



2025-26 Winter & Spring Season

“Points of Emphasis”

November 5, 2025

Colleen Maguire, Executive Director

- Spectator Code of Conduct Policy
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Players leaving the bench area
- Use of Video
- Implicit Bias



Spectator Code of Conduct Policy

- Mandatory starting with 2025-2026 school year
- Requires schools to adopt a policy, which:
 - Parents/guardians must sign off acknowledging policy
 - Identify unsportsmanlike behavior
 - Disciplinary action for policy violations
- Officials should continue to contact NJSIAA staff with spectator issues and concerns



Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Players

- Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct by players:
 - Taunting acts, words or insignia
 - **Any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean opponents, spectators, or others**
 - Use of profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gesture
 - **Any delayed, excess or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon themselves**
- Unsportsmanlike penalties may result in disqualification if judged to be flagrant



Players Leaving the Bench Area

Any player that leaves the bench area during an altercation, regardless of whether the player engages in the altercation, shall be disqualified, and will be subject to the disqualification penalty (automatically disqualified from the next two contests, except for football which is one game). Only coaches can leave the bench with the purpose of restraining players and stopping the altercation.

Any player who leaves the bench area at any point during an interscholastic event is automatically disqualified. **If an official is unable to identify the player(s) who left the bench area, then the official must notify the athletic director, or site manager, prior to the leaving the event that they will be notifying NJSIAA staff so that video can be reviewed to determine which player(s) should be disqualified.**



Use of Video for Sportsmanship Violations

NJSIAA reserves the right to use video to determine for the following situations:

1. To identify if a violation of our sportsmanship policy occurred and to determine if additional disqualifications are necessary.
2. To correctly identify the players that have left the bench.
3. To ensure that disqualifications are correctly identified.

NJSIAA staff is responsible for entering these additional disqualifications in the system.



Implicit Bias Training

In September 2019, NJSIAA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the NJ Office of the Attorney General – Division of Civil Rights. This Memorandum required NJSIAA to provide implicit bias training to all registered NJSIAA officials.

To accomplish this requirement, NJSIAA started hosting a series of virtual workshops on implicit bias during the 2023-2024 school year. To date, a total of 108 workshops have been hosted for a total of 7,417 officials.

This workshop is required! No official will be eligible for any regular and or post-season state tournament assignments without participating in the workshop. Similar workshops, like the NFHS course, will not be accepted.

This is a one-time-only requirement - it will not be a seasonal or annual requirement.



Information Updates

- State tournament assigning:
 - The NJSIAA will assign all rounds of all state tournament
 - No more local assigning
- Arbiter
 - Rollout
 - Registration



Information Updates

- Website/Handbook
- Communication
- Testing Platform
- Chapter Board Members Info
- No/Yes Lists
- Fan Behavior / Coaches Behavior
- Unsportsmanlike Report Form
- Arbiter Insurance
- Arbiter Concussion Video



Certainty Over Severity

People are deterred from wrongdoing not because of how harsh the punishment is, but because they believe it is inevitable.

Key Points:

- If people are confident that a consequence will happen, even if it's mild, they are less likely to take the risk.
- Punishment works best when it's consistent and predictable.
- Policies that focus on consistent enforcement of laws (e.g., frequent audits or routine checks) are often more effective than draconian penalties that are rarely applied.

This idea challenges the notion that harsher penalties alone are sufficient to prevent undesirable actions. Instead, it supports the importance of a justice system that is reliable and consistent.



DQ Rule



Disqualification Rule

1. There are only two types of flagrant unsportsmanlike misconduct that necessitate disqualification.
 - Physical unsportsmanlike flagrant misconduct
 - Verbal unsportsmanlike flagrant misconduct
2. Flagrant is a glaring action by a player or coach which is excessive physical play or unacceptable verbal conduct as judged by the game/meet official(s).
3. Flagrant, unsportsmanlike misconduct is not a “playing rule” violation. The determination of disqualification must be made at the time of the violation.
4. Prudent judgment should be utilized by all officials prior to any disqualification.
5. All disqualifications for flagrant, unsportsmanlike conduct (Physical & Verbal) will always carry the additional game(s) penalty.
6. Ejection or removal of a player for a specific sports rule will carry the disqualification penalty only when it includes a flagrant unsportsmanlike act.

DQ Reporting

- Official must contact the AD by noon of the next day. Acceptable forms of communication are email, talking to the AD at the game, or on the phone. Leaving a message is not acceptable.
- The online report must be sent within 48 hours from the completion of the game
- Take your time and get it right!
- In certain circumstances, officials are encouraged to use video (if available) to confirm the information is correct before filing the DQ with the NJSIAA.
- Schools will not be penalized for playing a player that eventually was disqualified within the 48-hour period.
- Official must notify the coach before they leave the facility that it was a DQ or in the case where multiple DQ's (fight) is possible, inform the coach and AD DQ's are coming.
- DQ is a DQ, officials are not permitted to change their mind after it is called
- DQ appeals will **NOT** be accepted by the NJSIAA
- Please remember to be signed into the website to enter a DQ



DQ vs. Game Ejection

Disqualification Rule

Any student-athlete or coach disqualified before, during or after an interscholastic event for unsportsmanlike, flagrant verbal or physical misconduct will be disqualified from the next two regularly scheduled contests, except for football which will carry a one game disqualification.

Game Ejection

Definition of a game ejection is any player removed from a game for behavior that is not considered unsportsmanlike, and does not require a DQ report to be filed.



Sportsmanship

It shall be the responsibility of each member school to ensure that all individuals employed by or directly associated with the athletic program, including its Student-Athletes, comport themselves in a sportsmanlike manner when representing their school, especially at interscholastic events.



Sportsmanship Statement

- Must be read at all levels (no choice – AG office mandate)
- Must be read in its entirety (no paraphrasing)
- Must be professional in the delivery
- Must be read to all members of the team regardless of the size of the team.
- PA announcers – different version
- The sportsmanship policy must be adhered to before, during and after the contest.



Sportsmanship Statement

The NJSIAA requires officials to enforce all rules regarding unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches and players. There will be no tolerance for any negative behavior, such as taunting, trash-talking and verbal, written, or physical conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or religion. Such behavior will result in being ejected from this event. All participants must respect the game, respect the officials, and respect their opponents.



Handshake

Handshake Protocol

1. It is the schools/coaches' responsibility to supervise the handshake. Administrators/security should be stationed within close proximity to the handshake line. Officials are not required to supervise the handshake.
2. One team should be on the right and the other team should be on the left. Players from one team should not be allowed to walk down both sides of the line.
3. Absolutely no non-essential personnel should be allowed on the playing surface until both teams have reached a designated area after completion of the handshake line.
4. A coach or site personnel should be stationed at the end of the handshake line to direct the players who have completed the handshake to a designated area.
5. Best practice is to have coaches at the front and end of the line. If that is not practical, a coach at the end of the line is mandatory.



Registration for 2025-2026

Registration Reminders:

Registration will open on April 15, 2025.

Registration will close on March 31, 2026

All registered officials are covered by the Arbiter Liability Insurance.

All eligibility requirements will expire on June 30th of each year.

Eligibility Reminders:

Concussion Certification – July 1, Chapters responsibility

Background Checks – Automatically sent

RulesTest – 80% is passing

Implicit Bias – One-time requirement

Member in good standing (no longer Track)



Registration Fees

First Sport = \$60

- Registration = \$50
- Background Check = \$10

Each Additional Sport = \$30

- Registration = \$30
- Background Check = \$0



Background Checks

BACKGROUND CHECK DISCLOSURE

The New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) requires all independently contracted officials to complete a criminal history background check annually. The background check will be ordered by the NJSIAA and submitted to an NJSIAA-approved consumer reporting agency (CRA). The NJSIAA will not accept criminal history background reports from other CRAs that were not ordered by the NJSIAA. Under New Jersey law, you have the right to submit a request to the CRA for a copy of any background check report that the NJSIAA has ordered about you.

BACKGROUND CHECK ADJUDICATION MATRIX

With the NJSIAA Comprehensive National Background Package, the NJSIAA approved background check company will be conducting their background checks using the NJSIAA adjudication matrix listed below:

Unlimited Scope:

- All Felonies
- Misdemeanors involving the following:
 - Sex crimes
 - Crimes involving minors

Seven (7) Year Scope:

- Misdemeanors involving drug related charges

Additional Information is located on NJSIAA website



Eligibility Warnings

➤ Warning Procedure

1. The first warning email is sent to all officials that have not completed all eligibility checks three weeks before the NJSIAA opening day of that sport.
2. The second warning email is sent two weeks before the NJSIAA opening day of that sport.
3. Forfeiture of events will occur one week before the NJSIAA opening day for that sport.
4. All officials can be assigned to games up to the forfeiture date



Eligibility Warning Dates



Fall Season	1st Warning	2nd Warning	Removal of Assignments
Cross Country	08/04/2025	08/11/2025	08/18/2025
Field Hockey	08/04/2025	08/11/2025	08/18/2025
Football	08/07/2025	08/14/2025	08/21/2025
Gymnastics	08/04/2025	08/11/2025	08/18/2025
Soccer	08/04/2025	08/11/2025	08/18/2025
Tennis-Girls	07/28/2025	08/04/2025	08/11/2025
Volleyball-Girls	08/04/2025	08/11/2025	08/18/2025
Winter Season	1st Warning	2nd Warning	Removal of Assignments
Basketball	11/17/2025	11/24/2025	12/01/2025
Fencing	11/17/2025	11/24/2025	12/01/2025
Ice Hockey	11/10/2025	11/17/2025	11/24/2025
Swimming & Diving	11/10/2025	11/17/2025	11/24/2025
Track & Field	11/17/2025	11/24/2025	12/01/2025
Wrestling	11/17/2025	11/24/2025	12/01/2025
Spring Season	1st Warning	2nd Warning	Removal of Assignments
Baseball	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026
Lacrosse-Boys	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026
Lacrosse-Girls	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026
Softball	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026
Tennis-Boys			
Track & Field	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026
Volleyball-Boys	02/23/2026	03/02/2026	03/09/2026

Conflict of Interest Policy

Conflict of Interest

- Currently employed in the district
- Previous employment in the district within the past 10 years
- A close relative employed in the district
- A child attending any school in the district
- A graduate of school within the past ten years

Officials that also coach the sport in which they officiate must be extremely aware of a possible conflict of interest



Heat Policy

- The heat policy and subsequent modifications is the decision of the school district. They will determine the correct procedure as spelled out in the heat policy.
- Officials are not involved in this decision regarding the heat policy before or during the game.
- School district personnel should be in communication with all officials assigned to the game regarding modifications if needed.



NFHS Rules Changes – Hair Adornments, Religious Items, and Jewelry

The NFHS has adopted several rules changes concerning hair adornments, religious items, and jewelry across multiple sports.

It is extremely important that all administrators, coaches, officials, and student-athletes are aware of these rules to ensure everyone's safety and a consistent understanding by all stakeholders.

All involved are encouraged to review the full rulebook prior to the season.



School Uniform Modifications

Schools may permit modifications of uniforms for hair adornments, cultural/religious reasons, jewelry, and transgender modifications without an approval letter from the NJSIAA.

Any concerns regarding the accommodations must be addressed through the coach, not the athlete.

Officials are instructed to continue with the contest and notify the NJSIAA if there are concerns the following day. No accommodation may create an unsafe environment for any participant.



NFHS Rules Changes – Hair Adornments, Religious Items, and Jewelry

Procedures

Prior to the start of the competition, it is the head coach's responsibility to ensure that his or her student-athletes are properly equipped by adhering to all NFHS uniform rules.

If an official notices a violation of any NFHS uniform rule, the official should address the violation **with the head coach only** – the official is not to address the violation with the student-athlete or anyone else associated with the team.

The head coach is responsible for working with the student-athlete to remedy the violation to the satisfaction of the official.



NFHS Rules Changes – Hair Adornments, Religious Items, and Jewelry

Hair Adornments

The NFHS has updated its rules to allow the use of hair adornments that are made of hard materials if they are securely fastened close to the head and do not present an increased risk to the player, teammates, or opponents.

Hair adornments are defined as anything decorative that could be worn on one's head, regardless if they are used to hold a hairstyle in place. Hair adornments include, but are not limited to, barrettes, beads, and bobby pins. Hair charms are considered jewelry and must follow the jewelry rules below.

Hair adornments are allowed in all sports. If the hair adornment becomes non-compliant during play, then the officials shall allow time to fix the hair adornment. If the hair adornment cannot be fixed immediately, then the student-athlete must leave the game to fix the hair adornment.



NFHS Rules Changes – Hair Adornments, Religious Items, and Jewelry

Religious Items

The NFHS has updated its rules to allow uniform flexibility to accommodate religious norms, such as the wearing of undergarments, head coverings and religious jewelry.

Head covering worn for religious reasons must be made on non-abrasive, soft materials and must fit securely.

Religious medals must be taped and worn under the uniform. Other religious jewelry, such as nose rings, are allowed in all sports but must not pose a safety risk to the player, teammates, or opponents. Accommodations should be made to allow religious jewelry to be worn.

The state association shall be notified, after the event, if there is a concern about a head covering, or any other covering, worn for religious reasons.



NFHS Rules Changes – Hair Adornments, Religious Items, and Jewelry

Jewelry

The NFHS has updated its rules to allow jewelry to be worn during competition in certain sports. Jewelry includes, but is not limited to, **necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and watches.**

- **Medical alert medals** are *not* considered jewelry but must be taped to the body.
- **Prohibited jewelry:** Athletes may not wear jewelry under any circumstances if it is deemed potentially dangerous by the official.

Please review the NFHS rule book for your specific sport to ensure compliance with these guidelines.



School Uniform Modifications

Transgender Clarification:

Pursuant to NJ law and NJSIAA policy, the NJSIAA will approve all reasonable accommodations regarding uniforms as it relates to transgender student-athletes. If there are any questions regarding this on the day of the contest, officials are instructed to continue with the contest and notify the NJSIAA the following day.

All Accommodations:

- Must not violate the NFHS sports specific uniform rules
- Must match the existing uniform in terms of color and logos.
- Must not create an unsafe environment for all participants.



Officials Apparel

The NJSIAA is proud to continue our relationship with Smitty apparel as our exclusive supplier of officials' uniforms. Smitty is a nationwide company with an outstanding product, serving many states as well as being the official manufacturer of the NFHS. Their website will help you find all local vendors that will be selling Smitty apparel. smittyapparel.com

Officials are required to wear only Smitty apparel.



Officials Logo

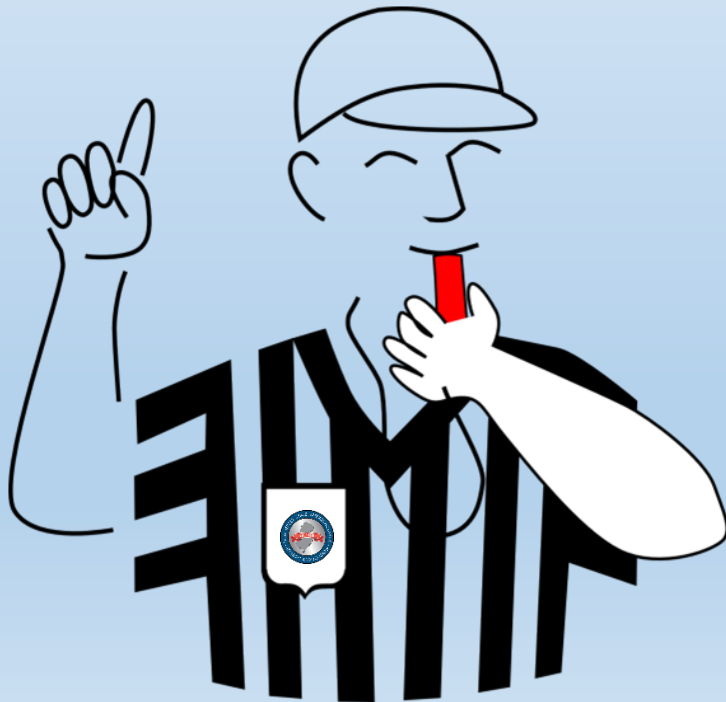
All officials (any level) that are registered with the NJSIAA must wear the approved NJSIAA logo on the chosen apparel (shirt/jacket). All officials must match if there are color options.

For those officials that wear hats during their contests; During the regular season, the hats can have either the NJSIAA logo or their chapters logo; During the tournament, all hats must have the NJSIAA logo.



Professional Development

Please visit the NFHSlearn.com for many free professional development opportunities.



Have a great year!!!

