2015 – 2016
MSSAA
CHEERLEADING
RULES &
REGULATIONS

* Additions/Changes are indicated in italics

M.S.S.A.A.
33 Forge Parkway
Franklin, MA 02038

Phone: 508-541-7997
Fax: 508-541-9888
Web: www.mssaa.org
Email: mssaa@mssaa.org
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.
1. **School Sponsored Team:**

A school team is one that is sponsored by and under the jurisdiction of the school system. By definition, a school cheerleading team must have: a coach (or coaches) appointed by the principal; a regular practice schedule through the season defined by the sport for which they are cheering to include participation as determined by the league or school policy; a school uniform; and, the opportunity to participate in MSSAA sanctioned competitions to include open, invitational, regional and final state championship tournaments. The school must be a member of the MSSAA and follow all National Federation Interscholastic Spirit Rules and Guidelines. All team participants must attend the school for which they cheer.

A. Combined Schools: Schools wishing to combine students with another school for the purpose of producing a cheerleading team may seek permission in writing to the MSSAA. The MSSAA will allow the schools to combine if (1) one of the schools can demonstrate that it does not have enough participants to roster a cheerleading team, and (2) both schools are members of the MSSAA. Administrators from both schools must give approval, take responsibility for the team and follow all MSSAA eligibility rules.

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 practices, games and competitions. Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a high school practice, game or competition in order to participate in a non-school activity/event in any activity/sport recognized by the MSSAA/MIAA. Students cannot be given special treatment (late arrival, early dismissal, etc.) for non-school athletic programs.

A student-athlete must be a Team Member for 50% of the regular season schedule for that sport to participate in any MSSAA Tournament competition (team member: any student athlete who attends practices or games for his/her sport teams – e.g. Participant moved to JV and then Varsity).

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

On occasion, a student might find himself/herself in potential conflict with this rule. This can happen when a student-athlete has an
association with an out-of-school team or has an opportunity to participate in some special tournament or on a special team. A waiver of the bona fide team rule excusing the student from the school activity that day and allowing the student to participate in such a non-school event is possible under the guidelines set forth below.

Waivers will be considered on an individual basis on the merits of each case. A waiver request must be submitted in writing to the MSSAA 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. Private Promoters and Sponsors
In any activity involving one or more MSSAA member, 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 MSSAA Office -- and when appropriate to the Board of Directors -- all outside financial offers for supporting athletic programs among several school districts.

4. Adult Representation:
A. The principal, headmaster or director of the school is responsible to the MSSAA for the acts of the school cheerleading team. All teams and individual participants must have adult representation present and responsible for the participants at all times. Such adult representative must be an employee or a designated representative of the school district. All representatives should be listed on the roster.

B. A coach is defined as a paid or volunteer member of the school staff recognized by the school administration.

5. 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 gymnastics. 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/MSSAA 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.

C. All MSSAA 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. All MSSAA member school coaches are required to view annually the on-line MSSAA Coaches Seminar prior to the start of their season.

E. Cheerleading teams should be provided the assistance of all school medical personnel and/or athletic trainers. 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, games and MSSAA sanctioned competitions. MSSAA 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.

6. Parental Permission:
Administrators should secure from each cheerleader’s parent/guardian written consent to participate in cheerleading activities. Particular consideration should be given to the parent regarding the Duty to Warn about the risk involved in participating in cheerleading.

7. Student Eligibility/School Requirements: Physical Examinations/Medical Coverage/Concussions

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’s Assistant or Nurse Practitioner. The Sports Medicine Committee recommended physical examination form is in the MIAA White Book.

PENALTY: A student in violation shall be suspended for the number of contests in which he/she participated without a proper physical.

8. **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 MSSAA sanctioned events will have the final approval for participation of any injured cheerleader.

9. **School Attendance Policies:**
   Each school should establish the same school/class requirements for cheerleaders that are set for other school activities.

10. **Academic Requirements:**
    Cheerleaders must follow the same requirements established for other school activities.

    A. Academic Awards: The MSSAA 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 administrator in charge of cheerleading should contact the MSSAA office regarding this award when applicable.

11. **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.

12. **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.

13. **Registering Cheerleading Team with MSSAA:**
The school administrator is responsible for Membership Registration for both fall and winter cheerleading teams. Teams not registered by the established deadline, September 11, 2015, will be assessed a $100.00 late fee. Teams not registered with the MSSAA will NOT be allowed entrance into any MSSAA sanctioned competition. Each school having a fall and winter cheer team must register both teams at a fee of $80.00/each.

A. **Cheerleading Team Roster:** A current cheerleading team roster must be submitted to the MSSAA Cheerleading Director by the established deadline for fall, October 15, and winter, February 15. Any change to the roster sheet must be reported to the MSSAA. All participants must be listed on the roster (including alternates). Properly registered cheerleading teams are allowed to compete at MSSAA sanctioned tournaments with a maximum of twenty (20) members per team. Participants not listed on the roster submitted to the MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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 team roster may have an unlimited number of participants (including alternates). All participants must be listed on the roster submitted to the MSSAA. A team may not compete with a cheerleader that did not appear as a member on a previously submitted roster.

C. **Cheerleading Team/Student Activities Dues:** All competitive cheerleading teams must be members of the MSSAA. Membership dues MUST be submitted to the MSSAA Office by the established deadline of September 11. Any cheerleading team that does not submit membership dues will not be sanctioned by the MSSAA and will be ineligible to compete in MSSAA sanctioned events.

14. **Student Eligibility: Baseline Eligibility Requirements**
For a student to practice with, or to represent a MSSAA member school in 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).

**Middle School Students on Senior High Teams:**
A middle school student is eligible to represent a senior high school on its athletic teams only when the MSSAA member high school includes those grades and they are under the direct jurisdiction and supervision of the high school principal.

15. **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 his/her gender.

16. **Divisional Placement/Enrollment:**
Divisions will be re-aligned every two (2) years based on female enrollment. **Beginning with the 2017-18 academic year, divisions will be re-aligned every four (4) years based on female enrollment.** If schools combine for participation in cheerleading, the female enrollment of each school will be combined to determine the divisional placement. Divisional placement of teams in open invitational and/or league competitions may be different from those defined in the MSSAA Divisional Chart. The MSSAA uses its division assignments to determine which teams advance to regional tournaments and the state championship.

17. **Application of Rules:**
As a condition of a high school’s participation in cheerleading under MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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. MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA or National Federation Interscholastic Spirit Rules and Guidelines. Regarding the participation of an ineligible student, no ineligible high school student can participate in any cheerleading activity (games, competition, etc.) regardless of any proposed agreement between school and competition host school. Schools hosting MSSAA sanctioned open invitational competitions must follow the MSSAA rules.

G. Neither schools nor school committees may make rules that are in any way less restrictive than those set by MSSAA 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 MSSAA Executive Officer in charge of cheerleading.

18. **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.
19. **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 MSSAA 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.

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

A. Cheerleading teams will be allowed entrance into MSSAA 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) MSSAA 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 their league competition 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 MSSAA/MIAA (i.e., August 27, 2015). 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 (i.e., August 24, 2015) 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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA tournament.

E. **Limitation Exceptions:**
   1. Approved participation in tournaments sponsored by the Council of New England Secondary School Principals' Associations is allowed.
   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.

21. **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 MSSAA/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).

22. **State Championship ONLY – Video Replay**
    State Championship events will be recorded by a video technician. A video replay review may only be initiated by the MSSAA State Tournament Director who will conduct the review seeking guidance from the penalty judges that judged the routine. Video reviews will be
limited to circumstances where a penalty has been assessed and that penalty has either:

a. Prevented a team from earning a National Bid; OR
b. Affected the top three (3) placements in a division.

The review will be limited to the portion of the routine in which a penalty was originally assessed. Following a video replay review, whether or not the call has been reversed, the decision will stand.

23. Competition Routine Parameters:

All routines are limited to a maximum of two minutes and thirty seconds (2:30). There is no limit to the amount of music that may be used. All routines must include a cheer (before/middle/after/over the music) to be properly judged in the voice and motions 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.

24. Victory Celebrations:

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.

B. During the award ceremony of any MSSAA sanctioned event, cheerleading teams and coaches should behave in an appropriate and sportsmanlike manner.

25. Definition of Competitions:

A. Open or Invitational – hosted by an MSSAA 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 assigned by the MSSAA. Leagues should be aware that MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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 154 to be asked to fill the open slots).

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

A. **In-State Teams Competing Out of State:** Teams wishing to compete out of state must seek written permission of the MSSAA Executive in charge of cheerleading. An out of state host must allow only those Massachusetts teams sanctioned by MSSAA to participate. Out of state hosts allowing non-sanctioned Massachusetts teams to compete will not receive MSSAA sanctioning. All tournaments must adhere to the NFHS rules.

B. **Out-of-State Teams Competing in MSSAA events:** Out of state teams may receive a waiver to compete in a MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA sanctioned cheerleading tournament.

27.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 MSSAA. Competitions must be sanctioned by the MSSAA 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 MSSAA website. No non-sanctioned team (college, all star, youth, pop warner) is allowed to exhibition or compete at an MSSAA 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 host site, the host site will no longer be allowed to host tournaments.

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

28. Qualifying for Regional Competition from League Competition:
A. MSSAA Category Score Sheets will be used at all MSSAA competitions. The score sheet will be divided into 4 categories. Each judge is assigned a category for a total possible score of 110. Regional and State tournaments will use 8 judges per line (2 judges for each category) with a total possible score of 220. No scores are dropped. League and invitational tournaments may use either 4 or 8 judges per line.
B. A school may enter only one (1) varsity team in its league competition.

C. The top scoring team from each division will qualify for regional competition. The MSSAA 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 co-ed 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 MSSAA Tournament Director no less than 48 hours prior to regional competition.

AND

2. The team earned a minimum score of 73 (4 judge line) or 145 (8 judge line) (66% of the total possible score) at their league competition.

E. All teams obtaining a minimum score of 73 (4 judge line) or 145 (8 judge line) (66% of the total possible score) will qualify for regionals.

F. Non-league teams must all qualify at the same designated competition assigned by the MSSAA. The MSSAA will consider location as a priority when assigning a competition. Non-league teams must contact the MSSAA office for assignment.

G. Teams not participating in its league competition are not eligible for regional or state competition.
29. 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 154 (70% of possible score of 220) or more.
   
   C. Any team scoring 176 (80% of possible score of 220) or more will qualify for the state championship.
   
   D. Each regional 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 154 (70% of possible score of 220).

30. 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 176 (80% of possible score of 220) will receive a National Bid.

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

If a tie occurs, ties will be broken by adding the following categories: Partner Stunts – Difficulty; Pyramids – Difficulty; Tumbling – Difficulty; Jumps – Difficulty; Motions – Difficulty; and Dance – Difficulty. If the tie remains, both teams will receive recognition and the tie will stand.

32. **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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA office, forfeiting every cheerleading competition in which the ineligible student competed during that season.

33. **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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA defined sport season.

Voluntary conditioning sessions open equally to all students in a school and which are entirely devoid of sports-specific activity may 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. No candidate may either be required to attend or be penalized for not attending; 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.

F. Definition of Practice: A 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 MSSAA 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 MSSAA 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.

34. 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 cheerleading-related...
activity outside of the authorized seasonal limits. In addition, a coach may not provide transportation for candidates of his/her team to an out-of-season athletic activity (Exception: Cheerleading Training/Camp under Section 33A). Student participation in out-of-season activities may not be funded in any way by booster clubs or organizations. Students may not wear school uniforms, or be identified as a school team, out of season and/or during non-school events.

35. **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, 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.

36. **Student (and Coach) Eligibility: Chemical Health /Alcohol / Drugs/Tobacco**
A. During the season of practice or competition, 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); marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as “NA or near beer”. 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. This rule represents only a minimum standard upon which schools may develop more stringent requirements.

This MSSAA/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.

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 MSSAA 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, 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 MSSAA strongly opposes the use of steroids.

37. **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 MSSAA suggests that policies be included in local Student Handbooks.

38. **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 four (4) Regional Representatives, one for each region of the state.

39. **Signs and/or Banners**
   The display of signs, banners, place cards or similar items at MSSAA 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.
E. They are not safety hazards; and

F. They are not prohibited by facility management.

40. **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.

41. **MSSAA Cheerleading Web Site:**
[www.mssaa.org](http://www.mssaa.org) – check for updates on cheerleading events throughout the season.

42. **National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Web Site:**
[www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org) – check for updates on “Spirit Rules” or to order publications.

43. **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 MSSAA website ([www.mssaa.org](http://www.mssaa.org)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015-2016 MSSAA Cheerleading Season Tournament Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Cheer Regionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Cheer State Finals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Cheer Regionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Cheer State Finals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Championship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Dance Tournament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Dance Tournament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dates are tentative and are subject to change