



Middle School League Operating Manual 2025-2026

The Massachusetts Charter School Athletic Organization does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, homelessness, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or foreign language, prior academic achievement, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Retaliation is likewise prohibited.



Mission Statement

The mission of the Massachusetts Charter School Athletic Organization (MCSAO) is to oversee the regulation, organization and promotion of its member schools' interscholastic athletic programs. MCSAO provides opportunities for charter school student/athletes to compete at a high level and uses that competition to teach the fundamental values of teamwork, discipline, sacrifice, and sportsmanship. This will contribute to the students' overall educational experience and development as individuals. The MCSAO is committed to educating our youth for a rewarding future and working in partnership with local communities to establish and maintain charter school interscholastic athletic programs.

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Legal Note

Public schools that provide athletic opportunities for their students are required to follow both state and federal laws to ensure equitable opportunities for students of different sexes or genders. The purpose of this legal note is to provide a brief overview of the laws that impact gender equity, particularly as it relates to fielding mixed gender teams and the inclusion of transgender or non-binary students in athletic programs. Member Schools with specific questions about gender equity and their own athletic program should work with their legal representatives to ensure compliance with all laws.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in school programs, including athletics. With respect to athletics, Title IX seeks to ensure that underrepresented sexes are given an equal opportunity to participate in athletic programs. Title IX does not require schools to offer identical sports for boys and girls, but an equal opportunity to play. Thus, schools are well-advised to offer sufficient program options to boys and girls with a sufficient numbers or roster spots across the various athletic seasons.

Massachusetts schools must also comply with the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which is part of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights and Constitution. The ERA states that “equality under the law shall not be abridged because of sex, race, color, creed or national origin.” The ERA was applied to school athletics in 1979 in the matter of *Attorney General v. MIAA*, 378 Mass. 342 (1979), a case which schools continue to follow today. Similar to Title IX, the ERA and interpretive case law ensures equitable opportunities for boys and girls to participate in school athletics. The ERA, however, has been applied in such a way as to allow for mixed gender teams. In *Attorney General v. MIAA*, the court determined that a blanket rule prohibiting boys from playing on girls’ teams, where there was no equivalent boys’ team, violated the ERA.

Additionally, Massachusetts schools must also be familiar with G.L. c. 76, § 5. This statute, which also protects students from discrimination based on sex, was expanded to protect students based on gender identification. As a result of this law, and consistent with the interpretive guidance offered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, students are entitled to be accepted by their schools as the gender with which they identify across all school programs. This means that athletic opportunities must be afforded to students in accordance with their identified gender, not necessarily their birth-assigned gender.

Schools at the local level are responsible for determining eligibility of students who want to participate in its athletic program. MCSAO acknowledges that for school administrators understanding how each of these statutes inform local decision making is challenging. Drawing upon Title IX, ERA and M.G.L. c. 76, § 5 and the relevant case law, MCSAO offers several guidelines to assist Member Schools on gender-based issues and fielding mixed gender teams:

- 1 Blanket prohibitions based on gender should be avoided. The *MIAA* case in 1979 and *D.M. v. Minn. State High Sch. League*, 917 F.3d 996 (8th Cir.), a case wherein the school failed to show allowing boys to compete in competitive dance would impact competitive balance or risk injury to girls, stand for the proposition that when an athletic association has a blanket prohibition of boys playing on girls teams such rules were overly broad and not sufficiently tailored to the interest in advancing gender equity in school based athletic programs.
- 2 Collect and understand the data about boys' and girls' participation in athletics. Currently, schools report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on the number of single gender sports and teams and number of participants by gender as part of Title IX compliance monitoring.
- 3 If schools are providing relatively equal athletic opportunities to boys and girls, then permitting boys to play on girls' teams and vice versa meets the requirements of the ERA and likely would not violate Title IX.
- 4 If the data show that opportunities for boys and girls are not equal, then allowing students of the over-represented gender onto teams of the under-represented gender may violate Title IX and should be carefully considered.

Student safety has not been a successful defense to excluding students of one gender from participating on teams of the opposite gender. The arguments generally fail due to the lack of correlation between injuries and mixed-gender teams.

As the laws and interpretive case law continue to evolve, MCSAO will also endeavor to respond with information and guidance to its members and revisit its rules as necessary in response to changes in the law. Member Schools are encouraged to work with their local legal counsel on individual cases.

SECTION I. LEAGUE ADMINISTRATION

- 1.1 **MCSAO Membership** – will consist of the Athletic Director appointed by the administrative team from each Member School or one (1) administrative team member from a Member School. Member Schools must, within five business days, notify the MCSAO Executive Staff of any change in the position of Athletic Director, and provide updated contact information. The MCSAO Membership is directly responsible for voting on items as requested by the Executive Staff.
- 1.2 **MCSAO Executive Staff** – is directly responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Directors for the implementation of rules, regulations, policies and guidelines pertaining to MCSAO governance and enforcing all rules and regulations adopted by the MCSAO. This includes the right to change dates and times of events if needed.
- 1.3 **MCSAO Board of Directors** – will consist of a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Clerk and a Treasurer. The Board of Directors shall manage, operate and decide on all matters concerning the governing regulations and policies of the MCSAO. The Board of Directors shall have the sole authority to appoint the Executive Staff and such committees as are suggested in order to effectuate the purpose of the organization.
- 1.4 **Annual Meeting** – attendance is required for all member school Athletic Directors. The failure of an Athletic Director to attend shall be a violation towards the “Member in Good Standing Agreement” and may result in forfeiture of admittance to the MCSAO for that school year.
- 1.5 **Member in Good Standing Agreement** – Member Schools must uphold the MCSAO Mission Statement. All members of the MCSAO agree to:
- Commit to a fixed academic eligibility policy from July 1st through June 30th
 - Demonstrate good sportsmanship in accordance with Section V of this Operating Manual
 - Meet all MCSAO deadlines
 - Attend all required league meetings
 - Participate in all seasons, having equal opportunities for boys and girls
 - Demonstrate competitive progress
 - Forfeit zero competitions
 - Abide by all rules outlined in this Operating Manual
- 1.5.1 Member schools should abide by the preceding statements. A Member School that fails to meet any of these standards shall be in violation of this agreement. If a Member School is found in violation of this agreement the school’s Athletic Director and Administration will be notified in writing by the Executive Staff, pursuant to the schedule described in Rule 1.5.2.
- 1.5.2 Each violation of this agreement by a Member School shall result in written notification issued by the Executive Staff to the Member School.

- 1.5.2.1** Upon a first violation, written notice shall be issued to the Member School's athletic director and the school will be fined \$100.
- 1.5.2.2** Upon a second violation, written notice shall be issued to both the Member School's athletic director and administration and the school will be fined \$250.
- 1.5.2.3** Upon a third violation, the Member School will become ineligible for league play for one school year from the date of their infraction and the school will be fined \$500.
- 1.5.2.4** The MCSAO Board of Directors retains discretion to impose additional sanctions.
- 1.5.3** Violations accrued over the course of any given School Year shall expire upon the final day of the School year.
- 1.5.4** The failure to timely report scores or pay fees assessed pursuant to Rule 3.7 shall not constitute a violation of the Member in Good Standing Agreement.
- 1.6** **League Meetings** – attendance at all league meetings is mandatory. Athletic Directors are expected to be at league meetings on time and stay for the duration of the meetings. League meetings are utilized to advance and facilitate organizational/league business. Any Member School failing to attend will be penalized in accordance to Rule 1.5.
- 1.7** **Membership Dues** – are due and payable on or before the fourth Friday in September. Said fees help offset costs incurred by the MCSAO for the facilitation of tournaments (facilities, officials, awards, etc.). Member schools who fail to meet this deadline will be charged and billed a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) late penalty fee each month they are in arrears. All dues and penalty fees assessed against a Member School are due and payable no later than seven (7) days prior to the commencement of any MCSAO tournament event. The failure to pay any and all monies in compliance with this section shall result in that Member School's termination from any and all future MCSAO leagues and tournament events until all financial contributions are paid in full. Such failure to pay shall also be a violation of the "Member in Good Standing Agreement."
- 1.8** **Deadline Extensions** – Requests for deadline extensions must be submitted in writing (email is valid) prior to the deadline date to the Executive Staff, who retain sole discretion to approve or reject any such request.
- 1.9** **Appeals Unavailable** – Any and all sanctions imposed pursuant to Section I of this Operating Manual, including but not limited to those imposed as a result of a violation of the Member in Good Standing Agreement shall be final.
- 1.10** **Probationary Policy** – Member schools that repeatedly violate league rules may be placed on probation for one full academic year. Probation may be triggered by two or more

documented member in good standing violations within a school year, failure to comply with prior sanctions, or conduct that undermines the league's mission or operations. Schools placed on probation will receive written notice outlining the reasons for their probation. They must submit a corrective action plan within 30 days of receiving this notice. The league's Executive Committee will monitor the school's compliance throughout the year. At the end of the probation period, the Executive Committee will determine whether to lift probation, extend it, or remove the school from the league. All probation-related matters will remain confidential and be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee.

SECTION II. GENERAL TERMS DEFINED

Members should also refer to the MIAA Handbook for further definitions

- 2.1 **Member School** – Member Schools enter the league upon the acceptance of an application submitted to the MCSAO board of directors no later than May 15 of the prior school year. Any public charter middle school which has a building Administrative Team, Athletic Director, a graduation ceremony, etc., in the state of Massachusetts which has met all MCSAO membership requirements, subject to the approval of the MCSAO board of directors which may not be unreasonably withheld but which may only be granted if admission is in the best interest of MCSAO, may be eligible to enter the league. Member Schools may not participate in any other athletic organization, unless MCSAO does not offer the relevant sport. A Member School's first and foremost obligation is to uphold the MCSAO Mission Statement and abide by the Member in Good Standing Agreement.
- 2.2 **Sports Season** – one of the three (3) time frames (Fall, Winter, Spring) marked by particular activities.
- 2.3 **League** – a group of no less than five (5) member schools that will, during a specific sports season, compete against each other in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth by the MCSAO.
- 2.4 **Participant** – any student/athlete who is enrolled as a full time-student in that member's school, has met all school and MCSAO eligibility requirements and is listed on that school's official team roster.
- 2.5 **Parental Permission** – Athletic Directors should secure from each Participant's parent written consent to participate in interscholastic sports. The form shall describe eligibility rules and and provide for an assumption of risk statement.
- 2.6 **Return to Athletic Participation** – Subsequent to any serious injury and prior to further participation in that sport, an athlete should receive a medical release in the form of the MCSAO Return to Athletic Participation Form (found in Appendix A) signed by a licensed physician.
- 2.7 **Transportation** – Schools should transport teams by such common carriers as bus lines, vans, or taxi cabs. They should discourage the use of private cars.

- 2.8 Criminal Offender Record Information Act (CORI)** – in accordance to M.G.L. c. 6, §§ 167-178B, all Member Schools are required to conduct criminal background checks on current and prospective employees, coaches and volunteers, including those who regularly provide school related transportation to students and who may have direct and unmonitored contact with team members.
- 2.9 Head Coach** – It is the responsibility of the schools Administrative Team or Athletic Director to ensure that all teams have appropriate adult representation hereby known as the Head Coach. The Head Coach shall be a paid or volunteer member of a Member School’s athletic staff as appointed by the Member School’s Administrative Team or Athletic Director. The Head Coach is responsible, at all times, for the actions and behavior of his or her team and anyone associated with and representing their school. All Head Coaches must complete the NFHS Concussion Course and NFHS Sportsmanship Course. In addition all head coaches must be CPR certified and complete the NFHS Sports First Aid course (or other recognized Concussion, First Aid and/or CPR course). Also, all Head Coaches are strongly encouraged to complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course. Failure to do so will result in a violation of the “Member in Good Standing Agreement”. Head Coaches shall also:
- 2.9.1** Promote and uphold the MCSAO Mission Statement, Placing a high value on good sportsmanship and the fundamental concepts of teamwork, discipline and hard work.
 - 2.9.2** Be a positive role model by setting a good example for others to follow.
 - 2.9.3** Teach their players about respect and courtesy for their opponents, coaches, referees and all involved in an MCSAO event.
 - 2.9.4** Teach their players about the fundamental concepts of athletics and competition.
- 2.10 Outside Coaching/Instruction by Coaches Prohibited** – Coaching staff are prohibited from instructing/coaching their players in a team setting outside the designated MCSAO season, during the school year. The school year is defined as being from the fall starting date to the spring closing date. They may legitimately work with all members outside the designated MCSAO season, if these activities involve non-related sports instruction (i.e. fund-raising events, collection or issuing equipment, awards recognition ceremony, etc.). Any coach found to be in violation of this provision will be suspended from all coaching duties for one calendar year and the member school will be ineligible for post season play for the subsequent season.
- A middle school coach who is employed by a member school (paid or volunteer) may coach his/her sport once the school year has ended.
- 2.11 Prohibited Recruiting** – Coaching staff are prohibited from recruiting players from outside the member’s school district. Recruiting is a method utilized to induce, solicit, encourage or influence in any manner a student and/or the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to withdraw from his/her present school for the purpose of enrolling in another school for

athletic participation there. Any member school found to be in violation of this provision will be suspended from league play for one calendar year. Any coach found to be in violation of this provision will be suspended from all coaching duties for one calendar year.

2.12 Official Roster – all member schools must submit an itemized list of participants from their school with the names of those participants including their uniform number and grade. All official rosters must be submitted on the league website by the due date set in Rule 9.3. The size of that roster is unlimited. Any student may be added to the Official Roster at any time during the season provided the student is enrolled in that Member School as a full-time student. Additions or changes to a participant’s jersey number must be reported to the executive staff in writing prior to their next scheduled league contest.

2.13 Team – a group of student/athletes who are enrolled as full time-students in the member school, have met all school and MCSAO eligibility requirements, are supervised by a Head Coach who has been appointed by the Administrative Team or Athletic Director, has a schedule of league games, scheduled practices and uniforms.

2.13.1 A team must (1) be sponsored by its member school and under the jurisdiction of the members School Committee/Board of Directors, (2) register annually with the MCSAO and abide by all rules and regulations set forth by the MCSAO.

2.14 Practice – is the reporting of a group of potential student/athletes who are eligible to take part in and be part of a particular athletic team sponsored by the member school. Practices are to be held under the direct supervision of the Head Coach or coaching staff who have been appointed by the Administrative Team or Athletic Director.

2.15 Captain’s Practice – The term "Captain's Practice" means the team's captain(s) organizing and conducting, without adult supervision, out-of-season practice for that sport. The MCSAO does not in any way sanction, encourage, or condone "Captain's Practice" in any sport.

2.16 Administrative Team – The term “Administrative Team” refers to the Member School’s leadership team and may include the Head of School, Principal, Executive Director and/or Dean of Students.

2.17 School Year – The School Year shall run from July 1 until June 30 of the following year.

SECTION III. REGULATIONS/POLICIES

3.1 Divisions/League Expansion/Tournament Policy

Division Membership

- Once a sport reaches five teams it is eligible for league play and have a tournament champion

- There are three regional divisions, North, Central, and South. Teams will be considered to be in a division once there are four eligible teams in a sport from that region.
- Member Schools must demonstrate the ability to complete all their division games in all sports offered.
- All division games must be completed to be eligible for tournament play that season and to remain in the division the following year. Games may not be forfeited to accomplish this.

Divisional Game Breakdown

Teams	Games	Frequency
4	6	1 Home & 1 Away Game
5	8	1 Home & 1 Away Game
6	10	1 Home & 1 Away Game
7	6	1 Game
8	7	1 Game
9	8	1 Game
10	9	1 Game
11	10	1 Game
12	11	1 Game
13	12	1 Game

If a school drops a sport within three months of the season start date, resulting in the division decreasing from seven teams to six, member schools are not required to schedule two games against each remaining team in the division.

In the event a division reaches 14 teams, the division splits again geographically into two new divisions (for a total of 4 divisions), such splits shall continue to occur each time a division reaches 14 teams.

Tournament Eligibility

Game Minimums

- To be eligible for tournament play, regardless of sport, teams must have played their entire division schedule. In the case of soccer and flag football, teams must also play a minimum of eight games. In the case of basketball, teams must also play a minimum of ten games.

Winning Percentage

- A Member School must have an overall winning percentage of .500 or above to be eligible.
- Teams will be seeded by their overall winning percentage in relation to all divisions combined.

Divisional Game Requirements

- Member Schools must play all of the divisional games to be eligible for playoffs. A team cannot forfeit a game to meet this requirement.

Tournament Seeding

1. A Member School must have an overall winning percentage of .500 or better to be eligible, unless there are fewer than four teams with a .500 or better winning percentage, at which point the four highest winning percentages shall be eligible. There must be a minimum of four teams in any tournament.
2. Teams will be seeded by their overall winning percentage in relation to all divisions combined.
3. If there is a tie in seeding, see Rule 16.2.

3.2 Medical Emergencies – all member schools are required to develop a medical emergency response plan for the treatment and care of individuals who are injured while participating in the program or others (spectators, officials, cheerleaders, etc.) attending a MCSAO event. This plan should also include a means of transporting the injured person(s) to a medical facility for further treatment.

3.3 First Aid/CPR – Athletic Directors and coaches are required to be trained and certified to administer First Aid and CPR. Each team should be assigned their own separate medical kit containing all the basic supplies necessary for administering first aid. This medical kit is required by the MCSAO and must be present at all practices and games. It must also contain any medical information/instructions/instruments pertinent to rendering appropriate first aid to a particular individual(s) when called for. Athletic Directors must keep records reflecting current training and CPR certification of coaches.

3.3.1 A \$25 fine will be assessed to each member school for each time they are found not to be in compliance with the medical kit requirement.

3.3.2 A \$200 fine will be assessed to each member school and teams will forfeit competition per consideration of the MCSAO Board of Directors review if coaches are found to be leading without proper First Aid/CPR training/certification.

3.3 Concussion Policy – in compliance with MA 105 CMR 201.000, Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Athletic Activities, all member school Athletic Directors and coaches are required to take an on-line certification course on concussions and filing the certificate of completion with school's Athletic Director. Athletic Directors must keep records reflecting the completion of on-line certification courses.

3.4 Transportation – all member schools must transport all participants involved to athletic contests in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws.

- 3.5 Scheduling** – contests with member schools should be the first priority of the school’s Athletic Director. Scheduling of non-league opponents should be secondary. Any changes in scheduling should be reported to the league office within 24 hours of that change taking place.
- 3.6 Reporting Scores** – following each MCSAO contest, the home team’s Head Coach is responsible for submitting game results (score) on www.mcsao.org within 24 hours. Failure to report game scores will result in the following fines. The first offense receives a warning; each subsequent offense will receive a \$25 fine. An invoice will be sent to the Member School following the end of the season with a total balance of fines accumulated.
- 3.7 Cancellation of Season/Sport** – any member school that cancels a sport prior to their first official scheduled league contest shall not be penalized. However, any member school that cancels a sport after competing in their first official league contest shall be deemed in violation of the “Member in Good Standing Agreement”.
- 3.8 Forfeitures** – a school will forfeit their scheduled league contest to their opponent for violations that occur as outlined. The Athletic Director of that Member School who is in violation of the following regulations is required to notify in writing the Executive Staff within 24 hours of the disclosure. Failure to report the forfeit will be result in a Member in Good Standing Violation.
- 3.8.1** Rescheduling to play due to academic ineligibility.
- 3.8.2** If a student/athlete participates in a league contest that is later found to be ineligible in accordance to MCSAO regulations or is in violation of that school’s separate eligibility requirements.
- 3.8.3** With the exception of weather related postponements, any member school that cancels a scheduled contest within twenty-four (24) hours of that originally scheduled contest will forfeit that contest to their scheduled league opponent and will be responsible for any/all costs (i.e., ref’s fees, bus fees, etc...) associated with said contest.
- 3.8.4** If the Head Coach is ejected from a contest and no other authorized adult member (exclusive of players who have reached the age of majority) from that school is available to assume the coaching duties, the game will be forfeited to their opponents.
- 3.8.5** The home team will take a forfeit if they are unable to provide an adequate facility or adequate game site management at the time the game was originally scheduled to be played. In a situation that is out of the control of the home team, offering an alternate date or venue is sufficient to avoid the forfeit.
- 3.8.6** Any Member School that forfeits more than one game in a given sport during a season will be ineligible for that year’s playoffs and will not be able to enter that

sport into league play the following year. Ineligibility pursuant to this provision is subject to the Appeals Process described in Section VI.

A school that has been prohibited from a given sport for the next year may re-enter their team the following year if they feel their program is ready and they did not forfeit any games during the year they were removed from league play. The school will be accepted and considered under probation for a three-year time frame. If during that time frame they have another season with multiple forfeits they will once again be removed from league play, however this time for a two-year time period.

- 3.9 Postponements** – every effort should be made to reschedule games that are postponed due to travel, weather related issues, or referee assignments. Any postponed contests between member schools must be rescheduled at the earliest convenient time. The Athletic Directors of both schools in question should work collaboratively on this process. The home team is responsible for notifying the League Coordinator in writing within twenty four (24) hours of the schedule change.

In the case where officials do not show or a bus runs late or is a no show, proof must be submitted in the form of confirmation emails or written documentation. If an Athletic Director failed to confirm travel or officials, that team will be required to take a forfeit.

- 3.10 Home Game/Site Supervisor** – the Athletic Director of the member school that is hosting a league contest is required to be on site from the time the visiting team arrives until the time the visiting team departs. Coaches are not considered responsible for home game supervision unless the coach is the Athletic Director of the host school. In this case, the Athletic Director must designate a qualified individual to serve as the game site supervisor until their coaching duties have been completed. In the event the league contest is played on a neutral field, the team designated as the “home” team will be deemed to be “hosting” the contest.

- 3.11 Fraudulent Documentation** – any participant, coach or school official who knowingly falsifies any official document(s) or participates under an assumed name will be immediately suspended from further MCSAO participation for one (1) year from the date of the infraction. A hearing will then be scheduled and conducted by the MCSAO Board of Directors, a subcommittee or an ad hoc committee as duly appointed by and at the discretion of the MCSAO Board of Directors, to determine the re-entry status of those involved.

- 3.12 Jewelry** – only medical ID bracelets are allowed to be worn. These, however, must be wrapped/covered with a protective material to prevent injury. Taping over jewelry is not allowed.

- 3.13 Game Ejections** – any participant and/or coach ejected from a game will be disqualified from that game. Coaches must leave the contest area immediately and are automatically suspended from participating in that Member School’s team’s next league/tournament

game. In the situation where a player is ejected, they are allowed to remain on the bench and should be strictly supervised.

The Home Game Supervisor is responsible for having Suspension Notification forms readily available for game officials to complete at the conclusion of the game. Copies of the Suspension Notification form must then be forwarded to both member school's Administrative Team and the MCSAO Executive Staff within two (2) days from the date of the incident by the Home Game Supervisor. Any participant and/or coach disqualified twice in the same season will be suspended for the remainder of the season. In the case of a player, he or she shall be placed on probation for the balance of his career. In the case of a coach, he or she shall be placed on probation for a period of five years. If the player or coach receives any other ejections during the pendency of their probation he or she would be banned permanently from MCSAO competition, subject to Rule 1.9.

3.14 Suspensions – where any member of the MCSAO Executive Staff directly observe the behavior of any game supervisor, coach, manager, team-staff member, player or spectator and find said behavior to be detrimental to the MCSAO and contrary to the organization's Mission Statement, they may immediately issue suspensions. After issuing such a suspension, the Executive Staff member shall complete a Suspension notification form which shall be presented to the Executive Director for their review within twenty-four hours of said suspension. This temporary suspension will remain in effect until the member school's Administrative Team and Athletic Director are notified of the length of the suspension. All suspensions pursuant to this section are subject to the Appeals Process described in Section VI.

3.15 Ejections, Serving Suspensions, and Suspension Notifications – Any individual(s) associated with any MCSAO event who is ejected from an event is automatically suspended from participating in the next scheduled event.

3.15.1 Players may serve out their suspension on the bench but out of uniform.

3.15.2 All suspensions may be appealed. In these cases, an email needs to be sent to the Board of Directors within 48 hours of notification. All suspensions pursuant to this section are subject to the Appeals Process described in Section VI.

3.15.3 Any school that fails to report a suspension will be in violation of the Member in Good Standing Agreement and a fifty (\$50) fine.

3.16 Protests – the protocol for protesting a MCSAO sanctioned contest is as follows:

3.16.1 The protesting Member School's Head Coach, Athletic Director and/or Home Game Supervisor is required to fully notify all game officials and the opposing Head Coach, Athletic Director and/or Home Game Supervisor immediately once the decision to officially protest the game has been made. This decision must be made prior to the Member School's Team leaving the game site.

3.16.2 The head game official is then required to make a notation in the official game scorebook as well as the visitor's game scorebook specifying the reason(s) for the Protest. One representative from each school (Head Coach, Athletic Director and/or Home Game Supervisor) is then required to place their initials next to the game officials' notation in both scorebooks to acknowledge that they were officially notified of the protest.

3.16.3 The Athletic Director of the protesting Member School must complete a Protest Petition Form and forward this to the Administrative Team and Athletic Director of both schools involved and the MCSAO Executive Staff within (48 hours, i.e. two calendar days) from the date of disclosure. A copy of the scorebook containing the game officials' notation and member school initials must also accompany the written notification. Petition Forms not received within the allotted time will void and nullify the protest declaration submitted by the Athletic Director.

3.16.4 The Board of Directors or duly appointed committee will then take all information submitted under advisement and inform all relevant parties involved of their decision in writing within seven (7) days of the date of said Protest.

Games whose starting times are delayed due to a previous non-league or league games running longer than usual that same day/night leading to darkness or permit cutoffs cannot be protested. Judgment calls made by game officials will not be considered as grounds for filing a protest.

Failure to comply with any of the above protocols will result in the forfeiture of that Member School's ability to protest said event. Any schools operating outside the rules and regulations set forth by the MCSAO also forfeit their right to protest.

3.17 **Chain of Command** – All questions or requests made to the league must come from the member school's athletic director and not coaching staff or parents.

3.18 **Rule Change Proposals** – Rule Change Proposals must be submitted in writing by the Member School's AD to the Executive Staff two (2) weeks prior to start of the next season. At the next league meeting or, at the discretion of the Executive Staff, via email, the MCSAO Members will then vote to approve or disapprove the proposal. All proposals require a two-thirds (2/3) vote margin to be approved.

SECTION IV. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

4.1 **Enrollment** – the student must be enrolled as a full-time student of that member school in order to be eligible for athletic contests.

4.2 **Parent/Guardian Permission** – a signed and dated parent/guardian permission form must be submitted and kept on file in the member school Administrative Team's and/or athletic office prior to the first tryout or season practice. An assumption of risk statement must accompany this form.

- 4.3 **Physical Examinations** – all students must pass a physical examination prior to participation. A physical exam covers the student for 13 months from the exam date. A student’s eligibility will terminate once a physical has reached the 13 month limit. A copy of this exam must be filed with the member school's nurse or Athletic Director.
- 4.4 **Concussion Policy** – The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services now requires student-athletes and their parents, coaches, Athletic Directors, school nurses, and physicians to learn about the consequences of head injuries and concussions through training programs and written materials. The law requires that athletes and their parents inform their coaches about prior head injuries at the beginning of the season. If a student athlete becomes unconscious during a game or practice, the law now mandates taking the student out of play or practice, and requires written certification from a licensed medical professional for “return to play.” Parents and students who plan to participate in any athletic program for the MCSAO must also take a free on-line course. Courses are available through the National Federation of High School Coaches or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 4.5 **Boys’ and Girls’ on the Same Team** – No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate in any interscholastic activity because of gender. A school may establish separate teams for males and females for interscholastic competition in a sport provided that both teams receive equal instruction, training, coaching, access to available facilities, equipment, opportunities to practice and compete.

If a school offers a single team in a particular sport, it may not restrict eligibility based on gender unless such a restriction is necessary to ensure that the school’s gendered designation of athletic opportunities complies with Title IX (either by demonstrating proportionality or the absence of unmet interest among members of the underrepresented sex).

If a school offers a girls’ team and a boys’ team in a particular sport (including offering the same sport in two different seasons), it may restrict eligibility based on gender.

A student shall not be excluded from participation on a gender-specific sports team that is consistent with the student’s bona fide gender identity.

When a school district submits a roster to the MCSAO, it is verifying that it has determined that the students listed on a gender-specific sports team are eligible to participate either based on the gender listed on their official birth certificate or based on their bona fide gender identity and that no students are included on the roster solely for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage in competitive athletics. The MCSAO shall defer to the determination of the student and the student’s school regarding gender classification.

Nothing in this policy shall be read to entitle a student to selection of any particular team or to permit a student to transfer from one gender-specific team to another team of a different gender during a single sports season. Furthermore, when a sport is offered in two

different seasons, consistent with the provisions of G.L. c. 76, § 5, each individual shall participate on the team of the gender with which they identify, regardless of their gender assigned at birth.

It is a recommended best practice that schools communicate with their opponents as necessary about the gender-specific needs of their team in order to promote inclusion – e.g. to ensure that appropriate locker room facilities are available, that announcer use athlete’s correct pronouns, etc.

4.6 Birth Certificates – an original copy of each Participant’s birth certificate must be available upon request. Any Participant who does not fulfill this requirement will be ineligible to participate in that season's tournament.

4.6.1 If a birth certificate is unavailable, the participant must produce another official government issued document that includes proof of their date of birth.

4.7 Age Eligibility – a student is eligible to play if he/she is in the 8th grade or below, and he/she remains no more than 15 years of age through March 31st of that school year. Students who turn 16 years of age prior to March 31st of that season are ineligible to play.

4.8 Transfer Students – any student who transfers from one MCSAO member school to another will be ineligible to participate in any interscholastic athletic program in which that student participated in the previous school year for a period of one (1) year.

4.8.1 Transfer students may seek a waiver by appeal to the Executive Staff pursuant to rule 6.2. All appeals of waiver denials shall be governed by the process described in Section VI.

4.9 Recruitment – To maintain a proper relationship between the academic mission of schools and their athletic programs, all individuals in any way affiliated with a school are prohibited from recruitment, inducement, or other forms of persuasion which would encourage an athlete to enroll in, or transfer to, a school.

4.9.1 A school shall be deemed to be in violation of the rule against recruitment if a representative or agent of the school or any group or individual associated with athletic programs of that school approaches an athlete and directly or indirectly attempts to persuade or induce the athlete to enroll in, or transfer to, that school.

4.9.2 Any attempt to place a student in a member school by any person for the purposes of enhancement of that student's athletic development, or for increased exposure, shall be deemed to be recruitment.

4.9.3 Any student who enrolls in a school as a result of direct or indirect recruitment activities shall be ineligible for a period of one calendar year from the date of transfer. A coach adjudged to have recruited any student will cause that coach’s sport to be under probation for a period of one calendar year from the date of adjudication. An athletic director adjudged to have recruited any student will cause

all sports at the Member School to be placed on probation for a period of one calendar year from the date of adjudication. Probation shall include ineligibility for tournaments and league championships in that sport or all sports during the period of probation.

4.10 Academics – participants must have a passing grade in each subject in accordance with the academic guidelines set forth by their school.

4.10.1 All new middle school member schools or current schools that have updated their policies are required to submit their school’s Academic Policy to the league office by September 15, current to the upcoming school year and that this policy remain in effect and be adhered to for the entirety of that calendar year.

4.10.2 Any participant who is currently receiving special educational services under General Laws Chapter 766 and who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) can be declared eligible if all of their academic requirements satisfactorily meets the special education director's approval.

4.11 Injuries – If any injury or illness occurs during the season which requires medical attention beyond basic first aid practices, the participant must submit written approval from the attending physician to the Administrative Team or Athletic Director prior to returning to athletic participation.

4.12 Student Handbook – all participants, first and foremost, are subject to the rules and regulations governing student behavior as cited in the Member School's student handbook. Violations of school rules resulting in suspension (in/out of school) from school will automatically preclude that participant’s involvement in MCSAO contests until they have been officially readmitted to school.

4.13 Attendance – students should not be allowed to participate in any MCSAO contest on the same day they are absent from school unless the absence has been approved in advance by an Administrative Team member. Participants must be in attendance for at least 57% of the school day in order to be eligible to participate.

4.14 Alcohol/Tobacco/Drugs – during the course of the season, participants are prohibited from using, consuming, possessing, purchasing, giving away or being in the presence of any beverage containing alcohol. Participants are also prohibited from using tobacco products, marijuana, non-prescription steroids or controlled substances.

4.14.1 Penalties incurred should be (1) in strict accordance to the school’s student handbook and (2) will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the MCSAO Board of Directors.

4.15 Steroid Use – the use of non-prescription steroids or other associated growth enhancement products is strictly prohibited. The MCSAO will take a proactive approach in educating participants about the harmful short and long term effects of steroid use.

- 4.16 **Amateur Status** – all participants must be of amateur status. An amateur is defined as an athlete/participant who competes for the intrinsic value of the game and at no time, under any circumstances, accepts money or compensation of any kind, for their efforts involving the activity in question.

SECTION V. SPORTSMANSHIP

All participants, coaches, spectators and anyone associated with or involved in a MCSAO event are required to display, at all times, the characteristics associated with "good sportsmanship". Sportsmanship is the ability to treat everyone involved in an athletic contest with fairness, generosity, respect and courtesy regardless of the outcome of a game. This is symbolized by appropriate "handshakes" at the end of athletic competition. With regards to offenders being required to leave the contest area immediately and not being allowed to return, please refer to rule 3.16. All of the rules listed below include but are not limited to; before contests, during contests, after contests, social media, electronic communication, etc.

- 5.1 **Taunting/Trash Talk** – any action or comment that is used to demean, bait or embarrass/humiliate others is strictly prohibited. Game officials are to treat any form of taunting as a flagrant unsportsmanlike foul and immediately disqualify the offender(s). The offender(s) are required to leave the contest area immediately and are not allowed to return.
- 5.2 **Threats of Physical Bodily Harm** – any participant, coach or spectator who willfully threatens physical bodily harm to anyone associated with a MCSAO contest/event(including spectators) before, during or after said event, must be immediately removed from the game site and will be suspended until further notice by the MCSAO Board of Directors until a hearing can be scheduled and conducted. The offender(s) future participation in the MCSAO will be determined at that time.
- 5.3 **Physical Altercations** – any participant, coach or spectator who willfully attempts to injure anyone associated with a MCSAO contest/event (including spectators) before, during or after said event, must be removed from the game site immediately and will be suspended until further notice by the MCSAO Board of Directors until a hearing can be scheduled and conducted. The offender(s) future participation in the MCSAO will be determined at that time.
- 5.4 **Direct Profanity** – any participant, coach or spectator who uses profane language directed towards a game official, participant, coach, spectator or anyone associated with a MCSAO contest/event before, during or after said event, must be removed from the game site and suspended for the next two (2) league games.
- 5.5 **Indirect Profanity** – any participant, coach or spectator who uses profane language indirectly during a MCSAO contest/event will receive a warning on their first offense. Any further violations are subject to all rules pertaining to technical fouls.

- 5.6 **Spitting** – any participant or coach who spits directly or indirectly at an opposing player, official or coach during a MCSAO contest/event will be removed from the game site and suspended for the next two (2) league games.
- 5.7 **Failure to Report** – any incident that goes unreported will be considered a violation of the “Member in Good Standing Agreement.”
- 5.8 **Best Interest of MCSAO** – All Members and student athletes shall always act in the best interest of MCSAO and seek to promote a fair and safe environment. Nothing herein contained shall be construed as exclusively defining or otherwise limiting acts, transactions, practices or conduct not to be in the best interests of MCSAO; and any and all other acts, transactions, practices or conduct not to be in the best interests of MCSAO are prohibited and shall be subject to such penalties, including permanent ineligibility, as the facts in the particular case may warrant.

SECTION VI. APPEALS

- 6.1 Appeals of suspensions, must be initiated within two school days by notifying the Executive Staff in writing. The notice must describe the decision being appealed and the grounds for the appeal, including the factual basis for the appeal.
- 6.1.1. Upon receipt, the Executive Staff may decide the appeal without further hearing. In all appeals, the Executive Staff may, in its sole discretion, conduct an investigation. The investigation may be conducted directly by the Executive Staff or whomever they designate.
- 6.1.2. The Executive Staff may, in its discretion, order a hearing where all relevant parties may present their positions. All relevant parties, including school principals, administrative teams, athletic directors, or coaches will be required to attend.
- 6.1.3. Prior to the hearing date established by the Executive Staff, the Executive Staff will provide the relevant parties notice of the format of the hearing, which may be modified as needed on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.1.4. The Executive Staff shall notify the appellant of its decision in writing. The aggrieved party may then appeal the decision of the Executive Staff to the Board of Directors. Any appeal to the Board of Directors must be initiated within two school days of receipt of the Executive Staff’s decision.
- 6.1.5. In considering the merits of the appeal, the Board of Directors shall not conduct any further investigation or hold any further hearings and must accept the Executive Staff’s finding of facts.
- 6.2 Appeals of age waiver decisions, transfer waiver decisions, and playoff eligibility decisions must be initiated within two school days by notifying the Executive Staff in writing.
- 6.2.1 The appellant must support their appeal with: A letter signed by the school principal and athletic director explaining why the Executive Staff should grant relief; a statement by the principal, athletic director and coach, explaining the circumstances giving rise to the playoff eligibility; and include a statement from the principal

describing an action plan to remedy the root cause of the problem which triggered the playoff ineligibility.

- 6.2.2** Upon receipt, the Executive Staff may decide the appeal without further hearing. In all appeals, the Executive Staff may, in its sole discretion, conduct an investigation. The investigation may be conducted directly by the Executive Staff or whomever it designates.
 - 6.2.3** The Executive Staff may, in its discretion, order a hearing where all relevant parties may present their positions. All relevant parties, including school principals, administrative teams, athletic directors, or coaches will be required to attend.
 - 6.2.4** Prior to the hearing date established by the Executive Staff, the Executive Staff will provide the relevant parties notice of the format of the hearing, which may be modified as needed on a case-by-case basis.
 - 6.2.5** The Executive Staff shall notify the appellant of its decision in writing.
 - 6.2.6** In all cases, if relief is granted, the team in question shall be seeded last in their appropriate divisional alignment. The Executive Staff may also order additional remedial measures, including but not limited to, attendance at mandatory training by the Member School's principal, athletic director, or coaches. The Executive Staff's decision pursuant to playoff eligibility appeals shall be final.
- 6.3** Appeals of all other decisions must be initiated within two school days of the decision by written notification to the Executive Staff.
- 6.3.1** Upon receipt, the Executive Staff may decide the appeal without further hearing. In all appeals, the Executive Staff may, in its sole discretion, conduct an investigation. The investigation may be conducted directly by the Executive Staff or whomever they designate.
 - 6.3.2** The Executive Staff may, in its discretion, order a hearing where all relevant parties may present their positions. All relevant parties, including school principals, administrative teams, athletic directors, or coaches will be required to attend.
 - 6.3.3** Prior to the hearing date established by the Executive Staff, the Executive Staff shall provide the relevant parties notice of the format of the hearing, which may be modified as needed on a case-by-case basis.
 - 6.3.4** The Executive Staff shall notify the appellant of its decision in writing. The aggrieved party may then appeal the decision of the Executive Staff to the Board of Directors. Any appeal to the Board of Directors must be initiated within two school days of receipt of the Executive Staff's decision.
 - 6.3.5** In considering the merits of the appeal, the Board of Directors shall not conduct any further investigation or hold any further hearings and must accept the Executive Staff's finding of facts.

- 6.4 All decisions of the Executive Staff shall be implemented immediately and shall not be stayed pending whatever further appeal a Member School may seek.

SECTION VII. PENALTIES

- 7.1 Pursuant to all MCSAO Bylaws, the MCSAO Board of Directors, the MCSAO Membership, subcommittee or ad hoc committee as duly appointed by the MCSAO Board of Directors, are authorized to warn, place on probation, suspend or terminate any participant, team, coach, school official, game official, spectator or member school who is found in violation of the Mission Statement of the organization or its rules, regulations and guidelines.
- 7.2 All penalties relating to the specific rules set forth by the MCSAO will be placed into effect immediately upon the rendering of any verdict by the MCSAO Board of Directors, the MCSAO Membership, subcommittee or ad hoc committee as duly appointed by the MCSAO Board of Directors upon the Board's approval.
- 7.3 The MCSAO Board of Directors, the MCSAO Membership, MCSAO League Coordinators, subcommittee or ad hoc committee as duly appointed by the MCSAO Board of Directors have the authority to determine and impose other specified penalties that are agreed upon and are levied to protect the best interests of the MCSAO.
- 7.4 No member school player, team, coach, game official, school official or school shall be terminated from the organization until the completion of the hearing process. In such cases, the Respondent/Accused shall be given written notice as to the nature of the allegations regarding said particular incident or related incidents by the Complainant. Each party will be provided the opportunity to present/submit oral and written testimony on their behalf prior to the rendering of any decision. Decisions of the Board of Directors are final.

SECTION VIII. OFFICIALS

- 8.1 **Requirements to Officiate** – MCSAO events officials must:
- 8.1.1 Be at least 18 years of age
 - 8.1.2 Be a certified member of a recognized officials' group for the specified sport
 - 8.1.3 Provide accurate information on official background check application process
 - 8.1.4 Be cleared through a background check procedure.
- 8.2 **Member Responsibility** – the home team is responsible for the scheduling and payment of certified game officials. All Member Schools are to schedule two (2) certified game officials per contest for soccer, flag football, and basketball. One (1) certified official per

contest is required for volleyball. Game officials will have the final decision in any game circumstance in conjunction with MCSAO rules, regulations and guidelines.

8.2.1 The MCSAO will not sanction games that are played without certified game officials absent the express written permission of the Executive Board.

8.3 **Safety and Security** – must be provided by the home team at member game sites for officials.

8.4 **Payment** – should be provided by member schools within a 60-day period from the date of service.

8.5 **Expectations** – All officials must be knowledgeable of the appropriate MCSAO general rules and regulations as well as those rules governing the sport(s) which he/she is officiating.

8.6 **Recommended Game Officials’ Fee Schedule** – fees are recommended in each sport regardless of the length of the periods or the length of the contest. It is recommended that an official who works a contest alone be paid a fee and one-half. If and when three (3) officials are used for regular season contests, it is recommended that officials each be paid 85% of the standard fee.

<u>Soccer</u>	<u>2024-25 Fee</u>
Middle School	\$73
<u>Flag Football</u>	
Middle School	\$80
<u>Volleyball</u>	
Middle School	\$72
<u>Basketball</u>	
Middle School	\$73
<u>Track</u>	
Middle School	\$97

SECTION IX. SPORT SEASONS

- 9.1 **League** – Each Member School will play each division member during the regular season on a yearly basis in accordance to the leagues master schedule in order to qualify for tournament play. Athletic Director’s may then schedule additional non-divisional games at their discretion, opposing other member schools no more than twice.
- 9.2 **Completion** – the regular season will end with the completion of the regular season game schedule. The regular season will be followed by a single elimination tournament for qualifying Member Schools to determine a yearly champion. The exact times and location are TBA.
- 9.3 **Schedules** – In the interest of protecting our student-athletes from injury and overuse the following day and week limitations are to be adhered to. For soccer, basketball, cross-country and track student-athletes may participate in one contest per day and three contests per week. For volleyball, flag football, student-athletes may participate in two contests per day and four maximum contests per week. A week will run from Sunday to Saturday. Any games scheduled beyond these limits will not be considered for playoff seeding and will be considered a violation of the Member in Good Standing Agreement. Absent approval by the executive staff, all schedules and rosters must be finalized by the fifth Monday after the start of the Season. Any games added after that date, with the exception of games previously scheduled but postponed, will not be considered for playoff seeding.

FALL

- 9.4 **Fall Start and End Dates** – the official starting date for team practices and/or tryouts during the fall season is the third Monday in August. No Member School is allowed to hold workouts prior to this date. The regular season end date is the fourth Thursday of October. No games played after this date will be counted toward playoff qualification.
- 9.5 **Fall Filing Date** – member charter schools must notify the Executive Staff of their decision to submit a team for the fall season by September 1 for the upcoming season. Schools that submit a team are expected to carry this team for the season. Schools that withdraw a team prior to or during the season will be considered in violation of Rule 1.5.

WINTER

- 9.6 **Winter Start and End Dates** – the official starting date for team practices and/or tryouts during the winter season is the last Monday in November. No Member School is allowed to hold workouts prior to this date. The regular season end date is the Friday before the start of the Massachusetts February Break Vacation week. No games played after this date will be counted toward playoff qualification.
- 9.7 **Winter Filing Date** – member charter schools must notify the Executive Staff of their decision to submit a team for the winter season by November 1 for the upcoming season. Schools that submit a team are expected to carry this team for the season. Schools that withdraw a team prior to or during the season will be considered in violation of Rule 1.5.

SPRING

- 9.8 **Spring Start and End Date** – the official starting date for team practices and/or tryouts during the spring season is the third Monday in March. No Member School is allowed to hold workouts before this date. The regular season end date is the last Thursday in May. No games played after this date will be counted toward playoff qualification.
- 9.9 **Spring Filing Date** – member charter schools must notify the Executive Staff of their decision to submit a team for the spring season by March 1 for the upcoming season. Schools that submit a team are expected to carry this team for the season. Schools that withdraw a team prior to or during the season will be considered in violation of Rule 1.5.

SPORTS RULES

SECTION X - SOCCER

- 10.1 **Mouth Guards** – mouth guards are highly recommended for all participants.
- 10.2 **Shin Guards** – are required for all participants during games and practices.
- 10.3 **Uniforms**
- 10.3.1 All players must wear soccer appropriate jerseys and shorts.
 - 10.3.2 Goalkeepers must wear a different colored jersey than the ten (10) field players. It is recommended that goalkeepers wear gloves, a padded jersey and padded shorts/pants.
 - 10.3.3 All players must wear soccer appropriate footwear. Soccer shoes with aluminum or metal cleats are prohibited.
 - 10.3.4 Any player improperly uniformed will be removed from the game by the game officials.
- 10.4 **Substitutions** – may occur when the team has possession of the ball (goal kicks, corner kicks, and throw-ins), after a goal is scored, or when the opposing team is making a substitution.
- 10.5 **Timeouts** – each team will be allowed a one-minute out per half and each extended time period. The time-out may be called by the coach or any player on the field during an offensive restart.
- 10.6 **Coed Rule** - Teams are required to have a minimum of three players of each gender on the field at all times (e.g., three girls and eight boys, or three boys and eight girls). If a team does not have at least three players of one gender, they must play short (i.e., with one fewer

player) and are not permitted to replace the missing player with someone of the opposite gender.

10.7 Field Dimension Requirements – fields should be between 100 and 120 yards long by 55 and 80 yards wide. Field must also have all required field markings.

10.8 Length of Contests - will consist of two (2) thirty (35) minute running-time halves with a five (5) minute halftime. If a game is tied at the end of regulation, it is declared a draw.

10.8.1 A regulation game is one in which the first half of play has been completed.

10.8.2 Once a contest becomes a regulation game and is ended due to unforeseen circumstances, the game is considered complete and will count in the standings.

10.8.3 Any contest which is suspended in the first half due to unforeseen circumstances must be continued from the point of suspension on the first available date.

10.9 Standings –winning percentage in the league will determine playoff eligibility and seeding implications. If there is a tie, the tiebreaker begins at Rule 16.2.2.

10.10 Forfeits

10.10.1 A team must have 7 players to start and finish a game or it is considered a forfeit.

10.10.2 Will be declared if a team is not wearing appropriate uniforms (missing numbers, matching jerseys and shorts, etc.).

10.10.3 Will be declared if the field is not marked or if goals are not present.

10.10.4 Head Coaches are required to report forfeits within 24 hours to the League Coordinator.

10.10.5 Any forfeit will result in a violation of the Member in Good Standing agreement and be subject to the fine described in Section 1.5.2 of this operating manual.

10.11 Yellow/Red Card Rule – players who receive a “yellow card” from a game official are required to leave the field immediately. At the discretion of the head coach, they may be allowed to return to the field of play during the next available substitution. Any player receiving 2 yellow cards or a red card will receive an automatic game ejection and will be suspended from participating in the next league/tournament game. The MCSAO must be notified anytime an ejection occurs within 24 hours of said ejection via the MCSAO Suspension Form

10.11.1 Any player who receives a third yellow card in a season shall be suspended from the next contest; a fourth yellow card and subsequent yellow cards in a season shall result in suspension for the following two contests. This penalty carries over to the next soccer season (or next season if senior) if occurring in the last contest, or the next to last contest.

10.11.2 Any coach who receives a third yellow card in a season shall be suspended from coaching the next two contests. A fourth yellow card in a season shall result in a one year suspension. The penalty carries over to the next soccer season if occurring in the last contest, or the next to last contest.

10.12 **Red Card Accumulations** – Participants receiving two red cards for fighting or for flagrant unsportsmanlike behavior in the same season shall be suspended for one year (from the date of the second offense) in all fall sports.

Any team whose players/coaches receive collectively a total of more than four red cards during the regular season shall not qualify for the MCSAO state tournament.

10.13 **Tournament Play** – if the contest is tied at the completion of both halves, two (2) ten (10) minute sudden death overtime periods will be played.

10.14 **Penalty Kick Shootout** – will take place at the completion of the sudden death overtime periods under the following guidelines:

10.14.1 The head coach will select five (5) players from the team to take one (1) penalty kick each regardless if they were on the field at the end of regulation tournament play.

10.14.2 The goal selected by the game officials will be used by both teams.

10.14.3 All coaches and players other than those selected to kick will remain on the sidelines.

10.14.4 A coin toss, called by the visiting team, will determine who kicks first.

10.14.5 Teams will alternate taking kicks until all five (5) kicks, for each team, have been completed.

10.14.6 If a tie remains after all ten (10) penalty kicks have been completed, the penalty shootout will enter sudden death. Coaches will then select one kicker at a time from their remaining roster. Sudden Death ends when one (1) team scores and the other team does not at the completion of a round.

10.14.7 During a Penalty Kick Shootout, a goalie may be replaced at any time.

10.14.8 A designated kicker can only be replaced if, in the judgment of the game officials, they are injured to the extent that they can no longer safely continue.

Any rule not listed will be in accordance with the National Federation of State High School Sports (NFHS).

SECTION XI - CROSS COUNTRY

11.1 **Uniforms** – will consist of a consistent jersey for all team members.

- 11.2 Rosters** – team rosters will be emailed to teams prior to race. Each school representative should list all runners on their roster sheet and then submit by email the roster. Each runner will then be assigned a race bib number. When the team arrives at meet sight, they will be given a race results sheet/roster, along with bibs for the race by the Cross Country Coordinator.
- 11.3 Eligibility** –Middle School runners cannot compete in both Middle School and High School races on the same race day. A Middle School runner that has run in 2 High School races in a season is ineligible to compete at the Middle School level for the remainder of the season.
- 11.4 Course** – will be well marked and measured and will be of sufficient width as to permit safe passing at all times. The course shall not exceed 1.9 miles.
- 11.5 Meets** – will consist of one (1) co-ed race with separate gender. The races will be run over a set course with a course walk-through allowed prior to the race. Meets may be presided over by hired meet officials or, with mutual agreement, may be run by the coaches. Meets will be scored as follows: 1 point will be awarded for each place finished (i.e., 1st place = 1 point, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd place = 3 points, etc.) with the top 5 runners from each team scoring and the 6th and 7th runners place being used to displace runners from other teams, but not included in the team score. If a meet contains more than two teams head to head team scoring will be as previously defined with places being determined by finishing order of the two teams being scored and not by overall finishing position. For example, in a tri-meet, each team may be scored separately against each of the other opposing teams so that a single tri-meet can be scored as if it were three separate dual-meets. (A single quad-meet can be scored as if it were six separate dual-meets.) Meets will be conducted in accordance with the USATF rules and regulations unless superseded by rules and regulation defined, herein.
- 11.6 Championship Meet** – will consist of a girls’ championship race and a boys’ championship shall not to exceed 1.9 miles. Races will be run over a set course with a course walk-through allowed prior to the races. Meets may be presided over by hired meet officials or, with mutual agreement, may be run by the coaches. Each team must run a minimum of five (5) runners in each race. Each team may run up to but not exceed a maximum of seven runners. The championship meet will be scored as follows: 1 point will be awarded for each place finished (i.e., 1st place = 1 point, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd place = 3 points, etc.) with the top 5 runners from each team scoring and the 6th and 7thrunners place being used to displace runners from other teams, but not included in the team score. The championship meet will be conducted in accordance with the USATF rules and regulations unless superseded by rules and regulation defined, herein.

SECTION XII - VOLLEYBALL

- 12.1 Uniforms** – no participant will be allowed to play without wearing the school’s proper uniform that has its name or insignia. All uniforms must have a number on the front and back. Proper athletic footwear is required. (i.e. no converse fashion sneakers).

- 12.1.1** Knee pads are required for all participants.
- 12.2** **Scorekeeper** – the home school will be required to have an official scorekeeper and scorebook at each match. The scorekeeper can be a reliable, trained staff member or student. Any officially approved score book can be used.
- 12.3** **Match Official** – the home school will be required to have one (1) certified match official to oversee contests. A DOWN official will not be required during regular season play. For tournament play, an UP and a DOWN official will be required.
- 12.4** **Rosters** – regular season rosters are unlimited. Tournament rosters will be limited to fifteen (15) participants.
- 12.5** **Warm-ups** – each team will be allowed 15 minutes before the start of each match. Coaches can mutually agree to share warm-up time.
- 12.6** **Matches** – each member school is allowed to play two matches per day. All varsity competitions will be best 2 out of 3 sets, played to 25 points utilizing rally scoring, margin of victory is by 2 points with a cap of the first team to 30. The 3rd set will be played to 15 points, win by 2. If a team arrives late, for every 15 minutes that team forfeits a set.
- 12.7** **Serving** – the ball may be served underhand or overhand. Limit is one (1) re-serve as long as the ball does not make contact with server. On underhand serves, the ball must completely leave the players tossing hand. The server must serve from behind the line. The ball can be served from any position behind the line but not directly behind a back row player. The receiving team cannot not block a serve. On a serve, the receiving team may only set or bump (feet have to be on the floor). The ball can graze the net on a serve but cannot hit the ceiling. At the end of each point, the ball must be rolled under the net to the server.
- 12.8** **Rotating** – teams will rotate positions in a clockwise direction each time they win back the serve.
- 12.9** **Volleys** – a maximum of three hits per side. Players may not hit the ball twice in succession (a block is not considered a hit). Ball may be played off the net during a volley and on the serve. A ball touching a boundary line is good. A legal hit is contact with the ball by a player's body above and including the waist which does not allow the ball to visibly come to a rest. If two or more players contact the ball simultaneously, it is considered one play and the players involved may not participate in the next play. A player must not block or attack a serve. Switching positions is only allowed after the serve.

Any rule not listed here will be in accordance with the National Federation of State High School Sports (NFHS).

SECTION XIII - FLAG FOOTBALL

13.1 Rules

- 1) **The quarterback is not allowed to rush past the line of scrimmage** unless he is handed off the ball from another player. Also the quarterback has only 7 seconds to get rid of the ball.
- 2) The game will consist of two (2) thirty (30) Minute halves and the clock will only stop on timeouts and the last two minutes of the second half. In the event of a double-header, the game will consist of two (2) twenty-five (25) minute halves.
- 3) If a flag falls off a player who has the ball, the play ends and the ball will be placed where the flag has fallen
- 4) There can be only one rusher who will be seven-yards off the ball and will have to raise his hand to be the designated rusher. There will be no blitzing in the game.
- 5) On 4th down the team on offense has the option to punt or run a play. If the team elects to punt, the ball will be placed on the five-yard line from the opponent's goal line.
- 6) There is **no blocking whatsoever** in the game; a line person may set a pick but cannot block at all.
- 7) Overtime: each team will get four downs to score from midfield. If neither team scores , then each team will receive a fresh set of downs from the ten-yard line, neither team however may rush.
- 8) Coaches are not allowed on the field during game play.
- 9) All offensive penalties and defensive penalties will remain the same. If something comes up in the game that is not provided for in these rules, the referees on the field will confer and their decision will be final.
- 10) Any player who receives two (2) personal foul calls during a game will be ejected from the contest.
- 11) Each team will have two (2) timeouts per half with no carry over.
- 12) Each home team will bring a scrimmage mark to be placed where the ball was last played.
- 13) Any interference from fans of any kind may result in forfeiture of the game
- 14) All Players are eligible to receive a pass.
- 15) The field shall be seventy (70) yards in length and thirty (30) yards in width. The length of the playing area is fifty (50) yards plus an end-zone which will be an additional ten

(10) yards deep. Rushing is not permitted between the five (5) yard line and the goal line and within five (5) yards of mid-field.

16) The game will be played with a Size 7 youth football.

Athletic directors (supervisors) are responsible for team behavior and crowd control during each game

SECTION XIV - BASKETBALL

14.1 Mouth Guards – mouth guards are highly recommended for all participants.

14.2 Uniforms – need to consist of jerseys with numbers on the front and back. Only digits 0-5 be used on jersey numbers. Jerseys worn under uniforms must be of the same jersey color. All jerseys must be tucked in at all times with the exception of uniforms specifically designed to fit outside the shorts. Shorts must match and complete the uniform. Participants wearing mismatched uniforms will result in a technical foul call each time the participant in question steps onto the court for play.

14.2.1 Hard items worn on head, such as barrettes, bobby pins are prohibited.

14.2.2 The wearing of any/all jewelry is strictly prohibited. Players are not allowed to “tape over” these items.

14.2.3 All head /wrist bands worn must match the color of the game jersey.

14.3 Electronic/Digital Score Clock – is required and to be provided by all home teams. The clock must be operational and visible to all coaches, players, officials and spectators. In case of other circumstances, teams can make any other arrangements necessary to ensure that there is a proper means of keeping the correct game score and time.

14.4 Official Scorer Jersey – The official scorer is required to wear a black-and-white vertically striped garment.

14.5 Length of Contests

Games - will consist of four (4) ten (10) minute running time quarters with a five (5) minute halftime. There is a one (1) minute break between the 1st and 2nd and 3rd and 4th quarters. The last two minutes of the fourth quarter will be stopped time.

14.5.1 At the discretion of the game site supervisor, the "ready to play" team's head coach and game officials, the game clock shall be started once ten (10) minutes has elapsed from the game's original scheduled starting time. For every minute that counts down, the team who is unwilling or not yet ready to play will be penalized 1 point for each minute they are unable to take the court. Once 15 minutes has elapsed, the game site supervisor, coach and game officials can declare the game to be a forfeit.

- 14.6 Overtime(s)** – will be two (2) minutes stop time in length. League games will include an indefinite number of overtime periods to determine a winner. Coaches will agree upon a solution to a game that must be ended due to time constraints.
- 14.7 Timeouts** – each team will be allowed five (5) one (1) minute timeouts per game. One additional one (1) minute timeout will be given for each overtime period. Unused timeouts can be carried over into overtime period(s).
- 14.8 Jump Balls** – will be used to start the game and any overtime period. An alternating possession arrow will be used at all other times.
- 14.9 Warm-Ups** – teams should be given adequate time to warm-up before games to prevent injuries.
- 14.10 Fouls** – any participant committing five (5) fouls in a game is disqualified from that game. Teams will shoot two (2) free throws after five (5) team fouls in a quarter. Each quarter the team fouls are reset to zero.
- 14.11 Technical Fouls** – any participant and/or coach who receives two (2) technical fouls for unsportsmanlike behavior in a game will be disqualified from that game, must leave the contest area immediately and is automatically suspended from participating in that members school next league/tournament game. The Home Game Supervisor is responsible for having suspension notification forms readily available for game officials to complete at the conclusion of the game. Copies of the suspension notification form must then be forwarded to both member school's Administrative Team/school coordinator and the League Coordinator within two (2) days from the date of the incident. Any participant and/or coach who is disqualified twice in the same season will be suspended for the remainder of the season.

Any participant and/or coach who receives one (1) technical foul in two (2) consecutive games for unsportsmanlike behavior will be automatically suspended from participating in that member school's next league/tournament game. Any participant and/or coach who receives five (5) technical fouls over the course of a season for unsportsmanlike behavior will be suspended for the remainder of the season.

- 14.12 Roster** – size of roster is limited to 20 players. Final rosters must be submitted to the league office by roster deadline day. No roster additions can be made once this deadline has passed, with the exception of a new student starting in your school after the deadline or an exemption made by the MCSAO Executive Staff due to extenuating circumstances. Any changes to a player's jersey number must be reported to the league office prior to their next scheduled league contest.

Any rule not listed here will be in accordance with the National Federation of State High School Sports (NFHS).

SECTION XV - OUTDOOR TRACK

15.1 Uniforms – will consist of a consistent jersey for all team members.

15.2 Meets – will consist of the events defined in 15.3 and will be contested for both boys and girls. Races will be seeded based on inputs from each of the coaches. Meets may be presided over by hired meet officials or, with mutual agreement, may be run by the coaches. Meets held during the regular season will be conducted in dual or tri-meet fashion in which points will be award to top three finishers. 5- first, 3- 2nd, 1- 3rd and relays as 5 for first place.

15.2.1 Championship Meet will be scored as follows: 10 points for 1st place, 8 points for 2nd place, 6 points for 3rd place, 4 points for 4th place, 2 points for 5th place and 1 point for 6th place. Relays will be scored as 10 points for 1st place, 5 points for 2nd place and 2 points for third place. The team with the highest point total wins. Meets will be conducted in accordance with the USATF rules and regulations unless superseded by rules and regulation defined, herein.

15.3 Events – The following events will be held at MCSAO Sanctioned meets. Officials and those running the meet will determine the order for the meet. Order may change due to time, weather, or permits but will include the, 100M, 200M, 400M, 800M, 1600M, 4x100M Relay, Shot Put, Long Jump.

REGULAR SEASON MEETS

Order of Track Events

- 1600m
- 100m
- 400m
- 4 x 100m
- 800m
- 200m

Field Events

- Shot Put
- Long Jump

CHAMPIONSHIP MEET

Order of Track Events

- 100m qualifiers
- 800m
- 100m finals
- 400m
- 200m
- 1600m
- 4 x 100m

Field Events

- Shot Put
- Long Jump

15.4 **Participation Limits** – An athlete may compete in a maximum of three events including relays during regular season and championship meets. No more than three athletes per school may compete in any event during regular season meets, however, more than three may participate in the championship meet if they qualify. A school may enter up to six athletes for each relay team, listing the first four in order of appearance, followed by as many as two alternates to be designated by the Coach. During the regular season each team may enter only one relay team per race. In a championship race, in the event a Member school has two teams composed of two completely different sets of students athletes, exclusive of alternates, both teams may race.

15.5 **Championship Meet** – Events include those defined in 15.3 and will be contested for both boys and girls. Only participants listed on the schools Championship Team Entry sheet will be allowed to participate. No additions allowed. Separate boys and girls champions will be awarded. Races will be seeded based on regular season results/top finishers. Coaches can utilize the updated Top Finishers List to decide which events they wish to place their participants in. Meets may be presided over by hired meet officials or, with mutual agreement, may be run by the coaches.

15.5.1 The “**Honest Effort**” rule will be enforced. If an athlete is scratched from an event, then they are scratched from all other events that follow. This includes the relay.

Explanation: If an athlete is set to run in the 1600 and the 800, the runner may not scratch only from the 1600. They would also be scratched from the 800 as well, but the athlete would be able to scratch from the 800 after running the 1600.

SECTION XVI. TOURNAMENT

16.1 Qualifying Criteria – to be eligible to compete in the end of season tournament, all member schools must have:

16.1.1 Fulfilled all financial obligations (7) days prior to the date of tournament commencement.

16.1.2 Submitted all game scores and team's current record to the MCSAO.

16.1.3 Be considered a member in good standing.

16.1.4 Have completed all division games.

16.1.5 Have completed eight games for soccer and flag football and ten games for basketball.

16.2 Seeds – will be based on the following criteria

16.2.1 Best winning percentage against MCSAO schools for the season

16.2.2 Head-to-Head competition decides ties (including in track and cross-country)

16.2.3 Most wins

16.2.4 Ties after step B, fewest points allowed vs. each other (VB – Sets then individual points)

16.2.5 Ties after step C, fewest points allowed vs. league opponents

16.2.6 Ties after step D, number of victories vs. opponents with a winning percentage.

16.2.7 Ties after step E, coin toss.

The higher seeded team is always designated as the home team. The tournament is based on a one (1) game elimination premise.

16.3 Site Selection – the Board of Directors, League Coordinators and the MCSAO Committee will work collaboratively in seeking tournament venues which meet the following criteria:

16.3.1 Safety of all the participants involved (players, coaches, game officials, spectators, etc.).

16.3.2 Neutrality

16.3.3 Adequate seating for spectators

16.3.4 Location

16.3.5 Site Expenses

16.3.6 Ability to charge admission

16.4 **Game Official Assignments** – will be assigned by the designated by a league assignor for championship games. Assignors will do their best to select officials selected that have not officiated contests that include teams they have been contracted for, during regular season play, to officiate.

For rounds hosted by higher seed, the higher seed is responsible for securing the officials and paying for them. The following guidelines are set forth for all playoff games.

- Basketball - two man crew required, three optional
- Soccer - two officials required, three optional
- Volleyball - one official required, two preferred

16.5 **Ticket Sales** – utilized to help offset tournament costs. Separate fees will be charged to students and adults attending MCSAO sponsored events.

16.6 **Award Ceremony** – will be held at the conclusion of each championship game.

16.7 **Postponements** – will be warranted when conditions are considered to be detrimental to the health and safety of students, coaches, school officials, game officials and spectators (i.e. unsafe traveling due to weather).