

The Power and Possibility of Coach Training in Youth Development

IMPACT STATEMENT FROM THE MILLION COACHES CHALLENGE





88%

coaches agree that participation in training made them a better coach.

(American Institutes for Research, 2024).

The Million Coaches Challenge (MCC) is a collective of leading youth sports organizations committed to training one million coaches in youth development techniques by 2025. Funded by the Susan Crown Exchange, partner organizations have created evidence-based training programs that teach coaches how to meet youth development needs. From mental health and trauma-informed practice to Coaching Gen Z and mentoring underserved youth, these programs equip coaches with knowledge, techniques, and principles to help youth thrive, on and off the field.

How is training influencing coaches?

Thousands of youth sports coaches participate in training with an MCC partner organization every day. How is training influencing coaches, youth, and the communities they serve? We draw on early findings from the MCC Coach Perception Survey and program evaluation data from the MCC partners to describe how evidence-based training programs can result in positive outcomes for youth sports coaches, the youth they serve, and the communities they belong to. We focus on five key areas:

Gains in knowledge and/or skills

CHJS-trained coaches gain knowledge around stress and youth behavior 97% of coaches trained by *Center for Healing & Justice Through Sport* report learning something new about the stress response and how it impacts behavior. 98% report gaining knowledge on youth development, trauma, and the brain.

Shifts in attitudes and behaviors

CoachUp! participants question "Old School" coaching

"[The CoachUp! Washington course] brought up what coaching is actually like and the shift that has come from the 'old school' way of coaching to what it should be."

Feelings of confidence and preparedness

Coach Beyond attendees are more confident in linking youth to resources After *Coach Beyond* training, coach confidence grew from 29% to 81% in their ability to link student-athletes to mental health supports in school or community.

Youth experiences with trained coaches

Youth in Girls on the Run felt listened to and cared for by their coaches 99% of participants felt that their *Girls on the Run* coaches cared about them and listened to them when they talked with them.

Influence on the community and/or organization

PCA-trained coaches are having more fun

After *Positive Coaching Alliance* training, 73% of coaches are having more fun coaching and 80% of leaders believe that people in their athletic program are having more fun.

MCC PARTNERS



The **Center for Healing & Justice through Sport (CHJS)** engages with sport at every level. From community centers and juvenile detention centers to major college athletic conferences and professional leagues, the CHJS team puts a premium on teaching coaches to deliver healing-centered sport experiences while protecting, nurturing, and embracing athletes for every bit of who they are. Our interactive courses range from 2-hour introductions to a 100-hour advanced certification, offered in partnership with the world-renowned Neurosequential Network.



CoachUp! Washington is a strategic partnership between the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) and the University of Washington's Center for Leadership in Athletics (UW CLA) aimed at providing online coach development courses to all school-based coaches across Washington state. The first two foundational courses focus on creating physically and emotionally safe environments and centering the social, emotional, and physical needs of adolescent athletes.



Girls on the Run International annually equips about 20,000 new coaches across its network of 175 local councils through the National Coach Training. Drawing on research and insights from the field, the blended online and in-person training prepares coaches to deliver the evidence-based Girls on the Run curriculum, use trauma sensitive strategies, establish safe environments with an awareness of sexual abuse prevention best practices, build relationships, create a positive, inclusive environment where ALL youth can be themselves, and cultivate a mastery climate.



How to Coach Kids is co-created by the United States Olympic Committee and Nike and inspired by Aspen Institute Project Play. How to Coach Kids is a free, 30-minute interactive online training course and resource library designed for community organizations and youth sports leagues who would like to offer foundational training to their volunteer coaches.



Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA is training thousands of youth sport coaches in sports-based youth development, positive youth development and social-emotional learning approaches. Coaches being trained are located throughout the US, including in our key Sport for Good Cities (Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, and New York City) and our training partnerships focus on non-profit organizations, professional league and team networks, and other local sport and youth agencies.





LiFEsports at **The Ohio State University** in partnership with the Ohio High School Athletic Association introduces Coach Beyond..., a series of ten education sessions designed to ensure coaches and athletic directors are ready to "coach beyond..." the X's and O's and teach life and leadership skills through sport. We offer in-person and online trainings, free webinars, and community events on important topics such as supporting student-athlete mental health, fostering a positive team environment, managing stress and pressure, and improving mental strategies for athletic performance

Focused on ensuring children have a positive, well-rounded experience on and off the field, the **Little League®** Diamond Leader Training Program is a free educational resource that provides coaches with an understanding of the impact that mental, social, and emotional well-being has in youth sports through detailed information, interactive scenarios, and a variety of additional resources. Through this course, which navigates Little League volunteers through real-life scenarios that are being faced in local leagues all around the world each year, coaches will have a better understanding of the impact they have on their players, both on and off the field.



The **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)** is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant, and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals as a catalyst for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being. Through their Million Coaches Challenge initiative they will train 30,000 youth sports coaches in positive youth development.



Positive Coaching Alliance's Double-Goal Coach workshop explores why and how to pursue both winning and the more important goal of teaching life lessons through sports. Each coach leaves the workshop knowing how to focus on communication between coaches and athletes, coach for mastery of sport, and honor the game. The training is open to coaches of all sports, across all levels from 4–5-year-olds up through high school and competitive club sports and is available via self-paced online courses as well as live interactive workshops via Zoom or in-person.



The **U.S. Soccer Foundation** builds coaches' capacity to create lasting, positive connections with youth, by teaching coaches how to also serve as mentors. With an emphasis on serving under-resourced communities, the Foundation training serves coaches of all youth sports and is delivered in-person, virtual-live, and through an asynchronous, online training.



The **United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee's (USOPC)** Connection Based Coaching is an online course created to help coaches of all levels better connect with their athletes. Through the story-telling lens of Team USA athletes, coaches, and professionals, the interactive course modules guide participants to a greater self-awareness in social and emotional skills they use in their coaching techniques.



USA Fencing, USA Weightlifting, and USA Triathlon have developed coach training modules focused on Effectively Coaching Generation Z, Creating A Culture of Belonging, and Elevating Your Coaching IQ. Additionally, these courses will be offered to all NGBs (at no cost) to incorporate into their Coach Education programs.

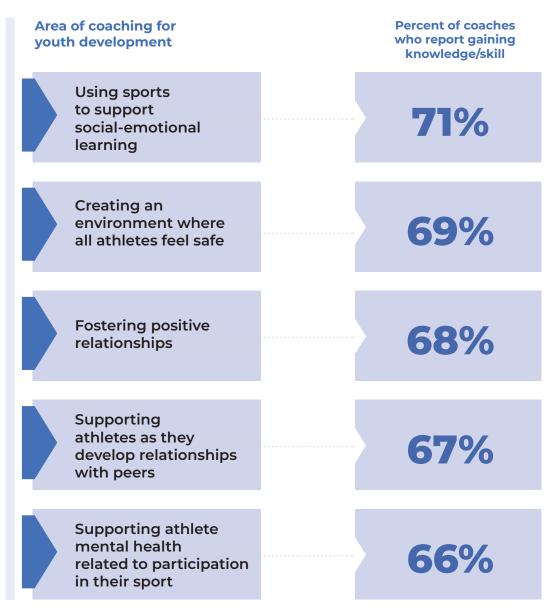






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A key need for youth-focused training involves increasing coaches' knowledge and skills for working with kids. Preliminary findings from the MCC Coach Perception Survey suggest that a large majority of trained coaches report gains in knowledge and/ or skills across five areas of youth development.



^{*} From MCC Coach Perception Survey (American Institutes for Research, 2024)



Examples of coaches' knowledge and skill gains

Drawn from partner evaluations of each training, the following examples illustrate how specific forms of training can affect coaches' views of learned knowledge and skill for working with youth in sports settings.

CHUS

CENTER FOR HEALING & JUSTICE THROUGH SPORT (CHJS)

Coaches' knowledge about trauma and healing after completing a CHJS training

97%

report learning something new about the stress response and how it impacts behavior 98%

report learning new strategies they can use to help people who have experienced trauma thrive in their program 99%

report gaining knowledge on youth development, trauma, and the brain



COACH UP! WASHINGTON

Washington state high school coaches' comments after Foundations of Coaching

85%

felt the content and takeaways will benefit their future coaching

86%

would encourage my peer coaches to take this training



This training covered the topics new and veteran coaches need. You can't learn the sport through an hour of online training, and most coaches already know the sport, they participated in it. However, many coaches, especially those that are not teachers, need to have some scaffolding to fill in gaps about human development and leadership strategies."







LiFEsports & OHSAA: COACH BEYOND

Changes in high school coaches' knowledge and awareness after attending a Coach Beyond training

Coaching area	Desired learning outcome	Before training	After training
Promote positive	Awareness of underlying causes of behavior	71 %	94%
behavior and engagement	Knowledge of positive reinforcement strategies	71 %	88%
Mental strategies for youth performance	Awareness of mental strategies to enhance athletic performance	33%	89%
	Knowledge of factors influencing athletes' mental game	24%	94%
Addressing mental health*	Awareness of student-athlete mental health needs and preparation of coaches to address concerns	30%	86%
	Knowledge of strategies, resources and techniques to support student-athlete mental health	20%	82%

^{*} From Bates, et al (2024)







USA FENCING, USA TRIATHLON, USA WEIGHTLIFTING

Youth sports coach learning following Creating a Culture of Belonging





"[I learned] **creating a culture of belonging** in sports, especially for children, is fundamental to development and enjoyment of the game."

"I think the most impactful take away from this program was **establishing a coaching philosophy** and learning how to foster a culture of belonging."



U.S. SOCCER FOUNDATION

Coaches' agreement that mentorship skills improved after Coach-Mentor Training

97.9%

Creating a Team Code

97.9%

Modeling and teaching empathy for their youth players

97.8%

Addressing challenging behavior with empathy

97.8%

Setting goals with youth players

98.1%

Being consistent in their interactions with youth players

98.2%

Honoring the connection made with players at the end of the season



UNITED STATES OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC FOUNDATION

Youth sports coaches' views of skills and knowledge gained from participation in *Connection Based Coaching* or *How to Coach Kids*

Finding from How to Coach Kids	Finding from Connection Based Coaching
Significant increase in coaches' knowledge of how to adapt activities for age and ability (38% -> 74%)	On average, coaches rated themselves 9.0 (out of 10) for skills gained to help manage their emotions



GIRLS ON THE RUN INTERNATIONAL

Volunteer coaches perceptions of key learning from training



I am a teacher, and Girls on the Run definitely personifies best practices in teaching. One of the best strategies is being in a circle when meeting. It levels the playing field and makes all participants feel equal. It's the best suggestion for coaching!"



Coach training can have more profound effects when it helps coaches to identify behaviors in need of change, or leads them to reflect on taken-for-granted methods, the role of the coach, and what success looks like.



Examples of changing attitudes or behaviors

Drawn from partner evaluations of each training, the following examples reveal how their training can influence coaches' attitudes and/or behaviors for working with youth in sports settings.



POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE (PCA)

Changes in youth sports coaches' attitudes and behaviors following PCA training

82%

of coaches do more to help athletes develop resilience

81%

of coaches are increasing their focus on teaching life lessons through sports **72%**

of coaches have more constructive conversations with parents



LITTLE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

Youth baseball coaches' likelihood of using tactics learned in Diamond Leader Training

98%

indicated they were likely or very likely to implement one or more of the seven tactics covered in Diamond Leader Training Most likely tactics to be implemented

- 1 Establishing a supportive team culture
- 2 Knowing every athlete's story
- 3 Celebrating effort

Highest rated tactic

Be coachable

The coach accepting feedback and adapting to meet the needs of their participants





GIRLS ON THE RUN INTERNATIONAL

Volunteer coaches perceptions of how training influenced their coaching approach with girls





The different coaching strategies that we learned at training were very helpful. Without those strategies I would have been completely lost. For example, using running time to run or walk with our girls to build a deeper relationship was extremely helpful. The girls verbally told me their favorite parts of practice were when they could walk with the coaches and create a bond with them. It also helped with some of the girls who may have needed a little more attention too."



COACH UP! WASHINGTON

Washington high school coaches' comments after Foundations of Coaching



The training reinforced the importance of having a dynamic coaching style.

Athletes are kids, and they need space to explore and wrestle with the skills and techniques required in high school athletics."

Pre- and post-training surveys show significant improvements in coaches' attitudes toward fostering a positive youth sport environment, including:

- Prioritizing sport for skill building
- · Emotional and physical safety
- Autonomy
- Mastery
- Fun-intensity balance
- Coach emotional regulation
- Modeling



U.S. SOCCER FOUNDATION

Coaches' agreement that mentorship skills improved after Coach-Mentor Training



of coaches reported using skills taught in the course, such as modeling empathy for my youth players



A player from the opposition made a mistake that cost their team a goal and I could clearly see that it hurt him emotionally. As he walked by my sideline, I encouraged the player from the other team to cheer up and keep trying his best. When my players questioned why I was coaching the player from the other team... I took that opportunity to chat with them about empathy after the game and how sportsmanship towards teammates and opponents players goes a really long way for our mental wellness."







USA FENCING, USA TRIATHLON, USA WEIGHTLIFTING

Coaches' self-reported changes after participation in Youth Sport Coach Fellowship

Change in practice, perspective and relations

13 of 16 agreed that participating in the fellowship changed their coaching practices, perspective, and/or relationships with athletes

Quick implementation of ideas

12 of 16 coaches report already implementing ideas from the VSC followship from the YSC fellowship



Not using dismissive language. There were some things I'd say that were unintentionally dismissive, such as 'Ah, don't be nervous." I learned that this can sometimes make students feel like their feelings aren't being valued. So now I will say, 'It's okay to be nervous' and ask how I can help."

CHUS

CENTER FOR HEALING & JUSTICE THROUGH SPORT (CHJS)

Changes in Parks & Rec coaches' agreement with beliefs following a CHJS training

Practice belief	Before training	After training
When young athletes are acting up, they need discipline	21%	13%
When young athletes are acting up, they need to be engaged	79%	88%
The best results come from regularly pushing athletes to their limits to see what they're capable of	63%	47%
The best results come from moderate but consistent doses of stress	37 %	53%
It's the coach's job to make decisions about what goes on during practice	47 %	27%
Youth should have a say in what goes on during practice	53%	73%



Working with kids can feel intimidating or overwhelming, especially for many volunteers and first-time coaches. This is where coach training can matter the most.



Examples of coach confidence and preparedness after training

Drawn from partner evaluations of each training, the following examples reveal how their training can influence the confidence and/or preparedness of coaches for working with youth in sports settings.







USA FENCING, USA TRIATHLON, USA WEIGHTLIFTING

Coaches' gain confidence from support of others in Youth Sport Coach Fellowship

69%

reported that participating in the fellowship made them feel supported in their coaching





POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE (PCA)

Changes in youth sports coaches' attitudes and behaviors following PCA training

87%

of coaches are better able to help athletes develop a growth mindset 84%

of coaches are better able to help athletes bounce back quickly from mistakes **80%**

of coaches are better able to develop teamwork



U.S. SOCCER FOUNDATION

Feelings of preparedness, immediately following Coach-Mentor Training

98%

of coaches the tools and **felt competent as a coach-mentor**

97%

had the tools to address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of players 98%

felt prepared to make an impact on my community









LiFEsports & OHSAA: COACH BEYOND

High school coaches' confidence and preparation after attending a Coach Beyond training

Coaching area	Desired learning outcome	Before training	After training
Supporting the whole child	Confident in understanding of strategies and resources to support the whole child	31%	86%
Addressing	Confident in ability to support student-athletes with mental health concerns	31%	82%
mental health	Confident in ability to link student-athletes to mental health supports in school or community	29%	81%

^{*} From Bates, et al., 2024





LAUREUS SPORT FOR GOOD FOUNDATION USA

Youth sport coaches' confidence in behaviors that drive sport-based youth development after participation in training

Competency	Before training % extremely confident	After training % extremely confident
Encouraging participation Encouraging everyone to participate, no matter how good they are in the sport or activity	53%	76%
Facilitating choice & voice Creating opportunities for young people to make choices and have a voice	58%	7 5%
Encouraging risk-taking Encouraging young people to take a risk and try something new, even when it seems difficult to do	58%	75%

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What about the effects of trained coaches on kids? 81% of respondents to the *MCC Coach Perception Survey* report at least one positive change in the athletes they coach as a result of their participation in training. In addition, 74% of responding coaches perceived that their participation in training had a positive influence on athlete retention (American Institutes for Research, 2024).

Coaches' observations after completing training	Percent of coaches who report they have already observed outcomes
The athletes they coach are experiencing more joy	72%
Stronger relationships with athletes	69%
Improved social and emotional competence in athletes	57 %
Improved mental health related to sport in athletes	49%

^{*} From MCC Coach Perception Survey (American Institutes for Research, 2024)





Examples of youth experiences with trained coaches

Drawn from partner evaluations of each training, the following partner examples further demonstrate how coaches who complete their training view their impact on young people in sports settings.



POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE (PCA)

Coach and parent views of changes in athletes after PCA training

82%

of coaches say their athletes experiences have improved because of PCA tools 86%

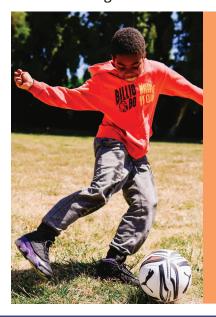
of parents say their use of PCA tools has improved children's experience **73%**

of coaches say their team's environment is more positive



U.S. SOCCER FOUNDATION

How coaching tools learned in Coach Mentor Training influenced work with youth





One example of [how I modeled empathy happened] when a student began laughing at a student who missed a goal and slipped on the grass. I was able to explain and discuss that sometimes in soccer they will see this happen. I asked him why he laughed and that if he knew if he was ok. The student then thought about it and said he did not realize that he could have been hurt. He then approached the student that fell and apologized for laughing and asked if he was ok. After I would see this student help students get up or ask if they were ok. It's amazing when you see that and others catch on to that too. He became a model student for that."



GIRLS ON THE RUN INTERNATIONAL

The Impact of an intentional Girls on the Run curriculum taught by trained coaches

99%

of participants felt that their Girls on the Run coaches cared about them and listened to them when they talked with them

86%

of caregivers said that Girls on the Run helped their children gain skills to help them manage stress 93%

as a coach, I felt I was making a difference in participants' lives

98%

as a coach, I **formed positive relationships** with the participants on my team

97%

of participants said they learned critical life skills

44

"My daughter loves that GOTR is her time and her space. There is a personal connection between the girls and their coaches, which is essential to each girl feeling like an individual and feeling empowered. Thanks to Girls on the Run, my daughter is as happy and goofy and loud and fun as I have ever seen her; she can truly do her thing and be herself."

^{*} From Weiss, et al., 2020 and Weiss, Kipp, and Riley, 2023



As many organizations struggle to recruit and retain coaches, preliminary findings from the MCC Coach Perception Survey suggest that participation in training can be a positive influence on coach retention (American Institutes for Research, 2024).

55%

report training positively influenced their decision to coach again in the future

43%

of respondents already confirmed to coach again 41%

of respondents will likely coach again



Partner examples of community and organizational influences

Drawn from evaluations of each training, the following partner examples reveal wider effects of coach training on the community, including the influence on the coaching experience, fun in coaching, intentions to return, and the perceived value of training.



COACH UP! WASHINGTON

Washington high school coaches' views of the impact of *Foundations of Coaching* on the wider coaching community





As a long-term educator, some of this seemed pretty basic to me – but that said, from what I've seen from the coaching domain, I know this is really needed work. I especially appreciate the holistic focus – sometimes adults forget how much is going on in adolescent lives – and we risk treating them as "widgets" in a team atmosphere when this happens. Recent events related to hazing on teams in my community reinforce how negative the social atmosphere can be in athletics, so it is imperative that we continue to focus on social development and building belonging and acceptance through sport."



LITTLE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

Effects of Diamond Leader Training on youth baseball coaches' demand for training

90%

of coaches were likely or very likely to recommend this training to other youth coaches **150**

coaches now complete the Diamond Leader Training per day, on average 50%

of those who have completed this training coach in one or more additional sports outside of Little League – a signal of the widespread effect of the training to other sports and communities



POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE (PCA)

Perceived impact of coach training on the organization and environment as a whole

80%

of leaders believe that people in their athletic program are having more fun

100%

of leaders say their coaches are focusing more on using sports to teach life **78**%

of coaches say their **organization's environment is more positive**

73%

of coaches are having more fun coaching





GIRLS ON THE RUN INTERNATIONAL

Trained coaches felt supported, leading to positive coaching experiences

90%

of coaches felt they had adequate training and were informed and supported throughout the season 83%

of coaches said it was likely they will return as a Girls on the Run Coach FUN

was the most frequently used word that coaches used to describe their experience (15% of all responses), followed by REWARDING, POSITIVE and INSPIRING.



46

"The **impact of coach training** is felt when coaches return season after season as well as when coaches share in the community what a rewarding time they had as a coach with Girls on the Run."

- Council Leader







USA FENCING, USA TRIATHLON, USA WEIGHTLIFTING

Coaches value connections made with other coaches and being exposed to new perspectives during the Youth Sport Coach Fellowship





No matter the sport, coaches have universal challenges and joys and I loved being able to talk with coaches in various sports as that's not something I've been able to do before. I learned so much from exploring issues in that setting"



"This stuff isn't really taught in any of the other education I've taken. I never really thought about my coaching philosophy before. I have gained a lot of insights from both the modules and the other coaches on the calls. What I thought was most fun was hearing from coaches in other sports throughout our calls. I never got other perspectives and realized some of the similarities across sports."





38M

youth play sports. All of their coaches should be trained.

Coaches can make or break the sports experience for kids, but many feel unprepared to meet the diverse, evolving needs of the youth they coach. To create a positive environment that helps kids get the most out of sport, coaches must be trained in youth development. We are committed to a system of accessible, evidence-based training for coaches that will lead to more youth enjoyment, learning, growth and a desire for continued participation in sports and physical activity.

Here's what you can do:

Coaches

Get Trained

- Complete youth development-focused training
- Coach with organizations that provide and/ or require training in youth development
- Seek out new training opportunities that address key youth development needs

FAMILY & CAREGIVERS

Seek Trained Coaches

- Sign up for programs that provide and/ or require coach training in youth development
- Advocate for coach training within your community sports programs and organizations
- Share new training opportunities with your community sports leaders

PROGRAMS & ORGANIZATIONS

Provide Training

- Provide and/or require training for your coaches that focuses on youth needs
- Seek out training opportunities for the coaches in your network or programs
- Advocate for coach training across your region, sport, and/or networks

FUNDERS

Support Training Efforts

- · Invest in sports programs and organizations that prioritize evidencebased coach training focused on youth development needs
- Invest in coach training organizations that provide evidence-based programs focused on youth needs

Get Involved

Million Coaches Challenge:

Equipping a generation of coaches to help youth thrive

LEARN more about the MCC partners: millioncoaches.org **READ** the MCC belief statement.

FOLLOW the movement to train 1M coaches



@MillionCoaches in @million-coaches-challenge

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

What training are you doing? Share with us @MillionCoaches #millioncoacheschallenge

ABOUT THIS STATEMENT

The purpose of this statement is to provide examples of the potential outcomes that are possible through coach training in youth development. The authors of this statement drew on MCC partner program evaluations as the primary source of data to represent the myriad potential benefits for coaches, youth, communities, and organizations. In addition, the authors leveraged preliminary findings from the *MCC Coach Perception*Survey that is part of an ongoing implementation study of the MCC.

MCC Partner Program Evaluations

As part of their commitment to program quality, MCC partner organizations engage in active monitoring and evaluation of their respective training programs. Methods of evaluation differ by partner and include a range of quantitative and qualitative material from pre- and post-training data collection efforts. Partners shared evaluation material with the statement authors, who reviewed and organized material according to five areas of focus.

MCC Coach Perception Survey

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is leading a multiyear, mixed-methods implementation study of the Million Coaches Challenge. The goal of the implementation study is to document the MCC partners' individual and collective efforts to develop and deliver trainings that bolster coach knowledge, skills, and practice in youth development and skill-building techniques. The study methodology includes an extensive document review of partner training materials, ongoing interviews with partners, descriptive analysis of coach training participation and demographic data, and administration of the MCC Coach Perception Survey. The MCC Coach Perception Survey is designed to capture coach perceptions of whether and how the training influenced coach and athlete outcomes including the development of knowledge, skills, changes in practice, retention, and more. The MCC Coach Perception Survey is not an outcome measure. Findings from the MCC Implementation Study will be released in late 2024/early 2025.

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