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OIG FINDS NORDC FAILED TO OBTAIN BACKGROUND CHECKS ON YOUTH COACHES, LACKS SUFFICIENT PROCESSES FOR VETTING COACHES

The New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a public letter today (June 4) finding serious deficiencies in the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC)'s policies and practices for vetting youth sports coaches. The letter stemmed from a larger, ongoing OIG evaluation related to NORDC policies and procedures for youth sports.

In a review of coaching applications for 2025, the OIG found that NORDC failed to obtain background checks for nearly half of volunteer youth sports coaches. The OIG also found that NORDC lacked adequate procedures for evaluating and documenting background checks once processed, and relied on background checks that lacked key information.

The OIG released today's letter to urge NORDC to immediately address weaknesses in its policies and procedures for collecting, processing, evaluating, and recording background information about volunteers involved with youth athletics.

In its review, OIG evaluators found the following:

- **NORDC could not provide an accurate list of authorized youth sports coaches.** An authorized NORDC administrator informed the OIG that the organization did not maintain records of the individuals to whom it provided coach ID cards and was "unable to generate a comprehensive list of recognized coaches for 2025."
- **NORDC failed to consistently follow its own background check policy, with no checks on file for many youth sports coaches.** Out of 275 application files, the OIG selected a random sample of 50 volunteer coaching applications and found that NORDC's files lacked background checks for 46% of the sample. Of the 46% of individuals lacking background checks, more than a third had completed a background authorization form, but the checks were not processed, violating NORDC policy.
- **NORDC lacked adequate procedures for evaluating and documenting background check results and relied on background checks that lacked key information.** While the volunteer coach application included guidelines for screening background checks, the background checks obtained by NORDC lacked the information needed to verify that applicants had no disqualifying criminal history or pending charges. The checks were largely limited to Orleans Parish and included little information on the disposition of criminal charges listed. Although NORDC administrators said coaches were required to provide proof of disposition for charges with unclear outcomes, and that proof should be added to the coach's file, the OIG found no additional documentation regarding the disposition of a charge in any of the 275 files. Further, NORDC's

files for multiple active coaches were missing final dispositions for criminal offenses that should have disqualified them according to NORDC's application forms.

As a result of these findings, the OIG made the following recommendations:

- NORDC should maintain an accurate roster of coaches in an electronic format that explicitly identifies which coaching applications are approved, shows when individuals receive NORDC coach IDs, and is easily accessible by all relevant staff members.
- NORDC should fully commit to actually processing background check authorizations for all coaches. The organization should implement methods to ensure that each coach has an annual background check on file, with all required documentation, before an ID badge is issued.
- NORDC should adopt and implement formal, written policies and procedures for evaluating background checks of prospective coaches. These should include clear disqualification criteria and guidelines for documenting when charges have been dropped.
- NORDC should make every effort to obtain nationwide background checks that provide accurate dispositions for as many cases as possible.

The OIG recently alerted NORDC to the presence of two active coaches who should not be eligible to coach, and NORDC leadership this week took steps to remove those coaches from their positions. While acknowledging these steps, the OIG highly recommends that NORDC take additional action immediately to ensure the safety of local youth.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

“NORDC's failure to properly document and screen youth sports coaches, despite policies requiring annual background checks, is a serious public safety issue impacting some of our most vulnerable citizens, our children. As we enter the summer season, it is critical that NORDC immediately correct these significant gaps in its approval process. While stronger background checks may require additional resources, the investment is essential to protecting young people from potential harm and ensuring accountability in programs that serve them.”

To view the OIG's letter, visit NolaOIG.gov.

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