


IHSAA: Unruly Parents and Adult Fans an 'Epidemic'

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The Iowa High School Athletic Association this week confirmed that aggressive parents and adults are the biggest threat to the health of youth and high school sports.

According to IHSAA executive director Tom Keating and Karissa Niehoff, executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations, who spoke with WHOTV (<https://whotv.com/2019/08/27/ihsaa-aggressive-parents-are-the-biggest-challenge-facing-high-school-sports/>), inappropriate behavior by adults at youth and high school sporting events has reached "epidemic proportions."

A survey of 2,000 high school athletic directors from across the country found that 62.3 percent said that the worst part of their job was "dealing with aggressive parents and adult fans."

IHSAA can back that up, noting that 60 percent of new officials in the 2016-17 season quit by the following year, and unruly parents were often cited as the reason why.

IHSAA has published the following guidelines for parents and fans when attending sporting events:

1. Act your age.

"You are, after all, an adult. Act in a way that makes your family and school proud."

2. Don't live vicariously through your children.

"High school sports are for them, not you. Your family's reputation is not determined by how well your children perform on the field of play."

3. Let your children talk to the coach instead of doing it for them.

"High school athletes learn how to become more confident, independent and capable — but only when their parents don't jump in and solve their problems for them."

4. Stay in your own lane.

"No coaching or officiating from the sidelines. Your role is to be a responsible, supportive parent, not a coach or official."

5. Remember: Participating in a high school sport is not about a college scholarship.

"According to the NCAA, only about 2% of all high school athletes are awarded a sports scholarship, and the average total value of that scholarship is only around \$18,000."

6. Make sure your children know you love watching them play.

"Do not critique your child's performance on the car ride home. Participating in high school sports is about character development, learning and having fun — not winning and losing."

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