relationships with your law enforcement partners.
- Include your law enforcement partners in activities and events beyond *Badges for Baseball* year round.
 - Ask them to help with other programs your organization offers
 - Ask them for input on community engagement – you might be surprised at the ideas they have
- Ensure that your staff members are respectful of the law enforcement profession and that they model that behavior to the kids served by your organization.
- As always - Stick to the Schedule!

ONE FINAL THOUGHT: One of the frequent questions we hear from community based organizations is: “Do we only work with the local police department?” Our answer is no. Any law enforcement agency (badge) in your area including local, state and federal law enforcement agencies are welcome. If you find that support is difficult to identify, then get creative by reaching out to your local campus police, fire departments, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), military personnel, and Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). At the end of the day, it’s all about providing children with opportunities to be around positive role models – any “badge” will do!

