

## **Charter for Combating Hate in Sports Working Group**

### **Background**

In March 2021, athletes from Wakefield High School were spat upon and subjected to racial slurs while playing a football game at Marshall High School. Despite bringing these behaviors to the attention of their coaches and the referees, action was not taken to stop the offensive behavior. The incident caused notable harm to the players, their teammates, the entire Wakefield community, and to Arlington as a whole. Whereas sportsmanlike conduct is a sacred value among sports participants, coaches, and supporters, and the arena of play is treasured as a place of fair and noble competition, therefore racist or hateful speech and behavior have no place in sports. Given the role that sports play in teaching young people important life skills and lessons, it is especially important for youth sports to be free from hate.

The Sports Commission is charged with advising the Arlington County Board on issues related to the efficient, effective, and equitable provision of sports programming and management of sports facilities in Arlington. Its mission includes advising the County Board on the rules and policies governing participation in and the conduct of County sponsored or supported athletic activities' allocation of facilities, and the efficiency, fairness, and transparency with which these rules and policies are administered. The Commission also plays an important role in reaching out to and supporting sports leagues that provide a significant portion of Arlington's sports programming. Consistent with Arlington's focus on challenging racism, the Commission has a strong interest in ensuring that all sports in Arlington are conducted in a safe, fair, and respectful manner that is free from racist and hateful conditions.

### **Charge**

The Sports Commission establishes a Combating Hate in Sports Working Group (CHWG) as a standing working group to better understand the prevalence of racist and hateful conditions in Arlington sports and support youth sports leagues' efforts to protect their participants from such conditions. The Working Group is directed to:

- Collect information about the nature and extent of racist and hateful behavior in Arlington County youth sports activities;
- Conduct research to identify best practices for deterring and addressing racist and hateful behavior in youth sports;
- By no later than June 2022, develop a framework for youth sports leagues to consider in establishing league protocols for detecting, deterring, and addressing (including through restorative practices) racist and hateful behavior in youth sports; and
- Identify and share information with youth sports leagues about resources for training their coaches, officials, and volunteers about unconscious biases and other relevant topics.
- Advise the Commission on this topic over time, including ways the Commission can leverage its platform to raise awareness, support youth sports leagues, and help ensure that sports activities occur in a safe and respectful environment.

### **Proposed Timeline and Staff Support**

The CHWG will begin its work in June 2021 and continue to work on this topic until the Commission determines its work is complete. The working group will be supported by a staff liaison from the Department of Parks and Recreation who help establish meeting schedules, locations, and agendas. A

staff liaison from Arlington Public Schools (APS) will also support the group as needed to facilitate information exchange about anti-racism/hate efforts undertaken by APS and to share information about training, protocols, and other related topics that will support the group's efforts. All meetings of the CWG are open to the public. The Working Group's meetings and products will be shared with the public on a website that is linked to the [Sports Commission website](#).

## **Membership**

Exact Group membership is to be determined, but will generally reflect the following:

- Sports Commission Chair or Co-Chairs
- Sports Commission Members
- Arlington Partnership for Children Youth and Families Member
- Park and Recreation Commission Member
- Youth Sports League Representatives
- Members of the Officiating Community
- Other groups or individuals that the Commission chooses to include

Given the standing nature of this Working Group, leadership and membership may be rotated over time to ensure broad participation and avoid over-taxing any one individual.