



2024 – 2025 MSAA CHEERLEADING RULES & REGULATIONS

MSAA
33 Forge Parkway
Franklin, MA 02038

Phone: 508-541-7997
Fax: 508-541-9802
Web: www.msaa.net
Email: msaa@msaa.net

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

MSAA Mission

Serving the needs of elementary level, middle level and high school administrators of the Massachusetts School Administrators' Association to support and promote quality educational opportunities for elementary, middle and high school students throughout Massachusetts by:

- Providing a voice for educational leaders in the state
- Offering quality professional development for Association members and their staffs
- Encouraging collaboration among members through networking
- Training future school leaders
- Organizing and facilitating statewide student activities such as Student Council, National Honor Society and Cheerleading
- Acting as an ongoing provider of pertinent and timely information to our members
- Maximizing the number of active Association members
- Collaborating with other educational leadership groups

COACHES' CODE OF ETHICS

Each high school coach is first a TEACHER. The student-athlete is participating within the school's activity program because he or she desires to do so. Consequently, that student is often more attentive to a coach's lessons than to those offered by teachers in required courses.

The function of an interscholastic coach is to educate students in "LIFE LESSONS," through their participation in educational athletics. Every student athlete should be treated as though they were the coach's own children. Their welfare must be uppermost at all times. The following abridged guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the National Federation Interscholastic Coaches Association Board of Directors.

1. The coach must be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, either for good or bad, in the education of the student athlete and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest desirable ideals of character.
2. In all personal contact with student athletes, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
3. The coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse, and under no circumstances should authorize their use.
4. The coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.
5. The coach shall be thoroughly acquainted with the contest rules and is responsible for their interpretation to team members. The spirit and letter of rules should be regarded as mutual agreements. The coach shall not try to seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.
6. Coaches shall actively use their influence to enhance sportsmanship in the broadest possible manner.
7. Contest officials shall have the respect and support of the coach. The coach shall not indulge in conduct, which will incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.
8. A coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student athletes special consideration.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

1. **School Sponsored Team:**

A school team must be sponsored by and under the control of the school committee and registered with the MSAA through an annual registration process. A school team must have: a coach(es) appointed by the principal; a regular practice schedule through the season; a meaningful schedule of contests through the season defined for that sport; and school uniforms.

Teams not registered with the Association are not eligible for tournament participation. All school teams must be registered with the Association during the annual Student Activities Registration renewal process.

2. **Bona Fide Team Member:**

A bona fide member of the school team is a student who is consistently present for, and actively participates in, all high school team sessions (e.g. practices, tryouts, competitions). Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a high school practice or competition in order to participate in a non-school athletic activity/event

First Offense: Student-athlete is suspended for one (1) contest and shall not participate in the next scheduled interscholastic competition that is part of their regular season schedule or in tournament play. Second Offense: Student-athlete is suspended for an additional 25% of the season, and is ineligible for tournament play immediately upon confirmation of the violation.

Waivers will be considered on an individual basis on the merits of each case. A waiver request must be submitted in writing to the MSAA before the student may participate in the non-school event or activity. Waivers will be approved or denied within two weeks of the request, and the coach/athletic director or principal will be notified in writing.

3. **Subsidizing Out-Of-Season Activities**

A school or a member of that school's coaching staff may not subsidize or support students who might attend any sports-related activity outside of the authorized seasonal limits for that sport. In addition, a coach may not provide transportation for candidates of his/her team to an out-of-season athletic activity/camp.

A. Student participation in out-of-season activities may be funded by booster clubs or organizations if approved by the school administration.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

- B. Students may not wear school uniforms, or be identified as a school team, out-of-season and/or during non-school events.
- C. Schools may issue equipment (but not uniforms) during the out-of-season period, but school districts should review any liability issues that could arise from such issuance.

4. **Gender and Participation**

- A. No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate in any student activity because of gender. A school may establish separate teams for males and females for interscholastic competition on a team provided that teams receive equal instruction, training, coaching, access to available facilities, equipment, opportunities to practice and compete.
- B. A student shall not be excluded from participation on a gender-specific team that is consistent with the student's bona fide gender identity.
- C. When a school district submits a roster to the MSAA, it is verifying that it has determined that the students listed on a gender-specific team are eligible to participate either based on the gender listed on their official birth certificate or based on their bona fide gender identity and that no students are included on the roster solely for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage in competition. The MSAA shall defer to the determination of the student and the student's school regarding gender classification.
- D. Nothing in this policy shall be read to entitle a student to selection of any particular team or to permit a student to transfer from one gender-specific team to another team of a different gender during a single sports season.

5. **Private Promoters and Sponsors**

In any activity involving one or more MSAA members, schools should not endorse any private promotion and/or sponsorship, which might result in the exploitation of students or direct financial gain to the promoter or sponsor.

Schools should refer to the MSAA Office -- and when appropriate to the Board of Directors -- all outside financial offers for supporting athletic programs among several school districts.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

6. Adult Representation:

The principal, headmaster, or director of the school in all cases is responsible to the Association for the acts of school teams and other school organizations. All teams and individual participants must have adult representation present and responsible for them at all times. Such adult representation must be an employee or a designated representative of the school district. If the representative is not the coach of record, then the designee must provide written introduction on school letterhead, signed by the principal, or the student(s) will not be permitted to participate.

7. Cheerleading Safety:

A. Each school must employ a cheerleading coach that is qualified and trained in cheerleading safety. If the administrator finds it necessary to hire a coach that is untrained, training should be provided before the team performs stunts or tumbling. All Cheerleading coaches must meet the same requirements set for other coaches in the school system.

B. All coaches hired prior to August 1, 1998, are exempt from taking the Fundamentals of Coaching Course. Coaches hired after August 1, 1998 but before July 1, 2005 must complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course with the exception of Certified Massachusetts teachers

All coaches (stipend or volunteer) first serving as an interscholastic coach after July 1, 2005 must complete the National Federation of High Schools, NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course taught by an MIAA/MSAA Instructor, (must be passed prior to coaching a second year) and the NFHS Sports First Aid course (must be passed prior to coaching a third year). INCLUDING CERTIFIED TEACHERS.

Commented [JC1]: Double check with MIAA

C. All MSAA member school coaches (paid or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program, prior to the start of their season.

D. Cheerleading teams should be provided the assistance of all school medical personnel and/or athletic trainers/Certified Athletic Trainer. Cheerleading coaches should be given an equal amount of practice time in a safe environment conducive with cheerleading activity. Cheerleading coaches should be equipped with a team medical kit, which is readily available to them at all practices,

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

games and MSAA sanctioned competitions. MSAA recommends that all cheerleading coaches have some training in First Aid and CPR. Cheerleading mats must be provided to all cheerleading teams for practice and/or competition.

8. **Parental Permission:**

Principals should secure from each athlete's parent written consent to participate in interscholastic sports. Eligibility rules and an assumption of risk statement should be part of this form. Some sports may require individual waivers.

9. **Physical Examination:**

All students must pass a physical examination prior to participation in High School Athletics. A physical exam covers the student for 13 months from the exam date. A student's eligibility will terminate once a physical has reached the 13 month limit.

Physical examinations must be performed by a duly registered Licensed Physician, Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner.

All MSAA member school coaches (paid or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program, prior to the start of their season.

All MSAA member school Athletic Directors and Athletic Trainers are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other recognized education program, prior to the start of their season.

All students are required to take the on-line National Federation Concussion Course or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program following regulations as put forth by the Department of Public Health in regards to the Concussion Law.

PENALTY: A student in violation shall be suspended for the number of contests in which they participated without a proper physical. Teams do not have to forfeit these contests.

Each school's medical person/staff is responsible for the members of that team. These individuals annually must have taken, and been certified in, the NFHS on-line Concussion Course or other recognized education program. In the event of injury, that medical person/staff will make the final judgment as to whether a student-athlete may return to play. Whenever a medical person is on duty at an athletic

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

event, they shall be responsible for both teams (unless the other team has its own medical person present). When a physician is not present at an athletic event, a licensed/certified athletic trainer, if available, shall be considered the higher medical authority on-site when an EMS is providing medical coverage at the same event. Their judgment will be final. Physical disqualification by the medical provider renders the student ineligible. The Penalty for playing an ineligible student is forfeiture.

Medical Alert Bracelets/Anklets are approved for wearing in all sports, provided they are taped to the body and marked in red.

Any student-athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the practice or competition and must not return to practice or competition that day, and further shall not return to play until cleared (in writing to the Athletic Director) by an appropriate health-care professional (as determined by the Department of Public Health). Whenever it is decided to disqualify a student-athlete from further participation for a suspected concussion or other injury, the person making that decision must communicate about this matter with the injured athlete's coach and athletic director in a timely fashion.

10. **Return to Participation:**

- A. Subsequent to any serious injury, and prior to further participation in cheerleading, a cheerleader must receive a medical release from a physician. This form should be kept on file at the school.
- B. The assigned athletic trainer at all MSAA sanctioned events will have the final approval for participation of any injured cheerleader.

11. **School Attendance Policies:**

Each school should establish the same school/class requirements for cheerleaders that are set for other school activities provided that such requirements are not in conflict with MSAA Rules and regulations.

12. **Academic Requirements:**

Cheerleaders must follow the same requirements established for other school activities.

- A. Academic Awards: The MSAA will provide a certificate to the school for every varsity cheerleading team that achieves a minimum combined GPA of 3.00 (gold) or 2.50 (silver). The school

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

administrator in charge of cheerleading should contact the MSAA office regarding this award when applicable.

13. **Equipment:**

Each school is to provide their cheerleading team with a suitable practice facility and ascertain that all equipment is in good, safe condition and not defective in any way. Cheerleading mats must be provided for all cheerleading teams for practice/performing purposes.

14. **Transportation:**

Each school should transport its cheerleading team by common carrier such as bus lines, vans, or taxicabs. The school administrator should discourage the use of any private vehicle to transport cheerleaders to away games or competitions.

15. **Registering Cheerleading Team with MSAA:**

The school administrator is responsible for Membership Registration for both fall and winter cheerleading and Game Day teams. Teams not registered by the established deadline, September 30, will be assessed a \$100.00 late fee. Teams not registered with the MSAA will NOT be allowed entrance into any MSAA sanctioned competition. Each school having a fall and winter cheer team and/or game day team must register both teams at a fee of \$150.00/each.

A. Cheerleading and Game Day Team Roster: A current cheerleading team roster must be submitted to the MSAA by the established deadline for fall, November 1, and winter, March 1. Any change to the roster sheet must be reported to the MSAA. All participants must be listed on the roster (including alternates). Properly registered cheerleading teams are allowed to compete at MSAA sanctioned tournaments with a maximum of twenty (20) members per team. Participants not listed on the roster submitted to the MSAA are ineligible for competition. Only bona fide team members are allowed to enter the competition free of charge. In addition, up to three (3) coaches will be allowed into MSAA sanctioned tournaments at no cost. All other members/coaches (including junior varsity members) will be required to proceed to the spectator entrance and pay admission.

B. Changes to Roster: A varsity cheerleading/game day team roster may have an unlimited number of participants (including alternates). All participants must be listed on the roster submitted

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

to the MSAA. A team may not compete with a cheerleader that did not appear as a member on a previously submitted roster.

- C. Cheerleading/Game Day Team/Student Activities Dues: All competitive cheerleading teams must be members of the MSAA. Membership dues MUST be submitted to the MSAA Office by the established deadline of **September 30**. Any cheerleading/game day team that does not submit membership dues will not be sanctioned by the MSAA and will be ineligible to compete in MSAA sanctioned events.

16. **Student Eligibility: Baseline Eligibility Requirements**

For a student to practice with, or to represent a MSAA member school in athletic competition, the student must be duly enrolled in that school. Additionally, the student must be a candidate for that school's diploma, subject to the jurisdiction of that school's principal (i.e. the principal must have the authority to suspend the student from classes), and under the supervision of that school principal (i.e. the principal must have control and knowledge of the student's daily attendance and achievement).

An ineligible student who is duly enrolled in your school, may practice with team if approved by your school administration.

17. **Middle School Students on Senior High Teams:**

A middle school student is eligible to represent a senior high school on its teams only when the MSAA member high school includes those grades and they are under the direct jurisdiction and supervision of the high school principal.

Middle Level Waiver and Coops can be applied for using the same method as MIAA. Deadlines for cheer/dance/game day will be the same as those for each season in MIAA sports. No late entries will be accepted.

18. **Mixed Gender/Coed Teams:**

Mixed gender teams are those teams having both male and female participants. A minimum of one opposite gender participant defines a team as coed. No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate on the cheerleading team because of gender.

19. Divisional Placement/Enrollment:

Divisions will be re-aligned every two **(2) years** based on female enrollment. If schools combine for participation in cheerleading, the school with the higher enrollment will determine the divisional placement. Divisional placement of teams in open invitationals and/or league competitions may be different from those defined in the MSAA Divisional Chart. The MSAA uses its division alignments to determine which teams advance to regional tournaments and the state championship.

20. Application of Rules:

As a condition of a high school's participation in cheerleading under MSAA Rules and Regulations, prior to the first fall season contest, each principal or his/her designee must read entirely, understand, abide by and be prepared to enforce all MSAA cheerleading rules, regulations and policies. Further, the principal and his/her designee must assure that each member of the school cheerleading coaching staff is knowledgeable of and will enforce all requirements contained therein.

- A. MSAA rules apply to all member school teams and all individuals at all levels of competition. Teams must comply with safety standards in accordance with National Federation rules, guidelines and recommendations at all times and in all aspects of its program.
- B. In order to be eligible to represent a school in all cheerleading competitions, teams must conform to all MSAA rules.
- C. In the case of a postponed event, the eligibility of participants does not carry over. The students who participate in any event must meet all eligibility requirements on the date that the event is actually held.
- D. No special privileges, such as extra examinations, delayed marks, makeup opportunities or other opportunities not granted to every student in the school, are to be granted to cheerleaders.
- E. School cheerleading teams may not compete against teams that do not represent a school.
- F. A principal may not make a private agreement with another school or any other party to evade MSAA or National Federation Interscholastic Sprit Rules and Guidelines. Regarding the participation of an ineligible student, no ineligible high school student can participate in any cheerleading activity (games,

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

competition, etc.) regardless of any proposed agreement between school and competition host school. Schools hosting MSAA sanctioned open invitational competitions must follow the MSAA rules.

G. Neither schools nor school committees may make rules that are in any way less restrictive than those set by MSAA or National Federation.

H. A principal or his/her designee must report suspected rule violations to the principal of the school in question and to the MSAA Executive Officer in charge of cheerleading.

21. Violation of the Rules and Regulations:

A. A violation of any of the rules contained herein may result in one of the following actions being taken, including but not limited to:

- a. Written warning;
- b. Suspension from competition for the remainder of the school year;
- c. Suspension from competition for one season;
- d. Suspension from competition for one year.

22. Interruption of Performance

The Safety Judge or Head Judge reserves the right to stop a routine due to an obvious injury. In the event that an injury causes the team's routine to be interrupted during a Regional or State Competition, the team will have time to regroup before performing their routine again from the beginning. Judging will resume from the point at which the injury/interruption occurred as determined by the Head Judge. The routine must be performed full-out from the beginning of the routine. All safety deductions accumulated to that point will carry over. If a team prefers not to re-work the routine, then at the coach's discretion, they may take the score they have received up to that point. If a skill has not been performed a "0" will be given in the category.

All other circumstances in which there is an interruption of a team's performance will be under the discretion of the Head Judge or MSAA Tournament Director at Regional and State Championship events. In all instances where a team is allowed to present its routine again, the routine must be performed full-out from the beginning of the routine. All safety deductions accumulated to that point will carry over and judging will resume from the point at which the interruption occurred.

23. **Recognized Activity and Competition Limits:**

- A. Cheerleading teams will be allowed entrance into MSAA sanctioned competitions with approval of their school administrator. A team must be actively supporting its school's athletic program in order to be eligible for competition in EACH season it wishes to compete. The number of competitions should be large enough to ensure that the student participants have an opportunity to experience win and loss situations and to learn the values associated with athletic participation such as, commitment, sacrifice, teamwork, leadership, sportsmanship, etc.
- B. Competition Limits: Cheerleading teams are allowed participation in a maximum of seven (7) MSAA sanctioned competitions per season which includes four (4) open or invitational tournaments, their league tournament, regional competition and the state championship. Teams competing but not advancing from league or regional competitions may choose to attend extra open or invitational tournaments but may not exceed a total of seven competitions per season. **Teams must enter and compete in their league competition/qualifier in order to qualify for their respective regional tournament.**
- C. Fall Season: The fall cheerleading season must not begin before the designated date determined by the MSAA/MIAA. Fall cheerleading teams may precede their initial practice day with an additional three days of single, non-stunting sessions for conditioning purposes only. The conditioning sessions may only occur during the three days immediately preceding the fall season start date and may not be used to prepare or choreograph competition routines. The Fall season must end with completion of the regular varsity season schedule except for a team completing their participation in the MSAA tournament.
- D. Winter Season: The winter cheerleading season must not begin before the Monday after Thanksgiving. The Winter season must end with completion of the regular varsity season schedule, except for a team completing their participation in the MSAA tournament.
- E. Limitation Exceptions:
1. Approved participation in tournaments sponsored by the Council of New England Secondary School Principals' Associations is allowed.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

2. Approved participation in a national competition is allowed subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the National Competition section of this Rulebook.

24. Try Outs

- A. Participants may try out for the fall team in the spring. Tryouts may not be held before the Tuesday following Memorial Day and must be completed by June 30. Spring tryouts may last for no more than five (5) days. Fall teams may continue their tryout process in the fall after the designated start date determined by the MSAA/MIAA. All tryouts must be concluded by September 15th.
- B. Participants may try out for the winter team in November. Tryouts may not be held prior to the Monday after Thanksgiving (spring try out is allowed if the school does not have a fall cheerleading team).

25. State Championship– Video Replay

State Championship events will be recorded by a video technician. A video replay review may be initiated by the MSAA State Tournament Director who will conduct the review seeking guidance from the head judge and penalty judge(s) that judged the routine.

26. Competition Routine Parameters (Performance Division):

All routines are limited to a maximum of two minutes and thirty seconds (2:30). There is no limit to the amount of music (within the 2:30 minutes) that may be used. **All routines must include a cheer** (before/middle/after/over the music) to be properly judged in the appropriate categories. There is not a minimum time/length requirement.

Timing will begin with the first organized word, movement, or note of music by the team after it is officially announced that they may begin. Coaches are strongly advised to create routines that finish a few seconds under the time limit to ensure that the team does not go over time.

27. Award Ceremonies:

- A. Student athletes should be apprised of the potential risk of injury associated with victory celebrations including activities such as “piling on”. This is of particular concern at presentation of awards during cheerleading competitions. Coaches are responsible for discouraging their teams from responding in a manner that could cause injury to others.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

- B. During the award ceremony of any MSAA sanctioned event, cheerleading teams and coaches should behave in an appropriate and sportsmanlike manner.
- C. Teams must be in full uniform for award ceremonies.
- D. Score sheets will be distributed to the coach of record only following the conclusion of awards.

28. Definition of Competitions:

- A. **Open or Invitational** – hosted by an MSAA member school – any sanctioned member may participate.
- B. **League Competition** – set up by league administrators for the purpose of naming league champions and advancing teams to regionals. Leagues must set the date of their tournament by September 30 for the fall season, and January 30 for the winter season. League competitions must take place at least one (1) week prior to the regional competition. Non-league teams must all qualify at the same designated competition approved by the MSAA. Leagues should be aware that MSAA divisional placements are used to determine which teams advance to the regional tournaments.
- C. **Regional** – held in fall and winter. All eligible member cheerleading teams advancing from league competitions are allowed to compete.
- D. **State Final** - held in fall and winter. All eligible member cheerleading teams advancing from their respective regional tournament are allowed to compete.
- E. **New England Tournament** – held in the winter. Top three (3) teams in each division will receive a bid to attend the New England Tournament. If any of the top three teams are unable to attend, the MSAA will allow the next place team to attend in their stead until all of the Massachusetts slots are filled (teams must score a minimum of 70 to be asked to fill the open slots).

29. Sanctioned Events:

MSAA must sanction all local open/invitational and league competitions. It is recommended that all teams entering competitions be placed into divisions using the MSAA divisional placement chart. Only MSAA member sanctioned schools will be allowed entrance into open/invitational, league, regional and state competitions.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

- A. In-State Teams Competing Out of State: Teams wishing to compete out of state must seek written permission of the MSAA Executive in charge of cheerleading. An out of state host must allow only those Massachusetts teams sanctioned by MSAA to participate. Out of state hosts allowing non-sanctioned Massachusetts teams to compete will not receive MSAA sanctioning. All tournaments must adhere to the NFHS rules. **Out of State competitions listed on the Sanctioned Events list have been approved for participation by Massachusetts sanctioned teams.**
- B. Out-of-State Teams Competing in MSAA events: Out of state teams may receive a waiver to compete in a MSAA open invitational if the host site director obtains a registration form with written signed approval from the registering school administrator that includes:
1. Total female enrollment figures (9-12);
 2. Team roster sheet not to exceed twenty (20) competing members and four (4) alternates;
 3. Coach's contact information;
 4. Signed verification of physicals; and
 5. A release of liability to the MSAA and the school hosting the event while competing and/or transporting participants to and from the event.
- C. Exhibition of Non-Sanctioned Teams: Non-sanctioned teams, including but not limited to college teams, all star teams, pop warner and youth teams, are not allowed to exhibition or compete at an MSAA sanctioned cheerleading tournament.

30. **Hosting Competitions (Open/Invitationals AND League):**

- A. Member schools wishing to sponsor an open or invitational or league competition must submit an "Application for Approval of Multiple School Cheerleading Event" for approval by the MSAA. Competitions must be sanctioned by the MSAA prior to sending out invitations to member schools. Only sanctioned teams will be allowed to compete.
- B. The host school is responsible for verifying the eligibility of the teams that enter the competition. This can be done on the MSAA website. **No non-sanctioned team (college, all star, youth, pop warner) is allowed to exhibition or compete at an MSAA sanctioned event.** If the host site allows a team that is not sanctioned to compete or exhibition at its tournament, it will receive a warning letter. If there is a subsequent violation by the

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

host site, the host site will no longer be allowed to host tournaments.

- C. All interstate cheer competitions must be sanctioned by MSAA and abide by all National Federation rules and recommendations.

31. Qualifying for Regional Competition from League Competition:

- A. MSAA Category Score Sheets will be used at all MSAA competitions. The score sheet will be divided into 4 categories. Each judge is assigned a category for a total possible score of 100. No scores are dropped.
- B. A school may enter only one (1) varsity team in its league competition. All schools in a league must compete at the same tournament each year/season.
- C. The top scoring team from each division will qualify for regional competition. The MSAA division alignments will be used for determining whether a team has qualified for regionals regardless of league set-up or structure (i.e., small and large; or A, B, C).
- D. For purposes of qualifying for regionals from league competition, the four (4) all-girl divisions and one (1) coed division will be considered. All coed teams will compete against each other (regardless of their all-girl division) for qualification purposes. If a team enters the coed division and qualifies for regionals, the team must remain in the coed division for regionals and states of that season.

EXCEPTION: A team that has qualified for regionals from their league competition in the coed division may choose to move to the all-girl division for regional competition **ONLY** if **ALL** of the following conditions are met:

- 1. The male participant(s) is (are) no longer eligible for competition due a). to an injury/illness documented by a medical professional treating the participant prohibiting participation; or b). The participant no longer meets academic eligibility requirements set forth by the school. Documentation must be provided to the MSAA Tournament Director no less than 48 hours prior to regional competition.

AND

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

- 2. The team earned a minimum score of 66 (4 judge line) (66% of the total possible score of 100) at their league competition.
- E. All teams obtaining a minimum score of 66 (4 judge line) (66% of the total possible score of 100) will qualify for regionals.
- F. Non-league teams must all qualify at the same designated competition assigned by the MSAA. The MSAA will consider location as a priority when assigning a competition. Non-league teams must contact the MSAA office for assignment.
- G. Teams not participating in its league competition are not eligible for regional or state competition.

32. Qualifying for State Championships from Regional Competition:

- A. The top 2 teams in each division will qualify for the state championship.
- B. The 3rd place team will qualify providing they obtain a score of 70 (70% of total possible score of 100) or more.
- C. Any team scoring 80 (80% of possible score of 100) or more will qualify for the state championship.
- D. Each **regional and state** tournament will have up to four (4) all-girl divisions and two (2) coed divisions.
- E. **Coed Division at Regional and State Tournaments:** Following the completion of all league competitions, coed teams that have qualified for Regionals will be ranked by total enrollment and split into two (2) divisions by the State Tournament Director.
- F. **At-Large Bids:** At each regional tournament, each division has three bids to the State Championship. If a division does not have three teams that qualify for the State Championship pursuant to Sections A, B and C of this Rule, the bids that are not used shall become At-Large Bids to be awarded to teams in that division from other regions. At-Large Bids shall be awarded following the completion of all regional competitions to teams, based on their score at their respective regional tournament, that have 1) not qualified under paragraphs A, B, or C of this section; and 2) obtained a minimum score of 70 (70% of total possible score of 100).

33. National Competition:

Only eligible member varsity cheerleading teams earning a bid to attend a National Event in the manner below are allowed to compete. A National Bid may only be used in the academic year in which it is earned.

- a. Champions from each division will receive a National Bid.
- b. Any team obtaining a minimum score of 80 (80% of possible score of 100) will receive a National Bid.

National bids are subject to the approval of school administrators. Once approved, teams must notify the MSAA office in writing of their intention to use a National Bid including where and when the bid will be used.

34. Game Day:

Teams will respond to situation audio clues that simulate a real game day sporting event. Teams will be judged on execution, crowd effectiveness, energy, and overall performance. Teams electing to compete in the Game Day division may do so at open competitions having a Game Day division as well as at the MSAA Game Day state tournament.

A school must elect whether to enter the MSAA Game Day State Tournament OR the MSAA Regional/State Competition Series. A school is permitted to field two (2) teams in order to enter both events. Crossovers of athletes between teams from the same school are NOT permitted during the Game Day State Championship. In other words, an athlete can only compete on one team from a member school the day of the Game Day State Championship.

All participants must be listed on the official school roster must be bona fide team members. A roster must be submitted to the MSAA. A team, and all of its participants, must be actively supporting its school's athletic program in order to be eligible for competition in EACH season it wishes to compete. There will be no differentiation of coed and all girl for the Game Day Division.

With all three elements combined, the Game Day performance cannot exceed a 3 minute time limit. All skill restrictions below will be enforced.

Band Chant should have an emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality – No stunting or tumbling is permitted, however jumps

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

and kicks are allowed. Squads should focus on crowd engagement and visual appeal and use creative movements such as level changes and ripples.

Crowd Leading - Following the band chant, the announcer will give squads a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an offensive or defensive Sideline. After the Situational Sideline, teams will move into their Cheer which can include one reflective of a timeout, general sideline/spell-out or other cheer material that incites a response and encourages the crowd to yell along. Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, crowd effectiveness, proper use of motions/crowd leading tools and execution of stunts/tumbling relevant to a game day environment.

Fight Song - Incorporation is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts of stunts and/or tumbling. If the fight song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed both times if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill (stunt or tumbling). Teams should incorporate crowd effective skills (stunts and/or tumbling) and can include spirit raising props to enhance the overall effect. For teams that do not have an official Fight Song, it is recommended to use a second selection of band chant music.

Game Day National Competition:

Teams entering the Game Day State Championship are eligible to earn a bid to attend a Game Day National Event in the manner below. A Game Day National Bid may only be used in the academic year in which it is earned.

- a. Champions from each division will receive a National Bid.
- b. Any team obtaining a minimum score of 80% of the total possible score will receive a National Bid.

Game Day National bids are subject to the approval of school administrators. Once approved, teams must notify the MSAA office in writing of their intention to use a Game Day National Bid including where and when the bid will be used. A Game Day National Bid is limited to events providing a Game Day division.

35. Ties:

If a tie occurs, ties will be broken by adding the following categories:

Performance Division: Partner Stunts – Difficulty

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

Pyramids – Difficulty
Tumbling – Difficulty
Jumps – Difficulty
Motions – Difficulty
Dance - Difficulty

Game Day Division: Band Chant – Visual Appeal
 Fight Song – Effectiveness & Execution
 Crowd Leading – Effectiveness & Execution
 Crowd Leading – Overall Impression

If the tie remains, both teams will receive recognition and the tie will stand.

36. Penalty for Participating if Ineligible:

The principal of a school that allows a student to cheer who is later found to be ineligible shall notify in writing the MSAA representative and the tournament director of all cheerleading competitions in which they have received award recognition as a team or individuals (trophy for placements, most valuable cheerleading awards, spirit awards, etc.). The team will return all recognition awards to the MSAA office, forfeiting every cheerleading competition in which the ineligible student competed during that season.

37. Out-of-Season Coaching Parameters:

Unless otherwise permitted in this rule, between seasons a coach may conduct a meeting(s) with team candidates only to elect captains, collect equipment, issue equipment, to provide for physical examinations, to conduct legitimate fund-raising events, or to offer wellness workshops or activities. Teams may participate in school or community events.

- A. A coach is defined as any paid or volunteer member of the athletic staff.
- B. The MSAA considers the last coach of record as holding that position until replaced by the Administration.
- C. A coach may not directly or indirectly require an athlete to participate in a sport or a training program outside of the MSAA defined sport season. Additionally, a coach may not penalize an athlete for not attending an out of season program.

Voluntary conditioning sessions open equally to all students in a school and which are entirely devoid of sports-specific activity may

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

be conducted between seasons provided no candidate is either required to participate or penalized for not doing so.

A “candidate” is defined as:

1. A varsity or sub-varsity athlete who participated in a high school program at some interscholastic level the previous year and has eligibility remaining; or
 2. A middle school student “selected” to participate in an out-of-season program; or
 3. A sixth grade student in a 7-12 high school or an eighth grade student in a 9-12 high school.
- D. A high school coach may be employed by a park or recreation department or other organization or may volunteer for such a group to teach his/her sport out-of-season provided the following conditions exist:
1. The coach adheres to all conditions of MSAA Rule 38; and
 2. School funds are not used.
- E. Cheerleading Training/Camp: Coaches may attend one (1) session (no longer than 5 consecutive days – not to be split into separate weeks) of training/camp out-of-season with their team. This training session must be in the interest of learning technique and safety. This session may not be used for the purpose of choreographing competition routines or portions thereof.
- F. Definition of Practice: Practice is a reporting of a group of potential athletes who are under the direct or indirect supervision of a member of the high school coaching staff, and who are receiving instruction in skills or techniques.
- G. Captain’s Practice: The term “Captain’s Practice” usually refers to a situation in which the team’s captain(s) organizes and conducts out-of-season practice for cheerleading without adult supervision. The MSAA does not in any way sanction, encourage, or condone “Captain’s Practice.” “Captain’s Practice”, depending on the member school’s involvement, may be a violation of MSAA rules. There is also a serious practical consideration. If it can be demonstrated that a school is allowing “Captain’s Practice”, the liability responsibility for an injured athlete may be quite serious.

38. Sportsmanship:

A. Student-athletes, coaches, administrators, spectators, contest officials and all other persons connected directly or indirectly with a member school shall adhere to the principles of good sportsmanship and the ethics of competition before, during and after all interscholastic events in which they participate and/or attend.

B. **Taunting:** Taunting includes any actions or comments by coaches, participants, or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule, or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berates, needles, intimidates, or threatens based on race, gender identity, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs, or personal characteristics.

Examples of taunting include but are not limited to: "trash talk", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed by a competitor to an opponent by ridiculing his/her skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or physical response; and physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game, including, but not limited to "in the face" confrontation by one participant to another.

C. A violation of this rule may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Violation of Rules and Regulations section of this Rulebook

39. Student (and Coach) Eligibility: Chemical Health /Alcohol / Drugs/Tobacco

A. From the earliest fall practice date, to the conclusion of the academic year or final athletic event (whichever is latest), a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess, buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product (including e-cigarettes, vape pens and all similar devices); marijuana (including synthetic); steroids; drug paraphernalia; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as "NA or near beer," inhalants (defined as any substance that produces a mind-altering effect when inhaled), and misuse of over-the-counter medications and substances used for the purposes of altering one's mental state.. It is not a violation for a student to be in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student's own use by his/her doctor.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

This MSAA/MIAA statewide minimum standard is not intended to render “guilt by association”, e.g. many student athletes might be present at a party where only a few violate this standard. This rule represents only a minimum standard upon which schools may develop more stringent requirements.

If a student in violation of this rule is unable to participate in interscholastic sports/activities due to injury or academics, the penalty will not take effect until that student is able to participate again.

Minimum PENALTIES:

First violation: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 25% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. No exception is permitted for a student who becomes a participant in a treatment program. It is recommended that the student be allowed to remain at practice for the purpose of rehabilitation. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 25% of the season.

Second and subsequent violations: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 60% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 60% of the season.

If after the second or subsequent violations the students of his/her own volition becomes a participant in an approved chemical dependency program or treatment program, the student may be certified for reinstatement in MSAA activities after a minimum of 40% of events. The director or a counselor of a chemical dependency treatment center must issue such certification. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 40% of the season.

Penalties shall be cumulative each academic year. If the penalty period is not completed during the season of violation, the penalty shall carry over to the student’s next season of actual participation,

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

which may affect the eligibility status of the student during the next academic year.

- B. During practice, game or competition, a coach shall not use any tobacco product.
- C. Steroid Use - Anabolic androgenic steroid use at the high school level is of grave concern. Steroids are used by some athletes, and the seriousness of the problem has been well documented. The use of steroids in sports is cheating. The MSAA strongly opposes the use of steroids.

40. **Good Citizen Rule:**

Student-athletes may not represent their school if they are on in-house or out-of-house disciplinary suspension. A suspended student is ineligible for practice or competition for at least the number of days (or partial days) equal to the number of days of the suspension. Individual school policies will determine the actual days of ineligibility. The MSAA suggests that policies be included in local Student Handbooks.

41. **Regional Representatives**

Each Regional Representative will be chosen by the Cheerleading Committee, and will serve on the Committee for a three (3) year term. There will be eight (8) Regional Representatives, two for each region of the state. Each region has one vote for each action under committee consideration.

42. **Signs and/or Banners**

The display of signs, banners, place cards or similar items at MSAA regional and state competitions is permitted, provided:

- A. They are in good taste and reflect good sportsmanship in their message and use;
- B. They reflect identification and encouragement to participants and their school or community, and make no reference to the opposing team(s), its school, players or community;
- C. They do not obstruct the view of participants or spectators;
- D. They do not endorse any private promotion and/or sponsorship, which might result in the exploitation of students or direct financial gain to the promoter or sponsor.

2024 ~ 2025 MSAA Cheerleading Rules & Regulations

- E. They are not safety hazards; and
- F. They are not prohibited by facility management.

43. Noisemakers

Horns and noisemakers are not to be permitted at any site. If the site manager feels that something not mentioned above is also creating a nuisance at a contest site, the site manager should have such items removed.

44. MSAA Cheerleading Web Site:

www.MSAA.net – check for updates on cheerleading events throughout the season.

45. National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Web Site:

www.nfhs.net – check for updates on “Spirit Rules” or to order publications.

46. Cheerleading Calendar of Events:

A Cheerleading Calendar of Events will be published at the beginning of each season. This information will be available on the MSAA website (www.MSAA.net).