



Parent/Participant Information Handbook



ABOUT US

Welcome to PAFA Spirit! We are predominantly a volunteer based sports program whose success relies on the commitment of its many dedicated volunteers and coaches.

PAFA Spirit has provided a successful sports program for over 40 years. We have cheerleaders in grades 3 – 8 and Minis in grades 1-2. We have also offered poms and flags to athletes in grades 6-8 in the past. We are a feeder for our local high schools and we work closely with the local high school Varsity Cheer coaches.

The PAFA Spirit mission is two-fold. First, we support the development of our athletes and the sport of cheerleading by teaching skills and sportsmanship and what it means to be a member of a team. Second, we support the Palatine Panthers Amateur Football Association football teams (PAFA) by cheering at their games through early November.

PAFA strives to provide a safe, fun, and skill-based sports program for all participants. Team work, team spirit, and cooperation are reinforced as participants work with fellow team members, Coaches, and their Team Parents to master the fundamentals of cheerleading.

Cheerleaders will:

- Participate in team building exercises
- Learn safety rules for practices and games
- Learn sportsmanship and team commitment
- Learn specific cheer skills including jumps, cheers, motions, dances, stunts, and showmanship
- Learn halftime routines
- Cheer at football games

REGISTRATION

Registration begins in April. Those interested may register in person at any Palatine Park District facility; online through the Palatine Park District web site (www.palatineparks.org);

Registration closes in May. Please check the catalog or our website for the exact date. Late registration cannot be accepted.

PAFA SOCIAL MEDIA

PAFA Spirit can be found on Facebook by searching *PAFA Spirit* and on Instagram @pafapantherspirit. Follow us for photos and videos from the season!



WHO RUNS PAFA SPIRIT?

PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

The PAFA Spirit Supervisor is an employee of the Palatine Park District. The supervisor coordinates the program, trains the Coaches, and supports the volunteers to ensure that practices and games are consistently run safely and effectively. The supervisor is also responsible for designing and managing PAFA's comprehensive skill-based sports program, determining grade level goals, encouraging team building opportunities, and setting high level safety parameters.

SQUAD COACHES

Squad Coaches are employees of the Palatine Park District. They are experienced in high school cheerleading and run practices and games under the leadership of the PAFA Spirit Supervisor. Coaches are responsible for effectively teaching basic and advanced skills of cheerleading. Coaches reinforce team spirit, high-level techniques, and safety procedures.

Parent questions or concerns should be directed to the PAFA Spirit Supervisor and **not** to the Coaches.

TEAM PARENTS

Team Parents are adult volunteers who have a child enrolled in the program. For safety reasons, background checks are required. Each practice and game has at least one Team Parent present. They oversee safety, support Coaches as needed, and provide communication to parents and participants regarding PAFA policies, game schedules, and other PAFA activities.

Absences should be communicated in advance to the Team Parent.



CHEERLEADING BASICS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Cheerleading is a competitive team sport that incorporates skills such as cheering, tumbling, dance, stunting, and jumps.

Our squads typically consist of between 6-22 athletes. Squad size is kept small enough to facilitate learning, yet large enough to allow for various stunting combinations. Every squad needs a combination of bases, flyers, and spotters. Our goal is to provide well-rounded athletes to the junior high and high school teams.

Every team member is vital to the team and the performance and plays an integral role. There are no benchwarmers. Each member of the squad is trained in all aspects of the sport to maximize their skills and reach their potential.

Please note that no athlete has the right to any specific role or location in a routine. Coaches change formations and stunt groups for a variety of reasons, many of which have nothing to do with the ability of the athlete in question. Many times, the flow of the choreography or formations dictate changes be made. Our Coaches have the final word on positions and placement.

TUMBLING

Tumbling is an important part of cheerleading. PAFA Spirit does not include tumbling classes as part of the cheer program; however tumbling may be incorporated into routines for those girls with tumbling experience. Our Coaches are not certified gymnastics/tumbling coaches and thus, to ensure safety, they do not spot or instruct on tumbling techniques unless the participant has the skill.

There are a number of fantastic cheer tumbling programs throughout the Palatine area including the Palatine Park District. **We encourage our participants to enroll in separate tumbling classes and clinics if they wish to continue in High School Cheerleading at a varsity/competition level.**

SAFETY

- **Safety is our #1 priority.**
- Safety rules, as presented by the Coaches and Team Parents, should be followed at all practices, games, and PAFA events.
- Any squad or squad member failing to abide by the safety policies will not be allowed to participate.

PRACTICE SESSIONS



Practice is the foundation for safe and successful cheerleading squads. A successful season requires each member's full participation, cooperation, commitment, **and** attendance.

- To minimize distractions, our practices are closed to anyone who is not a cheerleader, Team Parent, or Coach. If a parent stays for practice, they are asked to stay outside the gym in the chairs provided during inside practices.
- For safety reasons, cheer participants who are absent from practice may not be included in that week's halftime routine and will not be included in stunting. Stunts and routines will be mastered during a practice session before being performed at a game. It is unsafe to alter a half-time routine immediately prior to a game to accommodate a participant who was absent from the previous practice.
- Supervision is required at all practices. Team parents and Coaches will arrive 5-10 minutes prior to actual start times. Please do not arrive earlier. Participants should **not** be left if a Team Parent or Coach is not present.
- Cheer participants are required to use active spotting techniques and pay careful attention during the practice and performance of stunts.
- Parents **MUST** be on time to pick up participants after practice. It is unfair for coaches and Team Parents to wait for late parents.
- No cell phones allowed during practices. All cell phones must be left in bags and silenced while in the gym.
- Cheer participants **must** wear cheer shorts, PAFA-provided or other fitted t-shirt and cheer shoes to each practice. Loose fitting tank tops, shorts that restrict movement, and incorrect footwear are a safety hazard and are not allowed. Capris, sweatpants and leggings may not be worn during stunting.
- **ALL** girls should have a sports bra or tank top under their t-shirt (even the young ones) and full coverage underwear or boy shorts under loose shorts.
- Hair must always be secured in a pony tail. No fly-aways or bangs. For safety reasons **no** barrettes - please use flat push clips or bobby pins to secure fly-aways or bangs.
- For safety reasons, nails should be cut so that with your palm up facing you, nails are not visible.



- Absolutely no jewelry should be worn to practice or games. This includes necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, and any other piercings. Coaches will not be responsible for jewelry handed to them or left in the gym.
- No gum.
- Participants **must** bring **only** water bottles to practices and games. Food and other beverages are not allowed.

Please note: Cheer squads will adhere to PAFA stunting guidelines based on skill and age level. Mats will always be used for stunting.

GAME DAYS

Every game is important and requires each member's participation and cooperation. Concentration and full participation is required.

- For safety reasons, cheer participants should arrive fully dressed and on time to games (30 minutes prior to kickoff, unless otherwise instructed). Coaches will lead the girls in warm ups and review halftime stunts during this time. Please be respectful of the other members of the squad by arriving on time and allowing all groups to practice and go into the halftime show safely and confidently. Allow extra time for parking.
- Supervision is required at all games. Team Parents and Coaches will arrive 5-10 minutes prior to assigned start times. Please do not drop your daughter off if a Team Parent or Coach is not present.
- Participants must stay at the game field under the supervision of their Coaches and Team Parents. Do not remove your child from their team without signing them out with a Team Parent, even during halftime.
- Parents must be on time to pick up their athletes.
- If your game is scheduled over mealtime, please have your athlete eat something before the game. **For safety reasons, there is no eating during a game.**
- Participants **must** bring water bottles to all games. (only water is allowed at games when the uniform is on). Non-water beverages can stain or attract bees in warmer weather.
- Participants must be dressed in complete uniform in order to participate. (See Uniforms and Mandatory Supplies Section of this Handbook).



- Hair must always be secured in a pony tail with the PAFA bow. No fly aways or bangs. For safety reasons **no** barrettes - please use flat push clips or bobby pins to secure fly-aways or bangs.
- For safety reasons, nails should be cut so that with your palm up facing you, no nails should be visible.
- **Absolutely no jewelry should be worn to practice or games.** This includes necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, and any other piercings. Coaches will not be responsible for jewelry handed to them or left at the field.
- **No gum.**
- Cheerleaders must stay in squad formation during the game.

UNIFORMS & MANDATORY SUPPLIES

The uniform (skirt, shell) is the property of PAFA Spirit and is to be used at approved PAFA games or exhibitions **only**. We do our best to properly fit each participant; however the uniforms are not a custom fit. Poms may be distributed at games but remain the property of PAFA Spirit.

Uniforms are distributed to participants in August and must be returned at the end of the season. Pom poms are kept in the possession of the Team Parents.

The PAFA Spirit uniform **must** be worn by every cheerleader at every game and competition. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

THE PAFA SPIRIT CHEER UNIFORM CONSISTS OF:

- PAFA Shell (provided)
- PAFA Skirt (provided)
- Black boy shorts (mandatory supply)
- White no-show socks (mandatory supply – purchased outside of PAFA)
- White cheer shoes (mandatory supply – purchased outside of PAFA)
- Hair tied back off face and shoulders with PAFA-issued bow (mandatory supply)
- Long sleeve PAFA crop top (mandatory supply) **worn if game will be 59 degrees or below. Please watch the weather on game day to know if long sleeve should be worn.**
- PAFA Spirit jacket and leggings (mandatory supply) worn in cold weather.

PAFA uniform or warm ups must be visible at all times. Other warm clothing may be worn under the uniform if desired. If your child is not prepared with appropriate uniform, she will be excluded from the side line and/or half-time.



Additional optional game supplies:

- Black gloves (gloves must be all black)
- Black PAFA or plain black headband. (if headband is not purchased at PAFA, the headband worn must be all black.)
- Clear rain poncho

Mandatory items are purchased in June, distributed in August, and are yours to keep. If any item is lost, you will need to purchase another to keep the uniform complete. Please let your Team Parent know if you are missing any items within a week of supplies being handed out so that issues can be quickly addressed if possible.

UNIFORM DEPOSIT CHECK

- Every participant is required to submit a \$125 post dated check as a uniform deposit.
- Uniforms should **not** be altered, tailored or dry cleaned, and tags are to remain intact.
- Should the uniform become damaged in your care, a fee will be imposed. Your deposit check will be cashed at the end of the season to cover the expense and the balance will be returned to you.
- Provided the uniform is returned in good condition, unaltered and free of stains, your deposit check will be destroyed or returned to you at the end of the season upon request.

UNIFORM CARE & CLEANING

- The uniform (skirt & shell) should be turned inside out and washed on the gentle cycle in **cold** water.
- Do **NOT** put in the dryer. Please either hang or lay flat to dry.
- Do **NOT** dry clean or iron as this will ruin the uniform.
- Do **NOT** use stain remover as this will ruin the uniform

Failure to properly wash and dry uniform will result in the forfeit of your Uniform Deposit.

Please note: While the uniform is on, athletes must drink only water or clear liquids and only eat if the uniform is covered.



FOOTBALL GAMES

Our squads cheer on the Palatine Amateur Football Association (PAFA) Panthers during their season. Our sideline cheer teams cheer beginning in late August through the Championships in early November.

GAME SCHEDULES

Game schedules are determined by the Bill George Youth Football League (BGYFL) and may take a few weeks into the season to finalize. PAFA Spirit schedules cannot be created until the official football schedule has been finalized by the league and by the PAFA football board. We make every effort to publish our schedule within 24 hours of receiving the football schedule. We ask for your patience and understanding as the schedule for the first two weeks of the season may not come out until a few days before game day.

Games may be played either Saturday or Sunday

We attempt to provide every football team with cheerleaders, at least once during the season. Cheer squads are scheduled to align as closely as possible the squad age with the football team age.

FOOTBALL FIELDS

Home games are played at Ost Field. Maps and information to all home and away fields can be located on the Palatine Park District website or at www.bgyfl.org

WEATHER ISSUES



A general rule of thumb: If football plays, we cheer. This includes hot or cold, weather.

Games, due to bad weather or field conditions, are cancelled by members of the Football board. Your Team Parent will communicate these cancellations with the team.

Under special circumstances PAFA Spirit may cancel our attendance at games. Your Team Parent will communicate these cancellations with the team.

Every effort will be made to inform parents of cancellations **30 to 45 minutes before game arrival time**. However, due to how games are scheduled, parents will not always know that games are cancelled or delayed until athletes arrive at the fields.

PAFA Spirit will abide by Park District guidelines for inclement weather – including but not limited to seeking shelter during lightening. A lightening detection system is at every Park District park. This strike guard detects and tracks lightning strikes within a 20 mile radius, including which direction a storm is moving and how fast. The siren and strobes will provide notice when a storm heading our way is within 5 to 10 miles. When lightening has been detected, a long 15 second siren will sound and a strobe will flash on the unit. After 20 minutes of no lightening, the strobe will sound three five second intermittent blasts and the strobe will go off. At this time, games may resume.



SEASON EVENTS

Event information is subject to change.

PICTURES

Squad and individual professional pictures may be offered. A link will be sent after Picture Day with ordering information.

CROSTOWN GAME

The Palatine High School vs. Fremd High School football game is also known as PAFA Night. The PAFA Football players and PAFA Spirit cheerleaders are invited to watch and sometimes participate in pre-game cheers with their future high school cheerleaders. Information will be distributed to participants via email and those interested should RSVP to be eligible.

POOL PARTY WITH PAFA SPIRIT

Whenever possible, PAFA Spirit plans a pool party to kick off our new season. Information will be provided during the beginning of the season.

PARADE (NEED PARENT VOLUNTEER TO ORGANIZE)

PAFA Spirit may participate in the Palatine St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Independence Day Parade (pending final approval from parade organizers and availability of volunteers). All registered participants are invited; however, per parade guidelines, registration is limited to 40 girls! Information will be distributed to participants via email and those interested should sign up to be eligible.

BANQUET/AWARDS (NEED PARENT VOLUNTEER TO ORGANIZE)

A banquet may be held at the end of the season. If you're interested in assisting with planning and executing a PAFA Spirit banquet, please contact the PAFA Spirit Supervisor at pafaspirit.ppd@gmail.com.



EXPECTED BEHAVIOR OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

It is our mission to give every participant the skills necessary to succeed and grow in the cheerleading world as well as in life. We provide lessons in dedication, teamwork, motivation and discipline. We hope to challenge and motivate your child to become a better athlete – physically, mentally and emotionally in a fun and nurturing environment. Our program is not only dependent on our athletes and Coaches, but also our parents. You are the key to our program being successful. We appreciate the sacrifices you make for your children to participate in our program both in time and in money. Thank you!

PAFA Spirits goal is to provide a safe and constructive sports environment for participants without the threat of violence, inappropriate behavior or inappropriate language at all practices, games, competitions, and PAFA Spirit events.

PAFA Spirit has high expectations for our participants and they never let us down! Squad members are required to maintain and uphold the reputation of the PAFA organization through positive conduct and team spirit. Members are required to be courteous and polite. All cheers and chants should be positive and performed in a sportsmanlike manner.

PAFA Spirit athletes are expected to be courteous, truthful, honest, considerate, determined and respectful. Parents are encouraged to discuss the expected behaviors and Code of Conduct with the participants and family.

All participants and their parents/families will be held accountable for:

- Respecting and supporting fellow PAFA participants during the season both on and off the field.
- Respecting the Coaches and Team Parents.
- Respecting all PAFA football participants, opposing teams, and opposing cheerleading participants.
- Demonstrating good sportsmanship and displaying positive behavior.

Unacceptable behavior by participants, parents, family members, volunteers, or Coaches will result in disciplinary action including suspension or dismissal. Refunds will not be provided.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND COMMITMENT FORM



In order to make our organization and your athletes experience the very best it can be we strive to teach our athletes respect and sportsmanship. All participants and parents must read and abide by the PAFA Spirit Code of Conduct and PAFA Spirit Commitment Code. Athletes and parents are asked to sign the Conduct and Commitment Form and submit during Clinic Week. Any violation of the Code of Conduct or rules found in the Parent Handbook by participants or family members can lead to suspension or dismissal from the program.

1. Each participant must provide a \$125.00 uniform deposit check.
2. Each participant must purchase and wear the mandatory PAFA clothing items for the season.
3. Each participant must attend practices to the best of their ability.

Cheer is a team sport with each participant having a specific place in routines. When one member is absent it can keep the whole team from achieving their goals, jeopardize the safety of all of those involved in stunt groups, and prevent participants from practicing portions of a routine.

Failure to attend practices, or consistently being late to practices, will limit one's ability to participate in stunts, half-time routines, and new cheers choreographed at that practice session.

Participants who miss practices prior to a game may be removed from the half-time performance. In the event that a participant is unable to attend a practice (due to a contagious illness or other type of emergency), a Team Parent must be notified.

Unexcused absences from two or more practices or games may result in removal and/or dismissal from the program. A refund will not be given. A "no-show" or "no-call" is considered an unexcused absence. This is a team sport and all members are important.

4. Parents must read communication from PAFA Spirit Supervisor and Team Parents.
5. Each participant and parent understands that all coaching decisions are made by the PAFA Spirit Coaching staff and should be supported.
6. Any participant suffering a head injury during a game, at practice or outside of PAFA, may not return to practice/ game(s) without a doctor's permission. This is a safety issue pertaining to concussions.
7. Parents must remain outside the practice area during all practices. Parents may sit in the chairs if provided outside each practice facility.
8. Athletes are expected to arrive at practices and games on time. Failure to arrive on time may result in the reworking of the halftime routine which would subsequently keep the late athlete from participating in the halftime routine. Athletes are also expected to be picked up on time. Per Park District policy, failure to pick up a participant on time can result in an additional charge being assessed to the family for staff time.



9. BEHAVIOR

Appropriate behavior at practice and at games (on or off the field), is imperative. Participants and parents are representing PAFA Spirit and the Palatine Park District and should act and dress appropriately. Inappropriate behavior by participants or parents may result in suspension or dismissal. Inappropriate behavior includes but is not limited to: rudeness, bullying, temper tantrums, outbursts, showing disrespect to the Team Parents/Coaches by talking back, eye rolling, etc., showing disrespect to a fellow team member, negatively addressing our football team or guests at our field, lack of participation or poor attitude, poor sportsmanship, negative or vulgar comments, use of cell phones for non-emergency calls, damage to fields or property, etc. Personal issues should not be brought into practices. Concentration is required at all times for everyone's safety.

10. The use of illegal substances, inappropriate language or gestures, or any other behavior that would reflect poorly on the squad or the PAFA organization is not allowed and is cause for dismissal.
11. Physical displays or threats of physical aggression by participants or parents/family members are not allowed and are cause for suspension or dismissal.
12. Posting negative or threatening commentary on **any** electronic means of communication during the season is not allowed and is cause for suspension or dismissal.
13. Bullying behavior is not tolerated and is cause for suspension or dismissal. The PD has a bullying policy in effect that is in addition to the PAFA Spirit Code of Conduct.
14. Signs of gang affiliations are not allowed and are cause for dismissal.
15. Fans are encouraged to attend games to support the cheerleaders and football players; however visiting during game time is not allowed. Persistent interruptions from friends/family during game time will result in suspension or dismissal.
16. Gum chewing, eating, soft drinks, jewelry (including earrings, bracelets, anklets, necklaces, etc.) are not allowed.
17. Smoking/Vaping is not allowed on Park District property or within 500 feet of participants.
18. Participants are not allowed to leave the practice space or game location, without first notifying a Team Parent.
19. For safety reasons, cheer participants must arrive one-half hour prior to the start of each football game in order to warm-up and review the half-time routine and stunts being performed during the game. Participants who do not arrive at the designated time will be taken out of the half-time performance. NO EXCEPTIONS.
20. Parent concerns should be directed to a Team Parent or the PAFA Spirit Supervisor. Parents may not approach Coaches, football coaches, or football officials. Violations may result in the ejection of a parent from the game or future games.

The Code of Conduct Disciplinary actions may include verbal warnings, written warnings, suspension from a game, and/or a practice, and/or dismissal from the season. Refunds will not be provided.



This page is deliberately left blank.



PAFA SPIRIT CODE OF CONDUCT & COMMITMENT CONDUCT FORM
THIS FORM IS MANDATORY AND MUST BE SIGNED IN ORDER TO
PARTICIPATE.

We, participant and parents, have read the PAFA Spirit Parent/Participant Handbook and Code of Conduct and agree to abide by the policies stated within.

Participant Name Date

Participant Signature Date

Parent Signature Date

**RETURN THIS SIGNED FORM TO YOUR TEAM PARENT OR PAFA SUPERVISOR
DURING THE 1st WEEK of PRACTICE**