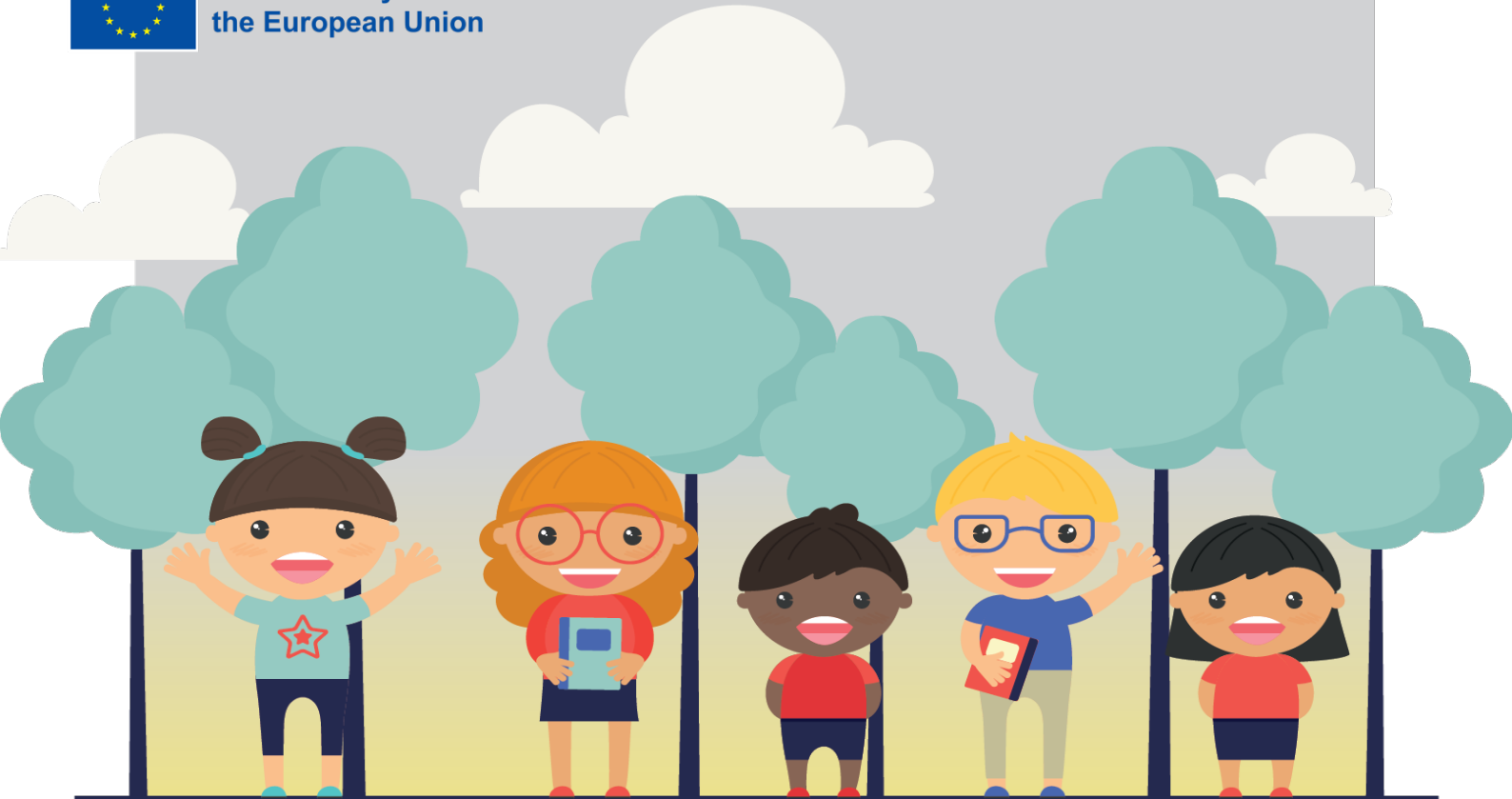




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# Potential Challenges and Recommendations in the Child Protection Program in Sports



## PROTECTING CHILDREN IN SPORT: DEVELOPING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPORT ORGANIZATIONS



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## 1. Background

The positive impacts of sports on the development of young athletes are indisputable. However, ensuring the safety of these environments represents a significant responsibility for sports administrators and leaders. Adopting child protection programs in sports organizations not only safeguards these young individuals physically and psychologically but also reinforces the positive effects of sports on society. Unfortunately, some sports administrators and leaders hesitate to participate in such programs due to various concerns and obstacles. In this context, one of the objectives of the PCSOS project is to deeply understand why sports administrators refrain from participating in child protection programs and develop effective strategies to overcome these barriers.

Integrating child protection programs into sports organizations fulfills legal obligations and enhances the institutions' credibility and reputation in the community. These programs reinforce families' sense of security when enrolling their children, encouraging young athletes' participation. Moreover, sports organizations with child protection programs are recognized and respected internationally.

This guide will address the challenges faced by sports organizations, administrators, and leaders and will propose solutions to these challenges. It aims to identify the factors that hinder sports administrators' participation in child protection programs and to present viable strategies to overcome these barriers. Specifically, it will focus on cultural and language barriers, educational deficiencies, costs, and legal compliance, offering practical solutions.

This introductory section provides a foundational framework for the subsequent discussions on concerns and barriers, implementation strategies, monitoring and evaluation methods, stakeholder collaboration, and policy recommendations.



## 2. Potential challenges for Sports Organizations

Sports organizations may face various challenges when implementing child protection programs, which can stem from the organization's structure, culture, and resources and hinder the effective execution of these programs. Designed to ensure children's physical and psychological safety, these programs may not reach their full potential due to various obstacles. The PCSOS project aims to identify the challenges faced by sports administrators and leaders and to offer a comprehensive approach to solving these issues. Understanding these barriers will enable sports organizations to plan and implement child protection programs more effectively.

### 2.1. Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is a common challenge in sports organizations, especially those with deeply entrenched institutional structures and management cultures. This resistance often manifests as a reluctance to alter existing operational systems and routines. Sports administrators and leaders may feel comfortable with the status quo and apprehensive about the uncertainties new practices may bring. Implementing child protection programs necessitates changes to existing policies and procedures, and the adaptation process can be difficult and time-consuming. The acclimatization of managers and staff to these new policies should be supported through training and information and by enhancing confidence in the processes and new norms.

Resistance to change within an organization directly impacts the success of child protection programs. Administrators might view the implementation of such programs as unnecessary or an excessive burden. This perception can stem from a failure to communicate the importance and benefits of the program correctly. One way to overcome resistance to change is to demonstrate the program's advantages through clear and concrete examples. Detailed information should be provided on how the program will enhance the organization's legal compliance, build trust and respect in the community, and, most importantly, ensure the safety of young athletes. This can help reduce resistance among administrators, staff, and educators, facilitating broader acceptance.



## 2.2. Resource Management and Optimization

Resource management and optimization are critical in successfully implementing child protection programs within sports organizations. When financial and personnel resources are limited, effectively managing these resources is vital for ensuring that programs are comprehensive and sustainable. Sports administrators often struggle to provide adequate funding for child protection programs while supporting various other programs and activities within the existing budget. This can be a particularly significant problem for smaller or resource-limited sports clubs. Effective resource management requires the prudent use of the existing budget and, if necessary, the pursuit of additional funding sources. Moreover, using existing personnel efficiently for training and other resources required for program implementation is critical.

Optimizing personnel resources represents another challenge in implementing child protection programs. With proper training and sufficient staff, such programs can become effective and positively impact the organization's overall performance. Adequate numbers of trained staff are essential to implement child protection policies, but training and managing these personnel can also be costly. Sports administrators must evaluate how they can use existing personnel more efficiently and provide necessary training cost-effectively. Additionally, technology and automation can make processes more efficient, reducing the burden on staff and facilitating program management. A comprehensive resource management strategy is crucial for such programs' successful integration and long-term sustainability.

## 2.3. Education and Awareness Raising

Education and awareness-raising are fundamental components of the effectiveness of child protection programs. Sports administrators, coaches, employees, and all relevant personnel must possess adequate knowledge and awareness concerning child protection. However, many sports organizations need help to provide sufficient training in this area. The lack of such training can lead to significant deficiencies in recognizing potential risks to children, making appropriate interventions, and ensuring their safety. The importance of education not only reduces risks but also contributes to developing



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a protective culture within the organization. This culture fosters a continuous awareness and sensitivity regarding the safety of children.

The development and implementation of training programs should utilize various methods and resources. Online training modules, workshops, seminars, and continuous professional development programs can be helpful tools. However, when planning these trainings, sports organizations should consider the diversity of participants and their different learning needs. Training materials should be offered in multiple languages and be culturally sensitive to ensure they are understandable and accessible to everyone within the organization's ethnic and cultural diversity. Additionally, continuously evaluating training effectiveness, collecting feedback, and keeping content up to date are crucial parts of this process. Such an approach is critical for achieving widespread awareness and acceptance of child protection issues.

In conclusion, education and awareness programs are fundamental steps toward strengthening the child protection strategies of sports organizations and achieving sustainable success in this area. These programs aim to reduce the risks children may face during sports activities and provide a safe sporting environment while also creating a safer and more supportive environment for all participants in sports.

#### **2.4. Overcoming Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

Cultural and linguistic differences pose a significant challenge within sports organizations' global and multicultural structure. For the effective implementation of child protection programs, it is essential to understand this diversity and develop suitable approaches for each culture. Child-rearing methods, behavioral norms towards children, and their legal frameworks can vary significantly across different cultures. Therefore, to ensure the success of a child protection program, a multilingual and culturally sensitive approach must be adopted, considering these differences.

For example, countries like Romania, Italy, Turkey, Serbia, and Croatia each have unique cultural and linguistic structures. In Romania and Croatia, the family structure and approach to children are often based on traditional values, emphasizing the family's authority within the community. In Italy, family ties are strong; children are



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commonly raised within an extended family, and family interactions play a crucial role in children's social and emotional development. In Turkey, child-rearing approaches vary by region, but the family structure may generally exhibit protective and authoritarian traits. In Serbia, families and communities actively support children's education and social participation, and similar family structures and societal values can also be observed in Croatia.

Considering these differences, child protection programs should be designed with materials tailored to each country's language and cultural sensitivities. Promotional and educational materials of the programs should be presented in local languages and in ways that every culture can understand. Additionally, collaborating with local community leaders and families during the implementation of these programs can increase their acceptance. Respecting the beliefs and values of local communities when implementing child protection policies will enhance the program's effectiveness and encourage widespread adherence.

In conclusion, overcoming cultural and linguistic differences is a critical step in ensuring the global success of child protection programs. Understanding these differences and shaping the programs accordingly will enable sports organizations to be more effective and inclusive in child protection.

## 2.5. Implementation Strategies

Effective implementation of child protection programs in sports organizations requires practical and actionable strategies beyond theoretical plans, ensuring integration into daily operations. These strategies should align with the program's objectives and seamlessly integrate into the organization's structure while offering solutions to reduce encountered challenges.

Firstly, simplifying policies and procedures facilitates understanding and implementing child protection programs. Since sports organizations often host numerous participants and employees at various levels, methods must be easy to follow for everyone. For example, basic policies such as emergency procedures, reporting suspicious behaviors, and rules for interacting with children should be clear, concise, and accessible.



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Additionally, these policies should be regularly reviewed and reinforced through training by all employees and athletes.

Secondly, effective use of technology can significantly simplify the implementation of child protection programs. Digital platforms and mobile applications can distribute policy updates, training materials, and communication tools. This accelerates the organization's information flow and ensures accessibility at all levels. Information management systems can standardize the monitoring and reporting of child protection policies, particularly in large and multi-level sports organizations, making processes transparent and trackable.

Thirdly, establishing continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms enhances the effectiveness of implementation strategies. Issues and successes encountered during the implementation of child protection programs should be regularly reviewed, and data should be collected to enable adjustments as needed. Tools such as surveys, observation reports, and employee interviews can be used to assess the implementation and impact of the program. This continuous improvement keeps the program up to date and engages participants within the organization, making them feel part of the program.

In conclusion, practical implementation strategies ensure the existence of child protection programs and facilitate their active and effective operation within sports organizations. These strategies guarantee that the program is understandable, accessible, and implementable at every level while supporting and enhancing the organization's overall structure.

## 2.6. Comprehensive Statement on Regulatory Compliance

Compliance with regulations presents a significant challenge for sports organizations when implementing child protection programs. This requires organizations to act by local, national, and international laws. Legal regulations establish specific standards and protocols to protect children, and by complying, sports organizations not only fulfill their legal obligations but also secure their ethical commitments to child safety.





Firstly, the compliance process requires a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of the organization. This includes reviewing whether current policies and procedures align with legal requirements. Developing or updating new policies may be necessary if existing policies are insufficient. This process should be conducted with legal professionals and child protection experts. Furthermore, regularly updating these policies is critical to adapt to legal changes quickly.

Secondly, training and awareness programs are vital in the compliance process. Employees and managers need to be informed about child protection laws and regulations. This knowledge not only reduces potential legal risks but also strengthens the protection of children. Training programs should cover legal obligations, child protection principles, and reporting violations. Such trainings ensure the correct understanding and implementation of child protection policies, creating a culture of compliance throughout the organization.

Thirdly, the compliance process requires continuous monitoring and evaluation. Organizations must continually monitor applicable laws and conduct internal audits to ensure their child protection programs comply with these laws. This provides fulfillment of legal obligations and enhances the effectiveness of child protection programs. Additionally, maintaining necessary documentation, records, and reports for legal compliance and being prepared for audits is essential.

In conclusion, regulatory compliance ensures that sports organizations meet their legal obligations and establishes a robust foundation for the safety and protection of children. This process allows organizations to manage legal risks, enhance their credibility in the community, and elevate ethical standards in child protection.

## 2.7. Strengthening Information Technology and Data Security

Information technology and data security are foundational infrastructure elements for child protection programs in sports organizations. These technologies enable organizations to securely collect, store, and process sensitive information related to children. Without a robust IT infrastructure and strict data security protocols,





organizations could be vulnerable to data breaches and cyber-attacks, which can threaten the safety of children and damage the organization's reputation.

Firstly, ensuring data security for sports organizations involves protecting personal information. This can include athletes' health information, addresses, family details, and other personal data. For example, a football academy might use encryption technologies and secure servers to safely store the health records of young players digitally. Security measures such as two-factor authentication should also be implemented to allow access only to authorized personnel.

Secondly, data security also requires strengthening the organization's overall IT infrastructure. This is not limited to hardware and software updates but also includes training and raising awareness about cybersecurity among staff. For instance, the management of a basketball league could organize regular cybersecurity training for all employees and coaches to raise awareness about potential phishing attacks and reinforce data security protocols. Such training protects against malware and social engineering tactics.

Thirdly, continuous monitoring and rapid response are critical components of data security. Sports organizations should perform regular system scans to detect potential threats and vulnerabilities. For example, a swimming federation could continuously monitor all data traffic to quickly identify and respond to suspicious activities. Additionally, having a crisis response plan in case of a data breach is crucial to limit damage quickly, enabling the organization to react swiftly and effectively.

In conclusion, information technology and data security are essential components of child protection programs. A robust IT infrastructure and strict data security protocols protect children and the organization's credibility. This is achieved through technical solutions, staff training, and continuous monitoring. This approach increases the resilience of sports organizations against data breaches and cyber threats, maximizing the security and effectiveness of their child protection programs.





## 2.8. Respect for Children's Rights and Privacy

Respecting the rights and privacy of children is a fundamental principle of child protection programs in sports organizations. This encompasses protecting children's rights and maintaining the confidentiality of their personal information. Sports federations and clubs must support children's physical and psychological well-being, including safeguarding their privacy rights. Protecting children's personal information is not only a legal requirement but also an ethical imperative.

Children's personal information can include their health details, family circumstances, educational data, and other sensitive data. For instance, in a football academy, young players' health records, injury history, and other personal details are considered highly confidential and protected under data protection laws. Protecting such information is crucial to prevent risks of data leakage or misuse. Data access should be strictly controlled and limited to authorized personnel, such as health staff or coaches.

Moreover, respecting children's rights also means considering their opinions in all decisions that affect them. Children should have a say in matters concerning them and be included in decision-making processes. For example, a swimming team should consider young athletes' preferences and comfort when planning training schedules or competition participation. This approach ensures that children feel their rights are respected and that their voices matter.

Another measure sports organizations can implement to protect children's privacy rights involves cautious communication with parents. This is particularly important in cases involving divorced or separated parents, where clear policies must be established regarding what information can be shared. While parents have the right to be informed about their children, this information must be appropriately shared with the correct individuals.

In conclusion, respecting the rights and privacy of children is an indispensable element of child protection programs in sports organizations. This respect goes beyond legal compliance and demonstrates the welfare, security, and respect due to the children.



By strongly adopting these principles, sports organizations ensure children's safety and fulfill their ethical obligations.

### 3. Implementation

#### 3.1. Practical Implementation strategies

Practical implementation strategies are essential for effectively integrating child protection policies into sports organizations' daily operations. These strategies ensure that theoretical policies are applicable and sustainable in real-world conditions. A practical implementation strategy should make policies clear, understandable, and easily applicable and ensure that all relevant stakeholders know and comply with these policies.

##### *Example: National Sports Federation*

For a national sports federation, practical implementation strategies aim to achieve consistency and compliance across clubs in various regions. The federation can ensure this consistency by adapting child protection policies suitably for each club and monitoring their implementation through a centralized system. For instance, a nationwide training portal could be established. All coaches, referees, and sports club managers must complete mandatory child protection training through this portal. The training would cover topics such as codes of conduct towards children, emergency procedures, and how to report suspicious situations. Additionally, the federation could conduct regular site visits and remote audits to oversee the implementation of child protection policies.

##### *Example: Sports Club*

A sports club can adopt a more localized and customized approach to applying child protection policies. The club can tailor the child protection policies to its internal dynamics and needs. For example, the club could organize in-house informational meetings to educate all employees and volunteers about the policies. Moreover, the club could develop mechanisms to collect feedback from children and parents. This





ensures that parents and children feel secure and is critical for assessing the effectiveness of the policies. The club might also appoint observers to monitor compliance with child protection policies during training sessions and competitions. These observers would follow policy implementations and report any violations. In both examples, utilizing digital tools and software to facilitate the implementation of policies is essential. These tools can manage policy updates, training materials, and compliance reports. Furthermore, continuous information and training for all relevant parties are necessary to support the implementation of these strategies. This approach ensures that child protection policies are theoretical and actively applied in the organization's daily operations.

### 3.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical processes for continuously reviewing and improving the effectiveness of child protection programs in sports organizations. These processes ensure the achievement of the program's objectives and allow for ongoing improvements. Effective monitoring and evaluation methods include data collection, analysis, and feedback mechanisms. They also help understand the experiences and perceptions of all participants in the program, such as coaches, athletes, parents, and administrators.

#### Example: National Sports Federation

A national sports federation can establish a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluating its child protection program. This system could collect data from nationwide sports clubs into a central database. The federation could use online surveys, routine audits, and post-training evaluation tests to monitor the implementation of the child protection program. For instance, the federation could conduct annual satisfaction and awareness surveys among coaches, athletes, and parents. These surveys measure the program's effectiveness, knowledge levels, and satisfaction. Additionally, the federation might conduct on-site inspections at each club at least once a year to review program implementations. During these inspections, feedback on the implementation





methods is provided to coaches and other staff, and additional training or corrections are made if necessary.

#### Example: Sports Club

A sports club can use more localized methods to monitor and evaluate the implementation of its child protection program. The club could appoint observers during training sessions and matches to ensure continuous compliance with child protection policies. Additionally, the club could regularly collect opinions from athletes and parents through an in-house feedback box or an online feedback form. For example, the club could hold an evaluation meeting at each quarter's end to review policies and practices based on the collected feedback. These meetings discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the child protection program and develop action plans for improvement.

In both examples, technology can support monitoring and evaluation processes. Digital surveys and data analysis tools can quickly process large amounts of data, providing valuable insights. Moreover, continuous education and professional development should be considered part of the monitoring and evaluation processes. This ensures the program is continuously updated and all participants are knowledgeable about best practices in child protection.

## 4. Collaboration with Stakeholders and Policy Recommendations

**Workshops and Training Sessions** are designed to educate sports administrators and leaders about child protection issues, legal requirements, and best practices. These sessions can cover topics such as recognizing signs of abuse, reporting procedures, creating safe environments, and implementing effective policies.

**Expert Consultations:** Experts in child protection, such as psychologists, social workers, legal professionals, and representatives from child advocacy organizations, can be invited to provide insights and guidance on policy development. Their expertise can help inform the creation of comprehensive and effective child protection policies.





**Stakeholder Forums:** Host forums or roundtable discussions that bring together sports administrators, leaders, coaches, athletes, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss child protection concerns and brainstorm potential solutions openly. These forums can foster collaboration, build consensus, and ensure that the policies reflect the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders.

**Collaborative Policy Development Teams:** Interdisciplinary teams can comprise sports administrators, leaders, legal experts, child protection professionals, and representatives from relevant organizations to draft and refine child protection policies collaboratively. This approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and the policies are comprehensive and well-informed.

**Peer Learning and Mentoring:** Peer learning and mentoring opportunities among sports organizations can be facilitated by connecting them with peers who have successfully implemented child protection policies. This allows for knowledge sharing, mutual support, and the exchange of best practices.

**Continuous Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Implement ongoing education and awareness campaigns to reinforce the importance of child protection policies and promote a culture of vigilance and accountability within the sports community. These campaigns can utilize channels such as newsletters, social media, workshops, and events to reach a broad audience.

By employing these activities in collaboration with sports administrators and leaders, organizations can develop robust child protection policies that prioritize the safety and well-being of young athletes.

Collaboration with other sports organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions presents valuable opportunities to strengthen child protection efforts within the sports community. Here are some potential collaboration opportunities:

**Information Sharing and Resource Exchange:** Establish partnerships with other sports organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to facilitate the sharing of information, resources, and best practices related to child protection. This collaboration





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can involve sharing policies, training materials, research findings, and other relevant resources to support collective efforts in safeguarding young athletes.

**Joint Training Initiatives:** Collaborate on joint training initiatives to provide comprehensive and standardized child protection training to coaches, volunteers, and staff across multiple organizations. By pooling resources and expertise, organizations can deliver high-quality training that equips individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and respond to child protection concerns.

**Mutual Support and Referral Networks:** Establish mutual support networks among sports organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to assist and guide organizations facing child protection challenges. This collaboration can include sharing protocols for handling reports of abuse, offering peer support, and facilitating referrals to specialized services for victims and their families.

**Collaborative Advocacy Efforts:** Advocate collectively for policy changes, funding opportunities, and legislative initiatives to strengthen child protection measures within the sports sector. By leveraging collective advocacy efforts, organizations can amplify their voices and influence policymakers to prioritize child safety and allocate resources to support prevention and response efforts.

**Research and Evaluation Partnerships:** Collaborate on research projects and program evaluations to assess the effectiveness of child protection policies and interventions within the sports community. By partnering with academic institutions and research organizations, sports organizations can contribute to the evidence base for best practices in child protection and inform future policy and programming decisions.

Through these collaboration opportunities, sports organizations can leverage other stakeholders' collective expertise, resources, and networks to strengthen child protection efforts and create safer environments for young athletes to thrive.



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## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1. Resistance to Change

-Strengths: The approach to overcoming resistance through comprehensive training and clear benefits communication is well-founded. Organizations can reduce apprehension and facilitate smoother transitions by demonstrating child protection programs' legal, social, and ethical advantages.

Weaknesses: Resistance may persist in deeply entrenched cultures, and ongoing effort is needed to maintain stakeholder engagement and commitment.

### 5.2. Resource Management and Optimization

Strengths: Efficient resource management and optimization strategies, including leveraging technology and seeking additional funding, are crucial for sustainability. Focusing on using existing personnel more effectively and integrating automation enhances program implementation.

Weaknesses: Smaller organizations may need more resources despite these strategies, and securing additional funding can be challenging.

### 5.3. Education and Awareness Raising

Strengths: Emphasizing continuous, culturally sensitive education ensures that all personnel are aware of and equipped to handle child protection issues. This strategy helps foster a protective culture within the organization.

Weaknesses: Implementing continuous education requires ongoing investment and commitment, which may require more work for some organizations to sustain over time.

### 5.4. Overcoming Cultural and Linguistic Differences

Strengths: Tailoring programs to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity ensures inclusivity and greater acceptance. Collaborating with local community leaders enhances the program's relevance and effectiveness.



Weaknesses: Developing culturally sensitive materials and ensuring they are up-to-date and relevant requires significant effort and resources.

### **5.5. Implementation Strategies**

Strengths: Practical, actionable strategies make policies clear, understandable, and easy to apply. Simplifying procedures and utilizing technology for communication and monitoring enhances overall effectiveness.

Weaknesses: These strategies must be evaluated and adapted to address emerging challenges and ensure sustained effectiveness.

### **5.6. Comprehensive Statement on Regulatory Compliance**

Strengths: Regular review and updating of policies to ensure legal compliance builds a robust foundation for child protection. Training on legal obligations reinforces adherence and reduces risks.

Weaknesses: Keeping up with regulatory changes requires ongoing vigilance and resources.

### **5.7. Strengthening Information Technology and Data Security**

Strengths: Robust IT infrastructure and stringent data security measures protect sensitive information and enhance organizational credibility. Training staff on cybersecurity further strengthens these measures.

Weaknesses: Implementing and maintaining advanced IT security systems can be costly and require continuous updates.

### **5.8. Respect for Children's Rights and Privacy**

Strengths: Emphasizing respect for children's rights and privacy fulfills legal requirements and establishes a solid ethical foundation. Involving children in decision-making and controlling data access are effective strategies.

Weaknesses: Balancing privacy concerns with the need for transparency and communication can take time and effort.





## 6. Evaluation

The implemented strategies and solutions for child protection programs in sports organizations are highly effective, with strengths in resource management, education, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory compliance. Focusing on practical, actionable strategies and technology integration significantly enhances their implementation and sustainability. However, ongoing commitment to continuous evaluation, resource allocation, and adaptation to cultural and regulatory changes is essential to maintain and improve the effectiveness of these programs. To effectively implement child protection strategies, it is crucial to enhance training and education programs across all levels of the organization. This involves developing comprehensive training modules that cover basic and advanced topics related to child protection, such as psychological safety and advanced reporting techniques. Providing ongoing professional development opportunities ensures that all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders remain informed and capable of safeguarding young athletes. Establishing a culture of continuous learning will help children adapt to new challenges and maintain high standards of child protection. Securing additional funding and allocating a dedicated budget for child protection initiatives is essential for successfully implementing these programs. Utilizing technology can significantly enhance these efforts by providing real-time reporting tools, digital platforms for training, and AI-driven analytics for identifying potential risks. By effectively managing financial and personnel resources and integrating technological solutions, sports organizations can ensure that child protection programs are comprehensive and sustainable. Creating a culture of continuous improvement and stakeholder engagement is fundamental to the long-term success of child protection programs. Regular review cycles, feedback mechanisms, and public reporting of efforts, challenges, and outcomes will help maintain transparency and accountability. Actively involving athletes, parents, coaches, and community leaders in developing and continuously improving child protection policies fosters a sense of ownership and commitment across all levels of the organization. This collaborative approach enhances the effectiveness of child protection strategies and strengthens the community's support for these initiatives.



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