

Communication with families is a top priority. As head cheer coaches, we're responsible for creating a positive, structured, and safe environment where athletes can grow in confidence, learn the basics of cheer, and enjoy being part of a team. Every coach on staff should have a defined role at practice and on event days. Coaches should be building relationships with athletes to create an experience that's welcoming, fun, and developmentally appropriate.

Our purpose is to teach the fundamentals, build confidence, and help athletes love the sport so they come back year after year. We want to prepare our athletes for future opportunities, whether that's cheering in school, on a JV team, or just feeling proud of what they've learned. We're working to align our program with that bigger picture, focusing on growth, effort, and stepping outside your comfort zone.

Head Coaching Expectations for Delegating Responsibilities to Assistant Coaches

As a head coach, one of your most important responsibilities is clear and consistent communication with your assistant coaches. Every assistant coach should receive the same messages, expectations, and updates. The most effective way to do this is by creating a group text or GameChanger thread to share quick notes, updates, and ideas.

Each coach must clearly understand their assigned responsibilities and be expected to follow through—both at practices and during games and competitions. We understand that all coaches are volunteers, and there may be times when a coach can't make a practice. That's okay—but it must be communicated in advance. If a coach is unable to attend and was assigned a responsibility that day, advance notice gives the head coach time to adjust the practice plan accordingly.

As the head coach, you are also responsible for having the difficult conversations when needed. If an assistant coach is not fulfilling their responsibilities or is consistently absent from practices but always present on game day or at competitions, that's a red flag. This behavior often signals that the coach's primary intent is to be on the sideline because their child is on the team. A volunteer assistant should attend a majority of practices—not just games and competitions.

Have a face-to-face conversation with each assistant coach before the season starts to lay out expectations. Remind them: this is not high school, college, or a professional level. We do not yell at kids for mistakes, and we do not single them out for criticism. We expect mistakes and see them as part of the learning process. If you're going to single out an athlete, do it to recognize something positive—something they've worked hard on and finally achieved.

If necessary, you may have to ask a volunteer assistant to step away from the team. If they've demonstrated inappropriate behavior or excessive absences, you must explain that you can't allow them to continue on staff. This decision is not personal—it's based on our program's guidelines and expectations. Let them know that they are still part of the team as a parent and are welcome to attend games, competitions and practices as a spectator, but not as a coach.

Example conversation if behavior is an issue:

Make sure another assistant coach is nearby as a witness. Calmly say:

“Based on our initial meeting, I was very clear about our expectations. We are committed to creating a safe and positive environment. From what I’ve observed, you have not upheld that commitment. This isn’t a warning—it’s a final decision. I know you’re a great parent and want to be involved, and I appreciate that, but due to your conduct during practices (or a specific event), I can’t keep you on staff. This doesn’t mean you can’t apply again in the future. My hope is that you take time to reflect on our expectations. I’ve received feedback—either from parents or other coaches—that you were giving negative feedback to players for mistakes we expect them to make, or that you were questioning our coaching methods. We must all be on the same page. This is not a back-and-forth discussion. It’s a final decision.”

If the issue is attendance-related, and they’ve shown up to only one practice in two weeks while attending every game without communication, that’s unacceptable. If a coach communicates in advance that they can only make one practice a week due to other commitments, and they are honest and consistent, that’s acceptable.

To avoid issues, these expectations must be made clear before the season begins. Each assistant coach should read the expectations and sign a document stating they understand the responsibilities and consequences. If removal becomes necessary, there is no petition to return and no back-and-forth discussion. This is a one-sided, final conversation led by the head coach.

Assistant Coaches and Expectations

As head coach, you’re also responsible for setting expectations for your assistant coaches. Make sure every assistant understands their role and is showing up consistently. If a coach is missing practices regularly but always shows up on game day, that needs to be addressed directly. Volunteers are appreciated, but athletes deserve consistency.

If a coach can’t make a practice, that’s okay, but they need to communicate with you ahead of time. That way, you have time to adjust your practice plan. It’s your job to hold your staff accountable. That includes having tough conversations when someone isn’t following through.

Every assistant coach should be engaged and active during practice and events. Standing on the sideline and watching isn’t enough. Assign them specific roles like spotting, running warm-ups, helping with stunts, or supervising groups.

Discipline and Accountability

When it comes to discipline, it starts with the head coach. The expectation is that we’re holding athletes to a consistent standard. If there’s a behavioral issue at practice or during an event, it

should be handled in a way that is respectful but clear. Pull the athlete aside, explain the issue, and let them know what needs to change. If it becomes a pattern, loop in the family so everyone is on the same page.

We're not embarrassing kids or yelling in front of teammates. But we're also not letting things slide. Accountability builds trust. And when athletes know the boundaries and expectations, they rise to meet them. That goes for athletes, assistant coaches, and even parents. A consistent, calm, and firm approach is what keeps our team culture strong.

Certification and Safety

All head coaches are required to complete YCADA certification every year, as mandated by Pop Warner. This training covers things like stunt progressions, spotting techniques, concussion awareness, and how to run a safe and positive practice.

You are also responsible for making sure your assistant coaches follow all Pop Warner Cheer safety rules. That includes:

- Only doing stunts and dismounts allowed for your team's age and division
- Making sure mats are used when required
- Always having proper spotters in place
- Warming up the team properly and staying alert for any signs of injury

Safety comes first. If you're not sure whether something is allowed, don't do it until you've confirmed with Pop Warner guidelines or your league rep.

Event Day Responsibilities – Head Cheer Coach

At games or competitions, the head coach is the only person who should speak to officials, judges, or event staff. Those conversations need to be respectful, calm, and private. If an assistant coach notices something concerning, they should bring it to the head coach quietly so it can be addressed appropriately.

There should be one lead voice from the team, yours. The rest of the coaching staff should be focused on their responsibilities, whether it's spotting, managing warm-ups, organizing the team, or making sure the athletes stay positive and ready to perform.

Pop Warner sets a high bar for sideline behavior, and so do we. Officials, just like athletes and coaches, will make mistakes. What matters is how we respond. When we stay calm and lead with respect, our athletes learn to do the same. Getting loud or complaining sets the wrong tone, and it spreads to the kids and the crowd. That kind of behavior will not be tolerated in our program. Let other teams lose control. We're setting the example.

Spectator Conduct

Head coaches are responsible for what happens in the crowd too. If you hear or see anything from a parent or family member that goes against our expectations, whether it's negativity, shouting at officials, or disrespecting athletes, you need to address it right away. Start with a respectful but firm reminder. If the behavior continues, the spectator must be removed from the event.

Parents are part of the program, and they need to model the same respect and support we expect from the athletes and coaches. We protect our team culture from every angle, including the stands.

Acknowledgment of Receipt

I hereby acknowledge that I have received the following document(s):

Document Title(s):

Cheerleading Coaches Code of Conduct

Date Received:

By signing below, I confirm that I have received the document(s) listed above. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and, if required, comply with the contents of the document(s).

Recipient Information

Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____