



RHS Cheerleading

Introduction to Handbook

Cheerleaders and Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to Rockford Cheerleading! We are looking forward to another fantastic cheer season. This handbook is intended to inform parents and cheerleaders about policies and expectations within our program.

We look forward to the upcoming season with excitement and high expectations that this team will represent our school, you as parents, and us as coaches, the best they possibly can.

Yours truly,

Shelli Mintz *\/*
Cheerleading Coach
Rockford High School

EXPECTATIONS

We expect this cheer team to become the best cheer team they are capable of being. This goal can be achieved through hard work and respect for every member. When this team takes the sideline, we represent the best of Rockford Spirit, we are there to support our team, respect the officials and all coaches, respect the fans and lead them in cheering for our team. As an individual, your goal should be to know you gave your best effort both physically and mentally in helping this cheer team, the team on the field, and the fans to be the best in high school sportsmanship.

With this in mind, the following are guidelines to assist you in understanding some expectations we have of cheerleaders representing Rockford Area Schools.

1. Be a class person. **You are a role model.** As a result, you must accept certain code of conduct that will be expected of you. We expect your actions to bring respect to you, your family, the cheer family, the team on the field, and Rockford Area Schools. I expect you to do what's right, to do your best, and to treat other how you would like to be treated. If you don't feel comfortable doing a behavior in front of your parent, grandparents, teachers, etc. chances are it is not a good behavior. Use **Common Sense** and ask yourself if this is something that would make others proud you.
2. Be a student. You are expected to go to class, complete assignments, and study when needed, and be a successful student.
3. Be a TEAM player.
 - Cheerleaders cheer at ALL games, must be confident, loud, positive, energetic and smiling ☺
 - If you are a member of a stunt team you are required to stunt at all games unless it is raining, or the cheer surface is wet, or if you have an injury. Not wanting to stunt is not an acceptable reason, this is a team sport and your team is counting on you to perform.
 - Must be prompt; at the High School in uniform ready to cheer 30 minutes prior to the beginning of each game; or at the school, ready to leave 15 minutes prior to the bus departure for away games

- Must wear your full cheer uniform to school for every home football game
- Capable of staying organized & having all cheer “gear” with you at every game
- Must know all cheers by the first game
- Must help in ALL fundraising activities (including Kid’s Camp)
- Create motivational signs (locker tags) for football team, spirit signs for the school and signs for Homecoming week
- Must participate in Homecoming activities including ALL Pep-Fests and spirit days
- Help organize parent’s night – name tags, gifts for parents
- Cheer for team through subsections/state playoffs
- Follow all MSHSL & RHS policies
- Attendance is very important. Excessive absences and/or tardiness will not be tolerated, Cheerleading is a team sport, and your team is counting on you to be there!!!
- Respect your teammates, take pride in this team. You are a cheerleader, be loud, be proud!!!
- Have fun!!! ☺

4. EXPECT TO HAVE A GREAT SEASON!!!

“IF IT’S IN YOUR HEART...
IT WILL SHOW IN YOUR S-P-I-R-I-T”



EXPECTATIONS OF ROCKET CHEERLEADING PARENTS

**“As parents, encourage – do not complain;
Motivate – do no agitate;
Be a team parent”**

1. Be positive with your daughter/son. Let her/him know it is a great accomplishment to simply be a part of Rockford Cheerleading.
2. Do not offer excuses for why she/he is not on the stunt team or the lead cheerleader, encourage her/him to work hard and do her/his best.
3. Do not criticize her/his coaches. If you constantly criticize the coaches, how can you expect her/him to cheer for the team. Problems do not get solved unless your daughter or son communicates with her/his coaches, both as a talker and a listener.
4. Encourage your daughter/son to follow team and school rules.
5. Insist on your daughter/son working to her/his ability academically. It is the duty of the parent to be informed about their child’s class work.
6. Do not develop envy toward or try to bring down other cheerleaders. Every cheerleader should be encouraged to do their best. The rest will take care of itself.
7. Do not be a know-it-all. The coaches of this team work with your child at every practice. We know what each cheerleader can and cannot do and we will make the best decision for the team when it comes to stunting and half-time performances.
8. Insist on your daughters/sons respect for the sport of cheerleading, the safety rules, their cheer team, the officials, the coaches, and the opponents and opponents’ fans. Instill in her/him the importance of sportsmanship.
9. Foster your daughter/son in a positive self-image. Do not compare your child with yourself or others on the cheer team. Help her/him feel good about his role on the cheerleading team. Encourage healthy eating plans to maintain strength.
10. Encourage your daughter/son to cheer for the “love of cheerleading”. It’s not a popularity contest; it’s not about the uniform, but what the uniform represents. Good things happen to teams and individuals who are unselfish, hardworking, and committed.

**“YOU CAN’T WANT SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE
MORE THAN THEY WANT IT FOR THEMSELVES”**

TEAM POLICIES

MSHSL Eligibility

The Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) governs high school cheerleading, in accordance with the National Spirit Federation (NSF), the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA), and the Minnesota Cheerleading Coaches Association (MCCA). All cheerleaders must abide by the MSHSL and RHS eligibility Policies including:

- A health physical every 3 years on record with RHS Athletic Office
- No smoking, drinking, or mood altering chemicals are to be used at any time, in season or out-of-season
- Athlete must make satisfactory progress towards graduation

Cheerleading Letter Policy

Any violation of the MSHSL rules will cause a cheerleader to lose their letter eligibility for that season. Any member who quits waives their lettering eligibility. Any member who misses 5 practices will cause a cheerleader to lose their letter eligibility for that season. A family vacation will count as 1 missed practice. Any member who misses 1 game will cause a cheerleader to lose their letter eligibility for the fall cheer season. Any member who misses 2 games will cause a cheerleader to lose their letter eligibility for the winter cheer season. Coach's discretion will be applied to missed games.

Cheerleading Equipment and/or uniform

Each cheerleader will be provided a uniform shell, skirt, uniform crop top, warm up jacket (varsity only), and poms. You will be charged for any items damaged or not returned. Please wash your uniform in cold water and hang dry it, do not dry the uniform in the dryer.

Coaches

The cheerleading coaches will make decisions based on safety, skill level and what is in the **best interest of the entire team**. We ask that all team members and parents respect the coaches and all decisions based on safety and expertise in the sport when it comes to stunting and half-time performances.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be recorded for the season.

Absences are only excused if the coach is notified by a phone call. Telling the captain or another team member is not acceptable notification. Please remember, even a legitimate excuse may be counted as unexcused if you fail to properly report your absence.

Excused Absences: (ONLY at the coach's discretion)

- Major illness or injury
- Death in the family
- Major religious holiday or church related activity
- Family Vacations (your parent/guardian must call one of the coaches and let us know you will be on vacation)
- Mandatory school function and/or college visit

Unexcused:

- More than 10 minutes late to practice without letting a coach know
- Work
- No ride
- Didn't know about the event, where or when
- Drivers education
- Failure to notify the coach of an absence
- Excessive "Family Time" absences, you are allowed 1 family excuse, after that if you are going to miss because of a family event your parent/guardian must contact one of the coaches and discuss, at that time the coach will decide if it is excused.

Think about what team member in other sports are excused for; ask yourself...would the quarterback miss practice or a game for this???

School policy is that you must be in school by 10:50 am on a game day to attend practice or games that evening. Exceptions are for school related activities like fieldtrips or doctors/dental appointments during the day. Do not stay home from school and then come to practice or game.

No Call, No Show or Unexcused Penalties:

1st No Call, No Show or unexcused for a Practice/Game = Suspension for 1 game

2nd No Call, No Show or unexcused for a Practice/Game = Suspension for 2 games

3rd No Call, No Show or unexcused for a Practice/Game = Removal from the team

For safety reasons, if your child misses excessively, excused and/or unexcused, she/he will be taken off the stunting teams.

Zero Tolerance Bullying Policy

Cheerleaders are expected to treat all team members and coaches with respect at all times. There is a zero tolerance policy towards any type of bullying, including name calling and any harmful physical contact. If it is reported to one of the coaches that a cheerleader has bullied another team member, that cheerleader will be dismissed from the team.

Practice

All practices are closed. Observers can tend to be a distraction, please do not bring friends to practice, they will be asked to leave.

Cheerleaders are expected to be at all practices, please avoid scheduling doctor, dental, haircut and any other appointments during practice time, you are given a calendar well in advance of the season. Holding a job is highly discouraged and **MAY NOT** interfere with practices, games, fund raisers and team functions.

If you are out of practice due to an injury you will not be allowed to attend practice or games until you provide a doctor note clearing you to participate.

A cheerleader who is disrespectful or persistent in not listening to instructions, or if their negativity is harmful to the team **will be asked to leave practice** and will have a meeting with the coach to determine if it is in both parties best interest for them to continue as a member of the team.

No cell phones, you will be expected to turn your cell phones off during the entire practice time and the entire game! You may not check your phone on water breaks, you may not check your phone on bathroom breaks, and you may not check your phone during half-time. **This is cheer time - NO EXCEPTIONS.** Parents if you need to reach your child during this time you may call my cell phone, 763.229.7439

Game Time

Bring your best attitude to each and every game, you are leading the fans to support the team on the field, you cannot lead anyone if you bring negativity or drama to the sidelines. When you do the school song you are expected to cheer (sing) along with the motions, the fans are following you.

You must be at the game ready to perform 30 minutes prior to start time. You have some free time during half-time, however you must be back ready to perform 5 minutes prior to the start of second half and in cheer formation 2 minutes prior to the start of second half.

You must be present and performing for all band dances unless you are in the band and choose to play with the band. Male cheerleaders will be on the sideline during band dances supporting your team.

Strength Training and Nutrition

Conditioning and Strength Training will be a regular part of our preparation to make you into the best cheerleader possible. Do your part by eating the right foods and drinking plenty of fluids. **DO NOT** skip meals; you will need your strength, especially for safety in stunting. I'm a firm believer of breakfast being your most important meal of the day.

Training Rules:

- Eligibility rules are set up by the Minnesota State High School League, our local school administration, and by coaches. Cheerleaders in this program need to make a commitment to refrain from tobacco, alcohol, and taking, buying, or selling non-prescribed drugs.
- MSHSL Penalties are as follows:
 - First Infraction – 2 weeks or 2 events, whichever is greater
 - Second Infraction – 6 events suspension and counseling required
 - Third Infraction – chemical dependency treatment program required. Student may be certified for reinstatement in MSHSL activities after a minimum of six weeks.
- A violation in personal and team commitment breaks trust which is very difficult to regain. If you aren't able to make a commitment to your team and abide by the training rules **don't come out for the team.**

Injuries

Injuries may occur in all physical activities, you can almost expect it in cheerleading stunting. Bruises, jammed fingers, sprained ankles, bloody noses, etc. are all common cheerleading injuries. If you are injured your coaches need to be informed immediately. Braces or taping are strongly recommended if there has been an injury in the past.

Cheerleaders are responsible for getting taped, ice and rehabbing injuries, the coaches will be available for help and guidance.

Grades

You must be passing all of your classes to actively continue as a member of the cheer program. If you find yourself behind in class, talk to your coaches and your teachers to find an acceptable way to get back on track.

Academics take priority over cheerleading. Take care of your academics so you don't hurt yourself and your team.

Problem Solving

It is best to encourage your daughter/son to work through her/his own problems whenever possible. If the cheerleader is having trouble with her/his teammates or with her/his coaches, allow for a cool down period and then encourage them to discuss the issue with the coaches. Players should remember that good timing and a respectful attitude go a long way in bringing about a better understanding.

If it becomes necessary for parents to address concerns their daughter/son has with the coaches, an appointment for a meeting may be set. This should be done at an appropriate time. The Central Minnesota Conference has adopted a 24 hour "cooling off" period for concerns to be brought up with the coaches. Before or after games is NOT the right time to talk with the coaches about problems. As Coaches, we will not take phone calls after 9:00 pm regarding cheerleading issues. Parents should only contact the coaches after the cheerleader has attempted to address the problem. If you address a concern with the coaches, **be prepared to hear an answer**. We are looking out for the team as a whole and that may conflict with the interest you have just for your daughter/son.

If all parties work for a better understanding hopefully we can head off most issues before they become a problem.

"RESPOND WITH WISDOM, LOVE, FIRMNESS, AND POSITIVE SELF-CONTROL WHEN DISSATISFIED WITH THE BEHAVIOR, PERFORMANCE, OR RESPONSE OF OTHERS"

SUMMARY OF CHEER RULES AND EXPECTATION

Zero tolerance policy for BULLYING AND DRAMA – Come to cheer practice with a positive attitude, treat other as you wish to be treated, leave your issues at the door. If you would like to take some time before or after practice to discuss a problem or issue with one of the coaches or captains we are happy to listen, however cheer time is **CHEER TIME** *0/*

Attendance – the attendance policy out-lined in the handbook will be enforced. “Family time” excused absences will be limited to **one** excused, after that your parent/guardian must call one of the coaches, at that time we will decide if it is excused or unexcused. You may have 4 excused absences for a family vacation – your parent/guardian must contact one of the coaches to let us know you will be on vacation.

You are a role model - As a result, you must accept certain code of conduct that will be expected of you. I expect your actions to bring respect to you, your family, the cheer family, the team on the field, and Rockford High School. I expect you to do what’s right, to do your best, and to **treat other how you would like to be treated**. If you don’t feel comfortable doing a behavior in front of your parent, grandparents, teachers, etc. chances are it is not a good behavior. Use **Common Sense** and ask yourself if this is something that would make others proud you.

NO CELL PHONES! – Your cell phones will be given to the coaches prior to practices and games, you will get them back after cheer time.

Critiques – Take critiques and use them positively. We want you to be the best you can be, we only critique you to make you a better cheerleader. **DO NOT TALK BACK TO THE COACHES, CAPTAINS OR OTHER TEAM MEMBERS!**

Game Time – You must be at the game 30 minutes prior to start time ready to cheer. You must sing the school song. You are allowed some free time during half-time, but you must be back ready to cheer 5 minutes prior to the start of 2nd half and you must be in cheer formation 2 minutes prior to the start of 2nd half. Unless you are playing in the band you are required to perform band dances – male cheerleaders will be on the sideline supporting your team.

You will not perform until you have learned all the cheers, if you need help, please reach out to your captains for additional cheer practices.

Rockford Cheerleading Contract

I, _____ have read the Rockford Cheerleading Handbook and Summary of Rules and Expectations and agree to abide by all the rules and expectations required to be a member of the Rockford Cheerleading Program.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date