

# OCCA REC TEAM HANDBOOK



OCCA Rec Liaison

[RecLiaison@occa.net](mailto:RecLiaison@occa.net)

OCCA is not a governing body for rec teams or any team. However, we produce events annually that offer rec divisions and support our rec coaches in Oregon. Our main goals are to keep athletes safe, educate coaches, and provide positive competitive experiences. The information in this handbook is geared towards rec/youth teams in Oregon. Teams competing at the national level should follow the standards set forth by that specific event when competing for that event.

## **SECTION 1: QUALIFYING AS A COMPETITIVE REC TEAM - AFFILIATED AND NON-AFFILIATED**

At the beginning of the season an organization must classify if they are Affiliated or Non-Affiliated. Once the organization's status has been declared for the 2025-2026 season, changes will not be allowed. All rec programs are required to complete the OCCA Rec Program Form declaring status and providing current insurance certificate. All teams within a program will be classified the same. In addition, all Rec coaches (including volunteers) must complete the OCCA Rec Coach Certification Form showing proof of completion of all certifications.

**Affiliated:** The affiliated divisions will consist of tiny, mini, youth, and junior teams only. Please see above for age ranges. To compete as an affiliated recreational team in Oregon, teams must meet one of the following criteria. Please note rec cheerleaders (regardless of age) are not permitted to cheer for high school-level games per OSAA and NFHSSpirit Rules. Halftime performances do not count as sideline participation.

**Option #1:** Cheering sideline for school or community-based athletic team games (i.e., Pop Warner, area youth sports teams, middle school teams, etc.) Each team in the program must cheer for a sport during the 2025-2026 cheer season. The program must provide a letter confirming sideline participation. The team is not affiliated with an All Star program and does not compete under All Star divisions outside of Oregon.

**Option #2:** The program must be affiliated with, report to, and be governed by an organization (all three) such as; YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, City/County Parks and Recreation Program, American Youth Cheer, Pop Warner Association, or other community run program not associated with an All-Star gym. The program must provide a letter confirming the program's affiliation.

**Non-Affiliated:** The Non-Affiliated divisions will consist of tiny, mini, youth, junior, and senior teams. Please see above for age ranges. All programs offering a senior level team will automatically classify as a non-affiliated program. To compete as a non-affiliated recreational team in Oregon, teams must meet the following criteria:

**Option #1:** Organization may be independent of town/city organization/clubs. Team does not necessarily cheer for a supported, sports program. The team is not affiliated with an All Star program and does not compete under All Star divisions outside of Oregon.

- Tiny: Kindergarten and under
- Mini: 3rd grade and under
- Youth: 6th grade and under
- Junior: 8th grade and under
- Senior: 12th grade and under with a minimum of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. (Non-Affiliated only)

The oldest member of the team will set your division.

## **SECTION 2: COACH QUALIFICATIONS/INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS/OCCA MEMBERSHIP**

### **Coach Qualifications**

- All coaches, volunteer or paid, are required to be certified.
  - NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching or OSAA Beyond the Scoreboard – One Time Requirement
  - OSAA Spirit Safety Course – Required Annually (available in August)
  - NFHS Concussion in Sports – Required Annually
  - NFHS Heat Illness and Prevention – Required Every 4 Years
  - NFHS Appearance & Performance Enhancing Drugs & Substances - Required every 4 years
- For additional recommendations, please [CLICK HERE](#)

### **Insurance**

- All independent rec programs should have an insurance policy in place and will be required to participate or compete at OCCA/OSAA Sanctioned Events.
- School district or community center-based programs would most likely be insured through the school. You will need to contact the appropriate party to find out more information.

### **OCCA Membership**

- At least one coach per program must be a current OCCA Member to participate in OCCA sponsored events and OSAA Sanctioned Events. To complete the annual OCCA Membership form: [CLICK HERE](#)

## **SECTION 3: CHEERLEADING SAFETY/RULES GUIDELINES**

### **NFHS Rules**

- All Rec Teams competing in Oregon must follow all NFHS Spirit Rules: [NFHS Spirit Rules](#)
- Rule books are found online at: [www.nfhslearn.org](http://www.nfhslearn.org). You may download it to your phone/computer or order a hard copy.
- Questions regarding NFHS Rules should be directed to: [cheerleading.sri@osaa.org](mailto:cheerleading.sri@osaa.org)

### **NFHS Rules Exceptions for Rec Teams**

Junior and Senior level teams only: Basket tosses, sponge tosses, elevator tosses, or similar multi based tosses are limited to a straight ride toss for the 2025-26 season.

Tiny, Mini, and Youth level teams, basket tosses, sponge tosses, elevator tosses, or similar multi based tosses are not allowed in Oregon.

## **SECTION 4: SHARED PRACTICE SPACE/HIGH SCHOOL SIDELINE PARTICIPATION**

### **Shared Space Request Form**

- If you are sharing a practice space with a high school team, you must complete the form [CLICK HERE](#), prior to practicing.
- Rec/Youth Teams are not allowed to share space with high school teams simultaneously. Rec cheerleaders must practice in separate locations if practicing simultaneously and in the exact location as high school cheerleaders.
- High school coaches should not provide instruction to rec cheerleaders while high school cheerleaders practice in the same space.

### **High School Sideline Participation**

- Per NFHS and OSAA rules, any rec cheerleader representing a rec cheerleading program, regardless of age or team level, may not participate during any high school level game. Rec cheerleaders may participate or perform before the game, during halftime, or after the game's end.

## **SECTION 5: SENIOR TEAM/CROSSOVERS**

### **Senior Team**

- Senior Rec athletes who are also on an OSAA high school team, are not allowed to compete at the same event or venue. Athletes may **not** compete twice in one day, at the same event/venue, while representing two programs. Programs with a senior team will automatically be classified as non-affiliated.

### **Crossovers**

- Rec athletes are allowed to crossover up to twice each school year. Athletes may not compete and crossover outside of their age range.
  - Example: An 8th grader may not fill in for a youth team member. An athlete may only represent one program at a competition.
  - Teams found using athletes more than twice in a season on multiple teams could forfeit any placings and not be allowed to continue to compete.
  - Teams may be required to list any crossovers used on all event registration forms.

## **SECTION 6: REC DIVISIONS**

The oldest athlete on the team will set your division.

- Rec Game Day - Affiliated and Non-Affiliated
  - Tiny – Kindergarten and under
  - Mini – 3rd grade and under
  - Youth – 6<sup>th</sup> grade and under
  - Junior – 8<sup>th</sup> grade and under
  - Senior – 12<sup>th</sup> grade and under with a minimum of 5<sup>th</sup> grade (Non-Affiliated only)
- Rec Traditional Division - Affiliated and Non-Affiliated\*
  - Tiny – Kindergarten and under
  - Mini – 3rd grade and under
  - Youth – 6<sup>th</sup> grade and under
  - Junior – 8<sup>th</sup> grade and under
  - Senior – 12<sup>th</sup> grade and under with a minimum of 5<sup>th</sup> grade (Non-Affiliated only)
    - Rec Traditional divisions will be split based on the following:
      - Small: up to 12
      - Medium: 13-16
      - Large: 17+
        - Local event hosts will be encouraged to not combine divisions. In the event of low registration, local hosts will combine divisions if they choose.
        - Coed divisions may be available with enough teams registered.
- Affiliated and Non-Affiliated divisions will never be combined.
- Levels will never be combined

\*Non-Affiliated teams will compete in all music routines in the traditional division. NA teams will **not** be scored in the following categories:

- OVERALL:
  - Voice
  - Crowd Leading

### **Optional Divisions**

- Rec Stunt Group Division – For more information: [CLICK HERE](#)
- Rec Individual Division - For more information: [CLICK HERE](#)

**The following are suggestions and generic guidelines in setting up your rec/youth program. OCCA is not responsible for governing rec/youth programs.**

## **SECTION 7: WHO TO CONTACT**

If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to reach out with questions. We are more than happy to help you with setting up your program.

**General Questions and Competition Related Questions:** Christy Freeman, OCCA Rec Liaison, [RecLiaison@occa.net](mailto:RecLiaison@occa.net)

**General Questions:** Sarah Devereaux, OCCA President, [President@occa.net](mailto:President@occa.net)

**Safety Questions/Stunt Legality:** OSAA Spirit Rules Interpreter, [cheerleading/sri@osaa.org](mailto:cheerleading/sri@osaa.org)

Be sure to follow all OCCA social media and request to join the OCCA Rec Team Group Page to network with other Oregon rec coaches.

## **SECTION 8: PROGRAM SET UP/ PRACTICE SPACE/RECRUITMENT TIPS**

### **Name your program!**

- File with the State at: [www.filinginoregon.com](http://www.filinginoregon.com)

### **Limited Liability Company**

- Be sure to consult with a Certified Public Accountant

### **School District or Community Based Group**

- Contact a school district or community center to find out if you can offer a rec program.
  - This will require a meeting with the administrative staff or the community-based program equivalent.
- Be sure to have a clear program plan to present.
- Topics to Discuss:
  - Insurance requirements
  - Financial Processes
  - Salary for coaching staff
  - “Pay to play” fees or registration fees.
  - Practice Space
  - Program Responsibility (school district or program directors?)

### **Financial Responsibility**

- **See Section 9 for more information.**

### **Practice Space/Shared Space**

- If you are sharing space with your area high school team, please see section 4.

### **Practice Space Suggestions**

- School, church, community centers, outside
- Be sure to factor in equipment needs. Borrow mats? Fundraise for mats?

### **Recruitment Tips**

- Set foundation and vision for your program. Earn the trust of the parents and community!
- Build a reputable and certified coaching staff.
- Consider lower costs, shorter time commitments, and flexibility in the first years.
- Social Media advertising
- Community advertising
- Partner with the youth football program or affiliated schools
- Word of mouth is the most important. Building a solid program will continue to bring athletes each year.
- Offer only one tryout or registration window. This will help to make a seamless transition from football to competition season.

## **SECTION 9: CREATE DIRECTORSHIP AND/OR BOARD**

### **Create Directorship**

- Who is ultimately in charge?
- Make sure there is a clear difference between coach and director (*note: this can be the same person if needed and dependent on how you structure your program*)
  - **Director (or board):** Program management, financial responsibilities, competition registrations, equipment needs, scheduling practice space, ordering of gear, management of parent's concerns, code of conduct enforcement, coordinating community involvement and appearances.
  - **Coach:** Focus on kids, team progression, responsible for supervision of athletes and communication with the director on any concerns.

## **SECTION 10: FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY/FUNDRAISING**

### **If program is independent from a school district:**

- Set up a business checking account.
- Set up Venmo, PayPal, PO Box, keep it simple.
- Have a system of checks and balances in place and be transparent.
- Appoint a treasurer.
- Establish a monthly financial reporting system/invoicing to parents.

### **If program is run through school district finances:**

- Contact the bookkeeper to ensure proper financial steps are followed.
- Contact the high school coach to ensure clear communication on all finances.

### **Annual Budget:**

- Create a clear annual budget for all participants and share with the family before you select athletes/open programs for signups. Know your community demographic and set your budget accordingly.

- Budget to include: *(please note, you do not have to budget for everything below just be sure to include everything you **plan** to order)*
  - Uniform costs (skirt, top)
  - Poms
  - Shoes
  - Camp Fees
  - Camp Clothing/Practice Gear/Team Clothing
  - Accessories (bows, makeup, winter weather gear, bags, briefs)
  - Warm-ups
  - Equipment Charges (mat fee, megaphones, signs, flags, etc)
  - Program Registration Fee (if any)
  - Competition Expenses (choreographer, music, registration fees)
  - Coaches Fee or Facility Use Fees (some districts may have a “pay to play” fee)
  - Include a contingency for additional costs:
    - Team pictures
    - Team dinner/parties
    - Unpaid account balances

#### **Fundraising/Saving Tips:**

- Create Fundraising opportunities for all athletes if necessary and all fundraisers should be approved by the program director.
  - Ideas:
    - Local Business Sponsorships
    - Car Washes
    - Bottle Drives.
    - Cookie Dough Sales
- Set up a tracking system with the treasurer for all fundraising activities.
  - All to program or individual success?
  - Be sure to communicate with parents clearly and openly regarding earned funds.
- Typical programs can range between \$50-\$1400 per year (depending on community)
- Be sensitive (if needed) to budget expectations. Demographics are different. Be sure you are setting up your program to be financially successful.
- Shop around for the best deals prior to publishing your budget. Also compare prices!
- Reuse your uniforms if possible or offer the option to sell uniforms to the following years’ teams.

#### **Taxes**

- Depending on how your program is structured, you may be required to file taxes. Please consult with a Certified Public Accountant.



### **Non-Profit Status**

- Teams who are setting up a non-profit program are encouraged to consult a lawyer and/or certified accountant.
- For more specific information on beginning a non-profit in Oregon: [Click Here](#)

## **SECTION 11: OFFICIAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

### **1. Set Program Expectations**

- Create a team handbook. May include:
  - Financial Responsibility (be upfront, no hidden costs/fees)
  - Program Rules (missing practice or games, tardiness, discipline, etc.)
  - Behavior Expectations from athletes and parents
  - Social Media expectations
  - Time Commitment/Schedule
  - Program mission/vision
  - Coach/Director/Board contact information
  - Policies may include:
    - What happens if an athlete quits the team?
    - Scholarship opportunities
    - Fundraising policies
    - Accounting (how payments should be made, invoices, etc)
    - Travel to games or events

### **2. Resources**

- Reach out to local coaches (or OCCA) for a copy of a current handbook to use as a starting point.

## **SECTION 12: SAMPLE SEASON SCHEDULE**

*\*Please note: the below is only an example of a season schedule. You may create your schedule based on your own program timing and needs.*

### **March/April**

- Hire coaching staff
- Appoint director or board
- Set registration deadlines
- Begin building a budget
- Attend annual OCCA Coaches Conference
- Secure insurance for upcoming year

### **May**

- Registration (include financial commitment and schedule commitment)
- Secure choreographer (if competing)
- Register for camp (if attending)
- Hold Parent meetings after registration is complete and collect deposits for uniforms.

- Attend the OCCA Conference and connect with other rec team coaches

### **June**

- Uniform Fittings (recommend paying for the order at time of fitting)
- Secure facility contracts

### **August**

- Camp
- Monthly Tuition begins – Collect funds
- Handout official game schedule once set with youth football program
- Summer practice schedule
- All coaches should be certified by first practice date

### **September**

- Football season – Games on Saturdays
- Regular season practice schedule begins
- Tumbling options may begin (not required but may be offered as part of tuition)

### **October**

- Choreography (if competing)
- Order music (cheer sounds, unleash the beats, or pay thru choreographer)
- All music must be licensed and purchased through any of the music providers listed here:  
<http://www.usasf.net/safety/>
- Update competition schedule

### **November**

- Send all competition registrations
- Facility use updates
- Be sure to break for the holidays

### **December/January/February**

- Competition season
- Compete at OCCA Cheer Championships in February
- Attend Nationals

## **SECTION 13: COMPETITION**

**ALL** rec programs who plan to compete or participate in **ANY OCCA or OSAA event** must complete the information at the end of this handbook annually. Any programs NOT submitting the required form will NOT be allowed to compete or participate in any OCCA or OSAA event. At least one coach from the rec program must be a CURRENT member of OCCA to compete at any OCCA event.

### **Divisions Offered**

- *SEE SECTION 6*
- Competition Directors will list divisions offered on registration forms

### **Events**

- All OSAA/OCCA event information is found at: [www.osaa.org](http://www.osaa.org)
- OCCA's Oregon Cheer Championships is the largest rec team event and a great way to end the year! **Please note, this event is not an official state championship event and does not require qualification to compete.**

### **Routine Choreography/Score Sheets**

- All score sheets are available at: [www.occa.net](http://www.occa.net)
  - Be sure to study the rules of the game prior to choreographing your routine
  - Attend performance judge training to gain knowledge.
  - Ask for advice from other youth coaches in the Oregon cheer community.
  - Ask the Quality Control Judge questions at events.

### **Choreographers**

- For a list of recommended choreographers, please email: [occageneral@gmail.com](mailto:occageneral@gmail.com)
- Reach out to former high school cheerleaders or coaches for assistance.
- Hire out for one section or full routine.
- Ultimately the responsibility falls on the coach to ensure all elements are met and to know the score sheet. Choreographers **SHOULD** be educated in this area, but this is not always the case.

### **Building a routine**

- Components of a Routine
  - Opening
  - Signs and/or poms
  - Cheer
  - Dance
  - Stunts
  - Pyramid
  - Ending
- Routine Length/Time Limit: 2:30
- Skills to Include
  - Assess your skills, perform what you have perfected but leave room to grow
  - Think of the routine in chunks by using the score sheet as your guide. Make a check off list of all required elements.
  - Perfect the tumbling basics

- Study the scoring rubrics. The more you read over the rubrics, the more comfortable you will become.
- Music
  - All music must be licensed and purchased through any of the music providers listed here: <http://www.usasf.net/safety/>

### Competition Practice Plan/What to expect at events.

- Practice – Ready to Perform!
  - Break down sections at practice.
  - Mix it up and do not spend an entire practice on stunting.
  - Practice like you will perform.
  - Practice the warm-up process to mimic the events.
  - Review all judges' comments and scores and make notes on where to improve.
  - Ask for feedback from assistant coaches or other coaches.
  - Keep feedback positive and stay focused and relaxed around your athletes.
- What to expect at events?
  - Arrive no more than one hour before your team performs unless you want to watch.
  - When you receive the performance order, count about 5 minutes per routine to figure out approx. when you will perform. Share this information with parents/fans.
  - Keep your athletes together and their belongings. Space is usually limited.
  - Expect a 9-panel cheer floor for the performance area.
  - A spring floor will **not** be available at OCCA/OSAA events.
  - Once you arrive in the main performance area, establish where the warm-up area is located, where the music is played and where the Quality Control station is located. Share this information with your assistants.
  - Stretch and warm-up OFF the mat.
  - Be courteous to those around you and be aware of the performance schedule. A team who is performing at #15 should not be on the warmup mat before team #10.
  - Be efficient once you take the warm-up mat. Only use the mat for necessary skills. Running full out 5 times is not efficient and not being courteous to those around you.
  - Stay seated in designated team seating.
  - Parents/Fans should remain in the spectator section for the duration of the event.
  - Music – Be sure to have designated someone to play your music that knows your routine. Be sure it is in airplane mode, volume turned all the way up, phone case OFF, and you have the necessary dongle if needed. It is the responsibility of the coach (or designated music person) to play the music. If your music is not playing, it is the responsibility of the **COACH** to avoid time deductions and to begin counting when appropriate.
  - Competition Terms
    - **"Up Next"**: Team is taking the floor.
    - **"On Deck"**: Team immediately following the team on the floor.
    - **"In the Hole"**: Team is waiting to be on deck.
    - **Quality Control**: Your challenge form will be available approx. 15 minutes following your performance. The form will list your **DIFFICULTY** scores only and

should you feel it is incorrect, you may challenge for the revised score. This is also an opportunity to ask questions regarding scoring rubrics and safety violations.

- **Spectator Entrance:** All people should enter through this entrance apart from athletes and coaches.
- **Team Entrance:** Only coaches and athletes should enter through this entrance.
- **Cheer Grams:** Some events offer cheer grams. Parents/Fans can purchase and create an encouraging message to their team or specific athlete to be read prior to performing.

#### **Etiquette/Tips**

- Give yourself plenty of time for travel and parking.
- HAVE FUN and stay positive throughout the day. Go over positive feedback only on competition day.
- Provide complete and clear event information as soon as you receive it to parents/fans. (time, location, parking info, admission price, concessions, etc)
- Provide information sheets during the practice before with what to pack, wear, meeting time, etc.
- Be sure all parents/fans know they represent your program and encourage them to behave in a manner that is positive and respectful to all other teams, coaches, event personnel, judges, and school officials.
- Have a discussion with all your athletes and coaches about behavior expectations, uniform expectations, and sportsmanship before EVERY event.

## **SECTION 14: FAQ's**

### **1. Is OCCA the governing body for all rec teams?**

*No, OCCA is not a governing body. OCCA is a coaches association and provides support to rec team coaches and athletes. OCCA Members are required to follow the OCCA Code of Conduct. Any repeat violations of the Code of Conduct may result in revocation of membership.*

### **2. Are Rec Teams required to follow the OSAA Moratorium Week policy?**

*No, technically rec teams are not governed by OSAA. However, if you plan to use a high school facility for your practice during Moratorium Week, you will need to find an alternate arrangement. No practices are allowed at any high school facility (including outdoor areas during this time). If your coaches are also high school coaches, they can still attend rec practice if no high school athletes are present. Most Rec Teams take this week off to avoid confusion and potential coach conflicts.*

### **3. Why does OCCA require proof of insurance and information to compete or participate in events?**

*To be in line with national standards as many of the Varsity Brand events require this information to participate. This is to ensure all Rec Teams are following and meeting the criteria and to protect OCCA from any potential liability at our One Day Clinics and Events.*

**5. Do Rec Teams compete at the OSAA State Cheerleading Championships?**

*No, the OSAA State Cheerleading Championships are for high school varsity teams only. Rec Teams are encouraged to end their year at the OCCA Cheerleading Championships in February. This is the main Oregon event for all Rec Teams!*

**6. Are Rec Teams required to compete at two events prior to the OCCA Cheerleading Championships?**

*No, this requirement is for high school varsity teams to qualify for the OSAA State Cheerleading Championships. Rec Teams may compete as little or as much as they would like to. No requirements. At least one coach per rec program must be a CURRENT member of OCCA to compete at any OCCA events. The OCCA Cheer Championships is **not** an official state championship event.*

**7. Are senior rec team athletes eligible to compete at OCCA All-State?**

*No, OCCA All-State is open to high school varsity level athletes only.*