NCSAA Recreational Sideline Cheer Guidelines

PURPOSE

NCSAA Recreational Sideline Cheer is designed to promote school spirit, sportsmanship, teamwork, confidence, and participation among students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The program provides athletes with an opportunity to support their school's athletic teams through age-appropriate cheers, chants, jumps, dances, and sideline activities in a positive and recreational environment.

Recreational Sideline Cheer is not considered a competitive cheer division unless NCSAA announces a separate cheer showcase or competition.

ELIGIBLE GRADE LEVELS

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade are eligible to participate in NCSAA Recreational Sideline Cheer.

Schools may organize cheer teams by grade level, age group, campus, or school-approved division. All participating athletes must meet NCSAA eligibility and roster requirements.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that activities, routines, and skills are appropriate for the ages and experience levels of the athletes participating.

NCSAA ROSTER AND NSID REQUIREMENTS

All Recreational Sideline Cheer athletes must be registered and listed on the school's official NCSAA roster.

Athletes must also be verified through National Sports ID, commonly referred to as NSID,

The school, athletic director, coach, parent, and athlete are responsible for ensuring that:

- The athlete has a valid NSID account.
- The athlete's identity, age, grade, and school enrollment information are accurate.
- All required NSID documents have been submitted and approved.
- The athlete's NSID verification remains active and does not expire during the season.
- The athlete is added to the correct school and team roster before the applicable roster deadline.

An athlete may not participate in a game, sideline performance, halftime performance, showcase, or other NCSAA activity if the athlete is not properly registered, rostered, and verified.

Once NCSAA or NSID rosters are locked, athletes may not be added, transferred, or reinstated unless specifically approved by NCSAA.

An athlete whose NSID verification expires after the final roster deadline may be considered ineligible for the remainder of the season. NCSAA is not responsible for reminding schools, coaches, parents, or athletes of upcoming NSID expiration dates.

The use of an ineligible, unregistered, or improperly verified athlete may result in disciplinary action against the athlete, coach, or school.

SCHOOL AND CAMPUS ELIGIBILITY

Athletes must participate for the school or campus in which they are officially enrolled.

Schools with multiple campuses may not combine athletes from separate campuses without prior written approval from NCSAA. The same campus-combination and eligibility rules that apply to other NCSAA sports also apply to Recreational Sideline Cheer.

COACH REQUIREMENTS

Each team must be supervised by an approved adult coach at all practices, games, and NCSAA activities.

The coach is responsible for:

- Knowing and following all NCSAA rules.
- Confirming athlete eligibility and NSID verification.
- Providing appropriate supervision.
- Teaching safe and age-appropriate skills.
- Monitoring athlete conduct and sportsmanship.
- Inspecting the cheer area for hazards.
- Ensuring that athletes remain in designated areas.
- Responding appropriately to injuries and emergencies.
- Following all school, facility, and NCSAA instructions.

Coaches must not allow athletes to attempt skills that exceed their experience, training, or physical ability.

Coaches are responsible for the behavior of their athletes while the team is participating in an NCSAA activity.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Recreational Sideline Cheer is intended to be inclusive and participation-based.

Athletes should not perform routines or skills at a game unless they have been properly taught and practiced under the supervision of an approved coach.

Participation decisions must be based on safety, attendance, conduct, or readiness and should be applied consistently.

SIDELINE LOCATION

Cheer teams must remain in the sideline, end-line, bleacher, or performance area assigned by the school, facility, official, or NCSAA site manager.

Cheerleaders may not:

- Enter the field, court, or playing area without permission.
- Stand directly behind a goal, basket, bench, scorer's table, official, or opposing team area.
- Block entrances, exits, walkways, aisles, emergency access points, or spectator views.
- Interfere with players, coaches, officials, game staff, or spectators.
- Move into an unsafe location in order to perform a cheer or routine.

The NCSAA site manager or game official may move or restrict a cheer team when necessary for safety or facility operations.

APPROPRIATE TIMES TO CHEER

Cheer teams may perform cheers, chants, and dances during appropriate portions of the game.

Teams should avoid cheering:

- During an injury or medical emergency.
- While an injured athlete is being evaluated or removed.
- During a moment of silence, national anthem, prayer, or formal announcement.
- When a game official, coach, or site manager is giving instructions.
- When cheering would interfere with communication between players and coaches.
- At any time directed by an official or site manager.

Cheer teams must immediately stop any routine, music, chant, or performance when instructed by NCSAA staff, game officials, or facility personnel.

SPORTSMANSHIP

All cheers and activities must promote positive school spirit and good sportsmanship.

Cheer teams should focus on encouraging their own school and athletes.

The following conduct is prohibited:

- Booing or taunting.
- Negative cheers directed at an opposing team.
- Chants directed at an individual athlete, coach, official, or spectator.
- Mocking an opponent's mistake, injury, score, appearance, or ability.
- Arguing with officials.
- Disrespectful hand gestures, motions, signs, or facial expressions.
- Profanity, threats, intimidation, or inappropriate language.
- Entering the opposing team's sideline or designated area.
- Deliberately distracting an athlete during play.

Cheerleaders, coaches, and spectators are expected to represent their school and NCSAA in a respectful manner at all times.

PERMITTED RECREATIONAL CHEER ACTIVITIES

Recreational Sideline Cheer may include:

- Cheers and chants.
- Basic arm motions.
- Pom routines.
- Simple dance routines.
- Formations and formation changes.
- Marching.
- Age-appropriate jumps.
- Ground-level transitions.
- School songs and spirit routines.
- Signs, banners, and approved spirit items.
- Basic individual tumbling when permitted by the school, coach, facility, and NCSAA.

All activities must be performed in a controlled manner and within the assigned cheer area.

STUNTING

Recreational Sideline Cheer is intended to remain beginner-friendly and safety-focused.

Unless NCSAA has approved a stunt program in writing, partner stunts, group stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, lifts, and elevated skills are not permitted during NCSAA games or activities.

The following skills are prohibited unless specifically authorized under separate NCSAA stunt rules:

- Basket tosses.
- Athletes standing on another athlete's shoulders.
- Stunts performed without trained bases and spotters.

NCSAA staff, officials, or facility personnel may stop any activity that appears unsafe, even if the skill is not specifically listed as prohibited.

TUMBLING

Basic individual tumbling may only be performed when:

- The coach has approved the athlete to perform the skill.
- The athlete has demonstrated the skill safely during practice.

- The surface is level, dry, clear, and appropriate for tumbling.
- The athlete has enough space to complete the skill safely.
- The skill does not interfere with the game or other participants.
- The facility permits tumbling.

Tumbling should be limited to basic, age-appropriate skills such as forward rolls, backward rolls, cartwheels, roundoffs, or similar beginner-level movements.
Athletes may not attempt advanced tumbling skills during games unless specifically approved by their coach.
Tumbling is prohibited on any surface determined to be unsafe.

PERFORMANCE SURFACE

Before each practice or game, the coach must inspect the cheer and performance area.
Athletes may not perform jumps, tumbling, dances, or other activities in an area that contains:

- Water or moisture.
- Holes or uneven ground.
- Loose equipment.
- Bags, bottles, cords, signs, or other obstructions.
- Broken flooring.
- Debris.
- Unsafe walls, fences, or nearby structures.
- Insufficient space between the cheer team and the playing area.

When appropriate mats are required for a skill, the skill may not be performed without the mats.
The absence of proper equipment is not an acceptable reason to perform a skill under unsafe conditions.

UNIFORMS AND ATHLETE APPEARANCE

Cheer uniforms must be school-approved, age-appropriate, and suitable for athletic activity.
Athletes must wear:

- Secure athletic shoes.
- Appropriate uniform bottoms, briefs, shorts, or leggings.
- Weather-appropriate clothing when necessary.

The following are prohibited during games, and performances:

- Jewelry, including earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and watches.
- Gum, candy, or food while actively cheering.
- Unsafe hair accessories.
- Loose clothing that may interfere with movement.
- Long or sharp fingernails that create a safety concern.
- Accessories that could fall onto the playing surface.

Hair must be secured away from the athlete's face.
Medical identification jewelry may be permitted but should be secured according to the direction of the athlete's parent, school, and coach.

POM-POMS, SIGNS, FLAGS, AND EQUIPMENT

Pom-poms, signs, flags, megaphones, and other spirit equipment must be used safely.
Equipment may not:

- Be thrown toward spectators, athletes, or the playing area.
- Block walkways or exits.
- Contain inappropriate or negative messages.
- Be placed where an athlete, official, or spectator may trip.

- Interfere with the game.
- Be used to strike, intimidate, or distract another person.

Pom-poms and other equipment must be placed in a safe location when not being used.

The use of air horns, whistles, confetti, glitter, smoke devices, pyrotechnics, or similar items is prohibited unless specifically approved by the facility and NCSAA.

MUSIC

Music used for practices, games, halftime routines, or performances must be school-appropriate.

Music may not contain:

- Profanity.
- Sexual or suggestive language.
- References to drugs, alcohol, violence, or illegal activity.
- Discriminatory or offensive language.
- Inappropriate themes.
- Unedited lyrics that are unsuitable for a K–8 school environment.

The coach is responsible for reviewing all music before it is used.

NCSAA, the school, or facility may prohibit any song or routine considered inappropriate.

Music may only be played during approved breaks and at a volume that does not interfere with announcements, officials, coaches, or game operations.

HALFTIME AND TIMEOUT PERFORMANCES

Halftime or timeout performances may be permitted when approved by the host school, game officials, facility, and NCSAA site manager.

Performances must:

- Remain within the approved time limit.
- Use school-appropriate music and choreography.
- Be practiced in advance.
- Be age-appropriate.
- Follow all safety and skill restrictions.
- Begin and end promptly.
- Not delay the start or resumption of the game.

Teams must leave the playing area immediately when instructed by officials or game staff.

Permission to perform during one game does not guarantee permission at future games or facilities.

HEAT AND WEATHER SAFETY

Schools and coaches must take appropriate precautions during outdoor practices and games, especially during periods of high temperatures.

Coaches must provide or allow:

- Frequent hydration breaks.
- Access to water.
- Rest periods.
- Shade when available.
- Modified routines during excessive heat.
- Lighter or weather-appropriate clothing when permitted.

Athletes showing signs of heat exhaustion, heat illness, dizziness, confusion, nausea, weakness, or dehydration must immediately stop participating and be evaluated.

Outdoor activities must be suspended during lightning, severe weather, unsafe air quality, or other dangerous conditions.

NCSAA, the host school, or facility may cancel, postpone, relocate, or modify cheer participation due to weather or safety concerns.

INJURIES AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

An athlete who is injured or becomes ill must immediately stop participating.

Coaches must not permit an athlete to return until it is safe to do so.

An athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion must be removed from participation immediately and may not return that day.

Medical clearance may be required before an athlete returns to practices, games, or performances.

During an injury or medical emergency:

- Cheer activities must stop.
- Athletes must remain calm and clear of the injured person.
- Coaches must follow school and facility emergency procedures.
- Emergency personnel and site staff have final authority.
- Parents or guardians must be notified as appropriate.

Coaches must report serious injuries to the school and NCSAA.

ATHLETE CONDUCT

Cheerleaders are expected to:

- Follow all coach, school, facility, and NCSAA instructions.
- Treat teammates, opponents, officials, coaches, and spectators respectfully.
- Remain with their team unless excused by the coach.
- Use equipment appropriately.
- Keep the sideline and performance area clean.
- Avoid disruptive, unsafe, or inappropriate behavior.
- Represent their school in a positive manner.

Bullying, hazing, harassment, fighting, threats, or intentional exclusion will not be tolerated.

COACH, PARENT, AND SPECTATOR CONDUCT

Parents and spectators must remain in designated spectator areas.

Parents and spectators may not:

- Enter the cheer or playing area without permission.
- Coach athletes from the stands or sideline.
- Confront officials, coaches, athletes, or NCSAA staff.
- Use abusive, threatening, or inappropriate language.
- Interfere with practices, games, or performances.
- Encourage unsafe or unsportsmanlike conduct.

Questions or concerns should be directed to the school's coach or athletic director at an appropriate time.

Concerns regarding NCSAA rules should be submitted through the school or athletic director rather than addressed directly with game officials during or immediately after a game.

FACILITY RULES

All cheer teams must follow the rules of the host school, park, gym, field, or athletic facility.

Facility rules may include restrictions regarding:

- Food and beverages.
- Signs and banners.
- Music and speakers.
- Seating areas.
- Parking.
- Entry and exit locations.
- Equipment.
- Siblings and unattended children.
- Animals.
- Photography or recording.

When a facility rule is more restrictive than an NCSAA rule, the facility rule must be followed.

GAME OFFICIAL AND SITE MANAGER AUTHORITY

NCSAA officials, site managers, and facility personnel have the authority to enforce these guidelines.

They may:

- Relocate a cheer team.
- Stop a cheer, routine, or performance.
- Prohibit music or equipment.
- Require an unsafe skill to stop.
- Remove an athlete, coach, parent, or spectator.
- Restrict future participation.
- Report misconduct to NCSAA and the school.

Failure to follow an official or site manager's instruction may result in removal from the facility and additional disciplinary action.

SHOWCASES AND COMPETITIONS

Participation in Recreational Sideline Cheer does not automatically register or qualify a team for an NCSAA cheer showcase or competition. If NCSAA offers a cheer clinic, showcase, exhibition, or competition, separate registration, eligibility, roster, routine, music, uniform, and safety requirements may apply. Schools will receive separate information regarding any additional cheer events.

RULE INTERPRETATION

NCSAA reserves the right to interpret, clarify, modify, or enforce these guidelines in the best interest of athlete safety, sportsmanship, and program operations. Situations not specifically addressed in these guidelines will be reviewed and decided by NCSAA. The decisions of NCSAA regarding eligibility, safety, participation, conduct, and rule enforcement are final.