



NORTH ALLEGHENY SPORTS NETWORK

CHEERLEADING HANDBOOK

Dear Parents and athletes,

Welcome to North Allegheny Cheerleading! It is important to you, as parents and athletes, that you are aware of certain information and costs so that both you and your child can have an enjoyable season. This book was compiled to provide information and promote discussion among the Boosters, the Athletic Office, the coaches, parents, and potential cheerleaders. It is by no means all-inclusive of everything a parent needs to know about high school and middle school cheerleading, but it gives an overview of some of the most frequently asked questions. A signed policy form, found on the last page of this handbook, must be signed by the athlete and parent/guardian prior to any cheerleader trying out.

Please review the information in this booklet with your athlete. Keep it handy for future reference.

Sincerely,

The North Allegheny Coaching Staff and The North Allegheny Cheerleading Boosters

Eligibility Requirements

- Middle School squads will consist of students entering 7th and 8th from their respective middle school.
 - Middle School competition teams will include 7th, 8th & 9th graders selected by the coaching staff.
- Freshmen squad will consist of students entering 9th grade only.
- Junior Varsity will consist of students entering 9th, 10th and 11th grades.
 - Junior Varsity competition teams will include 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders selected by the coaching staff.
- Varsity will consist of students entering 10th, 11th, or 12th grades. Varsity athletes must have a standing backhandspring on all surfaces and be able to perform an extended lib in their stunt position.
 - Varsity competition teams will include 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders selected by the coaching staff.

***All squad members MUST have a completed Physical by a physician 1 week prior to the official start of the season.*

Academic Eligibility

All candidates must meet the PIAA academic requirements as follows:

1. The student athletes must pursue a curriculum defined and approved by the principal as a full-time curriculum.
2. The student athlete must be passing at least four full-credit subjects or the equivalent thereof as of each Friday during a grading period. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the loss of a student's athletic eligibility for the following week beginning Sunday through the following Saturday.
3. The student athlete must have passed at least four full-credit subjects or the equivalent thereof during the previous grading period. Eligibility for the first grading period is based on final grades for the preceding year. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a loss of athletic eligibility for the first fifteen school days period.

How much time does cheerleading take?

- **Varsity cheerleading** has the biggest commitment of time at approximately 20+ hours per week between practice time and time spent at interscholastic events. The full Varsity squad cheers for all football games and all home boys' basketball section games, and portions of the squad will cheer at away boys section games and possibly some girls' basketball games, and other events. This includes regular season games and ALL playoff games. Athletes will also cheer at other events as needed. We Their attendance at the events is at the discretion of the cheerleading coaches and the Athletic Director in cases where the sports' schedules conflict.
- The **Junior Varsity squad** will attend all home J.V. football, boys basketball home games and possibly some girls' basketball home games. The J.V. squad will be asked to fill in at Varsity events should a conflict arise in the Varsity schedule. Other events may be scheduled as well.
- The **Freshmen squad** will attend all home Freshmen football, boys basketball home games and some girls' basketball games. The Freshman squad will be asked to fill in at Varsity events should a conflict arise in the Varsity schedule. Other events may be scheduled as well.
- The **Middle School squads** will attend all home football and boys basketball home games, and some girls' basketball games. Other events may be scheduled as well.
- **High School Competitive cheerleading** is the greatest amount of commitment between our competitive squads. Athletes should expect to practice 3-4 times a week or more, specifically during the week leading up to competitions. Athletes will be expected to attend school and practices, and sometimes attend events that same day as well. Competitions will be attended at the local, state and national level and will require missing days of school. Athletes who cannot commit to this schedule and are not confident they can balance the workload with their school schedule should not try out for the competitive program at NA.
- **Non Travel JV and Middle School Competitive cheerleading** competes locally typically through the end of October or November. Athletes should expect to practice 1-2 times a week or more, specifically during the week leading up to competitions. Athletes will be expected to attend school and practices, and sometimes attend events that same day as well. Competitions will be attended at the local level and will not require missing days of school. Athletes who cannot commit to this schedule and are not confident they can balance the workload with their school schedule should not try out for the competitive program at NA.
- Cheerleading begins immediately after try-outs in April and ends in February / March, following basketball and cheer competitions. During the summer, all cheerleaders must make every effort to attend all practices. Cheerleaders must also attend a summer camp and high school cheerleaders must help coach a mini-camp.
- **The official season begins on August 11, 2025.**
- During the school year, the cheerleaders will typically practice, pending coach's schedule, at least once a week for sideline and 2-3 times a week for competition teams, or more during the competition season (if on a competition team). Practices can be added at any time.
- We may also perform upon request at pep rallies and charitable functions to represent the school.
- Other weekly responsibilities can include sign making, locker room decorating prior to home game days, and volunteer events.
- Some of the listed activities/games may have full squad or half-squad attendance requirements.

All scheduled appearances of the Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Freshmen cheerleaders are strictly up to the coach's discretion, not the Booster organization.

How much does cheerleading cost?

- Please see the 2025 – 2026 estimated cost sheet for a breakdown of costs associated with being an NA Cheerleader. Costs are estimates and returning cheerleaders typically have lower costs. Please do not let costs deter your participation – payment plans can be confidential and applied by cheer boosters or the athletic office.
- Booster Fees
 - Parents are encouraged to become members of the Cheerleading Boosters. This cost and dues can vary year to year based on squad needs and are at the discretion of the Cheerleading Booster Board. Please see the “Boosters” section of the booklet for further descriptions of the goals of the Booster organization.
- Competition Team Fees
 - The Varsity competition squads will enter cheerleading competitions. Squads are projected to compete in several local competitions throughout their season. The Varsity squad should be expected to attend the WPIAL Championship, the PIAA Championship, UCA regional competition, and UCA national competition in Florida. The Varsity Gameday squad is projected to compete in several local events in the fall and winter, as well as UCA Regional and UCA nationals in Florida. Any other travel squads will attend the UCA Nationals in Florida.
 - Non Varsity non travel competition teams (JV or Middle School) will be expected to enter local cheerleading competitions in the fall and early winter. Costs and time commitment associated with these teams are minimal compared to varsity competition squads.
 - Although competitions can be expensive, parents can reduce their share by participating in fundraising activities. We are planning to include more fundraising opportunities to offset competition costs. If you do not wish to participate in fundraising for competition expenses, you will be asked to pay directly for your fees. An estimated cost of the 2025-2026 competition season for each squad will be listed on the 2025- 2026 cost sheet.
- Summer Camps
 - Each squad will participate in a summer camp to improve their cheerleading skills during mandatory camp week. Competition Athletes will attend additional camps throughout the summer. Mandatory camp begins August 11, 2025 for all squads. You can expect to practice everyday (excluding weekends) until the start of school. A more detailed calendar of camp week will be provided closer to the start of camp. Not attending or being late to one or more days of camp will result in your athlete being benched for the first football game and not being in specific routines taught at camp. There are no exceptions to this rule.
- Clothing
 - Each cheerleader will incur clothing costs related to uniform requirement. Price is estimated on the 2025 – 2026 cost sheet. Please note many items are the same from year to year to try to keep the cost down. Please do not let costs deter your participation – payment plans can be confidential and applied by cheer boosters or the athletic office.

Cheerleading Boosters

Without every parent contributing to the Booster organization, it would not be a success. The cheerleading Boosters in the past have provided money for choreography camp, mini-camp expenses, tumbling mats, school uniform expenses, UBO donations, post-prom party donations, and senior cheerleader scholarship(s), to name a few. Boosters pay for coaches’ needs (sound system, equipment, etc.), the end-of-the-year banquet with gifts for all the cheerleaders and their coaches, and other expenses as they arise. It is expected that we all help to make this program a great one.

Fundraisers

Fundraising activities fall into three categories. The first type of fundraising benefits the Booster organization – i.e., mini- camp. This money goes towards a predetermined goal. The second type of fundraising benefits the operating costs of the organization and future needs of the program. The final and 3rd category is a team-fundraiser that would benefit the needs of a specific team (i.e. Cost of Nationals for the Varsity comp team). All fundraisers need maximum participation to appropriately support the growth of the program. If you do not wish to participate in fundraising, you will be asked to pay directly for your fees.

Uniforms

- Wearing an NA Cheerleading uniform is a privilege and should be treated as such. Appearance and behavior should reflect positively on our school district when the cheerleader is in uniform.
- Public display of affection while in uniform is strictly prohibited.
- The school provides the specific uniform items that are free of charge to the cheerleaders for their use during the year.
- Replacement charges will be charged to the individual cheerleaders for lost or damaged uniform items. Damaged uniform items can include but are not limited to unauthorized alterations, permanent stains, burns, tears, foul odors, or theft. The uniform replacement must be paid for and ordered prior to the banquet and the upcoming season's tryouts.
- The uniforms will be sized to the cheerleaders prior to the start of the season.
- Any alterations made to the uniform without the consent of the Coach & Athletic Director will result in the parent being required to reimburse the school for the full amount of the uniform.
- All uniforms should be machined-washed only and hung to dry. (Dry cleaning the uniform takes out the VISA treatment.) Only the Varsity wool jacket requires dry cleaning. For uniforms, we suggest Oxy Clean Powder soak to remove stains.

Absences and Attendance

- The cheerleader or her parents will communicate absences for medical reasons, summer vacations, family weddings, or death in the family to the coach as soon as they are known. Absences must be alerted to the coach at least two weeks in advance of the event expected to be missed for it to be excused, with the exception of last minute illness or family death. Absences not told to the coach in writing via email or SportsYou message less than two weeks in advance will be unexcused.
- The following reasons will be considered as an excusable absence during the season: a death in the family, family wedding, school related event, illness, and college visitations.
- Traveling during the summer months and Christmas break will also be excused absences, as long as the coach is made aware of the travel at least two weeks prior to the missed practice or event.
- Unexcused absences from practice and or games will not be tolerated. Unexcused absences may lead to suspension from squad and or immediate dismissal. An unexcused absence the week of a game or competition will result in the athlete being benched for the upcoming event. An excused absence the week of the game or event will result in the athlete not fully participating in the event.
- Practices prior to competitions are mandatory, and athletes with excused or unexcused absences will not be able to compete.
- Missing a competition may result in the athlete being removed from the team, moved to an alternate position, and/or spots in the routine changed. All competitions are required and are not optional.
- Doctor, dentist and non-medical (hair, nail) appointments made during team tumbling practice, practice or games times will count as an unexcused absences.
- Family dinners, birthdays and pre-scheduled appointments will NOT be excused absences.
- An unexcused absence the week of a game or event will result in a one game suspension at which the athlete must attend the game, but will sit with the coaches. They cannot cheer again until this one game suspension, sitting with the coaches in full uniform and warm-up for the full game, is served.
- An excused absence the week of a game or event may result in that athlete having to sit out specific cheers, pregame, quarters and performances
- 3+ unexcused absences of any kind will result in a meeting with the athletic director and myself to talk about your spot on the team. Missing 3 or more games for any reason will result in meeting with the athletic director and coach to talk about your spot on the team - this includes other club sports not associated with NA.
- Tumbling for high school teams is a team practice, not an optional practice. Missing this may result in being benched from the game that week as well, as the scheduled tumbling practice can turn into team practice at any time.
- All cheerleaders must be prompt to all practices and games and be fully dressed and ready by the start of their meet time. Not being ready to go for meet time will count as an absence and will result in the athlete

having to sit with the coaches during the game. Missing a uniform piece will also result in the athlete having to sit with the coaches during the game.

- Repeated unexcused absences can result in dismissal from squad.

Mandatory practices start on August 11, 2025 and will run that full week, not weekends, with practice the week school starts as well. Schedule TBD closer to camp week. Plan for all day.

UCA Home Camp for High School - 8/12 & 8/13 MS 8/14 & 8/15

Injuries

- If an injury occurs during the season, a doctor's note must be presented to the coaching staff and athletic trainer with specific directions as to what the cheerleader can and cannot do and they cannot return until a clearance note is given to their coaches and athletic trainer.
- If a cheerleader is injured during the season, as long as medically able, they are expected to attend all scheduled practice, tumbling, games, competitions and events. Additionally, injured athletes must attend the teams' events in uniform / warm- up and sit with the coaches and continue to support the team.

Squad Placements

- Earning a position on the Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshmen & Middle School cheerleading squads is a **privilege**. Your position on these squads is dependent on attendance, consistent effort, hard work, and a positive attitude toward cheerleading. Disrespecting your spot on the team, coaches or another individual may result in dismissal from the team. Team positions can change at any time.
- Varsity cheerleaders who fail to meet the required criteria may be placed on the JV cheerleading squad or sit out of Varsity events until Varsity criteria have once again been met. Cheerleaders can move from one team to another based on ability or behavior at the coaches' discretion.
- Team members will be tested WEEKLY on the skills they exhibited at tryouts. Failure to maintain these skills can result in removal from the team at coaches discretion or movement to another team. This can happen at anytime throughout the year.
- If a cheerleader is removed from the team or voluntarily quits their team, they would not be eligible to tryout for the next year. *(For example, if a Freshmen cheerleader quits her team, she would not be eligible to tryout again until she is going into her Junior year.)*
- If a cheerleader is removed from the team or voluntarily quits their competition team, they would not be eligible to tryout for the competition team the next year. *(For example, if a Freshmen cheerleader quits the Varsity competition team mid season, she would not be eligible to tryout for a competition team again until she is going into her Junior year.)*

Game, Event and Practice Expectations

- Cheerleaders must be in school by approx. 10:30 a.m. to participate in practices or games (varies by school).
- Cheerleaders will wear proper attire to school on games days decided by the coaches and captains.
- Nails must be at an appropriate length and neutral in color. This will be monitored by coaches. Failure to have nails at an appropriate length and neutral in color will result in the athlete sitting for the entire game or practice.
- Cheerleaders will be **prohibited** to wear jewelry of any kinds at practice or games due to safety reasons. This includes but is not limited to earrings, apple watches, necklaces, and other piercings. Failure to remove jewelry will result in the athlete sitting for the entire game or practice.
- Cell phones are prohibited during practices & games unless a coach approves use. Please keep phones on silent and inside your bag at all times.
- Cheerleaders are responsible for being on the field/court at their meet time designated by their coach, and back in the stands or field at least 1 minute before the end of half-time intermission, unless otherwise noted by their coach.
- Cheerleaders must demonstrate respectful attention during the National Anthem. They should be

standing in a proper formation that the coach approves. No laughing or talking will be permitted during the National Anthem or school anthem.

- Chewing gum is prohibited at games and practices.
- Eating or drinking on the track or on the bench during games is prohibited besides water.
- It is each cheerleader's responsibility to be dressed completely in the expected attire and bring appropriate weather gear. Missing any piece of a uniform at a game (Bow, Top, Skirt, Socks, Shoes, Poms, other, etc) will result in that athlete sitting the game.
- High school squads can use the NA Cheer Backpack for travel and games. No other backpacks please.
- No public displays of affection are allowed while in NA cheer uniform or team gear.

Cheerleader Expectations

- High School cheerleaders will have a weekly practice over the summer and a weekly tumbling class. Day/time TBD.
- Middle School Cheerleaders will have a weekly practice over the summer to develop cheers, motions and skills for the upcoming season.
- Competition Cheerleaders will have 1-2 weekly practices over the summer. Day/Time TBD.
- All Cheerleaders are expected to learn game material (sidelines, dances) by **August 11, 2025** using the NA Cheer videos posted in our SportsYou. This will be posted in SportsYou groups after tryouts. Failure to know your cheers and dances will result in being benched until you know them confidently and they are performed sharp, clean and with good knowledge.
- All cheerleaders will begin their Mandatory Practice week on August 11, 2025 and will continue until the start of school, excluding weekends. Families should prepare these dates in advance of the season so that all team members are present to begin the season. Missing a day of mandatory camp week will result in being benched for the first game, where an athlete is required to attend but sit with the coaches the full game. No exceptions to this rule
- Cheerleaders will work together as a team for the good of the squad and pay attention to the directions of their coach/captains. Disrespecting the coaches, other athletes or any adult will result in dismissal from the squad. Bullying, harassment, or inappropriate speech will not be tolerated.
- If the cheerleader receives an in school suspension they are permitted to practice but not participate in contests or in cheer competitions. If the cheerleader receives an out of school suspension then she will not be allowed to practice or cheer at school events. In addition, if the out of school suspension falls on a practice day or event/game day this amounts to an unexcused absence and may lead to additional sanctions including dismissal.
- Use of alcohol, drugs, Juul, tobacco and other illegal products are strictly prohibited. If a cheerleader uses and or is determined by school or law authorities to have used alcohol or drugs that student may be suspended or dismissed from the squad. This includes being associated with drugs and alcohol in social media posts. This policy will be strictly enforced.
- Each cheerleader must maintain a positive online presence that would not reflect poorly on the athlete, cheer program or North Allegheny School district. Social Media presence is closely monitored for all athletes and a negative presence can be cause for dismissal from the team. This includes all social media accounts and 'fake' accounts that belong to the athlete, and 'fail' accounts.
- Harassment (physical, verbal, emotional, etc.) of another student or team member will not be tolerated.

Competition Team Notes

- Competition Cheerleaders are required to be rostered on a sideline squad before making a competition squad.
- Competition athletes will practice more days a week than sideline cheerleaders. Please be aware of the additional time commitment for each squad prior to committing to the team. Varsity competition teams will practice regularly 2-3 days a week in addition to their sideline practice days.
- Failure to uphold skills, expectations, or a positive attitude may result in athletes being moved to an alternate role or removed from the competition team.

- Alternates are required to be at all practices and competitions, and dress in full uniform.
- There is no guarantee teams will compete directly against other squads at competitions as we do not know the schedule of every team in our area, or what size / type of squad each program will have year to year.
- Cheerleaders will all ride to competitions together on school transportation. Parents and athletes should be prompt with meet times to not delay the entire team's arrival to events.
- Athletes and parents must show good sportsmanship while representing NA, no matter the outcome.

Failure to follow these rules will result in disciplinary action being taken by the coaches or the Athletic Department. Other issues may arise during the school year that this booklet does not address, and rules may be added at the coaches' discretion.

Expectations of the Parents

- Arrange to have your child to practice on time and picked up promptly at the end of practice.
- Arrange to have your child to games on time.
- Safety of the girls is always our first consideration. Parents must understand that injuries are always a possibility in the sport or cheerleading.
- All parents are strongly encouraged to be members of the Cheerleading Boosters organization, participate in fundraising activities, and pay all cheer expenses promptly.
- All parents are expected to follow the chain commands for complaints.
 1. Kaylee Kenz / Your Athlete's Head Coach
 2. Dana Thomas
 3. The Athletic Office
- Parents should NOT take any complaints to the Booster President and Booster board, unless the complaint is pertaining to booster fees, fundraising or booster ran events. All issues need brought directly to the head coach of your athlete's team.

Grievances

- If you have a complaint about the squad, take it to the coach.
- If you have complaints with the Booster organization, take them to the Booster president.
- If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact the Head Coach, Cheerleading Coordinator, or the Athletic Office.
- Constructive criticism, expressed to the right people, makes the team better. Destructive criticism will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from the squad.
- Please discuss problems or concerns with your coach before or after practice by appointment only, not during practice sessions or a game. Please do not approach a coach directly after a practice or game if you do not have a scheduled appointment.
- Please respect your coaches time. Extensive messages via SportsYou will not be tolerated. Phone calls or in person appointments must be scheduled if there is an issue.

Coach's Responsibilities

- The squad expects that coaches will provide instruction and practice so that each girl can improve her cheerleading skills in a safe way.
- The coaches will correct mistakes in a positive and productive manner.
- The coaches will monitor attendance, attitude and participation at practices and games.
- Coaches will be available to answer questions and discuss any concerns expressed by cheerleaders and/or parents at a scheduled time.

North Allegheny Cheer Policy Agreement Form

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the 2025 – 2026 North Allegheny Cheerleading booklet and agree to all listed in this book. I also understand the cost associated with the sideline and competitive cheerleading squads my athlete is trying out for. This signed paper must be turned in on the first day of tryouts. Athletes cannot tryout without a signed policy agreement form.

Athlete Name: _____ Athlete Grade for the Upcoming Season: _____

Athlete Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please circle all of the squads you will be trying out for this season:

CARSON MIDDLE SCHOOL SIDELINE MARSHALL MIDDLE SCHOOL SIDELINE
INGOMAR MIDDLE SCHOOL SIDELINE MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPETITION TEAM
FRESHMAN SIDELINE JV SIDELINE
VARSITY / JV COMPETITION TEAM (TRAVEL) JV COMPETITION TEAM (NON TRAVEL)
VARSITY SIDELINE

Parent / Guardian Name: _____ Relationship to Athlete: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent / Guardian Phone Number : _____

Parent / Guardian Email : _____

I UNDERSTAND/ACCEPT THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEAMS MY ATHLETE IS TRYING OUT FOR (please circle yes or no): YES NO

I ATTENDED THE PARENT MEETING ON 3/18 AT NAI (please circle yes or no): YES NO

IF CIRCLED NO - HAVE YOU WATCHED THE MEETING RECORDING AND READ THE UPDATED HANDBOOK? (please circle yes or no): YES NO