

## Considerations for Athletes & Families for Selecting a Club Volleyball Program

This information guides Volleyball Alberta (VA) athletes and families on selecting a club volleyball program. This can be used for athletes deciding which tryout(s) to attend and deciding to sign with a volleyball club. Each athlete and family are responsible for educating themselves about the program they are considering joining.

### Key Principles

- It is the responsibility of all parties (Club, Athlete and Families) to honour any commitments outlined in the VA Letter of Intent (LOI), VA Policies and Processes, and Club Specific Policies and Processes.
- Clubs/Teams/Coaches do not own the rights to players. As of May 31, of each membership year, players finish their commitment to their indoor club. Each membership year, every athlete may pursue a club or team that best fits their development and goals.
- If a club does not appear to have your best interest in mind, then you should consider that in your decision. VA hopes to have every athlete, family and club be satisfied with the decisions they make during tryouts.
- Clubs are independent organizations, however when a club applies annually for membership with Volleyball Alberta, they accept all policies, processes, and procedures.
- The only recognized signing agreement by Volleyball Alberta is the [VA LOI](#). These are only available to clubs when their club is approved for the membership season when applications open in August.

### Considerations when Selecting a Club

Quality clubs have administrators that follow the Provincial and National Organizations' rules and guidelines. The club is accountable for their decisions, policies, risk management, and operational practices. Led by caring, knowledgeable and committed individuals focused on delivering optimal training and competition with trained/certified coaches and integrated support team professionals. The sport environment should be inclusive, welcoming, fun, fair and safe, resulting in positive experiences for participants. Their programs are developmentally appropriate, participant centered, progressive, challenging, and are aligned with [Volleyball Canada's Long Term Development](#).

- What are the club's values? What are the values you are looking for in a club?

Different clubs and teams have different focuses and overarching goals behind their values. Take the time to reflect on what your athlete hopes to get out of the club experience before making a final decision.

Consider if the Club stated values match their actions. We enroll kids in sport to help instill character in our children and need sport leaders to demonstrate the same principles we hope our children will learn and embrace.

- How long has the club been established? How is the club structured; are they a registered business, are they a non-profit? Does the Club have a Board of Directors? Are the Board Members also involved in club in secondary roles? Does the Club have established process and procedures, including dispute resolution?

There is not a singular 'right' way to operate, however a family should do their research and understand the advantages/disadvantages of the various models when selecting their club. You are spending your money and need to be an informed consumer.

Volleyball Canada operational best practices for clubs:

- Adoption of the Pan-Canadian Policies within the club bylaws and governance
  - If a club is offering programs to non-members and/or participating in non-sanctioned activities, the club should refer to their insurance coverage to ensure compliance.
  - The club/team bank accounts have two signing officers and annual financial statements are made available to club members.
  - A clear complaints process that may include a 3rd party liaison, who is not a direct relation to the main contact or head coach, if board of directors does not exist. This could be a school principal, lawyer, board member, team manager, etc. The process should include a person or organization to act as the direct contact for participants in case of dispute resolution.
  - Registration as a business and/or not for profit association.
- Have you spoken with previous club athletes? What was their experience? How many athletes do you see returning to the club year after year? Have you considered the role the previous athlete had on the team as it may alter the feedback they provide?

Your club experience is unique to you, but inquiring about previous experiences can often shed light on things you 'wish you knew' prior to learning first-hand.

- What is the coach's philosophy? Do the actions taken by the coach align with the stated philosophy?

The coaches on your club team will be the leaders in the club you will spend the most time with. Clubs should have coach information available on their website to help you learn more about the coaches' qualifications and experience.

- Do practice and training times work with our family schedule and/or participation in other activities or sports? Does the club/coach/team support multi-sport athletes and participation in school-based sports?

What is the commitment level expected for the club/coach/team? We encourage families to discuss ahead of time the expectations for attendance and if there are impacts on the athlete if team activities are missed due to other commitments.

Each athlete has their own context in how they participate in club volleyball. If you have other pursuits that are also important to you, you should find a club/coach/team that will support your outside interests.

- What is included in the club fees? What is the club's refund or financial policy?

Below are some examples of items that may be part of club fees. Clubs will have different levels of what is provided, and it is up to each athlete and family to determine what items are important to them as part of a club experience.

- Are hotels included? If not included, is there an expectation to stay at a particular hotel or with team members?
  - Is any team transportation included?
  - How many practices per week will be included? Number of courts per team for practices? Practice length? Are practices at a regularly scheduled time?
  - Is sport science included? Strength & Conditioning, Sport Psychology, Nutrition. Not all Sport Science providers are equivalent – what education/certification/professional designation do the providers hold?
  - Other items like Team pictures or Social activities?
  - Exhibition tournaments and other travel that may be included?
  - Team Gear and uniforms.
- What level of parental involvement is required? This may include fundraising requirements, scorekeeping, or other volunteer assignments.
  - Are the club expectations within the Volleyball Alberta policies, processes, and procedures? You can refer to the [VA website](#) for a comprehensive list of the current policies, processes, and procedures.

### **Age Class Considerations**

- Ensure you understand the age class regulations as there are different game types, developmental substitution rules, and positional requirements. For eg. 12U and 13U use the Tripleball format.
- Before registering for a tryout or signing a VA LOI, please choose the developmentally appropriate age class based on the athlete's birth date.
- Age class regulations are updated annually and can be found here: [General Information – Volleyball Alberta](#).

**Considerations for the Tryout Periods: clubs may participate in the Fall and/or Winter Tryout period depending on what fits their organization best.**

- Previous club affiliations do not limit an athlete's options to attend tryouts and athletes may attend multiple tryouts if they wish.

- Consider if the club already has re-signed athletes, and/or which positions are open for the tryouts.
- Athletes who have accepted a club offer MUST cease attending other club's tryouts and notify other clubs of their intent.
- Club tryouts must fall during the times indicated by Volleyball Alberta for the current membership year. Clubs cannot require athletes to attend tryouts outside of the published tryout dates as a condition of their selection to a club or team.

**Considerations for the Re-Signing Period & Signing an LOI: clubs may re-sign athletes to the club they competed for in the previous season before the tryout period. During the tryout periods, VA LOI's may be offered.**

- As best practice, we encourage clubs to provide information on the Head Coach and the number of athletes the team will carry when signing. The Team and Age Category are required by clubs to indicate on the LOI.
- Athletes and families have the right to select any club without receiving pressure from the club representatives or risk of consequences or repercussions. Clubs should not pressure athletes to accept any offers or commitment. The time stipulations for LOI's are clearly stated and must be honoured.
- If Athletes have questions around potential playing time, please be aware that playing time can change as an athlete develops throughout the season. Some age classes have fair play rules that will determine how playing time is distributed.
- Clubs have a right to have all financial obligations honoured. VA does not manage financial matters between clubs and athletes, a clubs financial and refund policy will always take precedence.
- Clubs should not ask athletes to earn their commitment through attending open gyms, camps or clinics in the summer or fall months. These should be made optional and meet the developmental and recovery needs of individual athletes.
- Club may only re-sign and sign athletes within the times indicated by Volleyball Alberta for the current membership year.

**Safe Behaviors in Volleyball**

- What is Safe Sport?

Volleyball Alberta is dedicated to creating a safe and welcoming sport environment and recognizes a systemic culture shift is required to eliminate maltreatment, including sexual, emotional, physical abuse, neglect, harassment, bullying, exploitation and discrimination. Volleyball Alberta believes the welfare and safety of everyone involved in the sport is a primary consideration and the responsibility of each individual, member, club and provider in the volleyball community. Volleyball Alberta has zero tolerance for any type of harassment or abuse. Athletes, officials, coaches, administrators, and parents are encouraged to report any instances of harassment and abuse in a way they feel safe.

Volleyball Alberta & Volleyball Canada's Independent Third Party, Abuse-Free Sport, is an independent program that is part of a national movement to rid Canadian sport of all forms of harassment, discrimination, and abuse. As a Program Signatory, Volleyball Canada is an active player in this movement.

- What steps should I take if I have a concern about the behavior of a Person In Authority (PIA): individuals that hold a position of trust or authority because of the role they have and this includes coaches, managers, trainers, referee allocators or mentors, staff and administrator?

If the concern is related to Volleyball Alberta bylaws, rules, policies, and/or procedures, please contact: [conduct@volleyballalberta.ca](mailto:conduct@volleyballalberta.ca). You should contact your club following their established policies for conflict resolution if the concern is in regarding club specific policies and procedures.

If the complaint/inquiry is related to maltreatment, misconduct, discrimination, violence, bullying or harassment, contact the Abuse-Free-Sport Helpline by Phone: 1-888-837-7678 or Email: [info@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:info@abuse-free-sport.ca).

- Best practices for Persons In Authority (PIA) for clubs to follow:
  - All club leaders are Screened and Approved members of Volleyball Alberta prior to taking part in any club activities with athletes: All Persons In Authority are required to complete a Criminal Record Check every 3 years, complete a Screening Disclosure Form annually, and complete Safe Sport training.
  - Follow Volleyball Canada's "[Open and Observable](#)" Environments: Open, observable, and justifiable interactions and communications are strongly recommended to foster safety, enhance protection, and help reduce vulnerability of both the athlete and adult(s) in a position of trust.

## **DRAFT 2024- 2025 Letter of Intent (LOI)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby confirm my intent to sign with \_\_\_\_\_, hereafter referenced as “my LOI club”, for the 2024-2025 Volleyball Alberta indoor club season (“the VA Club Season”) and declare that I accept and acknowledge the following terms of this Letter of Intent (LOI):

### **Voluntary**

- 1) I have voluntarily entered this LOI, which is a prerequisite for my eligibility to participate in the VA Club Season.
- 2) I agree to have my name, age class, position, and club listed on the Volleyball Alberta LOI Registry.

### **Timing, Duration, and Deadlines**

- 3) This LOI can only be registered for the upcoming VA Club Season.
- 4) This LOI will remain in effect until the conclusion of the 2024-2025 VA Club Season (May 31, 2025). Athletes are committed to that club for the upcoming club season, or if a release has been processed.
- 5) As evidence however, that I have carefully reviewed the LOI and considered my rights and obligations.
- 6) Delivery of this LOI may be made by hand delivery, or emailed, to my LOI club.

### **Penalty for Breach**

- 7) This LOI is subject to Volleyball Alberta regulations and my failure to abide by its terms could result in a review by Volleyball Alberta.

### **Recruiting and Contact by Representatives of Volleyball Alberta Clubs**

- 8) Failure to follow the guidelines for the Signing and Tryouts Process will result in a review. To submit a concern, please direct it to [conduct@volleyballalberta.ca](mailto:conduct@volleyballalberta.ca)

### **Release Request Form - Club**

- 9) To obtain a release from my LOI obligation, I must file a LOI Release Request Form with my LOI club. The [LOI Request for Release Form](#) and its requirements is available from the Volleyball Alberta website.

- 10) I have signed this LOI with the club and not with a particular individual. I agree to remain bound to the terms hereof except due to extenuating circumstances.
- 11) This LOI is a shared agreement between the club and athlete. **The signing does not provide ownership over the player, but the player/family must meet the financial commitment outlined in the agreement and the club's refund policy should they seek a release. Prior to signing, athletes and families are responsible for reviewing the club's policies such as:** refunds, playing time, travel, coaching code of conducts, ethics, expectations, concussion management, conflict resolution, athlete code of conduct, media sharing, etc.
- 12) Even if I have submitted a Release Request Form, I am prohibited from initiating or responding to contact from another club (for the purpose of attending that club) until my LOI Release Request Form is approved.
- 13) My LOI club has 5 clear days to provide their response to my Request for Release. If no response is received within that time, or in the alternative, the response is negative, I can directly apply for a Volleyball Alberta review as outlined below.
- 14) My LOI Club's refund policy is in effect at the time of signing.
- 15) Volleyball Alberta will consider petitions for a complete release from a LOI when extenuating circumstances are determined to exist, and the decision of Volleyball Alberta's Review Council is final and binding.
- 16) The Volleyball Alberta [LOI Request for Release Form](#) and its requirements is available from the VA website.

#### LOI Becomes Null and Void

- 17) This LOI shall be declared null and void if:
  - My LOI club (or a representative) violates Volleyball Alberta rules while signing me as found through the recruiting process:
    - o Assigned to a different team than stated on the LOI form.
    - o Club fees are more than the stated range.
  - Athletes and families must still request a release and submit the form to their LOI Club.

#### Club Signatures Required Prior to Submission

- 18) Before submission to the athlete and their family, this LOI must be signed and dated by:

- Club President (or his/her authorized representative)
- Head Coach (not mandatory)

### Athlete Signature Required

19) The athlete is required to sign the LOI.

### Parent/Guardian Signature Required

20) A parent or legal guardian is required to sign the LOI if the athlete is less than 18 years of age at the time of signing.

### Additional Athlete/Family information

- Once an athlete has signed an LOI, they are required to inform another VA Club's representative that you have done so; upon any subsequent contact by the same VA Club for the same purpose, you should notify the Club President of your LOI club within 48 hours.
- Can I practice with my prospective VA Club team? Clubs are strongly encouraged NOT to facilitate training or programs during July and August and the school season to prevent athlete burnout, overtraining, and/or overuse injuries. Athlete physical and mental wellness best practices should be applied outside the indoor club season.

**Copies must be maintained by the club and family- All Information is required unless otherwise stated.**

Name of Athlete: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY): \_\_\_\_\_

Sportlomo Member ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Sportlomo Account Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age Category/Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Coach (optional): \_\_\_\_\_



Club Fees Total (a range is acceptable):

Club Fees include:

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Club Fees exclude:

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**Athletes and families are responsible for reviewing club policies such as: refunds, playing time, travel, coaching code of conduct, ethics, expectations, concussion management, conflict resolution, athlete code of conduct, media sharing.**

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**Signing Offer Date and Time (Month/Day/Year)**

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**Signed (Club President or Designate)**

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**Date (MM/DD/YYYY)**

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**Signed (Head Coach if applicable)  
Date (MM/DD/YYYY)**

**For the Prospective Athlete to Complete**

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Athlete Name (Print)

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Athlete Signature

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Signed (parent / guardian if under 18)

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Age Class of Athlete in 2024-2025

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Date Signed (MM/DD/YYYY)

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Date Signed (MM/DD/YYYY)