

Allyship in Girls and Women's Baseball

A Resource for Baseball Associations, Coaches, Parents, Officials, and Volunteers

Introduction

The growth of girls' and women's baseball in Canada has created new opportunities for participation, leadership, and excellence. However, access alone does not guarantee belonging. Girls continue to encounter barriers rooted in gender stereotypes, unequal opportunities, unconscious bias, and do not feel they belong (Women in Sport, 2024a; Women in Sport, 2024b).

This resource provides practical guidance for local associations seeking to strengthen allyship and create environments without expectations that influence how they experience sport.

Creating equitable baseball environments requires more than increasing participation numbers. It requires allyship.

Allyship is the ongoing practice of using one's influence, position, and actions to support equity and inclusion. In the context of baseball, allyship involves actively creating environments where girls and women feel welcomed, respected, valued, and supported as athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, and leaders (Schweinbenz, 2021). It moves beyond passive support and involves challenging inequities, amplifying underrepresented voices, and advocating for meaningful change (Jolly et al., 2021).

Because baseball remains a male-dominated sport in many communities, boys and men often hold positions of influence as teammates, coaches, parents, officials, volunteers, and decision-makers. Research suggests that when boys and men act as allies, they can help challenge stereotypes, model respectful behaviours, advocate for equitable opportunities, and foster cultures where girls and women can thrive.

What Is Allyship?

Allyship is often described as active support for individuals or groups who experience systemic barriers or marginalization. Effective allyship involves both personal reflection and meaningful action.

Within sport, allyship is not about speaking for girls and women. Instead, it involves listening to their experiences, amplifying their voices, and using positions of influence to remove barriers and promote equity (Schweinbenz, 2021).

Research in sport suggests that effective allies:

- Recognize that gender inequities exist.
- Listen to the experiences of girls and women.
- Challenge stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour.
- Advocate for equitable opportunities and resources.
- Use their influence to support systemic change.
- Continue learning and reflecting on their own biases (Gippsport & La Trobe University, 2023).

Transformational allyship goes even further. Rather than responding only when problems arise, transformational allies proactively work to challenge inequitable systems and create lasting change (Jolly et al., 2021).

Why Allyship Matters in Baseball

Baseball provides opportunities for physical activity, confidence building, leadership development, teamwork, and lifelong connection. Yet many girls continue to report experiences that communicate they do not fully belong in sport.

Research consistently demonstrates that gender stereotypes can limit girls' participation, confidence, skill development, and enjoyment of sport (Women in Sport, 2024a; Women in Sport, 2024b). Girls are often directed away from team and competitive sports at an early age and may receive fewer opportunities to develop sport-specific skills.

These experiences can contribute to lower confidence, feelings of exclusion, and higher rates of dropout from sport.

At the same time, positive relationships with coaches, teammates, parents, and other adults are among the strongest predictors of girls remaining involved in sport (Zarrett et al., 2019).

When allyship is present, girls are more likely to:

- Feel welcomed and valued.
- Develop confidence in their abilities.
- Build strong social connections.
- Take on leadership roles.
- Continue participating in sport over time.
- Pursue opportunities as coaches, officials, and administrators.

For baseball associations, allyship contributes directly to participant retention, stronger club culture, and sustainable growth.

Allyship Is Everyone's Responsibility

Creating equitable baseball experiences is not the responsibility of girls and women alone.

Allyship can be demonstrated by:

Coaches

Coaches shape team culture more than any other adult within the sport environment. Research suggests coaches can foster allyship by challenging stereotypes, ensuring equitable opportunities, using inclusive language, and supporting the development of all athletes (Women in Sport, 2024b).

Parents and Guardians

Parents are among the earliest and most influential voices in a child's sporting experience. Their attitudes toward sport, gender, competition, and leadership significantly influence how children perceive belonging (Women in Sport, 2024a).

Teammates

Boys and young men play an important role in creating positive experiences for girls in baseball. Respectful behaviour, inclusion, encouragement, and challenging exclusionary comments can help establish cultures of belonging.

Officials and Volunteers

Officials, scorekeepers, board members, and volunteers influence how welcoming and equitable baseball environments feel. Their actions contribute to organizational culture and athlete experience.

Association Leaders

Meaningful allyship includes examining policies, budgets, facilities, scheduling practices, and leadership structures to ensure girls and women receive equitable opportunities and representation.

Practical Allyship Actions for Baseball Associations

Associations can strengthen allyship by:

1. Listen First

Seek regular feedback from girls and women participating in your programs. Create opportunities for honest conversations and ensure their experiences inform decision-making.

2. Challenge Stereotypes

Address comments or behaviours that reinforce harmful assumptions about girls' athletic abilities, competitiveness, or commitment.

3. Promote Equitable Visibility

Celebrate girls' and women's achievements through social media, websites, awards, and promotional materials.

4. Support Women in Leadership

Recruit, mentor, and support women coaches, officials, administrators, and board members.

5. Create Inclusive Team Cultures

Establish clear expectations for respect, inclusion, and sportsmanship.

6. Provide Equitable Opportunities

Review access to facilities, practice times, equipment, coaching resources, and development opportunities.

7. Educate and Reflect

Offer education on gender equity, unconscious bias, and inclusive coaching practices.

8. Model Allyship

Association leaders, coaches, and volunteers should actively demonstrate behaviours that reinforce equity and belonging.

Intersectionality and Allyship

Allyship must recognize that girls do not all experience baseball in the same way. Gender is one important part of a participant's experience, but it may intersect with race, Indigeneity, disability, socioeconomic status, geography, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and family circumstances.

For example, a girl may face barriers not only because she is a girl in baseball, but also because her family cannot afford travel, she does not see people from her community

represented, she has a disability, she lives in a rural or remote area, or she does not feel safe being herself in sport spaces.

An intersectional approach to allyship asks associations to consider who is still being left out, even when girls' programming is growing.

Associations can strengthen intersectional allyship by:

- Asking diverse girls and families about their experiences.
- Reducing financial and travel barriers.
- Ensuring facilities and programming are accessible.
- Creating culturally respectful and inclusive environments.
- Supporting Indigenous, racialized, disabled, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, and rural athletes.
- Avoiding one-size-fits-all programming.
- Listening before assuming what participants need.

True allyship means creating baseball environments where all girls are not only invited to participate, but are respected, supported, and able to thrive.

Moving From Support to Action

The future growth of girls' and women's baseball depends not only on participation opportunities, but on creating environments where girls know they belong.

Allyship is not a single action or initiative. It is an ongoing commitment to listening, learning, advocating, and acting. When associations embrace allyship as part of their culture, they help create baseball environments where every athlete can participate, develop, lead, and succeed.

Building equitable baseball communities is everyone's responsibility. Through intentional allyship, Baseball Canada associations can help ensure that girls and women are not simply included in baseball—but are valued, respected, and empowered within it.

References

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