



# **Cheerleading Sport Handbook**

## **GameDay – Fall of 2026**

### **Competition - Winter of 2026-27**

#### **Section 1: Rules**

- A. All contests under the jurisdiction of the RIIL shall be played according to the National Federation of State High School Association Rules, except for any special rulings adopted by the RIIL and listed in this handbook below.
- B. The RIIL strongly recommends head coaches/officials obtain a copy of the most recent NFHS Rulebook.

#### **Section 2: Mandatory Coaches Certification & Continuing Education**

- A. ALL Coaches must be appointed by their School Administration and upload their valid certificates to the Coaches' Certification website below. A coach is any adult with access to student-athletes through an education-based athletic program.
  - a. Including, but not limited to: Volunteer Coaches, Assistant Coaches, and Head Coaches.
- B. Coaching Requirements: Article 13
- C. Coaching Out of Season Rules: Article 7, Section 8
- D. Rules on Recruitment: Article 3, Section 11
- E. Sportsmanship Expectations for Coaches: Article 12, Section 3

#### **Section 3: Medical Coverage/Emergency Action Plans**

- A. Medical Coverage should be provided by the host school, be in attendance and on duty for the duration of all interscholastic scrimmages and games during the regular season and all tournament round games. The medical personnel must introduce themselves to both coaches and referee prior to the start of the game.
  - a. Pre-Game Safety Checklist
- B. Schools are responsible for providing Medical Coverage for their team throughout the playoffs, including the Semis and Finals/Championships.
- C. Home team medical coverage shall be responsible for both teams unless the visiting school provides its own medical coverage.

D. Levels of Medical Coverage:

<b><u>Medical Professional Legal Limitations</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Education/Schooling/Training &amp; Licensure</li> <li>B. Scope of Practice</li> <li>C. Able to Return to Play</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Doctors-MD/DO or Advanced Practice Provider-NP/PA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Advanced degree (Medical School/Successfully passed the licensing board, and RI Licensed)</li> <li>B. Preventative Care, On field Evaluation, Immediate Care, Diagnosis</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play – Yes</li> </ul>
<b>Athletic Trainer (RI Licensed)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Minimum Bachelor's Degree (Successfully pass the BOC exam, and RI licensed)</li> <li>B. Preventative Care, On field Evaluation, Immediate Care, Assessment of injury, referral for further diagnosis</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play during a game/contest? – YES</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Therapist (RI Licensed)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Degree varies from BS, MS to DPT (Successfully pass the board exam, and RI licensed.)</li> <li>B. Preventative Care, Rehabilitation, Orthopedic exam evaluation</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play during a game/contest? – NO</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Therapist w/ Orthopedic Clinical Specialist (OCS) credential (RI Licensed)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Advanced Certification (Successfully pass the board exam, successfully complete requirements for and pass the OCS exam, and RI licensed)</li> <li>B. Rehabilitation, Orthopedic exam evaluation. On the field coverage - not qualified, no emergency training incorporated into initial certification or required to be annually updated.</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play – NO (During a Game/Contest), Yes (In Clinical Setting)</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Therapists w/ Sports Certified Specialist (SCS) credential (RI Licensed)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Advanced Certification (Successfully pass the board exam, successfully complete requirements for and pass the SCS exam, and RI licensed)</li> <li>B. Rehabilitation, Orthopedic exam evaluation. On-the-field coverage – Qualified</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play during a game/contest? – YES</li> </ul>
<b>EMT - Basic, Intermediate &amp; Paramedic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Successfully complete the EMT program, pass the board exam, and RI licensed)</li> <li>B. Emergency care</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play during a game/contest? - NO, per RI EMS laws/regulations/protocols</li> </ul>
<b>School Nurse (RN)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Successful completion of a nursing program (Successfully pass the board exam, and RI licensed)</li> <li>B. Emergency care, referral for further treatment/diagnosis</li> <li>C. Can they Return to Play during a game/contest? – NO</li> </ul>

- E. The judgment of the medical person will be final with regard to the medical condition of a player. No player may continue to play against the medical person's advice under any circumstance.
- F. An Emergency Action Plan with clearly defined written and practice protocols as required by RI General Laws must be developed and in place at every high school.
  - a. When possible, an athletic trainer should be present at all practices and games. An athletic trainer is a key component in any strategy to minimize injury risk and optimize safety for all participants.
  - b. *Rationale:* An effective emergency action plan (EAP) must be in place as a prompt and appropriate response to any emergency situation that can save a life. The EAP should be designed and practiced to address all teams (freshman, junior varsity, and varsity) and all practice and game sites.

#### **Section 4: General Regulations for all Sports**

- A. Heat Acclimatization: RIIL R&R Article 7, Section 3
- B. Definition of a Game/Scrimmage: RIIL R&R Article 7, Section 2
- C. Coaching Out of Season Rules: RIIL R&R Article 7, Section 8
- D. Use of Equipment During the Summer: RIIL R&R Article 6, Section 13
- E. Sportsmanship Expectations for Coaches, Student-Athletes, & Spectators: RIIL R&R Art. 12, Sect. 3
- F. Loyalty to Home School: RIIL R&R Article 7, Section 7
- G. National Events: RIIL R&R Article 7, Section 11
- H. Penalties for Ejections: RIIL R&R Article 6, Section 7
- I. Protest Procedure: RIIL R&R Article 5

**Section 5: Sport Advisory Committee**

- A. Each Sport Advisory Committee is comprised of Member School Administrators, Athletic Directors, Coaches, Officials, and other relevant individuals who work with and report to the RIII on all matters concerning their sport.
- B. Cheerleading Sport Advisory Committee Membership:

Committee Role	Member	School/Position
Sport Director		
Administrator	Christen Magill	North Providence HS Principal
Co-Director (RIIAAA)	Bobby Palazzo	Classical HS Athletic Director
Athletic Director		
Head Coach	Giana Nassi	North Providence
Head Coach	Karen Dickie	North Smithfield
Head Coach	Kasey Murphy	Toll Gate

- C. The 2024-25 and 2025-26 Alignment received the following endorsements & approvals:
  - a. Sport Committee Approval: 04/19/24
  - b. Survey of all Member Schools: 04/30/24
  - c. RIIAAA E-Board Approval: 05/17/24
  - d. PCOA Approval: 06/17/24

**Section 6: Season Dates (All dates are subject to change):**

A. Fall Game Day Cheerleading Season:

School Year	2026-27	2027-28
Season	Fall of 2026	Fall of 2027
Sport	<b>Game Day Cheerleading</b>	<b>Game Day Cheerleading</b>
Start Date	Monday, August 17, 2026	Monday, August 16, 2027
Days in the Preseason	10	10
Competitions Can Begin	Thursday, August 27, 2026	Thursday, August 26, 2027
Regular Season Weeks	8	8
Week #1 Begins On	Monday, August 31, 2026	Monday, August 30, 2027
Week #2 Begins On	Monday, September 7, 2026	Monday, September 6, 2027
Week #3 Begins On	Monday, September 14, 2026	Monday, September 13, 2027
Week #4 Begins On	Monday, September 21, 2026	Monday, September 20, 2027
Week #5 Begins On	Monday, September 28, 2026	Monday, September 27, 2027
Week #6 Begins On	Monday, October 5, 2026	Monday, October 4, 2027
Week #7 Begins On	Monday, October 12, 2026	Monday, October 11, 2027
Week #8 Begins On	Monday, October 19, 2026	Monday, October 18, 2027
RUIL Championships Concluded By	Sunday, October 25, 2026	Sunday, October 24, 2027

a. Postseason:

i. State Championship:

1. Date & Time: Saturday, October 24, 2026
2. Location: Cranston Stadium

b. Divisions:

- i. Game Day Cheerleading Teams are split into three divisions based on enrollment
- ii. Exact Divisions will be released to the schools prior to the State Championship

B. Winter Competition Cheerleading Season:

School Year	2026-27	2027-28
Season	Winter of 2026-27	Winter of 2027-28
Sport	<b>Competition Cheerleading</b>	<b>Competition Cheerleading</b>
Start Date	Monday, November 30, 2026	Wednesday, December 1, 2027
Days in the Preseason	10	10
Games Can Begin	Thursday, December 10, 2026	Saturday, December 11, 2027
Regular Season Weeks	11	11
Week #1 Begins On	Monday, December 14, 2026	Wednesday, December 15, 2027
Week #2 Begins On	Monday, December 21, 2026	Wednesday, December 22, 2027
Week #3 Begins On	Monday, December 28, 2026	Wednesday, December 29, 2027
Week #4 Begins On	Monday, January 4, 2027	Wednesday, January 5, 2028
Week #5 Begins On	Monday, January 11, 2027	Wednesday, January 12, 2028
Week #6 Begins On	Monday, January 18, 2027	Wednesday, January 19, 2028
Week #7 Begins On	Monday, January 25, 2027	Wednesday, January 26, 2028
Week #8 Begins On	Monday, February 1, 2027	Wednesday, February 2, 2028
Week #9 Begins On	Monday, February 8, 2027	Wednesday, February 9, 2028
Week #10 Begins On	Monday, February 15, 2027	Wednesday, February 16, 2028
Week #11 Begins On	Monday, February 22, 2027	Wednesday, February 23, 2028
Week #10 Begins On	Monday, March 1, 2027	Wednesday, March 1, 2028
Week #11 Begins On	Monday, March 8, 2027	Wednesday, March 8, 2028
RIIL Championships Concluded By	Sunday, March 14, 2027	Sunday, March 12, 2028

- a. Postseason:
    - i. State Championship:
      - 1. Date & Time: Sunday, March 14, 2027
      - 2. Location: The Ryan Center at The University of Rhode Island
  - b. Divisions:
    - i. Game Day Cheerleading Teams are split into five female only divisions based on enrollment and one co-ed division
    - ii. Exact Divisions will be released to the schools prior to the State Championship
- C. Score Reporting for all Regular Season and Postseason League Games: In accordance with Article 6, Section 14, all contest scores are to be reported on-line on the RIIL Website. Coaches obtain access to the system through their Athletic Director.
- D. It shall be the responsibility of school officials/administrators/supervisors to provide a safe and secure environment for the teams and officials by ensuring the playing field and sidelines are continuously cleared of **everyone** except certified & appointed coaches, team managers/scorers, student-athletes, medical personnel, and school designated personnel. Media are allowed with prior permission of the host school.
- E. Home teams shall set a date/time for all contests.
- a. If there is a conflict in the date/time of the contest with the visiting team(s) and mutual agreement cannot be reached, the visiting school Principal/Athletic Director shall submit a **written request** to the RIIL to review the circumstances of the disagreement and render a decision. **This must be done prior to the submission of the Home Confirmation Schedule.**
  - b. Once the Home Confirmation Schedule is submitted, changes will not be allowed unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- F. Postponement of Regular Season Varsity Games after the confirmation deadline:
- a. Where unusual circumstances prevail or where weather conditions are unfavorable, a game may be postponed by mutual consent of the Principals and/or Athletic Directors
  - b. Postponed games shall be rescheduled to the next day when the teams, facility, and officials are available.
    - i. Includes weekends and/or school vacations.
    - ii. League games must take precedent over non-league games or lesser events
    - iii. Rescheduled games must be within all other guidelines contained in this handbook and the RIIL Rules & Regulations.
  - c. Additional Officials Fees for Games Changed within Two Weeks of original date/time:  
Article 6, Section 5
- G. Practice Limitations:
- a. Preseason Practice Limitations are also located in Heat Acclimatization: Article 7, Section 3
  - b. Scrimmages allowed after 5 days of practice
  - c. Games allowed after 10 days of practice

## **Section 7: Postseason Qualification & Format:**

- A. RIIL shall schedule and administer one unified State Cheerleading Championship.
  - a. Divisions will include Varsity Female Only and Varsity Co-Ed.
  - b. A Co-Ed varsity team is any team with one or more males on the team. If there is only one Co-Ed varsity team, the team will compete in its respective division (based on female enrollment at the school.) **No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate on the cheerleading team because of his/her gender.**
  - c. In order to have a division, there must be a minimum of two teams.
  - d. The RIIL has the right to expand, combine or eliminate division(s).
- B. The RIIL Cheerleading Championship shall be open to all RIIL Cheerleading member high schools.
- C. For a team to participate at the RIIL State Championship, all coaches must meet all coaching and safety requirements as listed in Article 13 and Article 16, Section 2 of the RIIL Rules and Regulations.
- D. All registration forms entered for the RIIL State Cheerleading Championship must be received by the date designated. Registrations received after this date will not be accepted.
- E. Championship Rules shall be as follows:
  - a. Maximum participants performing the routine shall be 20 members, including spotters. Alternates can be drawn from the official roster posted to the RIIL website. Minimum team size will be four (4) participants.
  - b. The winners of each Division will be named RI State Champions in their respective Divisions:
- F. Divisions are based on enrollment of those schools registered. The enrollment numbers will be placed in order from smallest to largest and then the list shall be divided into three with each division having as close to equal numbers as the list shall allow.
  - a. Each team will have a minimum of two (2) minutes to a maximum of two and one-half (2 ½) minutes to perform the complete routine. If a team uses music in their routine, the maximum time limit for music is one and one-half (1 ½) minutes. If a team exceeds the music time limit of one and one-half (1 ½) minutes, one point per second over the time limit will be deducted. If a team exceeds the overall routine time limit of two and one-half (2 ½) minutes, one point per second over the time limit will be deducted. Music time limit and overall routine time limit are considered separate infractions. If a team does not perform an overall routine of a minimum of two minutes, one point per second under the two minutes minimum time limit will be deducted.

- i. Timing will begin with the first note of music or first motion.
- ii. All teams must perform the cheerleading routine on a mat. The minimum mat size will be 42' by 42'. Any team performing off the mat will be assessed a ten- point safety infraction. Teams must begin their routine on the mat.
- iii. Any team not following the safety guidelines shall be penalized. Teams are also required to adhere to their own school rules in regards to skills performed. All cheerleading teams not following National Federation High School Spirit Rules shall be assessed the appropriate penalties.

#### G. Scoring

- a. Each team shall be scored according to the system set forth in the score sheet recommended by the Cheerleading Committee and adopted by the RILL.
- b. Judges will follow the Judging Criteria form adopted by the RILL.
- c. In the event of a tie, co-winners shall be declared.
- d. At the conclusion of the Championship, each squad will receive a copy of the master score sheet as well as a copy of their individual squad's score sheet.

### **Section 8: RILL Rules & Regulations Specific to Cheerleading**

- A. All coaches must complete the AACCA safety certification course or other national safety course that is recognized by the NFHS before the beginning of the season. Certification must be maintained by the coach. It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that their certification does not lapse or expire.

### **Section 9: Officials**

- A. RILL assigned official's authority extends to pre and post-game oversight. Fighting and unsportsmanlike penalties will always be within the authority of the officials at the contest site.
- B. Police protection, when necessary, must be provided by the home school. The home school is responsible for all crowd control measures. There is an urgent need for increasing vigilance in this matter. Schools must make every effort to ensure that players, officials, and spectators are protected. The duties of the police will be determined and outlined by the home school.
- C. The home team should provide an adult game supervisor at all home events. An adult game supervisor must be present at ice hockey, basketball, field hockey, lacrosse, baseball, softball, football, soccer, volleyball and wrestling contests. The supervisor shall not be a student, nor a coach involved with the game. The supervisor shall identify themselves to the game officials thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of the game. The supervisor shall be responsible for game administration and crowd control. They should notify the police, and event staff to seek appropriate assistance when applicable. In the event of a problem, the Principal/Athletic Director must notify the RILL office the next day and submit a written report detailing the incident(s).