

# LITTLE LEAGUE<sup>®</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL



## CHALLENGER DIVISION

The Challenger Division of Little League is a program for mentally and physically challenged youth, helping them to enjoy the full benefits of Little League participation in an athletic environment structured to their abilities. More than the skills of baseball learned through the experience, the value of the Little League Challenger Division is found in the proven therapeutic and socialization benefits of participating in sports, the strengthening of participants' self-esteem, the opportunities to mainstream into other divisions of play, and the disciplines of teamwork, sportsmanship and fair play, which are hallmarks of the Little League program. The Little League Challenger Division provides the framework so Little League programs may offer a structured, athletic activity for all youth in their communities. Playing with the same equipment on the same fields, Challenger Division participants have the opportunity to experience the joys of pulling together as a team, being cheered, and earning awards for their achievements.

# Little League® Challenger Division

## **What is the Challenger program?**

The Challenger Division offers boys and girls with physical and mental challenges, ages 5 to 18 (or the completion of high school), the opportunity to participate in an organized game of baseball. The most fundamental goal of the Challenger Division is to give everyone a chance to play.

**How does my league start a Challenger program?** Individuals interested in starting a Challenger program in their community, should contact Sam Ranck, Director of the Challenger Division at Little League International. Locally, individuals should contact the Director of Special Education in the school district and find out how many children are enrolled in classes. Some other good resources are the local mental health community service as well as any parent support groups in your community.

**What additional equipment will my league need to operate a Challenger program?** No additional equipment is necessary. Each individual child may use his or her own equipment just like children who play in other divisions of Little League. However, leagues

have the option to adjust equipment to accommodate individual challenges, such as using a lighter and smaller bat for children who cannot use an aluminum or wooden bat.

**Do Challenger games have to be played on a special field?** No, a special field is not necessary to operate a Challenger program. Challenger games are played on a standard Little League field. However, some communities choose to build wheelchair-friendly synthetic fields specifically for the Challenger program.

**What resources will Little League International provide to my league if we charter and operate a Challenger program?** Little League provides rule books, brochures, posters and a DVD to anyone operating, or interested in operating a Challenger program in their league. In addition, staff at Little League International is available to answer any questions.

**Does Little League offer financial assistance to local leagues interested in establishing a Challenger program?** New Challenger programs have the opportunity to apply through Little League International for a grant from "Teammates for Kids" ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, depending upon the



number of children in the program

**What would a "Challenger Information Kit" contain?** Brochures, a DVD, Rule Books and promotional posters.

**How much does it cost to operate a Challenger program?** The Challenger Division can be operated at the same cost as any other division of Little League.

**Does my league have to purchase additional insurance in order to operate a Challenger program?** No, the insurance cost for a Challenger program would be the same as the cost for other divisions of Little League Baseball and Softball.

## **The Special Rules of the Challenger Division**

- All Children ages 5 through 18, or who remain in school, with physical or mental disabilities are encouraged to participate. Level of play based upon player's size, age and skill level are recommended where numbers allow.
- Teams can include as many as 15 to 20 players. Players can participate in one of three levels: Tee Ball, Coach-Pitch, Player-Pitch.
- Each player in Tee Ball and Coach-Pitch may use the "Buddy" system, however, it is not mandatory. "Buddies" can also assist the Player-Pitch participants.
- Every player on the roster is in the batting order and shall play defensively for the entire game.
- No team is scheduled to play more than one game in one day. The side is retired when the offense has batted through the roster, or when three outs are recorded.
- Little League recommends that no score be kept during games.
- Challenger Division players wear the same uniforms, shoulder patches, and safety equipment as other Little Leaguers.
- Insurance for the Challenger Division is set at the same low cost as other Little League Divisions and is available through Little League International in Williamsport, Pa.
- However, whenever possible and with reasonable accommodations, disabled children should participate in unrestricted league play provided their participation is possible and fair within the standard rules and regulations of Little League.

For more information about establishing a Challenger Division contact:

**Sam Ranck, League Development Manager**

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