STAGE-BY-STAGE RECRUITING CHECKLIST

A guide to supporting your athlete through every stage of the recruiting journey.

NCSA COLLEGE RECRUITING | IMG ACADEMY

The Foundational Stage: Age 10-12

This stage is about fun, curiosity, and healthy habits. Encourage joy, exploration, and routines like sleep, nutrition, and rest.

- [ ] Let your athlete try different sports and positions.
- [ ] Avoid putting pressure on them to perform.
- [ ] Prioritize fun, effort, and teamwork over winning.
- [ ] Talk about how sport makes them feel.
- [ ] Encourage 9–12 hours of sleep.
- [ ] Help them stick to a consistent bedtime.
- [ ] Model healthy meals by building balanced plates at home.
- [ ] Encourage them to drink water regularly to stay hydrated.
- [ ] Keep college talk to a minimum.

The Exploration Stage: Age 13-14

This stage is about self-discovery, early goals, and awareness. Support exploration and keep conversations open about school, sport, and their future.

- [ ] Ask open-ended questions about what they enjoy and where they want to grow.
- [ ] Encourage them to start setting simple academic and athletic goals.
- [ ] Help them track grades and understand why academics matter for recruitment.
- [ ] Introduce NCAA/NAIA/JUCO core course and eligibility requirements.
- [ ] Collect game footage to build confidence and show progress.
- [ ] Attend low-pressure camps or clinics.
- [ ] Talk about what they're looking for in a future college experience.
- [ ] Keep communication supportive, not pushy.

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The Exposure Preparation Stage: Age 15-16

This is when your athlete takes the lead and ramps up their recruiting efforts. Your role is to support, not steer.

- [ ] Let your athlete build their own list of potential schools.
- [ ] Help them consider school size, location, major, and schedule structure.
- [ ] Encourage them to create highlight and skills videos.
- [ ] Support them in building a strong online presence (but don't manage it for them).
- [ ] Help them research camps, showcases, and tournaments that match their level.
- [ ] Encourage them to start emailing coaches directly.
- [ ] Offer to review emails or prep for calls (only if they ask).
- [ ] Talk about maintaining eligibility (GPA, coursework, test scores).
- [ ] Register for the NCAA or NAIA Eligibility Center.
- [ ] Remind them that recruiting is a long game, and consistency matters.

The Decision Stage: Age 17-19

This stage is about making real decisions and preparing for college. Your athlete leads; your role is to guide, support, and keep them grounded.

- [ ] Let your athlete lead calls, emails, and updates with coaches.
- [ ] Help them track communication.
- [ ] Schedule and plan for official or unofficial campus visits.
- [ ] Talk through the different funding options.
- [ ] Compare offers based on academic, sport, and personal fit.
- [ ] Support them in submitting applications, transcripts, and test scores on time.
- [ ] Double-check eligibility is finalized with the NCAA or NAIA Eligibility Center.
- [ ] Talk about what college life will actually look like.
- [ ] Give them opportunities to practice independence.
- [ ] Remind them you're in their corner, but they're ready to take the wheel.

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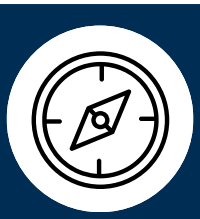

Across All Stages

No matter where your athlete is on their recruiting journey, these actions will always apply.

- [ ] Keep communication supportive, not pressure-filled.
- [ ] Avoid constant performance talk.
- [ ] Ask how they're *feeling*, not just how they're playing.
- [ ] Support independence by stepping back a little more each year.
- [ ] Be in their corner, no matter what.
- [ ] Be a role model for balance, resilience, and consistency.

REMEMBER

In the early stages, you'll be more hands-on, but as they grow, you can start to hand over the reins.

Recruiting isn't just about getting into college; it's about preparing them to thrive once they're there.