

Mother Lode Youth Athletic Conference Cheerleading Rules and Regulations

All MLYAC league rules and regulations shall apply to all cheerleaders and cheer coaches and advisors, in addition to the following amendments:

Purpose

The Mother Lode Youth Athletic Conference Cheerleading Program is an integral part of our total youth football program and contributes highly to an individual's overall education and growth as a young person. The Mother Lode Youth Athletic Conference Cheerleading Program is in place to promote spirit, develop teamwork and sportsmanship, and provide a safe environment in which cheerleading participants can learn and have fun. It is the intention of this organization to allow any child who wants to cheer the opportunity to participate. Depending on the number of cheerleaders, availability of uniforms, the number of coaches available, etc, it may be necessary to limit squad sizes.

Safety

No issue is of greater importance than the safety of our young cheerleaders and mascots; none is more worthy of the attention of coaches, officials, players and administrators. The young cheerleaders and mascots who enjoy the sport of cheerleading deserve our wholehearted commitment to their safety.

Cheerleading divisions

Ages, not grades, will be used to place participants in their appropriate division or levels. The ages of all cheer participants shall correspond to the overall ages of the team with which they are associated. The Mother Lode Youth Athletic Conference no longer uses grades for determining official status of any player or cheerleader.

Liability and responsibility: Guidelines are set due to age mainly because of liability reasons and the risks involved in cheerleading. Younger cheerleaders are less likely to recognize and respect those risks, and are more likely to attempt something inherently dangerous or dangerous due to current skill levels. Restrictions exist for the protection of those under the age of legal liability, coaches, parents and responsible organizations, such as the Mother Lode Youth Athletic Conference.

It should be noted that the guidelines set up by NFHS (National Federation of High School Associations) in the spirit section have been put in place to cover high school-age cheerleaders, and are not meant to cover the liability and responsibility of protecting the safety of the cheerleading participants at our level. The cheerleading participants at our level are not of high school age or at the skill level of high school cheerleaders.

Cheerleaders must be 10 years old on or before December 1, and not turn 15 before December 1 of the current year.

Bantam: All 10- and 11-year-old cheerleading participants will be placed on the Bantam Cheerleading Squad. No 10-year-old participants will be allowed on the Junior Varsity or Varsity squads. An 11-year-old participant with formal cheerleading experience (*see below*) may be placed on the Junior Varsity Squad with advisor approval.

Formal experience consists of one year's experience at the bantam level within our program, or an equivalent of cheerleading in an accredited youth football and cheer program. Participating as a mascot, or in gymnastics or dance programs, will not be considered as formal experience for the purpose of placement in our program.

Junior Varsity: All 12-year-old and experienced 11-year-old cheerleading participants with advisor approval will be placed on the Junior Varsity Squad. A 13-year-old may participate on the Junior Varsity level with advisor approval. No 14-year-old participants will be allowed on the Bantam or Junior Varsity squads (see *formal experience*).

Varsity: All 13- and 14-year-old cheerleading participants will be placed on the Varsity Squad. Participants 12 years old with previous formal experience may participate on the Varsity Squad with advisor approval.

Mascots: A mascot, by definition, is NOT a cheerleader. Mascots are not allowed to participate in any stunting or tumbling and must be recognizably different from cheerleaders.

First-year Mascots must be 8 years old on or before December 1. Mascots will be limited to a maximum of four to any level or squad, or a total of 12.

Smaller programs: Smaller groups may participate as one squad, but stunting must be based on appropriate age levels.

MLYAC Participation

Cheerleaders are to participate in sanctioned MLYAC jamborees and games that their franchise football team is participating in. Non-MLYAC-sanctioned events must have written approval by their Franchise Board of Directors, and this written approval must be sent on to MLYAC for approval prior to participating in any event that includes stunting and tumbling, and must have the appropriate insurance coverage.

Cheer Coaches Cards and Clinics

All cheer coaches must attend a MLYAC-sanctioned coaches' clinic each year to receive their coach's card. Coaches not attending a sanctioned clinic will not be allowed on the sidelines during games, and cannot conduct practice sessions. The MLYAC board and each team's advisors will work to contract a qualified (certified) cheer instructor to help organize this clinic.