



Upper Merion Vikings Youth Football & Cheer

Coaches and Team Staff Code of Conduct

Complete detailed version with professional conduct, chain of command, social media, gossip, rumor, safety, participation, and discipline expectations.

Purpose and Scope

All coaches, assistant coaches, team parents, volunteers, and team staff shall abide by the organization bylaws, constitution, policies, and Code of Conduct. Team Staff includes anyone who steps on the field, attends practices, games, scrimmages, competitions, events, or otherwise represents Upper Merion Vikings Youth Football & Cheer.

Coaches and team staff are expected to uphold the standards of this organization during preseason, in-season, post-season, and off-season. Representation of this program does not end when practice or the season ends.

Our program exists to teach young athletes discipline, teamwork, accountability, confidence, sportsmanship, leadership, respect, and the importance of being physically and mentally prepared.

Substance Use and Personal Conduct

- Do not smoke, vape, use smokeless tobacco, or use any tobacco or nicotine products on the field, at practices, games, scrimmages, competitions, or organization events.
- Do not use or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages before or during any practice, scrimmage, game, competition, team event, or while representing the organization.
- The use of illegal drugs at any time while representing the organization is prohibited.
- All coaches and team staff must remain in control. Never lose your temper, use profane or abusive language, threaten others, bully, intimidate, or engage in any form of violence.
- Coaches and team staff must never deliberately incite unsportsmanlike conduct from athletes, parents, spectators, or other coaches.

Rules, Eligibility, and League Compliance

- All coaches must have a working knowledge of league and organization rules so they can explain them to players and parents when necessary.
- Never knowingly circumvent, ignore, or break the league or organization rules of play.
- Never permit an ineligible player or cheerleader to participate in a game, competition, practice, or event.
- All teams must verify required weights, ages, birthdates, eligibility items, and documentation as directed by the organization or league.
- No coach, team staff member, consultant, choreographer, or expert may receive payment in cash or kind for services unless specifically approved by the organization and permitted by league rules.

Respect, Sportsmanship, and Sideline Conduct

- Never criticize, argue with, embarrass, or disrespect players, cheerleaders, referees, judges, opposing teams, opposing coaches, fans, spectators, parents, board members, or other volunteers in front of athletes or spectators.
- Never criticize an opposing team, its players, coaches, cheerleaders, judges, referees, or fans by word of mouth, gesture, social media, group chat, or any other form of communication.
- Constructive criticism of athletes should be reserved for later, in private, or in a controlled team setting if the message benefits the group.
- Only the head coach, or another authorized person designated by the organization, may communicate with officials during games unless league rules allow otherwise.
- Coaches, team staff, athletes, and spectators must accept decisions of officials and judges as being made to the best of their ability.

- No one other than the team squad and approved staff is permitted on the sidelines during any game unless authorized.
- No coach should ever grab, pull, or grasp a player by the facemask or use any physical handling that could be unsafe or inappropriate.
- Post-game talks should be held off the field. No matter the score, stress the positives, teach the lesson, and model sportsmanship.

Player and Cheerleader Development

- Make every activity serve as a training ground for life and a basis for good mental and physical health.
- Emphasize that winning is the result of good teamwork, discipline, preparation, and effort.
- Emphasize that good athletes also strive to be good students and responsible young people.
- Allow every youth participant a fair opportunity to compete for the position or role they desire, while maintaining safety and team needs.
- Ensure participants receive adequate repetitions in practice and fair participation in games, competitions, and team activities according to league and team requirements.
- Never run up the score on an opponent. When a team has a commanding lead, coaches should make every effort to provide additional playing time to players who normally receive less opportunity.
- Playing time and participation planning should not be an afterthought. The staff should have a rotation or participation plan before preseason games and should communicate with one another to execute that plan.
- Even when athletes appear out of place in preseason, do not give up on them. If coaches show confidence in their ability to adapt, athletes often improve and become contributors by the season.

Health, Injury, Medication, and Safety Standards

- Remove any participant from a game, practice, competition, or activity when there is even slight doubt about his or her health or safety, whether or not the concern is the result of injury, until competent medical advice is available.
- All injuries must be taken seriously. Serious injuries, including anything greater than minor cuts, bruises, or sprains, must be reported to the Athletic Director, Cheer Director, or designated board contact immediately.
- Do not recommend, distribute, or administer any medication, controlled or over-the-counter, except as specifically prescribed by the participant's physician and with permission of the participant's parent or guardian according to organization policy.
- No one is permitted to use sweating down tactics in order for a player to make weight.
- No one may engage in equipment modifications, alterations, subtractions, or additions before or after weigh-in on game days.
- Weigh-ins during practice or team activities must be supervised by an approved coach, director, or team parent as required by organization policy.
- Canceling practices due to inclement weather is at the discretion of authorized team leadership, but player safety is the number one priority.
- No team should practice during a thunderstorm, lightning, unsafe field conditions, or any situation that creates an unreasonable safety risk.
- If practice is canceled, coaches must arrange to contact all team members and notify the Athletic Director, Cheer Director, or appropriate organization contact as soon as the decision is made.

Equipment, Facilities, Field Use, and Scrimmages

- All teams are responsible for their own equipment and for ensuring equipment is properly used, returned, stored, and cared for.
- Field use priority will be games first, then scrimmages, then practices unless otherwise directed by the organization or facility rules.
- Keep players and cheerleaders out of restricted facilities, storage areas, announcer booths, field houses, or other designated areas unless supervised and authorized.
- All scrimmages, home or away, must be cleared through the Athletic Director, Cheer Director, or proper organization leadership.
- No team shall scrimmage another weight class, age group, or level unless specifically authorized by the organization and league rules.
- The last teams to use sleds, pads, mats, or field equipment are responsible for returning items to the proper storage area.
- The storage of equipment should be supervised by an adult. Equipment may not be thrown into storage areas or left unsecured.
- Coaches and staff are expected to protect the organization's equipment, uniforms, facilities, and fields as if they personally own them.

Volunteer and Program Support Expectations

- Coaches are expected to volunteer in areas beyond coaching, especially on game day and at major organization events.
- Game day duties may include chains, announcing, 50/50, concessions, food sales, field setup, field breakdown, cleanup, equipment movement, event support, and other program needs.

- Coaches and staff must set an example for other parents and families by supporting the entire organization, not just their individual team.
- All coaches agree to help recruit players and cheerleaders and support program growth across all levels when asked.
- Coaches and staff are expected to attend organization events, awards ceremonies, banquets, or recognition events when requested in order to honor the athletes.

Parent Communication and Team Parents

- Communicate with parents and guardians in a respectful, timely, and professional manner.
- Ask how athletes are doing in school and make an effort to know both players and parents in an appropriate, supportive way.
- Utilize team parents appropriately for distribution of information, paperwork, minor injury support, phone chains, information sharing, equipment issues, and administrative tasks.
- Coaches should not engage in emotional back-and-forth conversations, arguments, public disputes, or side conversations that create conflict with parents.
- Parent concerns should be redirected to the proper chain of command when they involve coaching decisions, discipline, safety concerns, participation, or organizational policy.

Chain of Command

All concerns involving athletes, parents, coaches, team issues, safety, discipline, playing time, team decisions, policy concerns, or program decisions must follow the proper chain of command:

1. **Head Coach or Team Lead**
2. **Athletic Director or Cheer Director**
3. **President or Executive Board**
4. **Full Board Review, if necessary**

- Coaches and team staff shall not bypass the chain of command, pull unrelated people into disputes, or create confusion by discussing internal issues with parents, other teams, outside organizations, friends, or on social media.
- Internal concerns are not to be discussed in parking lots, stands, group chats, private text threads, social media messages, sideline conversations, or informal circles.
- If someone brings a concern to a coach or staff member outside the proper process, the coach or staff member is expected to redirect that person back to the chain of command.

Professional Conduct, Communication, and Anti-Gossip Policy

Coaches and team staff are expected to operate with professionalism, integrity, discretion, and loyalty to the organization at all times. This applies during preseason, during the season, post-season, and off-season.

At no time should any coach, team staff member, volunteer, or representative engage in gossip, rumor-spreading, or discussion of internal team or organization matters with parents, athletes, other coaches outside official discussions, friends, family, spectators, other organizations, social media audiences, group chats, or private text threads.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Discussing playing time, positions, rotations, cheer placements, coaching assignments, coaching decisions, or discipline matters.
- Questioning, criticizing, or undermining other coaches, directors, board members, teams, athletes, parents, or organization leadership.
- Sharing personal opinions about athletes, parents, family situations, coach decisions, team conflicts, or board decisions.
- Repeating “what you heard,” “what someone said,” “people are saying,” or any information that has not been addressed through official leadership channels.
- Creating or participating in side conversations that divide teams, families, parents, athletes, or staff.
- Taking screenshots, forwarding private messages, sharing emails, copying text threads, or circulating private communications to stir conflict or involve unnecessary people.
- Venting to parents, friends, coaches, or other organization members about internal matters instead of addressing concerns through the chain of command.
- Positioning yourself as a source of inside information or creating the perception that you have special knowledge about team or organization decisions.

If you would not say it in a formal meeting with leadership present, it should not be said at all.

Any form of rumor starting, gossip participation, leadership undermining, side-taking, or creating division between parents, athletes, coaches, teams, or board members will be considered a serious violation of this Code of Conduct.

Social Media and Digital Communication

- Coaches and staff may not post, share, comment, like, repost, or engage in content that creates drama, gossip, speculation, negativity, embarrassment, or conflict involving the organization.
- Coaches and staff shall not use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, email chains, group chats, private messages, text threads, or any other platform to complain about team decisions, playing time, coaching concerns, board decisions, athlete behavior, parent issues, internal conflicts, or organization matters.
- Even indirect, vague, sarcastic, or “people know who they are” posts that could reasonably be interpreted as referencing the organization are not acceptable.
- Screenshots, forwarded messages, private texts, social media posts, or copied conversations may not be used to stir conflict, pressure leadership, embarrass others, or create division.
- Coaches and staff are expected to shut down gossip when they hear it, redirect concerns to the proper chain of command, and protect the integrity and reputation of the program.



Privacy and Confidentiality

- Coaches and team staff must protect the privacy of all athletes and families.
- Personal information, injuries, discipline matters, eligibility concerns, family issues, attendance, behavior, grades, documentation, or internal conflicts must not be discussed publicly or with anyone who does not have a direct need to know.
- Team information should only be shared with appropriate team members, parents, directors, or board members who are responsible for handling the matter.

Discipline Process for Athletes and Team Issues

For disciplinary problems or team issues, coaches and staff should follow a fair and progressive process:

- First, discuss the concern with the player or cheerleader in an appropriate and constructive manner.
- Second, discuss the concern with the parent or guardian if needed.
- Third, notify the Athletic Director or Cheer Director.
- Finally, the Athletic Director or Cheer Director, coaches, parents, and board leadership may meet to discuss the issue if necessary.

Board Authority and Disciplinary Action

- The Board of Directors, at its discretion, may discipline coaches and team staff for violating any part of this Code of Conduct.
- Disciplinary action may include verbal warning, written warning, suspension, removal from practice or game activities, removal from coaching or staff duties, or permanent expulsion from the organization.
- Violations involving gossip, rumor-spreading, social media misconduct, bypassing chain of command, parent division, athlete mistreatment, safety concerns, or conduct damaging to the organization may result in immediate action.
- This Code of Conduct is valid for the current season and must be signed in order to participate as a coach, team parent, volunteer, or team staff member.

Acknowledgment

I, _____, have read, understand, and agree to abide by and uphold the Upper Merion Vikings Youth Football & Cheer Coaches and Team Staff Code of Conduct, organization bylaws, policies, and expectations.

Signature: _____

Team and Position: _____

Date: _____