

## **SoFLO Volleyball Academy**

### **Parents Guide & Handbook 2025-26 Club Season**

#### **Our Mission**

SoFLO Volleyball Academy provides all its athletes with the technical, tactical, and physical training to reach their highest possible potential. SoFLO Volleyball Academy is equally dedicated to the highest standards of personal integrity, strength of character, competitive spirit, mutual respect, and responsible conduct. We strive to help every athlete, regardless of the age or ability, to achieve life-changing growth in physical skills and personal character as they play the game of volleyball.

#### **Goals**

To develop interest and encourage participation in the sport of volleyball for boys, girls, and adults. To provide athletes with advanced technical and performance training.

To be recognized as one of the finest youth volleyball programs in the state.

To provide mentorship to our athletes – SoFLO Volleyball Academy coaches will be mentors to our athletes for their entire volleyball careers. If your athlete chooses to play volleyball in middle school, high school, or college, we will help mentor them to make them aware of their best possible choices.

#### **Items Covered with Academy Dues**

If your athlete has been selected to play on one of our SoFLO Volleyball Academy teams, you will have financial responsibilities throughout the season. Outlined below are the costs that are covered with club dues. The Academy knows your commitment to your junior team will expose your athlete to high quality volleyball, provide them with a valuable educational experience, and allow your athlete to develop lifelong skills and friendships.

A non-refundable deposit is required from each player selected to play on a team. This amount is due, in full, upon your acceptance from SoFLO Volleyball Academy to join the

team. All paperwork must be turned in or electronically submitted to complete your acceptance. The player will not be considered registered for the team, and will not be allowed to participate in practice, until this initial registration is complete, and deposit is made.

All items listed in the budget will be covered by your Academy dues, including, but not limited to:

1. Coaches Registration in SoFLO Volleyball affiliated organizations, AVP, USAV, AAU and Gold Medal Squared, including Level 2 Background checks for all coaches
2. Facility Insurance Policy, D & O Insurance Policy, and General Liability Insurance Policy
3. Operational Equipment including Balls, ball carts, workout equipment, poles & nets, first aid supplies
4. High quality professional Gold Medal Squared Certified coaching
5. Facility Leasing Fees for all practices
6. Lodging and per diem for Coaches who travel
7. Administrative fees for managing registrations, rostering, scheduling, communications, accounting
8. Team and Coaches admissions fees to all tournaments
9. Coaching training and Certifications as well as annual membership fees to affiliated association
10. Performance and Fitness Training
11. Media and Communication Software
12. Mobile Application and Website service & maintenance fees

**Extra Expenses not included in season Academy dues**

1. All Athletes must purchase their uniform package separately
2. Athletes' travel expenses to and from all Tournaments – Hotels, meals, etc.
3. Additional Small Group, Clinics, or Private Instruction - per hour or session fee applies.

**Attitude is the Key**

SoFLO Volleyball Academy has established a volleyball program in which everyone can be proud to be a part. We consider ourselves an elite organization. To continue this tradition, a positive commitment from coaches, players and parents is required. Our coaching staff is committed and has the knowledge to teach the fundamentals of the game and the ability to motivate our players to their maximum level of performance. Our coaches must have patience, and above all, the ability to communicate with positive reinforcement and to assist each player in any way possible to achieve the goals established by each player. Our players

must be committed to the program as established by the coaching staff, to practice and play with competitive attitudes, and to maintain good sportsmanship at all times. And most importantly, our parents must be committed to the program and should maintain a positive attitude toward the program at all times. Parents must eliminate their own ego from the process and see the game without parental eyes. Parents should become knowledgeable of the game to understand how it is played and appreciate the efforts of ALL the club, including players, coaches, and club administration. It is extremely important to the maintenance of our program and the accomplishment of our goals that coaches, players, and parents maintain a positive attitude. So much can be accomplished if we believe in and are committed to the same system. From our past years of experiences, there are three very common negative complaints heard repeatedly from parents which limit the overall success of the teams and in turn the success of our organization as a whole.

The 3 most common complaints are:

**#1 My daughter's on the wrong team** – This generally means the player is not on what is considered to be the number one team OR parent feels their athlete is too good to be on team of which they were placed. (Very rarely does anyone ask to move down or say that their child is not good enough to be on a team). Methods used to assign players to teams are based on an evaluation conducted in a professional manner based upon the consensus of eminently qualified individuals with over 100 years combined volleyball experience. Time has shown that team assignments are made fairly with few mistakes. Players have been and will be moved if there is a consensus from SoFLO staff and the staff feels that it is in the player's best interest to do so. SoFLO Volleyball holds this right to move players but it is not something which we exercise much. If you think that a mistake has been made, please make an appointment to discuss it first with the Coach or Director in private, before involving your player.

**#2 My daughter's not playing in the right position** – Often times a player is the shining star on a high school or middle school team at a particular position and is not exclusively playing that position for their SoFLO Volleyball team. There are several reasons for this. First, we all have to remember that the competition within SoFLO Volleyball may be a lot stronger than on school teams. Therefore, the competition for each position may be more intense than in school where the number of good players is limited. Second, the coach may have a particular need at a certain position and the player is the only one with the requisite skills to fill that need. In any event, talk to the coach first about any concern you might have and then support the coach's decision. One further note: Do

not, under any circumstance, corner the coach at a tournament. There must be an appointment set to meet to discuss a matter like this. There is a 24-hour rule at SoFLO Volleyball for parents talking to coaches about a perceived problem with his/her daughter's playing time/team, etc.

**#3 My daughter's not playing enough** – This can be a common question or complaint but mostly its a misunderstanding in how playing time is determined and distributed. When playing on a SoFLO Volleyball team players will hardly ever play the same amount of time. We cannot provide a guarantee of playing time. SoFLO Volleyball does provide a guarantee that players will practice with other players of equal or better ability, and through hard work, improved skill levels and a great attitude, the opportunity to play more increases. Playing time is earned, not awarded and we will provide fair playing time, not equal time. Negative comments directed to other parents, coaches and players concerning offensive schemes, defensive schemes, players' positions, who is playing, etc. or provide excuses to our players for poor performances, simply have no place in the SoFLO Volleyball organization. Please help maintain our excellent program by supporting coaches and players with a positive attitude. Again, there is a 24-hour rule at SoFLO Volleyball for parents talking to coaches about a perceived problem with his/her daughter's playing time/team, etc.

### **General Rules**

We expect our athletes to act in a courteous manner throughout the season. Athletes disobeying either SoFLO Volleyball Academy, AAU or USAV rules, or acting in a way not deemed appropriate by the staff, may be disciplined or expelled from SoFLO Volleyball Academy. If expulsion from the program is required, there will be no financial compensation, and all outstanding club fees will be due. Every member of SoFLO Volleyball Academy will be offered training through practices. Playing time is based on performance in practice, attitude and event performance of the athlete as viewed by the team coach and the entire SoFLO Volleyball Academy staff. Court time at major competitions (such as Regional's, National Qualifiers, and/or Nationals) will most likely be geared toward the best line-up. Local court time will be more evenly distributed. Equal playtime is NOT guaranteed though fair playing time is.

### **Practice Policies**

Always be on time for practice, at least 15 minutes early. If your practice is at 1pm, please do not show up at 1pm as the team will already have started their warm-ups, 15

minutes early is best. We have limited gym space and to avoid another team's practice starting late or your practice running short, every athlete must be dressed and ready to go at the practice time listed. If an athlete is late arriving to a practice, report to her coach and explain why she is late. Her coach, in his/her sole discretion, will determine if any corrective action needs to be taken. An injured athlete who attends school is expected to be at SoFLO Volleyball practice, even if she cannot physically participate in practice. This is to offer support to her team as well as assist the coach if needed. Transportation to practice is your responsibility. Parents are expected to pick up from practice on time so that coaches are not made to wait. Practices are for you, the athlete, to improve skills. You get out of it what you put into it...always give 100% of the energy you have at that moment in practice. You will play how you practice!

Players must call their coach at least 2 hours before practice if they will not be there. Athletes who miss practice are missing valuable information, training time and touches, potentially, may have their playing time decreased. To emphasize player responsibility, we do not want parents to call on behalf of their child (with the exception of the 12 and under parents/players).

### **Tournament Policies**

Teams will arrive at the playing site at least 60 minutes prior to their first match (45 minutes for refereeing and 1 hour for playing the first match). All players are required to wear warm ups entering and leaving the gym. No food or drinks (other than water), and chewing gum is not permitted in any gym at any time. Florida Region rules allow a tournament director to penalize teams if parents and/or supporters ignore this rule. Team food and drinks can be kept in the lobby or outside the playing venue. All athletes are expected to attend every tournament. If an athlete cannot be at a tournament, she must inform the coach as soon as she knows she will be absent so that the coach can make appropriate changes to practices or lineups. It is the athlete's (not the parent's) responsibility to make arrangements with the coach. Athletes may not leave a tournament site until excused from the coach, no exceptions.

If a coach would like to add additional tournaments to a team's schedule, it will be up to the team to decide if a majority can make that tournament and to pay the cost of the tournament fees, coach's fees, and travel expenses for the additional tournament, and the team will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements and hotel accommodations. No coach may add tournaments to a team's

schedule without approval from the Director.

### **Officiating Duties**

To ensure fairness in distributing officiating duties, every player will attend a referee/scorer clinic. In addition, players may leave a tournament only after all refereeing duties have been taken care of and permission has been obtained from their team coach. Players not reporting for their team refereeing assignment will be benched for their next match.

### **Travel Policies**

This policy is to direct how athletes will be supervised during travel to and from practices and competitions and, where practical for this sport, provides leadership and minimizes one to one interactions.

Athletes are most vulnerable to misconduct during travel, particularly overnight stays. This includes a high risk of athlete to athlete misconduct. During travel, athletes are often away from their families and support networks, and the setting – new changing areas, locker rooms, workout facilities, cars and hotel rooms – is less structured and less familiar.

When the teams travel, all athletes will lodge with their respective team's hotel if possible. Players will be allowed to stay with their immediate family, relatives, or friends. Players are encouraged to wear their SoFLO Volleyball sweatshirts or t-shirts while traveling. We encourage parents to travel with the team to different events. Parents are responsible for making their own hotel reservations and travel accommodations.

This travel policy is a guide to travel practices and competition. Adherence to this policy helps reduce the opportunities for misconduct. We distinguish between travel to training, practice and local competition (Local Travel), and team travel involving a coordinated overnight stay (Team Travel).

### **Local Travel**

When local travel occurs, SoFLO does not sponsor, coordinate, or arrange for travel. For local travel, athletes or their parents/guardians (for minor athletes) are responsible for

making all travel arrangements. In these instances it is the responsibility of the athlete or their parent/guardians (for minor athletes) to ensure the person transporting the athlete maintains all safety and legal requirements, including, but not limited to, a valid driver's license, proper insurance, well maintained vehicle, and compliance with all state laws.

In an effort to minimize one on one interactions, SoFLO staff members, coaches and/or volunteers, who are not also acting as a parent, should not drive alone with an unrelated athlete and should only drive with at least two other athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the athlete's parent or guardian in advance of travel. In any case where a staff member and/or volunteer is involved in the athlete's local travel, a parental release is required in advance. Efforts must be made to ensure that staff and/or volunteers are not alone with an athlete or participant, by, e.g., picking the athletes up in groups.

Coaches, staff members and volunteers who are also an athlete's guardian may provide shared transportation for any athlete(s). We encourage guardians to pick up their athletes first and drop off their athlete last in any shared or carpool arrangement. We also recommend completing a shared travel declaration form signed by the parents/guardians of any minor athlete who is being transported as part of such a carpool arrangement.

## **Team Travel**

Team travel is overnight travel that occurs when SoFLO Volleyball Academy sponsors, coordinates or arranges for travel so that our teams can compete locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. Because of the greater distances, coaches, staff, volunteers and chaperones will often travel with the athletes. However, no coach, staff member, or volunteer will engage in team travel without the proper safety requirements in place, including valid drivers' licenses, proper insurance, well maintained vehicles and compliance with all state laws.

SoFLO Volleyball Academy will make every effort to provide the adequate supervision through our coaches, staff members and other adult chaperones to provide the proper supervisory needs of each team.

For team travel, hotels will NOT be booked by SoFLO Volleyball Academy. Parents/guardians of athletes are responsible to book their hotel rooms. All travel

teams will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements and hotel accommodations. General hotel locations will be announced to all teams on where SoFLO would like to have everyone stay, but the final accommodations will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the athlete.

We encourage family members who wish to stay in the team hotel to do so. If family members do not stay in the team hotel, we encourage all athletes to call parents/guardians regularly and allow for any unscheduled calls by either the athlete or parent/guardian.

### **Travel Notification**

When possible, SoFLO Volleyball Academy will provide reasonable advance notice before team travel. Notice will include the dates, location and duration of competition. Travel notice will also include designated team hotels for overnight stays as well as a contact person within SoFLO Volleyball. This individual will be the point of contact to confirm your intention to travel and to help with travel details.

### **Coach and Staff Responsibilities**

During team travel a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent or guardian of the particular athlete).

During team travel, coaches and staff members will help athletes, adhere to policy guidelines, including without limitation, the Travel Policy, Locker Rooms and Changing Areas Policy and Reporting Policy.

If a coach or staff member transports an athlete or other organization member in their private car for team travel, a copy of the coach's or staff member's valid driver's license is required.

When not practicing, training, competing, or preparing for competition, coaches and staff will monitor the activities of athletes, fellow coaches and staff during team travel. Coaches and staff will:

- Prepare athletes for team travel and make athletes aware of all expectations.
- Familiarize themselves with a travel schedules for upcoming for team travel.
- Conform to, and monitor for others' adherence, to the Travel Policy.
- Encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled

communications with their parents/guardians.

- Help athletes be on time for all team commitments when possible.
- Assist with team travel logistical needs when possible.
- Support chaperones and/or participate in the monitoring of athletes for adherence to curfew restrictions set based on age and competition schedule as listed in travel itinerary.
- Ensure athletes are complying with hotel room restrictions based on gender or age bracket requirements.
- Make certain that athletes are not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff and chaperones.
- Not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minor or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching duties.
- Immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations.
- Notify parents before taking any disciplinary action against a minor athlete if the athlete is traveling without his or her parents.

### **Chaperone Responsibilities**

Chaperones accompany team travel to ensure that the athletes, coaches, staff, and volunteers adhere to the SoFLO policy guidelines. While these include the travel policy, it also includes all other relevant policies contained in SoFLO Volleyball Academy PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT, CODE OF CONDUCT, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES agreement signed and agreed to by parent/guardian, as well as athlete.

All chaperones must have a criminal background check done by either AAU and/or USAV and have secured memberships with corresponding affiliation plus have participated in the SoFLO awareness training. No interactions with any athletes will be permitted until chaperones have cleared a criminal background check and secured their AAU and/or USAV memberships.

If a chaperone will be operating a private car for team travel, a copy of the chaperone's valid driver's license is required.

Chaperones will monitor the activities of all coaches, staff members, volunteers and athletes during team travel. Specifically, chaperone will:

- Familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before team travels
- Monitor for adherences to club policies during team travel
- Encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communications with their parents/guardians
- Help athletes be on time for all team commitments when possible
- Assist coaches, staff and other volunteers with team travel logistical needs when possible
- Monitor athletes for adherence to curfew restrictions set based on age and competition schedule as listed in travel itinerary
- Ensure athletes comply with hotel room restrictions based on gender or age bracket requirements
- Not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their chaperone duties
- Make certain that athletes are not alone in the hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff and chaperones
- Immediately report any concerns about sexual and physical abuse, misconduct or policy violations to SoFLO Director

### **Facebook, MySpace, Blogs and similar sites**

Coaches may not have athletes of SoFLO Volleyball Academy's team join a personal social media page. Athlete members and parents can friend the official SoFLO Volleyball Academy Team page and coaches can communicate to athlete members through the site. All posts, messages, text, or media of any kind between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes.

### **Twitter, Instant Messaging, Snap Chat, DMs, TikTok and similar media**

Coaches and athletes may "follow" each other. Coaches cannot "re-tweet" athlete message posts. All posts between coach and athlete must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **Email and similar Electronic Communications**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. All email content between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Where the coach is a staff member and/or volunteer,

email from a coach to any athlete should come from the club website email center (this is the SoFLO Volleyball SportsEngine website email).

### **Texting and similar Electronic Communications**

Texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. All texts between coach and athlete must be professional and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

### **Electronic Imagery**

From time to time, digital photos, videos of practice or competition, and other publicly obtainable images of the athlete – individually or in groups – may be taken. These photos and/or videos may be submitted to local, state or national publications, used in club videos, posted on club or club associated websites, or offered to the club families seasonally on disc or other electronic form. It is the default policy of SoFLO to allow such practices as long as the athlete or athletes are in public view and such imagery is both appropriate and in the best interest of the athlete and the club. Imagery must not be contrary to any rules as outlined in SoFLO Volleyball Academy's PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT, CODE OF CONDUCT, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES Agreement.

### **Request to Discontinue All Electronic Communications or Imagery**

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by any form of electronic communication by coaches (photography or videography).

### **Misconduct**

Social media and electronic communications can also be used to commit misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by coaches, staff, volunteers, administrators, officials, parents or athletes will not be tolerated and is considered violations of SoFLO Volleyball Academy's PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT, CODE OF CONDUCT, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES Agreement.

### **Violations**

Violations of SoFLO Volleyball Academy Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy should be reported to a SoFLO administrator or SoFLO director for evaluation. Complaints and allegations will be addressed under SoFLO Volleyball Academy's PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT, CODE OF CONDUCT, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES Agreement.

### **Specific Rules for Parents**

Just as we expect certain actions of our players, we also ask the same courteousness and politeness from our players' parents. Parents, please refrain from any unsportsmanlike conduct that would embarrass SoFLO Volleyball or your child or penalize one of our teams. Parents disobeying SoFLO Volleyball, AAU or USAV rules, or acting in a way not deemed appropriate by the SoFLO Volleyball staff, might be expelled from SoFLO Volleyball by the staff. Parents will not be permitted to discuss the coaching philosophies with the coaches at a tournament. SoFLO Volleyball asks that if a parent is upset about something with a team, he/she will abide by the **"24 Hour Rule"** and wait 24 hours before discussing the matter with the coach. If further problems arise, please contact the Director and they can schedule a meeting with the Coach, Directors and parents all together. (Please see Grievance Policy & Procedures)

### **Team Parent:**

In an effort to maintain order, volunteer parents from each team may be asked to take on a few simple tasks for his/her daughter's team. This person should be an effective communicator, good with email and texting, and able to attend all tournaments and team functions. This person will remind and gather any information necessary for tournaments, including travel for SoFLO Volleyball and their team.

### **Policy for Handling Concerns**

1. The athlete must first speak to the coach about the matter. If the matter remains unresolved, or the athlete has a reasonable concern that speaking to the coach will not resolve the matter, then move on to step 2.
2. The parents should speak or meet with the coach. Parents and/or athlete should contact coach on the phone to set up a meeting time (definitely not during a

tournament and not during practice times):

- A parent should never approach a coach at a tournament. We have instructed the coach to refuse to discuss any controversial matter and to refer the parent to the Director. The coach is instructed to walk away from these traps.
- The recommended time for a parent to schedule a meeting is usually before or immediately after a scheduled practice. If the matter still remains unresolved or if the parent has a reasonable concern that speaking with the coach will not resolve the matter, then go to step 3.

3. The parent may speak to the Director and request a meeting with the coach and Director together.

- In certain situations, SoFLO Volleyball may request the athlete to also attend.
- Meetings must be previously arranged. This will NOT take place at a tournament site.
- The Directors will NOT engage in discussions about coaching decisions.

4. The final decision on these matters sits with the Director. The decision of the Director will be final.

## **Grievance Policy**

Knowing when to communicate and how to communicate with your athlete's coach if you have a concern is an important part of being a club parent. Most often, the concern is how to inquire about issues surrounding playing time (Refer to the Top 3 concerns from parents above under Attitude is Key). SoFLO Volleyball Academy will always 1st try to encourage the athlete to talk to the coach when she has a problem about her playing time, player to coach first, if the athlete is unsure or unclear about what the coach expects from her, either in practice or in competition. The appropriate approach is for the athlete to ask the coach what the athlete needs to do to get more opportunities to play in matches. When parents have a problem that is specific to their own athlete, we also encourage them to talk first to t. Coaches WILL NOT discuss "coaching decisions". Coaching decision she coach, among other things, specific match decisions (who played when, who was subbed in/out and when, etc). Playtime is a very complex determination. It includes the coach's opinion, the athlete's ability, the athlete's potential, the team's needs at the moment, the momentum of the game, and

the team's needs for the future. The coach will not be required to defend his/her thought process or conclusions in these determinations, and it is improper for a parent to request this. In addition, SoFLO Volleyball Academy instructs coaches not to discuss any athlete other than the parent's own or the actions of any other SoFLO Volleyball Academy coach. If you, as a parent, have legitimate concerns about a coach other than your athlete's coach, or with an athlete other than your own, you need to address the Director only.

### **Refunds and Disputes**

Once you commit to the academy by making a deposit of money, the deposit is NON-REFUNDABLE as are all club payments thereafter. SoFLO Volleyball Academy will NOT refund any payments (the one exception is if there is an extenuating circumstance that revolves around a situation that is a justifiable reason to refund a payment, for example a season ending injury on our court or during a SoFLO Volleyball Academy event, the Directors will take all the information into consideration and make the fair and appropriate decision regarding the specific circumstance).

Additionally, club Director approval is required for any transfer if you decide to transfer to another club after giving your letter of intent to SoFLO Volleyball Academy. There must be a serious and legitimate concern for a release and transfer to take place.

Any dispute with the club must be submitted to the Director in writing, including the date of incident or injury, doctor notes including type and length of disability, and the duration of club participation. All disputes that include complete documentation as previously stated will be considered.

### **Non-payment, Invalid Credit Card & Returned Checks**

PLEASE NOTE: If a player's tuition account is in arrears, he/she will not be eligible to practice or to play in tournaments until the account is brought up to date. In the event that a credit card needs to be charged and is invalid, an additional \$30.00 fee will be added to the bill and if the payment is NOT made in full within 10 days, your daughter will be ineligible to practice or play until the payment is settled with SoFLO Volleyball Admin.

Returned checks will be charged a \$30.00 reprocessing fee. If account is not paid in full within 10 days of returned check notice, your daughter will be ineligible to practice or play until the full payment is settled with SoFLO Volleyball Admin.