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**OIG FINDS NORDC LACKS SUFFICIENT OVERSIGHT OF BOOSTER CLUBS, FEES,
AND SECURITY FOR YOUTH ATHLETICS**

The New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) today (Sept. 22) released a report on the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC)'s policies and practices for managing youth athletics teams.

The evaluation examined how NORDC oversees youth sports teams, manages registration fees, enforces safety and conduct policies, and monitors booster clubs and fundraising activities.

NORDC comprises a major investment for New Orleans, with \$19.4 million in City funds allocated to NORDC in 2025 alone. The organization provides valuable recreational opportunities for residents, including thousands of our city's youth. However, the OIG found that NORDC's oversight systems and enforcement practices require significant improvement to ensure equitable access, financial accountability, and safe environments for all participants.

What the OIG Found:

Insufficient Oversight of Booster Clubs

The OIG found that NORDC could not easily or consistently identify all active booster clubs, did not maintain reliable records of booster clubs, and did not consistently enforce its own booster club policies. Though NORDC has strong written policies for booster clubs, staff could not agree on how many booster clubs were operating, and at least one club was selling concessions and collecting funds on behalf of NORDC without sufficient oversight. This lack of oversight created risks around money handling, food safety, and public trust.

Lack of Formal Team Management Policies

NORDC's team-management policies are designed around booster clubs. Yet 95% of NORDC's active parks operate without booster clubs, and NORDC lacked adequate plans for attracting and growing booster clubs. NORDC has no written policies guiding team management in the absence of booster clubs, leaving most coaches to rely on informal, inconsistent practices to collect fees, manage funds, and address financial hardship among players. Some coaches reported believing they were supposed to turn children away due to inability to pay, contrary to the unwritten policy described by NORDC's leadership. Because NORDC did not clearly communicate its informal policy on financial hardship, some children may have missed out on valuable athletics opportunities. The absence of clear rules also led to unauthorized fundraising and concession sales. While the OIG did not find evidence of misuse of booster club funds, the lack of oversight increased the risk of misuse.

Inconsistent Collection of Registration Fees

NORDC did not collect registration fees in accordance with the amounts set forth in City Code, which varied based on family income. Instead, NORDC instituted a significantly lower registration fee of \$5 for all youth athletes, but did not consistently collect those fees. Data provided by NORDC showed that 55% of teams did not submit registration fees in 2024. That number grew to 75% of teams for the first half of 2025. OIG evaluators found that if NORDC had collected fees in accordance with the City Code in 2025, the organization could have raised \$150,000 for youth sports programming in that year alone.

At the same time, NORDC allowed coaches to charge additional team fees as high as parents were willing to pay, with some charging upwards of \$150, without oversight. The significant differences in registration fees between teams led to disparities on the field, discouraged participation, and opened opportunities for inadvertent misuse of team funds.

Gaps in Enforcement of Safety and Conduct Policies

NORDC failed to enforce its own policies for volunteer coach background checks and spectator behavior, resulting in some participants feeling unsafe at games and NORDC being unable to verify that the coaches entrusted with mentoring young athletes had not been convicted of violent crimes. Earlier this year, the OIG released a public letter urging NORDC to immediately address weaknesses in its policies and procedures related to background checks for volunteer coaches for youth athletics.

What the OIG Recommended:

To ensure that youth sports teams are properly managed and resources invested in youth athletics are appropriately spent, NORDC should:

- Develop systems for enforcing booster club policies, assign booster club oversight tasks to personnel with appropriate knowledge and experience, and train staff to enforce booster club policies.
- Develop effective strategies and written guidelines for recruiting new booster clubs and managing youth sports at playgrounds where no booster clubs exist.
- Establish clear and enforceable fees, centrally collect a single registration fee for all teams, and adopt an electronic payment process.
- Address pervasive deficiencies in its background check practices, create formal security protocols, and work with the City to explore ways to expand options for game security.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

“NORDC provides highly beneficial athletic and recreational opportunities to our city’s youth and their entire communities. Participation in athletics and other physical activities is associated with a myriad of physical and mental benefits, as well as overall improvements in well-being and quality of life. Addressing the issues outlined in our evaluation will help ensure NORDC can provide safe, equitable, high-quality programming for youth across New Orleans.”

To view the OIG’s letter, visit nolaoig.gov.

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