

**Smyth County School Board**

**Student Athletic and Activity  
Handbook**



## PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Athletic activities in Smyth County Schools are to supplement the educational development of each participating student. Athletic participation is a privilege offered to all students in Smyth County and all athletic programs shall be conducted in accordance with existing School Board policies and regulations. Each activity should be designed to develop sportsmanship, discipline, character, self confidence, responsibility, and maturity among all athletes through healthy competition. Each student should learn the reality of winning and losing and should accept victory with humility and graciously acknowledge defeat. With this in mind, each athletic team is expected to strive for victory in every game, meet, match, or contest. Success, however, will ultimately be measured in terms of overall student development, not wins and losses.

The student-athlete shall be defined as a student who is a participant in any Virginia High School League (VHSL) activity.

## PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

All student-athletes must abide by the Code of Student Conduct and Attendance guidelines set forth by The Smyth County School Board. Additionally all student-athletes are subject to the requirements of this handbook, the VHSL Rules and Policies, and the National Federation of High School Rules.

- **VHSL Physical Examination Form** – This form must be completed and on file in the athletic director’s office prior to any participation. Student-Athletes must have a physical each school year. Physicals are valid from May 1 or later until June 30 of the following year. Physicals prior to May 1 are only good until June 30 of the same year.
- **Parental Consent Form** – Each student must have parental consent to participate in athletics. Parents must read and certify they understand the contents of this handbook by signing the consent form and returning it to the head coach. Parents must also sign the parent consent portion of the VHSL physical form. (Part IV of the Physical Form)
- **Acknowledgement of Risk** – Parents and students must realize there are certain risks involved when participating in athletics. Parents must read and sign this portion of the VHSL physical form. (Part IV or the VHSL Physical Form)
- **Insurance Statement** – Parents must verify the insurance company that will cover their child in case of injury. (Part IV of the VHSL Physical Form)
- **Emergency Permission Form** – This form must be completed and signed by the parents. (Part V of the VHSL physical form)

- **Scholastic Eligibility** – To be eligible to participate in athletics a student must meet all VHSL requirements. The requirements are listed on the VHSL physical form.
- **Preseason Rules/Safety Meeting** - Parent/Guardians are required to attend each sports seasonal rules /safety meeting prior to their students participating in the first scheduled regular scheduled contest.
- **Student In Good Standing** – (A student in Good Standing shall be defined as a student who has met all eligibility requirements, exhibits good attendance, abides by the rules for the expectations for good conduct as a student of the school, and does not have impending criminal charges or is of a probationary status under the governance of the juvenile justice system.)
- **Financial Obligations** – Several sports will require some financial obligation from the student and parents/guardians; i.e. shoes, gloves, socks, tennis racket, cleats etc. All students are responsible for the proper care of equipment issued to them. Students will be financially responsible for lost or damaged equipment. Students are expected to remain in good standing with all financial obligations to all school accounts. Coaches are obligated to account and care for all uniforms and equipment.
- **Suspensions:** Any participant given out-of-school suspension will be ineligible during the suspension. Any student assigned to Modified Instructional Program (MIP) for a full day is not eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities for that day. In addition, they may be disciplined further by the Principal, Athletic Director, or the Coach by temporary or permanent suspension from the team.

## **CODE OF ATHLETIC CONDUCT**

A firm and fair policy of enforcement is necessary to uphold the regulations and standards of the athletic department. The community, school administrators, and coaching staff feel strongly that high standards of conduct, citizenship, and sportsmanship are essential in maintaining a sound athletic program. The welfare of the student is our major concern and transcends any other consideration.

All students must abide by a code of ethics. Any conduct that results in dishonor to the athlete, team, or school will not be tolerated. Acts of unacceptable conduct such as, but not limited to, theft, vandalism, disrespect, the use of alcohol or drugs, hazing or violations of law tarnishes the reputation of the student, program, and the school and will not be tolerated. Such severe violations may result in suspension or dismissal from the team.

Any student who is charged with a felony, or juvenile petition filed that would be a felony as an adult, or pleads no contest to a felony crime is immediately suspended from all athletic activities until all court proceedings have been exhausted.

## **TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS**

The use or possession of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs is a violation of law and the Smyth County School Board policy. The following is a listing of penalties for violations of these policies.

### **Tobacco**

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense – upon confirmation the student will be suspended immediately for 1 scheduled contest.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> offense – upon confirmation the student will be suspended immediately for 2 scheduled contest.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> offense – upon confirmation the student will be suspended for the rest of the current sport season.

### **Smyth County Schools Procedures for Alcohol and Drug Offenses**

#### **Alcohol Incidents: (First Offense)**

- The student will be charged if on school premises (law enforcement involvement)
- 9 day suspension
- The student must complete a Risk Assessment before returning to school
- Community Service-assigned by the Principal
- Students will relinquish all extra-curricular activities and associated titles and events/ceremonies for 12 weeks. In addition, students will relinquish participation in any seasonal club or activity for 12 weeks or the duration of the season, whichever is longer.

#### **Alcohol Incidents: (Second Offense)**

- The student will be charged if on school premises (law enforcement involvement)
- Alternative Placement – and no participation in any school extracurricular school events.

#### **Drug Offenses:**

- The student will be charged if on school premises (law enforcement involvement)
- Alternative Placement – and no participation in any school extracurricular school events.

## **HAZING/INITIATIONS**

“Hazing / Initiations” refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. All incidents of hazing will be subject to dispositions as defined in the Student Code of Conduct endorsed by the Smyth County School Board and reported to local law enforcement.

It is unlawful to haze, or otherwise mistreat so as to cause bodily or emotional injury, to any student at any school. Any person found guilty thereof shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, unless the injury would be such as to constitute a felony, and in that event the punishment shall be inflicted as is otherwise provided by law for the punishment of such felony.

## **TRYOUT/CUTTING POLICY**

Coaches are encouraged to keep a maximum number of athletes on the final roster without diluting the quality of the team. The following procedures will be followed when a cut is necessary:

- Tryouts will be announced by the school prior to the start of each season.
- A tryout will consist of a minimum of 3 practice days.
- Students must be apprised of the tryout dates and criteria on which the student will be judged.
- Criteria must be reasonable to the average student and be directly associated proportionately to the particular sport.
- Students will have the opportunity to perform sports specific activities.
- Coaches will meet with players that do not make the team. Lists will not be posted to inform athletes of the decision.

## **PLAYING TIME**

Playing time is at the discretion and judgment of the coaches.

## **QUITTING**

Once a team is chosen quitting the team is a serious matter. Students considering quitting a team should discuss their feelings with the head coach. The decision should not be made in haste or in anger. If an athlete does decide to quit the team after the first contest has been played, the student will not be eligible to tryout for another team or participate in out-of-season practice until the current season is officially over as recognized by the VHSL (regular season).

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation will be provided by Smyth County Schools to all away contests. Departure times will be determined by the head coach and athletic director. Times are set as not to interfere with the regular school day unless absolutely necessary. All departure times that require students to leave school during regular school hours must be approved by the principal. All members of the team are required to depart with the team. This includes team members, bona fide score keepers, and managers. All participants are required to ride the bus home. A student may be excused from this requirement only under circumstances of exceptional situations and must have prior approval from a school administrator before departure to the activity. If an athlete is excused he/she will be released to his/her parents.

## **ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION**

Student-Athletes are required to be in school all day in order to participate in any extra-curricular activities.

A student will be allowed no more than a total of 3 times per sports season to check in late or check out early without being denied athletic activity privileges for that day. Doctor's excuses, death in the family and required court appointments will not be counted toward the 3. Under this exception, the student must be present for 50% of the school day and present at the end of the school day.

School administrators may excuse absences, check-ins, and check-outs if there are extenuating circumstances or emergencies that warrant such action and the student is considered in good standing with the school academically and has not been absent an excessive number of days. The VHSL requires students to be in good standing of the school they represent. If school attendance of a particular athlete becomes problematic, the athlete may be denied participation.

## **GRADE LEVEL PARTICIPATION**

All VHSL sponsored sports that are offered at a particular school are open to any student in nine through twelfth grades that meet the requirements for participation. If the situation warrants, eighth grade students may be allowed to try out for the JV team. Eighth grade students that are members of JV teams will be given equal opportunity to earn playing time. No JV athlete may be cut from a team in order for an eighth grader to participate. Eighth graders are not allowed to participate on varsity teams.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

The expectation of The Smyth County School Board is for all students, coaches, parents, and fans to exemplify positive sportsmanship at all times. It is our duty as citizens to conduct ourselves in such a manner as to bring pride to our school and community. Any expression of poor sportsmanship by any athlete, coach, parent, or fan may result in denial of participation or suspension from attending athletic activities.

Schools are expected to encourage good sportsmanship and participate in all VHSL sportsmanship programs.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY FOR EXTRACURRICULAR EVENTS**

Smyth County Public Schools acknowledges the benefits of extracurricular interscholastic athletic and academic programs as an opportunity for the students of the school division. When the regular school schedule is changed due to periods of inclement weather, the following policy will be followed:

- If schools are dismissed early to due inclement weather, all practices and scheduled contests will be cancelled or postponed.
- If schools are closed for periods of inclement weather, practices and/or scheduled contests may be conducted if approved by the Superintendent. Practices on inclement days will not be permitted prior to 11:00 am.
- If schools are closed for periods of inclement weather, students will not be required to attend practices or scheduled contests. The student will not be penalized for his/her non-attendance.
- When school is closed due to inclement weather, the final approval for the student to attend practice and/or a scheduled contest will be at the discretion of the parent/guardian.
- In the event the school does not provide transportation, travel to and from school during periods of inclement weather will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

## **INSURANCE**

Smyth County Schools provides secondary insurance coverage to all student athletes and students who participate in VHSL sponsored events. In the event the athlete has no health insurance, the secondary insurance becomes the primary. As all insurance policies, there are limits of coverage. All high school athletics participants are covered by VHSL Catastrophic Insurance. Middle school student athletes are covered by a catastrophic insurance policy purchased by Smyth County Schools.

Upon the event of an injury, parents should report to the school nurse and complete all appropriate paperwork. All insurance claims must be submitted to the insurance company within ninety (90) days of the incident.

## **CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT**

Smyth County Public Schools desires the safe return to activity for all student-athletes participating in extracurricular physical activities following an injury, but particularly after a concussion. It is the goal of Smyth County Schools to ensure (i) that coaches, school staff, volunteers, student-athletes, and their parents or guardian are aware of the short-term and long term effects of concussions; (ii) that concussed student-athletes are identified, removed from play immediately, and referred appropriately; and (iii) that concussed student-athletes are returned to play only after receiving appropriate medical care, given adequate time to heal, and are symptom free.

Smyth County Schools has incorporated the use of the ImPACT (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) as a computer-based test that provides information on the neurocognitive function of the athlete's brain. The ImPACT test is not a diagnostic test, but is a tool used in conjunction with the assessment of qualified physicians and/or athletic trainers to assist in the treatment process and return to play decisions regarding the concussed athlete.

## **ImPact Testing-Test Use Protocol**

### **1. Preseason Baseline Testing and Education**

During this step of the model, baseline testing is administered to the student athletes and priority is placed on educating athletes, parents and coaches about the signs, symptoms and short and long term effects of concussion.



## 2. Concussion is Suspected

During this step, if a concussion is suspected, the athlete is to be removed from play immediately. Sideline assessments are to be conducted (neurocognitive and vestibular), and the athletic trainer/coach to communicate with the parent the need for a referral to a qualified physician or, if symptoms are severe and deteriorating, request EMS transport to the nearest medical facility.

## 3. Post-Injury Testing and Treatment Plan

In this step, emphasis is placed on communication between the athlete, parents, **qualified physician**, teachers and coaches. **A post-injury ImPACT test can be given 24-72 hours after the initial injury, IF symptoms are improving/resolving. If symptoms are not improving/resolving, administration of the post-injury test should be delayed.** If it is determined that the athlete needs more extensive neuropsychological testing, the referral to a neuropsychologist will be made. Vestibular (balance) therapy can be requested as well.

## 4. Is Athlete Ready for Non-Contact Activity

Criteria that must be met to return to non-contact activity are as follows:

- a. Symptom free at rest and with cognitive exertion
- b. Post-injury ImPACT test is within normal range of baseline
- c. Normal vestibular (balance) evaluation

\*If A, B, C are not met, return to step 3.

\*If A, B, C are met, obtain **written clearance for progression to activity** by supervising professional that has specific training in concussion management.

\*Implement stepwise return-to-play progression, beginning with light non-contact activity progressing to full non-contact exertion, with approval of a trained medical professional.

## 5. Determining Safe Return-to-Play

In the final step of the model, return-to-play decisions are made by a trained medical professional. The athlete **must** be symptom free at rest **and** following physical or cognitive exertion. ImPACT scores **must** be back to baseline. Once the athlete is safely returned to activity, the final ImPACT test score is set as their new baseline. The Acute Concussion Evaluation (ACE) Care Plan and the Virginia High School League (VHSL) Concussion Clearance form are required to be used to determine the gradual safe return to practice and play.

During step four (4), once a **written clearance** has been obtained for **progression to light activity**, the athletic trainer and coaching staff will implement the progression adopted by the Smyth County School System. This progression must be completed before moving to step 5, determining safe return-to-play.

The concussion management model, as designed by the ImPACT test creators, which can be seen on the ImPACT website ([www.impacttest.com](http://www.impacttest.com)).

**ASSUMPTION OF RISK**

I am aware that participating in sports will involve travel with the team. I acknowledge and accept the risks inherent in the sport (including serious injury or death) and with the travel involved and with this knowledge in mind, grant permission for my child/ward to participate in the sport and travel with the team.

## Acknowledgement of Receipt

We have read and understand the Smyth County Schools' Student Athletic Handbook and agree to support and abide by the policies and regulations contained within.

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Student

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Date

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Parent

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Date