
CHEER ATHLETICS ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

For membership term August 1, 2018-July 31, 2019

Purpose

As part of the Cheer Athletics's emphasis on safety and athlete protection, communications involving any participant, and especially our minor participants, should be appropriate, productive, transparent and observable.. Effective communication concerning travel, practice or competition schedules, and administrative issues among coaches, administrators, participants and their families is critical. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media, and other forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and also provides potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to participants. The improper use of social media, mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct. Adherence to the Cheer Athletics Electronic Communications Policy helps reduce these risks.

Definitions and General Policy

This policy is designed specifically for Cheer Athletics and the protection of athletes. The objective is provide a framework for effective communication, while attempting to minimize opportunities for inappropriate communication

The following are considered adults*:

1. Any person, 18 years of age or older affiliated with the program, that has a role within the program (other than being an athlete on a senior-level team) that has or could have direct interaction with minor participants. This includes, but is not limited to, program owners, coaches, choreographers, photographers, team parents, adult age participant and employees of the member organization.
2. Any athletes, 18 or older and on an open-level team, that train within the program.

* (*Dual Roles*) Adults that are affiliated with the program that are also the parent or relative of the minor participant serve dual roles. The parent/family role supersedes the role as owner or coach regarding communication with the related minor.

Athletes that are 18 years or older and on a team with minor athletes may communicate digitally with minors if following all of our policies.

1. All electronic communication between coach and participant must be for the purpose of communicating information that is appropriate.
2. Coaches, participants and all team personnel must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowed electronic communication.

3. All content between coaches and participants should be readily available to share with the public or families of the participant or coach.
4. All electronic communication between coach and participant must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Coaches, participants, and all team personnel must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowed electronic communication. All content between coaches and participants should be readily available to share with the public or families of the participant or coach.

(Should we add a list of appropriate/ inappropriate examples??)

Social Media

Social media makes it easy to share ideas and experiences. Cheer Athletics recognizes, however, that social media, mobile and other electronic communications must be undertaken with care for the well-being of our minor participant. All electronic communication of any kind between coach and participant, including use of social media, must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team oriented motivational purposes.

Personal Social Media Sites

Purpose: At CA, we believe that social media plays a significant part in building relationships with our athletes and families. We want to stay engaged with our customers and help them understand that we are relatable and transparent. However, it is also our duty to maintain a professional standard with our personal social media platforms, and to ensure that our athletes do the same while representing their teams and Cheer Athletics.

Staff members may have a personal social media page or site, with the following restrictions:

1. Staff members may not have any type of private, direct, or non public interaction with athletes on social media.
2. Staff members may not interact with athletes on any other social media sites other than the allowed platforms listed below.
3. Must inform parents and athletes that the above is not permitted.
4. Staff members may not be connected with "private" athlete accounts

Additional Restrictions by Social Media Type

SNAPCHAT

1. Staff members are not allowed to “invite”, “follow”, or “friend” an athlete on Snapchat.
2. Staff members should have ZERO interaction with athletes on Snapchat.
3. The only involvement we will allow is for athletes to follow the Cheer Athletics public Snapchat account.

INSTAGRAM

1. Staff members may not privately message an athlete on Instagram. This includes comments on stories that go directly to inbox.
2. The interaction on this site should be public for any and all followers to see.
3. Staff members with public profiles, or profiles that allow athlete friendship should be extremely aware of their instagram activity. This includes, what you like, who you follow, and any interaction on the platform. Anyone that has access to your page can also see all activity.
4. It is recommended to not interact with private instagrams, unless it is verified from parent that the account is the athletes.
5. Be extremely aware of the photos that you are “liking” and “commenting” on. Any photo interaction should be appropriate and positive.

TWITTER

1. Staff members should not direct message an athlete on twitter.
2. All interaction should be publicly tweeted for both followers to see.
3. Staff members with public access to their account need to be aware of all activity done on the platform. What you like, retweet, follow, or hashtag can show up in user activity.
4. It is recommended to not interact with private Twitter accounts.

Email, Text Messaging and Similar Electronic Communications

Owners, coaches, team parents and participants may use email, text messaging, or other direct forms of electronic communication to communicate with the following limitation: All communication between coaches/ team parents and participants should be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information directly related to CA activities.

Text messages to athletes of encouragement, messages checking on athletes well being, and messages of congratulating athletes are also permitted with the approval of the athletes parents. We encourage coaches, when sending a text from a coach to any minor participant, to include the participant’s parents and another coach or program director even when having permission from a parent to contact the athlete.

Examples of appropriate text messages;

1. Great job at practice today!
2. How is your injury today?
3. Happy birthday, I hope you have a great day!

Email

Where possible, a coach should be provided and use the organization website email center (the coach's return email address will contain "@cheerathletics.com") for all communications with the team, participants, and participants' parents, where applicable. Coaches should not contact a parent or athlete with a personal email address. When emailing a parent the coach should copy another coach/director on the email. When emailing an athlete the coach should copy the parent and another coach/director on the email. Work emails can be opened and looked at by owners at anytime.

Group Messaging

Communication with the team is critical in our organization. Group messages with the team are allowed and typically created with GroupMe, Slack or other similar applications. Communication in these groups should include but not limited to: practice information, schedules, videos and photos of practices, competitions or outside skillset conditioning, motivational conversations, encouraging the bonding of the team, and monitoring of activity of communication between the athletes.

Request to Discontinue All Electronic Communications or Imagery with Athlete

Following receipt of a written request by the parents of a minor participant that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by coaches or other adults in the pro gram, the program, team, coaches and administrators shall immediately comply with such request without any repercussions for such request.

Any adult member may not directly message a minor athlete participant unless the minor athlete is a member of their program. All contact must be initiated to the parent, adult owner or adult coach.

Abuse and Misconduct

Social media and other means of electronic communication can be used to commit abuse and misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Any abuse or misconduct in any communication

by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant of a Cheer Athletics Program, activity or event will not be tolerated and are considered violations of Cheer Athletics policies and U.S. All Star Federation's SafeSport Program. Infractions of Cheer Athletics Electronic Communications Policy should be reported to the appropriate person as described in the **Professional Responsibility Code V8.0. ???**

Any Cheer Athletics participant or parent of a participant who violates this Electronic Communications Policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including but not limited to: temporary suspension, permanent suspension, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

USASF Policies and Notices

Additionally, all content must adhere to the U. S. All Star Federation Code of Conduct and the Professional Responsibility Code V8.0 regarding the protection of athletes. Non-Compliance with the Professional Responsibility Code is subject to disciplinary hearing and potential penalties by the USASF.

The following four points are defined as definitively inappropriate conduct. Any communication with an athlete, either verbal or electronic may not involve or relate to any of the following:

1. Inappropriate or sexually explicit photos,
2. Sexual innuendos, sexual conversation, explicit language or sexual activity,
3. Drug or alcohol use, and/or
4. The adult should not relay information about their personal life or social life outside of the professional environment or discuss their relationships or personal problems.

Regardless of the adult's role in relationship to the athlete, it is the responsibility for the adult to maintain these guiding principles when communicating electronically.

1. Does the conversation pertain to the team, team activities, and/or health and well being of the athlete?
2. Is the content of the electronic conversation something that any parent, boss or other adult would agree is professional in nature?
3. Is the electronic communication accessible to the public (at minimum the athletes parent/guardian) at anytime?
4. Can the information conveyed to the athlete be used as a permanent part of the athlete's record?

Summary: An adult must ask him/herself whether the electronic communication with the athlete, if read by any reasonable individual, would be understood and determined **as professional in nature**.