

A grayscale photograph of a female coach with blonde hair, wearing a dark jacket, shouting and motivating a group of female athletes. The athletes are wearing light-colored jerseys with "TIMBERWOLVES" and the number "8" visible. The image is framed by a thick purple border.

KEEPING WOMEN & GIRLS IN SPORT

RECRUITING, RETAINING & SUPPORTING

WOMEN COACHES

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades there has been a marked increase in women leaders across nearly every sector of the workforce except sport. While there is a significant increase in attention to women's sports in the past few years and women's sports continue to grow, the numbers of female-identified coaches have remained relatively stagnant and, in some sports, have decreased in numbers. The percentage of women coaching female sports at the collegiate level (in both Canada and the United States) remains in the minority, while in male sports, the numbers are nearly zero.

Research has shown that diversity of representation in leadership positions (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation etc.) can lead to an enriching sport experience for young athletes, particularly for those who belong to marginalized groups within sport. Being able to see themselves represented in those roles can demonstrate for those athletes that there are opportunities for them to continue participating in sport after they finish competing. For young women, providing same sex role models has also been shown to improve self-perception and this positive impact can directly encourage those athletes to pursue coaching.

One of the ways that community and grassroots clubs can increase their numbers of female-identified coaches is to be intentional about how they recruit coaches and put supports in place to reduce barriers for participation. Examples of barriers include financial barriers, childcare costs, inflexible competition and practice schedules, lack of opportunities to increase education and coaching certification. Research has also cited lack of belonging within a male-dominated space and feeling a lack of competence as reasons for not pursuing coaching. Therefore, when recruiting female coaches, it is important that clubs and organizations understand the increased barriers that exist for female coaches and make efforts to support women. Providing flexible environments, opportunities for mentorship, and increased opportunities to improve their coaching competency are examples of ways that clubs and organizations can make coaching a feasible option for women.

The overall goal of this document is to help organizations recruit and retain female coaches within your sport. This document provides a checklist for administrators as well as tips and considerations for recruiting, supporting and retaining female coaches. The information was derived out of research from the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport (University of Minnesota), the Canadian Journal for Women, and the Positive Coaching Alliance.

TIPS TO RECRUIT WOMEN COACHES

1. Purposefully recruit participants: seek out and invite women into the environment and promote early involvement (athlete to coach transition)
2. Create, provide and promote meaningful experiences for women coaches
3. Promote the benefits that high-performance sport offers to the greater community and be upfront about the issues they may face (e.g. childcare)
4. Encourage women athletes to consider coaching and support them with mentorship
5. Be intentional about promotion of women coaches in your environment:
 - Have women as role models and celebrate women coaches
 - Have women coach both girls' and boys' teams
 - Promote Women in Coaching programs to a much greater extent (e.g. grants, mentorship, sponsorships etc.)
 - Tell the stories of women coaches as mothers to show that it is acceptable to have children and coach

TIPS TO RETAIN WOMEN COACHES

1. Be intentional about inviting women coaches back into spaces
2. Prioritizing women in coaching at an organizational level and promote/advance women through proactive sponsorship
3. Engaging in long-term planning for sustaining women in coaching
4. Provide financial incentives to make a coaching career feasible
5. Establish a mentorship program that helps women coaches find a path to club-level, provincial, and high-performance positions
6. Pair young coaches with senior counterparts to discuss related support pathways and to offer psychosocial support
7. Create networking/PD opportunities via women-centred coaching courses and clinics

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN COACHES

1. Tailor and Support Training for Women Coaches
 - Provide time for coaches to work on their certification / other PD opportunities
 - Provide coaches with travel credits/cover travel expenses
 - Provide opportunities for professional development
2. Childcare for Coaches that are Mothers
 - Ensure that women coaches maintain contact and remain involved with their sport organization during maternity or other types of leave
 - Permit women to ramp down to shorter hours or offer co-coaching opportunities to share coaching roles, and give them the flexibility to tend to family matters
 - Provide babysitting services during major competitions and training camps
 - Support babies accompanying their coach mothers to practices, competitions, and training camps with appropriate childcare
3. Reduce time commitment / provide a flexible coaching situation
 - Offer flexible arrival and departure times
 - Offer co-coaching positions
 - Change the traditional structure to accommodate their schedule

Recruitment of Women Coaches

- ☐ Intentional marketing of programs and opportunities available for women coaches
- ☐ Program and coaching advertisements include pictures of women coaches
- ☐ Coaches and administrators personally seek out and invite women coaches and provide meaningful experiences

Promotion of Women Coaches

- ☐ Highlight the achievements of women coaches
- ☐ Social media promotion of women coaching both male, female teams and co-ed teams
- ☐ Showcase the advancement of women coaches within the organization

Opportunities for Growth

- ☐ Provide professional development and networking opportunities for women coaches
- ☐ Create and run women-centred coaching clinics and/or provide funding for coaches to attend events outside of the organization
- ☐ Work with coaches within the organization to create long-term coach development plans

CHECKLIST

Support

- ☐ Offer flexibility in commitment, especially for coaches that are parents or care givers
- ☐ Consider alternative approaches to coaching staffs (ex. co-coaching opportunities) to lessen the workload for coaches
- ☐ Provide opportunities for mentorship to assist new and existing women coaches

Evaluation and Retention

- ☐ Coaches and administrators create long-term development plans and conduct frequent check-ins with coaches
- ☐ Work with coaches to find professional development opportunities provide them with meaningful coaching experiences within the organization
- ☐ Administrators provide opportunities for coaches to be evaluated

RESOURCES

[Sport NB Coaching Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#)

Sport NB Coaching Programs for Women

- [Women to Watch Grant](#)
- [Women and Girls Mentorship Program](#)
- NextGEN Coaching Grants
- [VIP Coaching Program](#)

[Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching](#)

[Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport](#)

[Positive Coaching Alliance](#)

Athlete Assessments

- [Valuable Ways to Support Women Coaches](#)

Kramers, S., Bean, C., Hummell, C., Allan, V., Johnson, A., & Turnnidge, J. (2023). Reflections on improving women's experiences of mentorship in Canadian coaching. *International Sport Coaching Journal* (ahead of print)