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Dear Start Smart Instructor:

Thank you for accepting the position of Start Smart Instructor. This manual will give you detailed instructions on how to run your program.

As you may know, well-meaning volunteer youth league coaches do not always have the time or expertise to teach children the basic motor skills that they need to be successful in sports. Start Smart teaches children the skills that they need to play organized sports in a FUN, non-competitive environment.

The Start Smart Sports Development Program was originally developed based on a 1993 study showing that 49% of children participating in organized sports do not have the minimum motor skills necessary to be successful in those programs. The same study also showed that children who are given proper motor skills instructions in a fun, supervised setting are more likely to be ready for organized sports. In addition to our general motor skills development program, we have created sport-specific programs to focus on the specific skills needed for future participation in particular sports.

Thank you again for bringing Start Smart to your Army Garrison. If you have any questions about the program or this manual, please call us at 1-800-729-2057.

Sincerely,

The Start Smart Sports Development Programs Staff

P.S. Please notify our national office of the start date for your program and send us pictures from your sessions.
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Introduction

What is the Start Smart Sports Development Program?
The Start Smart Sports Development Program, a program of the National Alliance for Youth Sports, teaches children (ages 3-7) the basic motor skills necessary to play organized sports while they work one-on-one and spend quality time with a member of your staff. The program focuses on teaching children basic sports mechanics without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt. Start Smart sessions are held once or twice a week for three to six weeks. Each week, the exercises become increasingly more difficult as the class progresses and the children show improvement.

The Start Smart Mission
The Start Smart Sports Development Programs were created to teach children the basic motor skills necessary to participate in organized sports while giving them the opportunity to work one-on-one with an adult. The programs were developed to be informative and fun, so children will have a positive first time sports experience and continue participating in sports beyond this introductory level.

Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?
Formed in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1981 the “Alliance” was originally developed as a volunteer youth sport coaches certification system (NYSCA) with a simple mission: to make youth sports fun and safe for kids. Since 1981, the nonprofit association has developed into a diverse organization with a number of national programs and accredited chapters in all fifty states. The programs offered by the Alliance include: the National Youth Sports Coaches and Officials Association, the National Academy for Youth Sports Administrators, Parents Association for Youth Sports, the Start Smart Development Programs and Hook A Kid On Golf. These programs are administered by the Alliance’s two divisions; Education and Youth Development.

While the Education division concentrates on programs that educate adults, the Youth Development division focuses on programs that deal directly with children. Specifically, the Youth Development division develops programs that build proficiency and confidence that youngsters need to participate and remain active in sports by 1) offering programs that teach the basic motor skills necessary for meaningful sports participation, 2) generating interest in lifetime activities and 3) providing a healthy fitness attitude for life. The Start Smart Sports Development Program, along with the other Start Smart programs, is administered through the Youth Development division of the National Alliance for Youth Sports.

Why Start Smart?
Before entering organized youth sports programs, children need to master the fundamental motor skills that serve as a basis for more complex sports skills. Children do not effectively learn these skills by playing games, but rather by practicing developmentally appropriate activities.
Developmentally appropriate activities are tasks designed for the child’s current level of performance ability while using equipment that enables the child to be successful. Success is extremely important in early motor skill learning experiences, as it builds self-esteem and the motivation and confidence needed to try and improve.

Children who enter youth sports programs with fundamental motor skills and confidence in their ability to perform are much more likely to learn new and more complex sport-specific skills, achieve success in competition, and enjoy a positive sports experience. These children are also more likely to participate in sports and fitness activities as adults.

All children should be provided with effective, developmentally appropriate activities and equipment to prepare them for future organized sports and fitness opportunities. Start Smart accomplishes this by offering programs that encourage children to participate in youth sports without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt.

References
The Start Smart Sports Development Program developmental tasks and program guidelines were developed by motor skill development specialists from Northern Kentucky University. The program is based on the research findings (Kirk, 1993), practices of effective motor development teachers and programs (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 1993), and is influenced by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education’s Council on Physical Education’s Council on Physical Education’s Position Statement: “Developmentally appropriate physical education practices for children” (1991). And the following publications:


What about the products?
The 1993 study at Northern Kentucky University showed that children ages 5-10 participating in a motor skill development program improved at a greater rate while using specialized equipment as opposed to traditional elementary physical education equipment. The products used in the Start Smart programs are the most innovative available and are developmentally appropriate for teaching youngsters the basic motor skills that are emphasized in the program. The Start Smart Sports Development Program utilizes developmentally appropriate products from the following companies:
Program Guidelines
The following guidelines should be emphasized during your Start Smart program to ensure that the children obtain high levels of achievement and success during the program. Staff members should be aware of the guidelines at all times while working on basic motor skill development with children.

Positive Learning Environment: Children must be provided with a positive non-threatening learning environment where they receive a great deal of encouragement and success.

Children are Unique: All children are unique and learn at different rates. It takes them much effort and many practice trials to improve.

Maximum Involvement: Each child needs the opportunity to practice skills learned. START SMART activities are organized to provide children optimal time to practice skills at the same time. To maximize individual practice time, equipment is provided for each instructor-child group.

Success is Important: The child should experience high success rates on a task. Modify the task if it is difficult for the child to succeed. Once success is attained, increase the difficulty of the task incrementally. An example of modifying a task is changing the distance that a ball must travel.

Appropriate Equipment: The equipment must be developmentally appropriate for the child. Start Smart provides equipment that is the appropriate size and weight for this age group.

Keep it simple: Children are not “little adults” and they learn and comprehend differently than adults. In the early learning stages, keep it simple by demonstrating exactly what you want them to do.

Positive Feedback: Clear, concise, positive feedback from the staff regarding the child’s performance and effort will enhance learning.

Expert Success: All kids need a lot of encouragement and a feeling that your only expectations are that they learn and improve. If you expect success, the children will have the confidence to believe that they are capable of succeeding in the particular task.

Complete Tasks Before Continuing: Start Smart activities are organized from simple to more complex. A child should complete one task successfully before moving on to the next exercise.

Review Tasks: Children will benefit from reviewing previously completed tasks. This practice is especially helpful if they are having difficulty with the task at hand.
The Start Smart Instructor

What are your Responsibilities?
As a Start Smart Instructor, you are the key to the success of your program! We recommend that you, the Child Development Center (CDC) Training and Curriculum Specialist, CDC Lead or Mentor, or Child and Youth Program Assistant (CYPA), and volunteers assigned to implement the Start Smart program familiarize yourself with all of the program materials prior to running Start Smart for the first time.

You can use the instructor manual as a guide to successfully implement your Start Smart program. This Start Smart Instructor Manual should be used in conjunction with the skill guide that you received with your Start Smart Starter Kit.

Program Checklist
Below is a checklist of your responsibilities as a Start Smart Instructor. Each item refers to a subject covered later in the manual. We recommend using the checklist as a timeline while working toward your program start date.

- Review Start Smart Instructor Manual
- Review the Materials Checklist (page 5) to assure that you have received all of your equipment in your Starter Kit.
- Establish a location for your program (CDC/SAS multi-purpose room or outdoor area).
- Develop Start Smart implementation Plan.
- Schedule Smart Start into the CDC or SAS Daily Activities Plans.
- Recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with the program.
- Order any additional materials from the National Office 3 weeks prior to the start of your program.
- Gather the additional program materials needed for your program (page 5)
- Implement Start Smart by following the Program Format (page 8) in this manual
Materials Checklist
The following is a list of items that should have been received in your Start Smart Starter Kit. Please use this list to make sure you have received your entire order.

- 2-Instructor Manual
- 2-Skill Guide
- 1-Model Youth Sports Parent Video
- 1-Carry-All Bag
- 10-Koosh Balls
- 7-Teslon Soccer Balls
- 5-Boingo Balls
- 5-Bat and Ball Sets
- 5-Gloves

Reminder: Check to see if you have all the equipment needed to start your program!

Additional Programs Materials You May Need
The following is a list of materials that you may need to run your Start Smart program. You most likely will already have some of these materials and most of them can be substituted by using other items.

- adjustable batting tees
- balloons
- duct or masking tape
- poster board for Performance Cue Posters for each skill area
- table and chairs (for sign-in)
- name tags
- first-aid kit
- marker cones
- clothes line rope
- hula hoops
- plastic milk or soda containers
Promotional Tips
The following list will ensure the success of Start Smart in your centers for years to come.

Before your program begins:
- Coordinate with your Public Affairs Office (PAO) or (MWR) Marketing Office to:
  ~ Daily and weekly local newspapers.
  ~ Local Radio Stations that may run public service announcements.
  ~ Local cable television stations that run public service announcements.

*Note: The national office can also provide you with a press release if needed!*

- Distribute a promotional flier (see sample on page A3) to:
  ~ Local youth sports leagues
  ~ Public libraries
  ~ Schools
  ~ Day care facilities
  ~ Community centers

During your program:
Coordinate with your Public Affairs Office (PAO) or MWR Marketing Office to:
- Contact weekly newspapers in your community to let them know that the program is being held (many weeklies prefer having the story done for them since most are under staffed; the national office can provide help with a story).
- Contact all television stations’ news and sports directors to get additional coverage. Local radio and television talk shows may be interested in having the Start Smart Instructor on the show with some parents, kids, etc. to talk about the program.
Frequently Asked Questions

When is the best time to conduct a Start Smart Program?
Smart Start can be run anytime, but you may want to consider running your program as a developmental program prior to the next scheduled youth sports leagues. This would enable those children who would like to participate in the next league to prepare themselves in advance. The Sports Readiness Assessment will enable parents to recognize if their child is ready for organized sports. Smart Start is recommended for children between the ages of 3-7 years old.

Where can I implement my Start Smart Program?
Start Smart can be run indoors or outside with the equipment that is included in your Starter Kit. If you are planning to hold your program outdoors, you need to consider variables like the weather, time changes in the spring and fall, and insects. Please remember - some of the Start Smart exercises require the use of a wall as a target.

How do I recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with Start Smart?
Advertise at the front desk, Central Enrollment and Registration (CER), your youth center and ask during sports registration sign-up, bearing in mind that many parents are apprehensive to coach a team but may be interested in teaching a skill development program.

Some questions that may be asked from parents during your program:

What if my child’s attention span prompts him/her to want to move to the next station before the instructor gives the signal?
For a program comprised of mostly young children, where attention spans are generally very short, you may want to decrease the time at each station to 7 or 8 minutes (rather than the 10 minutes, as specified in the program format).

Is the child ready to play in an organized youth sports league once he/she has finished the Start Smart program?
Refer to the “Interpreting Assessment” section in the back of the Skill Guide. However, it is important to remember that even if a child proves to be physically ready to participate in organized sports, he or she may not be emotionally ready. This decision should be based on both the physical and emotional development of the child. The National Alliance for Youth Sports recommends that children should not be involved in competitive sports before the age of eight.
Program Format

The following is a standard schedule for Start Smart. The 3/6 weeks of staff-child instruction should be scheduled for 1/2/3 days per week, and each session should last approximately one hour. The ratios are 1/10 in CDC and 1/15 in SAS:

**Standard Start Smart Schedule**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Smart Start Assessment and Skill Development Exercises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 2-5:</td>
<td>Skill Development Exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6:</td>
<td>Skill Development Exercises, Mock Game and Post Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Schedule - Week 1**

**Child Assessment and Exercise #1**

*For Example, if your class starts at 9 am…*

**8:30 am: Set-Up**
- Have your room already set-up with the four skill testing stations. Please see the sample floor plan (page A2) for how each skill area is set-up for the assessment.
- *Performance Cues* posters should be placed in a visible spot at each station.
- Appoint volunteers to specific stations to assist the participant groups.
- Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets (class rosters) and nametags.
- Before the class begins, divide the children into equal groups according to the participating child’s age. (i.e. all of the 4-year-olds in one group)
- Have Sports and Fitness Directors and TACS and/or TAPS assist with pre and post assessments.

**8:45-9:00 am: Check-In**
- Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

**9:00-9:10 pm: Instructor (CDC/SAS-Assigned Staff) Welcomes Participants and Conducts the Start Smart Program Assessment**
- Before administering the Sports Readiness Assessment, explain to the staff members that the assessment is ONLY an evaluation for them to gage the progress of the child. The test is NOT used to rank or score any of the children, and the scores are only for the staff to see.
- Have the participants turn to the assessment section of the Skill Guide.
• Explain to participants that they have 5-6 minutes at each skill station for assessment. If possible, there should be a volunteer at each skill station to demonstrate each task with the proper equipment.
• At this time, separate the staff/child groups into equal groups and assign them to a station.

9:10-9:35 am: Conduct Readiness Test
• Have staff/child groups rotate every 5-6 minutes from one station to the next, performing the assessment that is explained in the Skill Guide.

9:35-10:00 am: WEEK 1 Exercises
• After the assessment is complete, have the groups rotate through the stations again and perform the skill development exercises for WEEK 1 (page 11) for each of the skill areas. Spend 5 minutes in each station.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
• Before the children are dismissed, explain the format of the program for the upcoming weeks. This is also a good time to answer any questions.

Sample Schedule - Weeks 2-6

Skill Development Sessions

8:30 am: Set-Up
• Have your room already set-up with the four skill stations.
• Performance Cues posters should be placed in a visible spot
• Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets and nametags.

8:45-9:00 am: Check-In
• Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

9:00-9:10 am: Preview
The Start Smart Instructor (CDC TACS, Mentor, Lead or CDC/SAS CYPY) previews the program. Include the following:

• Show each exercise for the appropriate week at the skill stations with the suggested equipment.
• Study and instruct volunteers on how to review the Performance Cues with the child and how to use the Performance Cues as praise when the child performs the exercise correctly.
• Remind staff members that tasks may be altered (adjust the distance, etc.) to make the skill easier or more difficult to suit each child’s ability.
• If a 1/10 ratio exists, the work one station at a time. If you have parent or teen volunteers, you can have the participants split into groups and rotate stations. Pay special attention to each child’s skill level in the first few weeks. Throughout the course of the program, an effort should be made to group children that have similar skill levels.

9:10-9:20 am: Begin Skill Development Exercises
• As the Start Smart Instructor, you should monitor all skill stations. If enough volunteers are not available, the head instructor will need to run one station at a time.
• Each skill should be reviewed with the staff/child groups before they actually begin the tasks. Staff members should concentrate on proper execution of the Performance Cues by the children, and not necessarily the results.
• The Start Smart Instructor needs to continuously remind everyone of the importance of the posted Performance Cues and of giving positive feedback to the children.

9:20-10:00 am: Rotate to all Stations
• Rotate through the rest of the stations, switching every 10 minutes.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
• Before the staff/child groups are dismissed, answer any questions that they may have.
• Encourage the children to practice at home.
• Discuss what skills will be learned the following week.

**Week 6:** Give the children enough time to complete the Start Smart Assessment again to see what progress the child has made since week 1. Tell the staff members to record the child’s score in the “Post Assessment” column of the scoring sheet in their Skill Guide. Again, this assessment is ONLY an evaluation to gage the progress of the child. The assessment is NOT used to rank or score any child, and the scores are for the staff eyes only.
Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing at a Large Target
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape
With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark a line on the floor 5 feet away from a large target such as a wall. Have the children stand on the marked line and throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the large target. Do not emphasize accuracy but rather distance. The CYPA is to emphasize the performance cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 out of 10 attempts.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching a Ball Rolled by a Partner
Equipment Needed: Boingo Balls
CYPA lines up the children facing each other about 5-10 feet apart. The first child will slowly roll a Boingo Ball on the ground to the other child. The child bends down catches the ball with both hands, the slowly rolls the ball back to the other child. Each child should successfully catch the ball 8 out of 10 times. CYPA will observe the children, correct or help when needed, and encourage the children during activity. CYPA needs to remember to emphasize the Performance Cues.

Station #3 - Kicking
Kicking the Ball on the Ground for Distance
Equipment Needed: Soft, size 4 Soccer Balls, marker cones, and/or Masking Tape
Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. The CYPA places soccer balls along one of the marked lines and has each child stand behind a ball. The CYPA demonstrates kicking the soccer ball so that the ball travels along the ground past the other marked line, and then the children do the same. After the children kick the soccer ball, have them retrieve the ball and return to the line. The CYPA uses the performance cues to encourage proper technique. When the child can successfully kick 8 out of 10 balls beyond the line, encourage him/her to take a few steps backwards to increase difficulty.

Station #4 - Batting
Striking a Large, Stationary Ball Off a Batting Tee
Equipment Needed: Batting Tees, Masking Tape, Bat, Boingo Balls
Set up batting tees and mark a line 10 feet away leaving appropriate space for the children to safely swing. Review batting safely and have the children demonstrate. Have 5 children use a bat to hit the Boingo Ball off the tee so that it travels in the air and lands beyond the marked line. CYPA will use verbal cues for the batters to hit the Boingo Ball at the same time (Ready, step, swing). Have five children stand in their own personal space 10 feet away perpendicular from a child batting from the tee ready to catch the Boingo Ball. Increase the distance after all the children have batted twice.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 2

Station #1 - Throwing

Throwing Underhand to a Target for Accuracy
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape, and Hula Hoops (optional)*

With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark a starting line on the floor and put hula hoops (or taped circles) on the ground five feet away. Have the children stand on the starting line and throw a Koosh Ball underhand so that it lands inside the hula hoops (taped circles). As the child improves he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Throwing Underhand for Distance
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape*

With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark a starting line and additional lines in 5 foot increments. The child will throw a Koosh Ball 10 times to a specific distance. As the child improves he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Rolling Ball
*Equipment Needed: Boingo Ball*

CYPA will have the children line up in two lines. Have each child roll the Boingo Ball slowly away from him/herself, run ahead, get in front of the ball, and bend down and catch the ball with both hands. Children will then come back and go to the end of the line. Children will continue this until everyone has gone 10 times. Encourage each child to complete 8 out of 10 catches successfully. CYPA will observe, correct or help when needed, and encourage the children.

Catching a Self-Bounced Ball
*Equipment Needed: Boingo Ball*

CYPA will have the children line up in two lines. Using the Boingo Ball have each child drop the ball and catch it at waist level as it rebounds. Have each child do two attempts and then go to the end of the line. Children will continue this until everyone has gone 10 times. As they gain confidence, have them throw the ball down so that it bounces just above their head level and reach up to catch the ball with both hands at head level. Again have each child do two attempts and go to the end of the line. Progress so that the child bounces the ball well above the head, reaches up, and catches it with both hands above the head. CYPA will observe, correct or help when needed, and encourage the children.
Station #3 - Kicking

Kicking a Stationary Ball on the Ground for Distance

*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones, and or Masking Tape*

Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. The CYPA places the soccer balls along one of the marked lines and has each child stand behind a ball. The CYPA demonstrates taking two or three running steps before kicking the soccer ball so that it rolls over the marked line and then has the children do the same. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. Each child should kick the ball so that it rolls over the other marked line 8 out of 10 times. After the children kick the soccer ball have them retrieve the ball and return to the line. Repeat the activity while increasing the distance in increments of five feet as the children show improvement.

Kicking a Stationary Ball in the Air for Distance

*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape*

Mark two lines, 15 feet apart. The CYPA places the soccer balls along one of the marked lines and has each child stand behind a ball. The CYPA demonstrates taking two or three running steps before kicking the soccer ball so that it flies in the air over the marked line and then has the children do the same. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. After the children kick the soccer ball have them retrieve the ball and return to the line. Each child should kick the ball so that it flies in the air over the other marked line 8 out of 10 times. Repeat the activity while increasing the distance in increments of 5 feet as the children show improvement.

Station #4 - Batting

Striking a Large, Stationary Ball off a Batting Tee

*Equipment Needed: Batting Tees, Masking Tape, Bats, Boingo Balls*

Set up batting tees and mark a line ten feet away, leaving appropriate space for the children to safely swing. Review batting safety and have the children demonstrate. Have 5 children use a bat to hit the Boingo Ball off the tee so that the ball travels in the air and lands beyond the marked line. CYPA will use verbal cues for the batters to hit the Boingo Ball at the same time (Ready, Step, Swing). Have five children stand in their own personal space 10 feet away perpendicular from a child batting from a tee ready to catch the Boingo Ball. Children will rotate after Boingo Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times. Increase the distance after all children have batted twice.

Striking a Small, Stationary Ball off a Batting Tee

*Equipment Needed: Batting Tees, Bat & Ball Set w/ Foam Ball*

Set up batting tees and mark a line 10 feet away, leaving appropriate space for the children to safely swing. Review batting safety and have the children demonstrate. Have 5 children use a bat to hit the Foam Ball off the tee so that it travels in the air and lands beyond the marked line. CYPA will use verbal cues for the batters to hit the Foam Ball at the same time (Ready, Step, Swing). Have five children stand in their own personal space 10 feet away perpendicular from a child batting from a tee ready to catch the Foam Ball. Children will rotate after Foam Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times. Increase the distance after all the children have batted twice.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 3

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing Overhand for Distance and Accuracy at a Large Target
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape*
With the masking tape, the CYPA will designate a large target area (8 feet x 8 feet) with tape on a wall or other surface. The CYPA will mark off a starting line and additional lines at 5 foot increments. The child will throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the target. As the child improves he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Throwing Overhand for Accuracy at a Smaller Target
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape and Hula Hoops (optional)*
The CYPA will put the hula hoops, or taped circles, on a wall, 3 feet from the ground, and mark a starting line 5 feet away. The child will throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the hula hoops or taped circles. As the child improves he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching a Self Tossed Ball
*Equipment Needed: Boingo Balls and Koosh Balls*
CYPA will have the children line up in two lines. Using the Boingo Ball have each child toss the ball in the air just above the head, then catch it at waist level. Have each child do two attempts and then go to the end of the line. Children will continue this until everyone has gone 10 times. After successfully completing 8 out of 10 catches, have the child toss the ball higher, reaching up and catching it above their head. Again have each child do two attempts and go to the end of the line. Repeat this activity, with the child jumping up to catch the ball as high as possible. After using the Boingo Ball, have them catch with the Koosh Ball. CYPA will observe the children, correct or help when needed, and encourage the children.

Catching a Ball Tossed by a Partner
*Equipment Needed: Boingo Balls and Koosh Balls*
CYPA will line children up in single file line. CYPA will stand across from children about 5-10 feet away and softly toss the Boingo Ball underhand in a slight arc to the children. Child will have one attempt then continue to rotate in line until everyone has gone 10 times. After the children can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity with the Koosh Ball and then continue by increasing the distance, speed and arc of the ball in gradual increments as the children achieve success.
Station #3 - Kicking
Kick and Chase
Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape
Mark an arc in each corner of the room 10 feet in length. The CYPA places the soccer balls along one of the marked lines and has each child stand behind a ball. Children kick the ball in the air for distance, and then run and chase the ball. When the child reaches the ball, he/she brings the ball to the closest line in another corner of the room and waits for the others to do the same. Repeat the activity. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique.

Dribbling
Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Balls, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape
Mark a starting line and place two cones 15 feet away. The CYPA has the children stand on the line. The CYPA demonstrates proper dribbling by tapping the ball with the inside of the foot surface, alternating between the right foot and left foot, while walking from the line around one of the cones and back again. The CYPA then hands out two soccer balls and has the children do the same two at a time. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. As the child demonstrates control, have him/her increase speed but emphasize keeping control of the ball. Then challenge the children to dribble in a zigzag while moving around the cones.

Station #4 - Batting
Striking a Suspended Ball with a Bat
Equipment Needed: Bats, Koosh Balls and String (Stick or Pole optional)
Tie 5 Koosh Balls to 5 pieces of rope and hang it from the ceiling or tie it to the end of poles. Make sure that the ball is at the child’s waist level and is stationary. Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Have five children use a bat to hit a Koosh Ball, making sure there is appropriate space to swing. Encourage the children to stand behind and to the side of the ball, a bat’s length away. CYPA will use verbal cues for the batters to hit the Koosh Ball at the same time (Ready, step, swing). Have the other five children stand 10 feet behind the batters and count out loud how many times the ball is hit. Children will rotate after Koosh Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times. As child shows improvement, have the staff members take a few steps backwards to increase the difficulty.

Hit a Slowly Moving Large Balloon with a Bat
Equipment Needed: Bats and Balloons
Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Give 5 children a bat and have them stand across from a staff member/volunteer (make sure the children bat in the same direction). Encourage the staff member to toss a large balloon to the strike area so that child can successfully hit the balloon. Children will rotate stations after balloon is hit 8 out of 10 times. As child shows improvement, have the staff members take a few steps backwards to increase the difficulty.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 4

**Station #1 - Throwing**

**Throwing for Accuracy at Two Smaller Targets**

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Hula Hoops, Masking Tape*

The CYPA will prop, tape or tie Hula Hoops in sets of two in a vertical position 3 feet above the ground. The hoops will be spaced 2 feet apart from one another. A starting line will be taped 5 feet from the hula hoops (taped circles) with additional lines placed at 5 foot intervals. Each child will make 10 throws at the target, alternating between the left and right targets. As the child improves, he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 4 of 5 attempts on each target.

**Throwing for Accuracy at Multiple Small Targets**

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Small Table, 5 Plastic Bottles, Masking Tape*

With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark a starting line and additional lines in 5 foot increments away from a table or bench. The CYPA will place the 5 plastic bottles on the table or bench, 6 inches apart. The child will toss the ball underhand at the plastic bottles. As the child improves, he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The object is to hit all 5 jugs in as few throws as possible. The child will move back when he/she hits the 5 jugs within 6 throws. The CYPA is to emphasize Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 out of 10 attempts.

**Station #2 - Catching**

**Catching a Ground Ball**

*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls and Gloves*

The CYPA will line children up in a single file line. CYPA will stand across from children about 5-10 feet away and softly roll the foam ball to the children. As the child fields the ball he/she throws it quickly back to the CYPA. Use gloves in this activity as the child gains confidence.

**Moving to Catch a Ground Ball**

*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls and Gloves*

The CYPA will line children up in a single file line. CYPA will stand across from children about 5-10 feet away and softly roll the foam ball to the children, but for this activity the CYPA rolls the ball alternating to the right and left of the child so that he/she must shuffle one or two steps to either side to field the ball.
**Station #3 - Kicking**

**Kicking for Accuracy at Large Targets**

*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones and/or Masking Tape*

Mark a line, and then place 2 cones or markers 15 feet away and 12 feet apart. The CYPA places soccer balls along the line and has each child stand behind a ball. The CYPA demonstrates kicking a stationary ball between the two cones, spaced 12 feet apart. The CYPA places the soccer balls along the line and has each child stand behind a ball. The CYPA demonstrates kicking a stationary ball between two cones, spaced 12 feet apart, from an appropriate distance away and then has the children do the same. After the children kick the soccer ball have them retrieve the ball and return to the line. They CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. After the children have completed 8 out of 10 attempts, increase the distance or make the target area smaller.

**Kicking a Stationary Ball and Stopping a Rolling Ball with the Foot**

*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape*

Mark 2 lines 5 feet apart. The CYPA has each child stand on one of the lines across from another child. The CYPA gives each pair a soccer ball and has them kick the ball on the ground to the other child. The child then stops the ball with the bottom of the foot and then kicks the ball, with the inside of the foot, back to the other child. The CYPA demonstrates this first with one of the children as a partner. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. Each child should complete this successfully 8 out of 10 times. After mastering stopping the ball with the bottom of the foot, then have the child stop the ball with the inside surface of the foot by “giving” with the ball at contact.

**Station #4 - Batting**

**Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Front**

*Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Balls*

Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Give 5 children a bat and have them stand across from a staff member (make sure children bat in the same direction). Have the other 5 children stand 10 feet behind tosser ready to catch the Koosh Ball and throw it back to the tosser. The tosser stands in front of the batter, 10 feet away, and softly tosses the Koosh Ball in a horizontal direction to the striking area, so that the batter can hit the ball successfully. Children will rotate after Koosh Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times.

**Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Side**

*Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Balls*

Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Have the staff member stand to the side of the child (approximately 5 feet away) and softly toss a Koosh Ball so that the batter can strike the ball into the designated area. Have the other 5 children stand 10 feet away in front of a batter ready to catch the Koosh Ball. Children will rotate after Koosh Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 5

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing Underhand for Distance and Accuracy
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape or Rope
With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark an 8-10 foot circle on the ground. A starting line will be taped 5 feet away with additional lines at 5 foot intervals. Have the children stand on the starting line and throw a Koosh Ball underhand so that it lands inside the circle. As the child improves he/she should move back in 5 foot increments. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Throwing to a Partner
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape
With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart. The CYPA will mark additional lines in 5 foot increments. The CYPA will stand behind one line and the child behind the second line. They will then play throw and catch with a Koosh Ball. After the child completes 8 out of 10 throws and catches successfully, the CYPA will move back 5 feet. As the child becomes more successful, increase the height and speed of the thrown ball. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching a Ball as it Rebounds from a Wall
Equipment Needed: Boingo Balls, Foam Balls, and Gloves
CYPA will line children up and have each child stand 10 feet from the wall. They will throw the Boingo Ball at the wall so that it rebounds and then bounces on the ground between them and the wall. The child should catch the ball as it bounces from the floor. With success, repeat moving farther from the wall and throwing the ball harder. Try using the foam balls with gloves for increased difficulty. CYPA will observe children, correct or help when needed, and encourage the children.

Catching Fly Balls
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Gloves
CYPA will line children up in a single file line. CYPA will stand 15 feet from children and throw a Koosh Ball in a high arc to the children. Each child will catch one and go to the end of the line. Repeat this until all children have gone 10 times. Increase the distance at increments of 10 feet after the children catch 8 out of 10. Continue this task as the children continue to achieve success, by increasing distance and changing the speed and arc of the ball.
Station #3 - Kicking
Kicking a Rolling Ball
*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Balls, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape*

The CYPA has the children stand in a circle around him/her. The children should be 15 feet away from the CYPA. The CYPA then kicks the ball to each child in the circle. The child kicks the ball while it is moving, trying to get it back to the CYPA. The CYPA uses the performance cues to encourage proper technique. Each child should complete this successfully 8 out of 10 times.

Dribbling with the Ball and Kicking to a Stationary Target
*Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Balls, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape*

Mark a start line and a finish line 20 feet apart. Then place 2 cones 20 feet apart beyond the finish line. The CYPA has the children stand on the start line and then demonstrates dribbling the ball to the finish line (20 feet away), stopping the ball and kicking it to the target (two cones spaced 20 feet apart). The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique. Each child should complete this successfully 8 out of 10 times. As the child is successful, have him/her increase the pace of the dribble, kick harder, and/or kick the ball through the cones that are spaced closer together.

Station #4 - Batting
Striking a Small Ball Tossed from a Longer Distance
*Equipment Needed: Bats and Foam Balls*

Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Give 5 children a bat and have them stand across from a staff member (make sure children bat in the same direction and have appropriate spacing). Have the other 5 children stand 10 feet behind tosser ready to catch the Foam Ball and throw it back to the tosser. The tosser stands in front of batter, 20 feet away, and softly tosses the Foam Ball in a horizontal direction to the striking area, so that the batter can hit the ball successfully. Children will rotate after Foam Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times. As children have success, gradually increase the distance the ball is pitched from, the speed of the pitch and the distance it must be hit.

Hitting a Self-Tossed Ball with a Bat
*Equipment Needed: Bats and Foam Balls*

Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Give 5 children a bat and have them stand 20 feet across from another child, making sure you have appropriate spacing. Have the other 5 children catch the Foam Ball and throw it back to the batter. The children hold the bat in their dominant hand with the bat over shoulder, leaving room on the grip to place the non-dominant hand below the other hand on the bat. Standing in a side-facing position, the child then tosses the ball softly upward with non-dominant hand, grasps the bat with other hand and swings at the ball as it drops into the strike zone. Children will rotate after Foam Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 6

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing to a Moving Target
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape
With the masking tape, the CYPA will mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart. The CYPA will mark additional lines in 5 foot increments. The CYPA will stand behind one line and the child behind the second line. They will then play throw and catch with a Koosh Ball, with the CYPA moving to their left or right on each throw. When the child completes 8 out of 10 throws to the CYPA, increase the distance of the throw by 5 feet. The CYPA is to emphasize the Performance Cues. The CYPA will encourage each child and observe, correct or help them whenever it is needed. Each child should complete 8 of 10 attempts.

Station #2 - Catching
Moving to Catch Fly Balls
Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Foam Balls and Gloves
The CYPA will line children up in a single file line. The child moves to the right a step or two to catch a fly Koosh Ball or foam ball that was thrown to the right by the CYPA, who is standing 15 feet away. The child should succeed 8 out of 10 times from each side. The CYPA should then mix up the throws to the right and left. As the children achieve success, increase the distance and arc of the ball, and add the glove.

Station #3 - Kicking
Passing the Ball to a Partner
Equipment Needed: Soft, Size 4 Soccer Ball, Marker Cones, and/or Masking Tape
Mark a 10 foot by 10 foot space with either cones or masking tape. The CYPA has the children line up behind one of the corners of the space. In that space, the child and the CYPA, while walking in the same direction, pass the ball back and forth. When the ball is passed the child must stop the ball with his/her foot, gain control and begin traveling with the ball before passing back to the CYPA. The CYPA uses the Performance Cues to encourage proper technique.

Station #4 - Batting
Hitting a Small Ball Tossed from the Side to a Designated Area
Equipment Needed: Bat, Koosh Balls
Review batting safety and have children demonstrate. Have the staff member stand to the side of the child (approximately 5 feet away) and softly toss a Koosh Ball so that the batter can strike the ball into a marked area (20 feet away). Have the other 5 children stand 10 feet behind a batter counting the number of successful hits. Children will rotate after Koosh Ball is hit 8 out of 10 times.
APPENDIX

Performance Cues Posters .......................... A1
Sample Floor Plan ................................. A2
Sample Promotional Flier ......................... A3
Sample Press Release ............................. A4
Coordinator Survey ............................... A5
Participant Roster ................................. A6
Performance Cues are designed to teach children basic sports mechanics for each skill area. Have staff members use them to encourage the children and praise them when they remember individual steps involved with the particular skill.

Make posters to be displayed at each skill station for easy reference during your Start Smart program.

**Throwing**

*Overhand*
- Stand sideways to the target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Big step forward with opposite foot
- Belly button to target as you throw
- Shoulder first, then elbow, forearm and hand forward
- Throw as hard as you can

*Underhand*
- Face target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Swing arm and ball down and forward
- Shift weight from back to front
- Release ball in front of body

**Catching**
- Move in front of ball
- Bend knees
- Reach up for high balls
- Reach out for low or rolling balls
- Watch ball to your hands
- Step towards the ball to catch
- Squeeze ball with both hands
- “Give” with the ball and bring to body

**Kicking**
- Step behind and to the side of ball with your non-kicking foot
- Leg back, knee bent, toes pointed
- Swing leg forward, straighten knee at contact
- Contact ball behind and at center of ball with top of foot for low kicks
- Contact ball behind and at bottom of ball with top of foot for high kicks
- Arms out to side when kicking
- Point toes
- Follow through high with leg

*Stopping a Rolling Ball*
- Turn toes out with stopping foot
- Watch ball to side of foot
- Keep foot flexed and “give”

**Batting**
- Stand with non-dominant side facing the hitting area
- Stand facing the tee or base
- Throwing hand on top of grip
- Bat back away from ball
- Keep eyes on the ball
- Step towards hitting area and swing level
- Transfer weight from back to front foot
- Follow through
Sample Floor Plan

The following is a sample of a floor plan for the Start Smart program. Please keep in mind that if you do not have enough space for four stations you can alter this floor plan. Refer to the Program Format section of this manual for details.
Sample Promotional Flier

The following sample can be used as a guide when creating a flier for recruiting participants for your Smart Start program.  *Used for traditional Start Smart Program, operated through S&F Program.*

Is Your Child Ready For Sports?

The National Alliance For Youth Sports and ____Your Organization____ present the Start Smart Sports Development program.

What:  Start Smart is a six-week instructional program that helps children learn the basics of sports: throwing, catching, kicking and batting. The program helps prepare children for organized youth sports by using safe and fun equipment to teach them the basic motor skills needed to compete.

Who:  Start Smart is open to children (3-7 years old) who can attend each session to prepare for organized sports.

Where:  Start Smart will be held at the ____site____ for six consecutive ____Day(s) of the week____.

Cost:  Each participant will be charged ____fee____ which includes any additional materials provided ____.

*To register please call ____sports and fitness director____ at phone number ____ or stop by the ____address____ and sign up before ____deadline____!
Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: START SMART Instructor

Parents in  __city/town__  have a special opportunity to help their children develop sports skills through a unique national program that’s available.

The Start Smart Sports Development Program is open to youngsters ages three to seven whose parent or another adult is able to attend the six, one-hour sessions with them.

There are  ___  spots available for participants that will be filled on a first come, first serve basis.

The Start Smart program will begin  __start date__  at the  __facility__  and will be held from  __time__  every  __day(s) of the week__  for  __number of weeks__.

“We are excited about being chosen to be a part of this national program,” said  __Smart Start Instructor___.  “We are always looking for innovative ways to help improve youth sports and this program certainly helps.”

The Start Smart program targets children who need to develop basic motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking and batting that are needed to participate in sports.

It will teach children how to develop those skills while building their confidence which will enable them to enjoy participation in all youth sports programs.

A variety of innovative products will be utilized to enhance the child’s skill development. The popular line of Koosh Balls is just one type of equipment that is being provided as part of the program.

The program is being administered by the Youth Development branch of the nonprofit National Alliance for Youth Sports based in West Palm Beach, Florida.

For more information, contact  __Smart Start Instructor__  at  __phone #__.

*Used for traditional Parent/Child Start Smart Program
Instructor Survey

Please complete the following survey at the conclusion of your Start Smart program and mail or fax to: Start Smart, 2050 Vista Parkway, West Palm Beach, FL 33411 (561) 712-9887. **This is only used for the traditional parent/child Start Smart Program.**

Instructor: ______________________ Organization: _______________________________

Date Program ended: _________________ Number of Participants: _______________

How much did you charge each participant for the program? __________ Do you feel this price was well-received by the community?

Do you have any concerns regarding the time frame of the program (six one hour sessions)?

Do you feel the program is appropriate for children 3-7 years old?

Do you feel the children showed improvement from the beginning of the program? In what area(s)?

Were the Skill Guides clear for both the instructor and the participants?

Did the Instructor’s Manual contain everything you needed to run your Start Smart program? What could be added/changed, if anything?

Will you be hosting another Start Smart program in the future? If so, when?

Did your participants express an interest in a follow up program?

What was the overall perception from the participants in your program?

Do you feel the program helped prepare your participants for future participation in sports?

Please list additional comments you have to enhance our program on the back of this sheet.
Participant Roster

Site: ______________________________
Instructor: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________

Phone: ______________________________

Make copies of this page if you have more participants than the space provided

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