

**MCYA Competition Cheerleading Handbook
2026-2027 Season**



Welcome to the MCYA Competition Cheerleading Program! We are excited to have your family with us for the 2026–2027 season. Our goal is to provide a positive environment where athletes develop cheerleading skills, teamwork, sportsmanship, confidence, and character. This handbook outlines the expectations, policies, financial commitments, and procedures that help our program run successfully. Please review it carefully with your athlete.

Sincerely,

Heather Adams

Cheer Director - Madison County Youth Association

Athlete Safety

The safety and well-being of our athletes is MCYA Competition Cheerleading's highest priority. While cheerleading is an exciting and rewarding sport, it also involves physical activity that carries an inherent risk of injury.

Our coaches are committed to creating the safest possible environment by:

- Teaching skills using proper progressions.
- Prioritizing athlete safety over competition success.
- Ensuring athletes demonstrate the skills and strength required before advancing.
- Following industry safety guidelines and best practices.
- Modifying routines or athlete positions when necessary to protect the safety of the individual and the team.

Parents can help support a safe environment by ensuring their athlete:

- Arrives healthy, well-rested, and properly hydrated.
- Wears the required practice attire and removes all jewelry before practice and competitions.
- Reports injuries, illnesses, or pain to a coach immediately.
- Follows all coaching instructions and safety guidelines.

Although every reasonable precaution is taken to reduce the risk of injury, participation in competitive cheerleading involves inherent risks. By participating in the MCYA Competition Cheerleading Program, families acknowledge these risks and agree to support the safety policies outlined in this handbook.

Communication Policy

At MCYA Competition Cheerleading, we believe that open, respectful communication is essential to a successful season. Our coaches, athletes, and families all play an important role in creating a positive team environment. We encourage questions and concerns and ask that all communication remain respectful and solution-focused.

Our Commitment

Our coaches are committed to:

- Providing a safe, positive, and supportive environment for every athlete.
- Communicating important team information in a timely manner.
- Treating all athletes and families with respect and professionalism.
- Addressing concerns fairly and consistently.

Parent Communication

We ask that parents:

- Read all emails, SportsYou messages, and other team communication promptly.
- Encourage their athlete to communicate directly with coaches when age-appropriate, helping them build confidence and responsibility.
- Speak respectfully with coaches, officials, athletes, and other families at all times.

Athlete Communication

Athletes are encouraged to communicate directly with their coaches regarding skills, goals, or questions whenever appropriate. Learning to communicate respectfully is an important part of personal growth and being a successful teammate.

Addressing Questions or Concerns

If you have a concern, we ask that you follow these steps:

1. Allow a 24-hour cooling-off period after practice or competition before discussing concerns with a coach.
2. Contact the coach privately to schedule a time to talk. Coaches are focused on athlete safety during and immediately after practices and competitions and are not available for lengthy discussions at those times.
3. If the concern cannot be resolved with the coach, please contact the Cheer Director to discuss the matter further.

Our goal is to resolve concerns respectfully and collaboratively while maintaining a positive environment for all athletes.

Response Time

MCYA coaches are volunteers who dedicate their time outside of work, family, and personal commitments. While coaches will make every effort to respond promptly, families should allow up to 48 hours for a response to non-emergency communication. Messages received on weekends, holidays, or during competitions may require additional response time.

Appropriate Topics for Discussion

We welcome conversations about:

- Your athlete's progress and development
- Practice expectations
- Attendance concerns
- Health or safety issues
- Questions about team policies or procedures

To ensure fairness to every athlete, coaches will not discuss:

- Another athlete's abilities, behavior, or position
- Team placement decisions involving other athletes
- Personal matters unrelated to your child

Social Media

We ask that all athletes and families represent MCYA in a positive manner both in person and online. Concerns about the program should be addressed directly with coaches or the Cheer Director rather than through social media or public forums.

Communication within the Program

Group messages related to the MCYA Competition Cheerleading Program are used only to relay information relevant to the entire team. Personal opinions, complaints or announcements are not allowed. Please refrain from discussing non-MCYA related items within the team group message.

The addition or removal of a team member is at the discretion of the coaches and MCYA Leadership and will be communicated only by authorized program representatives.

Team Communication App

Everyone will receive a message inviting you to join SportsYou. All scheduling and notification of scheduling will be done through the app. It is important that you have notifications turned on. Please check your team's calendar for information on practice dates/times and future parent meetings.

Confidentiality

All issues, discussions, meetings, and resolutions that surround them are confidential between MCYA Leadership, coach(es) and the athlete/parents. Coaches will respect the privacy of each family and not discuss any issues brought to us in privacy with anyone other than those involved.

Disclosure of confidential information to other MCYA members may result in suspension from the team or dismissal from the MCYA Cheerleading program.

While in the gym, verbal communication regarding athletes, parents, classes, etc., should be held in private and at the appropriate time. Coaches will only be available to discuss concerns about your athlete.

Please Note: All MCYA Cheerleading Coaches are **volunteers** who dedicate their personal time, energy, and resources to this program. They are not paid employees. Their commitment comes from a love for the sport and a desire to see each athlete grow in skill, confidence, and teamwork. We kindly ask that parents and athletes show appreciation and respect for their efforts by upholding team expectations and maintaining positive communication throughout the season.

Program Expectations & Code of Conduct

Participation in the MCYA Competition Cheerleading Program is a commitment to your team, coaches, and fellow athletes. Every athlete and parent plays an important role in creating a positive, respectful, and successful environment. The following expectations apply throughout the entire season.

Respect & Sportsmanship

Athletes are expected to:

- Treat coaches, teammates, officials, competitors, and spectators with respect.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship in both victory and defeat.
- Refrain from bullying, gossiping, or disruptive behavior, including on social media.
- Represent themselves, their families, and MCYA in a positive manner at all times.

Bullying, harassment, or repeated unsportsmanlike conduct will result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

Practice Expectations

Athletes are expected to:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before practice, dressed and ready to begin on time.
- Come to practice hydrated and prepared to participate.
- Accept coaching, corrections, and constructive feedback with a positive attitude.
- Respect the facility by following all gym rules.
- Wear appropriate practice attire, cheer shoes, and keep all jewelry at home.

Competition Expectations

Athletes are expected to:

- Attend all scheduled competitions.
- Arrive on time and remain with their team until officially released.
- Support teammates throughout the event.
- Wear the complete competition uniform, including required hair and makeup.
- Demonstrate respect for all teams, officials, and event staff during awards and throughout the competition.

Routine Positions and Team Placement

Team positions, stunt groups, tumbling passes, and routine assignments are determined by the coaches and may change throughout the season based on athlete development, attendance, safety considerations, performance, and overall team needs. All placement decisions are made in the best interest of the team and are at the discretion of the coaches and MCYA Cheer Leadership.

Illness & Injury

Athlete safety is our highest priority. If an athlete becomes ill or injured, parents should notify the coaching staff as soon as possible.

If an athlete misses multiple practices due to illness or injury, coaches may adjust routine positions to allow the team to continue preparing safely. Once medically cleared, an athlete may return to participation; however, routine placements are not guaranteed and will be determined based on team needs and athlete readiness.

Parent Expectations

Parents are essential partners in the success of our program. We ask that parents:

- Support their athlete, coaches, and teammates with respect and positivity.
- Follow the Communication Policy when questions or concerns arise.
- Ensure their athlete arrives on time, prepared, and meets attendance expectations.
- Encourage good sportsmanship at practices and competitions.
- Respect coaching decisions regarding routines, positions, and team placement.
- Avoid gossip, negativity, or behavior that disrupts the team environment.
- Refrain from entering the practice area or approaching coaches during practices or competitions.

Failure to comply with parent expectations, communication guidelines, or sportsmanship standards may result in a meeting with program leadership, restricted access to team activities, or removal of the athlete from the program when necessary to protect the team environment.

Discipline

When expectations are not met, MCYA will work to correct behavior in a fair and consistent manner. Depending on the severity of the situation, disciplinary action may include:

1. Verbal discussion or warning.
2. Removal from part or all of a practice.
3. Meeting with the athlete, parent, coach, and Cheer Director.
4. Suspension from participation.
5. Removal from the team.

MCYA reserves the right to move directly to any level of discipline when warranted by the severity of the behavior.

Our goal is always to teach, mentor, and help athletes grow while maintaining a safe, respectful, and positive environment for every member of the program.

Appearance and Uniform Requirements

General Appearance & Hygiene

- Athletes are expected to wear deodorant (if they are of the appropriate age) to help prevent body odor
- No piercings are allowed to be worn at any time. Taping over a piercing is not acceptable
- Watches, necklaces, bracelets or any other loose jewelry are not allowed to be worn while practicing.
- When in the gym, hair must be pulled away from the face to minimize risk. Hair that does not touch athletes' shoulders is permitted to be worn half up. Longer hair **MUST** be pulled up into a ponytail.
- Socks and cheer shoes are required at all times.
- Nails must never be longer than the tips of the fingers. No artificial nails are allowed to be worn during the season.
- Female athletes are encouraged to wear sports bras (as opposed to regular bras) under their practice tops in order to provide adequate support.
- Shorts must cover the seat completely and should not be rolled more than once.

Neither MCYA coaches or MCYA leadership are responsible for jewelry if it is worn into the gym, removed for practice, lost or stolen. Please leave your jewelry at home.

Competition Dress Code

- Full uniform. (This includes "Competition" hair and makeup.)
- Team competition makeup
- No jewelry allowed at any time. Competition judges will apply deductions if worn on the floor.
- Due to rules and regulations set by the industry, athletes may not simply cover and/or plug a piercing while competing. Please plan accordingly.

Attendance Policy

Competitive cheer is a team sport, and every practice is important to the success and safety of the team. Attendance at all practices, competitions, and scheduled team events is expected throughout the season.

Because routines rely on every athlete, absences may affect stunt groups, routine positions, and competition eligibility. All attendance decisions are made in the best interest of the team.

Practice Attendance

- All practices are mandatory.
- An absence is defined as missing more than 30 minutes of practice.
- A tardy is defined as arriving more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes early.
- Athletes are responsible for learning any routine changes or material missed during an absence.
- Practice schedules may change or additional practices may be added as needed. Families are responsible for checking SportsYou, email, and other team communications regularly.

MCYA follows the Madison County School District calendar for holidays and school breaks. Families attending other school systems are responsible for planning around any differences.

Reporting an Absence

Planned absences must be communicated directly to the Head Coach by email or text at least **two weeks in advance**, whenever possible and no later than seven days before the absence unless an emergency exists.

For unexpected illnesses or emergencies, notify the Head Coach as soon as possible. A doctor's note is required for illnesses or injuries that prevent participation or occur during a competition blackout period.

Excused Absences

Excused absences may include:

- Death or serious illness of an immediate family member or household member.
- School-related events that affect a grade
- Illness or injury with appropriate medical documentation

- Other circumstances approved by MCYA Leadership

All absences are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. MCYA Leadership reserves the right to approve or deny any absence.

Unexcused Absences

Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:

- Homework or school projects
- Social events (birthdays, dances, concerts, etc.)
- Non-school sports or extracurricular activities
- Vacations not approved in advance
- Illness without a doctor's note (when required)

Attendance Consequences

Frequent absences, whether excused or unexcused, may affect routine placement, stunt groups, and competition eligibility.

After **two unexcused absences**, a meeting will be scheduled with the athlete, parent(s), coaches, and the Cheer Director.

After **three unexcused absences**, the athlete may be:

- Moved to an alternate position,
- Removed from portions of the routine, or
- Removed from the team.

Roster and routine decisions remain at the discretion of MCYA Leadership.

Competition Blackout Periods

Blackout periods, typically beginning one week before each competition, are mandatory and will be identified on the team calendar.

During a blackout period:

- Unexcused absences are not permitted.
- Illness or injury must be reported immediately and supported with a doctor's note.
- Coaches may adjust routine positions or remove an athlete from the upcoming competition if missed practices affect team safety or readiness.

- Vacations, parties, concerts, and other optional activities are not excused during blackout periods.

Competition Attendance

Attendance at all competitions is mandatory.

Athletes are expected to arrive on time, remain with their team throughout the event, and stay until officially released by their coach. Missing a competition without prior approval may result in removal from the program.

Injury, Emergencies & Weather

Injury and Medical Clearance

If an athlete is injured, notify the Head Coach as soon as possible. Athletes may not return to participation until medically cleared when required. Coaches may adjust routine positions based on the athlete's recovery and the needs of the team.

Athletes suspected of having a concussion, significant injury, or other condition that may affect safe participation may be removed from activity at the discretion of the coaches. Medical clearance may be required before returning to practice or competition.

Weather and Emergency Procedures

Practice cancellations, delays, or schedule changes due to weather, facility closures, or other emergencies will be communicated through SportsYou. Families are responsible for monitoring program communications and ensuring their contact information remains current.

Whenever possible, notification will be provided in advance; however, some circumstances may require last-minute schedule changes. The safety of athletes, families, and coaches will always be the primary consideration when weather-related decisions are made.

Family Emergencies

For family emergencies, contact your Head Coach or the Cheer Director as soon as possible. Absences related to family emergencies will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Program Fees and Financial Commitment

Participation in the MCYA Competition Cheerleading Program is a financial commitment for the entire season. Program fees help cover practice facilities, competition entry fees, choreography, music, and uniforms.

By accepting a team position, families agree to fulfill the financial obligations outlined below:

Season Fees

Expense	Amount	Due Date
Uniform Package	\$500	November 1
Choreography & Music	\$310	December 1
Monthly Tuition*	Varies	Monthly

*Monthly tuition covers gym rental and competition fees. Tuition amounts may vary slightly throughout the season based on the approved budget and competition schedule.

Payment Schedule

Monthly tuition is due on the **1st of each month**. Additional fees such as uniforms or choreography, are due on the dates listed above.

Families are responsible for ensuring payments are made on time.

Late Payments

Families experiencing financial hardship should contact the Cheer Director as soon as possible. Open communication is encouraged, and payment arrangements may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Failure to remain current on payments or maintain an approved payment arrangement may affect an athlete's eligibility to participate in practices, competitions, and other team activities until the account is brought current.

Refund Policy

Program fees, uniform purchases, choreography fees, music fees, competition registrations, and other expenses already incurred on behalf of an athlete are non-refundable unless otherwise approved by MCYA Leadership.

Financial Commitment

Once an athlete accepts a position on an MCYA Competition Cheer team, that roster spot is reserved for the entire season.

If an athlete withdraws, is removed from the program, or chooses to not complete the season, the family remains responsible for all outstanding financial obligations, including tuition, uniform costs, choreography, and music fees.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses are **not included** in program fees. Families are responsible for all travel-related costs, including:

- Transportation
- Lodging
- Meals
- Other personal expenses

Additional end-of-season (bid) competitions may require extra fees. Families will be notified in advance if these opportunities become available.

End of Season and Bid Events

Throughout the competition season, teams may have opportunities to earn bids to end-of-season events. Bids are awarded based on competition results and may provide full or partial registration credits toward specific end-of-season competitions.

Bid amounts and eligibility requirements vary by event and are determined by the event producer. Earning a bid does not guarantee attendance at an end-of-season event.

If the MCYA Competition Cheer Program elects to attend an end-of-season event, families will be responsible for any costs not covered by the earned bid, including but not limited to:

- Remaining competition registration fees
- Travel expenses
- Lodging
- Meals
- Other event-related expenses

Should a team receive a partial-paid bid, families will be responsible for their portion of the remaining registration costs. Participation in end-of-season events is contingent upon sufficient team interest and the program's ability to attend.

Important Dates

Competition dates, locations, times, and event schedules are subject to change. Families will be notified as soon as possible of any updates or modifications to the schedule.

Date	Event	Location
October 20, 2026	Tryouts	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
October 27, 2026	Uniform Fittings & Parent's Meeting	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
November 14, 2026 10am to 2pm	Senior Choreography - Day 1	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
December 5, 2026 2:30pm - 7pm	Senior Choreography - Day 2	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
November 14, 2026 2:30pm - 7pm	Mini Choreography - Day 1	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
December 5, 2026 10am - 2pm	Mini Choreography - Day 2	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA
January 7, 2027	Team Showcase	Union Baptist Church Hull, GA

January 16, 2027	Victory: Georgia State Championship	Atlanta, GA
January 23 - 24, 2027	Maximum	Cherokee, NC
January 30, 2027	Deep South: The Cheer Tour	Concord, NC
February 20, 2027	Deep South: The Eras Tour	Duluth, GA
March 20, 2027	Deep South: The Cheer Tour	Duluth, GA
April 2 - 4, 2027	Deep South: Beach Nationals	Orange Beach, AL

End of Season/BID Events (If Applicable)

Additional end-of-season events may be added to the schedule if teams earn qualifying bids during the season. Information regarding event dates, locations, costs, and participation requirements will be communicated to families as soon as they become available.

Required Forms and Releases

To participate in MCYA Competition Cheerleading, all athletes must have all required forms and documentation on file before participating in practices, competitions, team events, or other program activities.

Required forms may include:

- Registration Forms
- Medical Information and Emergency Contact Forms
- Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity Agreement
- Media Release Forms

Additional forms may be required by MCYA, competition organizers, event venues, or other governing organizations.

Participation is contingent upon the completion and submission of all required forms by the deadlines established by the program.

Release and Waiver of Liability

Participation in MCYA Competition Cheerleading requires a parent or legal guardian to sign the MCYA Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity Agreement. The complete waiver will be provided as part of the registration process and must be signed before an athlete may participate in any program activities.