

Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League

Coaches & team organizers road map

Checklists and links!

So, you want to be a NICA Maryland coach or start a team? We created this document to guide coaches and teams who are getting started with the Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League (MICL). It lays out the steps you should be completing as you work towards becoming a coach, helping to start a team, or planning to work with student-athletes in the league. These steps include useful links to additional resources and presentations, and explanations of each task. They are in suggested order - but do not have to be completed in the order in which they are presented. These steps are the nuts and bolts of the “how” - but you should also have a strong sense of “why” you want to be a NICA coach. **The “why” is most important to your success as a coach and the success of the student-athletes you will be involved with.**

Your MICL leadership is here to help!! Please use us as a resource and reach out with questions as you proceed. Thank you for your interest in helping to get more kids on bikes across Maryland!

1. Register on the Maryland PitZone website (registration resets and opens each Spring - for 2022 3/1 for coaches and 4/1 for student-athletes)

- a. PitZone is our MICL registration platform and is where all coaches, student-athletes, ride leaders, and team volunteers register. Coaches and student-athletes use PitZone to pay fees, upload proof of training (such as training completion certificates, first aid and leader summit certificates, etc), and track continuing education units and fieldwork hours. More information on all these requirements can be found at the national site under [Coach Licensing](#) Pit Zone “resets” and opens for new registrations in early Spring each year.
- b. There are two ways to get onto PitZone:
 - i. IF YOU ARE JOINING AN EXISTING TEAM - reach out to the team’s Team Director or Head Coach and they will be able to send you an invite to register with the team. (after March 1)
 1. Coaches can be invited to as many teams as they want using the same email address. Make sure they use the same email address for each invite, then they can use a single Pit Zone login to manage all their coach profiles. They will need to complete “registration” for each team separately, but Pit Zone will autofill all the data they enter after the first one so it will literally take a minute to complete. Also, they won’t have to duplicate their background

check or coach fees. This will allow coaches to be affiliated with more than one team and act as “floating coaches” who may work with multiple teams.

- ii. IF YOU ARE STARTING A NEW TEAM - simply email a MICL league director and request an invitation (after March 1) - you'll get a link by email and click the link to begin the process - it's that easy! Email either [Jon Posner](#) or [Fred Powell](#) to request your PitZone invitation

1. The person setting up the team in PitZone will become the Team Director by default - don't worry! All this means is that you are the point person for making sure the team is set up in PitZone and ensuring that team fees are paid. You can change the team director role to another person - this step is explained on the [PitZone FAQ page](#) .

2. Become a level 1 MICL coach (Attn - As of April 1 2019, LITMOS learning management software is used for coach licensing. This process is smooth and easy to follow. The link to your LITMOS access is through your page on Pit Zone)

- a. There are a few steps to this, but it all can be done in about three hours.

*First, follow the [PitZone](#) link to coach training from Pit Zone using the “Access Coach Courses” button and complete level one license training.

*Next, complete the Concussion Awareness training and complete the quiz

*Next, complete the background check by clicking the link through PitZone

*Almost there - one more requirement is the “NICA Student-athlete Coaching Philosophy” video and quiz

*After that, just sign the pledge and pay the required fees in PitZone.

You are now a full fledged level 1 volunteer, ready to be a coach, a ride leader, or just a basic volunteer, and fully insured. [Here is a useful video](#) explaining how to navigate the PitZone from a coaches or parents perspective. [Here is the PitZone FAQ's page](#) from the national NICA site.

Note that each second year team must have at least one level II coach on their roster. Third year teams need a level III. Should be pointed out that more than 30 coaches reached level II by the end of season one, so it is very do-able. First year teams only need a level I coach.

3. Recruit some other adult coaches/volunteers

- a. By now you have a solid understanding of the risk management practices of NICA and can talk a bit about the programming. You should spend a little time working on networking with other interested adults and recruiting some help to run the team. Many hands makes for easier work! Make sure you communicate clearly what you are asking for - there is no minimum time requirement, but you want people who will follow through on their commitment to a coaching role. It is more important to find a reliable, trustworthy, and solid role model than it is to find a great mountain biker. Remember this is about youth development! You can use [this “Call to Action”](#) and these videos ([1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)) ([new videos here!](#)) to help you get your message across! Some of the roles you would like people to commit to include being ride leaders at practices and on group rides, helping to coordinate carpooling for rides and races, managing fundraising for the team, and anything else you might want to delegate.

4. Get together and figure out the “vision” for the team

- a. Hopefully you have identified some other adults interested in helping out in a coaching capacity. Meet for an informal ride, or go out for coffee or lunch, or just grab a drink out together and talk about what you want the team to look like, what the overall vision or concept is. Put some notes down on paper. You will need to start defining your team culture from the first time you get the kids together, so have a plan going into it. **The most successful teams put an emphasis on participation, camaraderie, and group goals, not performance or individual achievement.**
- b. One of the decisions to make during this step is **whether you will be a school based team or a composite team**. We encourage composite teams to form because they allow more resource sharing and group learning. Then when teams grow large enough, it is easier for them to split into school based teams because everyone has had the experience of working in their roles for a season or two already. If there is a composite team already near you, we suggest the best path is to join them for a year or two to “incubate”, then spin off a newwhen possible. For composite teams that have 5 or more riders from a single school - those riders will be scored separately. These riders may still function as a part of the composite team, they are only separated for scoring purposes.

5. Develop a practice plan

- a. Work on a schedule for your team - **don’t forget to track your hours anytime you are working with your student-athletes!**
 - i. Before July 1 (preseason), teams are limited to 6 practices or get-togethers. These count towards of the attending coaches’ 20 hours of field work (moving you all closer to becoming a Level 2 & 3 Coach) and these events can include: flat tire repair classes, team building social functions, easy group rides on pathway systems, fundamental skills practices (as learned in On-the-Bike Skills 101), or even just information meetings for students and parents that include discussion of future practice venues and times. We don’t recommend going on group trail rides yet - you will want time to thoroughly assess your student-athletes and get to know each of them personally.
 1. For more ideas, check out: [Preseason Activities - examples](#)
 - ii. After July 1, teams should plan to start getting together more regularly and holding on-the-bike practices. Practices can be made up of stretching, strength work, fundamental drills, short course drills in a field, and “set plays” like group starts, cornering drills, and bike riding skills games. If you have reached around 20 hours of fieldwork with your student-athletes, start thinking about leading some introductory trail rides. Remember to never take a group on trails you haven’t ridden multiple times yourself so that you know what to expect and are aware of emergency access points and turnaround/bailout options.
 1. For more practice ideas and activities: [MICL Coaching Resource doc](#)
 2. Here is our list of [drills and field games](#)

6. Begin recruiting interested kids and their parents

- a. You can use [this program overview](#) and our [annual report](#) to communicate to parents and kids, and [here is a folder with some poster and flyer templates](#) - please make a copy of the item and then modify it or customize it, but leave the originals intact for others to use.

- b. [Here are some links](#) helpful for holding a parent/student interest meeting and you can use [these videos and media](#) bits to help generate excitement.
- c. [Here is a version of a team presentation deck](#) for the MD league - make a copy for yourself and adapt it to your needs.
- d. League leadership will come out to your community and hold an interest meeting - reach out and ask! We can meet with your prospective coaches and team leaders to talk a little strategy and give some key insights, then we can hold a wider interest meeting for the community.
- e. Remember that NICA is not talent development - it is the *point of entry* for kids to find mountain biking and provides *opportunities for developing youth* that good coaches can make the most of. This should be central to your recruiting message!

7. Identify the roles and duties for your team, and ask parents to get involved - also, set up communication

- a. [Check out this presentation](#) on getting parents involved and building team community
- b. Consider [this document about team roles](#)
- c. Think about [Team Snap](#) or [TEAM App](#) for setting up a way to communicate with your team. Make sure that parents are included in communications too. Creating a team facebook page or instagram account is another great way to build community & team identity and keep people in touch with one another.

8. Develop a fundraising plan

- a. [Link to fundraising presentation](#)
- b. [Guide to opening a team checking account](#)
- c. Build a relationship with your local bike shop - their support may not come in the way of financial support, but they may be able to connect you with customers who own/work for local businesses that may want to sponsor your team!
 - i. Ask if you can leave a team flyer or info sheet for customers to take, or for employees to reference when working with families with middle school/high school students or customers who may be interested in sponsoring the team
- d. Identify the costs associated for the student-athlete and for the team. Build a budget and then breakdown your sponsorship levels so that each sponsorship level can be easily tied to actual costs for the student or the team.
 - i. Example: If it costs a student \$85 to participate on a MICL team, and the team has 10 students - perhaps a sponsorship level could be for \$850 to ensure that every student can be part of the team. If you want to support students who want to race, each race costs \$40 (4 races x \$40 x 10) so a sponsorship level at \$1600 would cover the entry fee for all students to race at every MICL event, etc
- e. Develop a proposal that provides information about the team, costs associated, and the varying sponsorship levels with exactly what the sponsors will get in return (logo placement on a jersey or banner, social media shout outs, etc)

9. Think about your team identity and jersey design

- a. We have some custom clothing partners!
 - i. [Hill Killer](#) - Maryland based cycling apparel and custom clothing - support these guys, they're a MD league sponsor and local to the Old Line State!

- ii. [Podiumwear](#) - National NICA partner and provider for hundreds of NICA teams
- iii. Other teams have had success with [Athlos](#), another local custom cycling apparel company
- b. Recruit the student-athletes for logo ideas, jersey designs, and additional items to have branded with your team identity. Knit caps, ball caps, socks, wristbands, lanyards, hoodies, riding gloves, let your imagination go wild.

10. Identify interested kids with equipment needs

- a. You will see the [deals offered in PitZone](#) - they are for the student-athletes, coaches, and team volunteers only please!
- b. Use your local bike shops as a resource - they would love to earn your business and be affiliated with youth teams!
- c. MICL has limited resources to match kids in need with low-cost bikes, [contact us directly](#) if you would like help with this.
- d. Check out the [MICL garage sale facebook page](#) - great place to buy/sell stuff for kids in the league (this page was not started and is not managed by the league)

Raise your arms in victory - you have started a youth mountain biking club or team in the Maryland Interscholastic Cycling League!

Other things to keep in mind:

Take lots of photos! You will want to document the birth of the team and the progress of your student-athletes, lots of photos will help you do this and they'll come in handy for website, social media, end of year review, passing the "best of" to MICL to use, etc, etc. Please share the email address miclpics@gmail.com for people to send photos to so we can collect them for the whole league.

This Coaches Road Map guide will get you started and provides lots of good tools.

However, here is our caveat paragraph, be aware that this is a project requiring a certain level of commitment (that can vary widely and it is up to you) and there is continued input required with items such as practice planning and injury reporting for the NICA safety study, registering pre-season events and other team activities, maintaining coaching certifications (good for 2 years) or pursuing higher coach licensing, first aid certifications, etc.

All of these things are possible for someone from any background, and your MD league is here to help, and the payoff will be huge, but we want to make sure that folks understand the commitment being asked of them. **The most important thing is establishing trusted relationships with the student-athletes, and honoring the commitment to showing up for them is critical.**

Other useful links!

[Pre-Season Activity Approval Form](#)

[EAP Template](#) for 2022

[Folder of existing EAP's](#)- there may already be one written for your planned venue! If you create one, please consider uploading a copy here.

[NICA rulebook](#)

[NICA/MICL Insurance FAQ document](#) (updated April 2021)

[MICL Master Planning and Execution Spreadsheet](#) (make a copy and use for your team)

[Links to Positive Coaching Alliance resources](#)

[Links to True Sport youth coaching resources](#)

[MICL list of NICA documents and resources](#) (lots of example items in here)

[Even more MICL coaches resources, example docs, and helpful tips](#)

For more information on NICA First Aid Requirements, please visit the [NICA First Aid Webpage](#).

[MICL ideas for practice activities, off the bike ideas, drills, games, etc](#)