Freedom Area School District

Parent-Student Athletic Handbook

Revised 8/21/26

HS Principal: Mr. Steven Mott
MS Principal: Mr. Jeffery Griffith
Athletic Director: Mr. Dave Badamo
Athletic Secretary:
Athletic Office: (724) 775-7400
E-mail: freedomathletics@freedomarea.org
Fax: (724) 775-7753
Website: www.gofreedombulldogs.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Athletic Director 3
Athletic Offerings 4
Freedom Athletic Department Philosophy..... 5
Mission Statements 6
Scheduling 6
Code of Ethics 7
Conflict Resolution Process 8
Eligibility
- Physical Examinations 9
- Academics 9
- Age 10
- Attendance 10
- Amateur Status 10
- Period of Participation 11
- All-Star Contests 11
- Discipline 11

Medical Issues
- Health Insurance 12
- Athletic Trainers and Training Room Information 12
- Injury Procedure 12
- Emergency Telephone Numbers 12

Athletic Awards
- Awards & Criteria 13
- Varsity Jackets 13

Student Transportation 14
Student Transfer Process 14
Home-Schooled Students in Athletics 14
Equipment Return Procedure 14
Team Rules 15
Hazing Policy 15
Athletic Scholarships and Recruiting 16
Cancellation of Events Due to Inclement Weather 16
Instructions to Student Athletes 16
Weight Room Regulations 17
Social Media 18
M.R.S.A. Prevention 19
C3Logix Concussion Management System 19
Parents' Guide for Head Injuries 20
Collegiate Athletic Options (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA) 21
Recruiting Tips 22
NCAA Eligibility Center and Guide for College-Bound Student Athletes 23
Recruiting 23
Positive Athletic Parenting 24
Parent/Coach Relationship 24
Parents Code of Conduct 25
Handbook Acknowledgement 26

Dear Parent and Student Athlete:

The purpose of this letter is to welcome your son/daughter into the Freedom Athletic Program and to provide the necessary information to help him/her succeed at their chosen endeavor. It is our goal to provide your son/daughter with an enjoyable athletic experience that is rewarding both on and off the playing field.

Being a member of a Freedom athletic team is a fulfillment of an early ambition for many students. The attainment of this goal carries with it certain traditions and responsibilities that must be maintained. A great athletic tradition is not built overnight; it takes hard work from many people over many years to develop. As a member of an interscholastic squad for Freedom Middle School or High School, you have inherited a wonderful tradition which you are challenged to uphold.

We hope that you will always give Freedom Athletics 100% to uphold this high standard we have created. When you wear red and white, we assume that you not only understand our tradition, but are willing to accept the responsibilities that go along with it. These responsibilities include:

1.) **Responsibility to Yourself**: The most important of these responsibilities is to broaden and develop strength of character. You owe it to yourself to derive the greatest benefit from your high school experiences. Your academic studies, participation in school activities as well as participation in sports, prepare you for your life as an adult.

2.) **Responsibility to the Freedom School District**: Freedom cannot maintain its position as having an outstanding school unless each and every student and parent represents themselves with honor and dignity. By competing in athletics, you have the power to represent your school in a positive manner by demonstrating good sportsmanship while maintaining a strong desire to win.

3.) **Responsibility to Others**: Younger students in Freedom are watching you. They will copy you in many ways. Do not do anything to lead them astray or to let them down. Whether you realize it or not, you are one of the most influential people on the youth of our community.

The following pages comprise our athletic handbook for you to familiarize yourself with the district's policies and procedures. Many topics are included and may change on an annual basis. If you have a specific question regarding athletic scholarships, NCAA guidelines, eligibility, physical examinations, attendance, lettering, and other guidelines that have been set forth by the Freedom School District.

Good luck and GO BULLDOGS!

ATHLETIC OFFERINGS

The interscholastic sports program consists of fifteen (16) varsity teams, eight (8) junior varsity teams, two (3) junior high teams and seven (8) middle school programs. All of these groups compete in the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA). The local district of the PIAA that our school competes in is District 7, commonly known as the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League or (WPIAL). Our district is also a part of the Midwestern Athletic Conference (MAC) and the Southwest Conference for Middle School sports scheduling.

Baseball: This spring sport fields teams in Junior High (grades 7-8-9) and JV/Varsity teams (grades 9-12). JV games are limited therefore if a 9th grader chooses to play Junior High they must declare their intent. Once declared they are not permitted to play JV/Varsity for the season.

Basketball: This winter sport fields both boys and girls teams in Middle School (grades 7-8) and JV/Varsity (grades 9-12).

Bocce: This winter Special Olympics sport consists of an inclusive group of students at the high school (grades 9-12).

Cheerleading: This Fall/Winter sport has one squad that cheers during football and basketball games. Students are required to try out for this squad and must be in grades 9-12. There is also a Jr High Fall/Winter season for grades 7-8. Participating in both seasons is mandatory.

Cross Country: This fall sport fields a coed team for Varsity (grades 9-12) and a Middle School (grades 7-8).

Football: This fall sport fields a JV/Varsity team (grades 9-12) and a Jr High Team (7-8).

Golf: This fall sport fields a coed team for Varsity (grades 9-12).

Softball: This spring sport fields teams in Middle School (grades 7-8) and JV/Varsity teams (grades 9-12).

Soccer: This fall sport fields both boys and girls teams in Middle School (grades 7-8) and JV/Varsity (grades 9-12).

Track: This spring sport fields both boys and girls teams in Middle School (grades 7-8) and Varsity (grades 9-12).

Volleyball: This fall sport fields girls teams in JV/Varsity (grades 9-12).
This spring sport fields a girls team in Middle School (grades 7-8).

Wrestling: This winter sport fields teams in Junior High (grades 7-9) and Varsity teams (grades 9-12).

****

Hockey is offered as a cooperative program with Central Valley High School.
Students may also compete independently in sports that are not offered.
Students should see the athletic director if they desire to compete in a sport that is not listed.

Freedom Athletic Department Philosophy

The athletic program will conform to all policies of the school district. This handbook will not override Board approved policies. If there is any conflict between a Board policy and any policy procedure or other content of this Handbook, Board policy shall prevail.

The Freedom Area School District believes that a dynamic program of student athletics is vital to the educational development of the student. The Freedom Athletic Program should provide a variety of experiences to aid in the development of favorable habits and attitudes in students that will prepare them for adult life in a democratic society.

Athletics plays an important part in the life of Freedom High/Middle School students. Young people learn a great deal from their participation in interscholastic athletics. Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competition, and how to win and lose gracefully are an integral part of each team in our athletic program. Athletics play an important part, too, in helping the individual student develop a healthy self-concept as well as a healthy body. Athletic competition adds to our school spirit and helps all students (spectators as well as participants) develop pride in their school.

The major objective of the athletic program is to provide wholesome opportunities for students to develop positive habits and attitudes of social and group living. Leadership should be of the highest quality so as to exemplify to the participants the desired type of behavior to be developed from the athletic program. Measurement of leadership success should not be in terms of the victory and defeat record, but rather in the personal development factors that are an outgrowth of the major objectives of the athletic program.

We believe that the opportunity for participation in a wide variety of student-selected activities is a vital part of the student's educational experiences. Such participation is a privilege and "not a right," and therefore can be taken away from a student if that student does not comply with the policies and procedures and Codes of Conduct of the School District that carries with it responsibilities to the school, to the activity, to the student body, to the community, and to the students themselves. These experiences contribute to the development of learning skills and emotional patterns that enable the student to make maximum use of his or her education.

The interscholastic athletic program shall be conducted in accordance with existing Board of Education policies. While the Board of Education takes great pride in winning, it does not condone "winning at any cost" and discourages any and all pressures, which might tend to neglect good sportsmanship and good mental health. At all times, the athletic program must be conducted in such a way so as to justify it as an educational experience.

A comprehensive and balanced athletic program is an essential complement to the basic program of instruction. The athletic program should provide opportunities for students to further develop interests and talents in sports. Participation in athletics should provide many students with a lifetime basis for personal values for work and leisure activities.
Every effort should be made to support the activities program with facilities, equipment, and with the most qualified staff available. Coaches, directors, and sponsors should teach the specific skills necessary for improvement in athletics and provide guidance in the development of self-realization, good sportsmanship, cooperation, leadership, ethical behavior, and an appreciation for the importance of practice.

Middle School and Jr. High athletics are to focus on participation so that students can discover their abilities, build their confidence and improve their performance in the classroom. It is important for students to get involved with school activities, to meet new people and to develop interests. Practices and games are to develop skills and learn about the game and rules. In turn this preparation will prepare them to participate at the next level.

The Junior Varsity levels serve as a transition from a developmental philosophy to a more serious philosophy. The focus of this level is to practice learned skills and prepare to play at the next level. Athletes are exposed to the traits it takes to be successful. Such traits include hard work, dedication, time management, desire, and sacrifice.

The Varsity level is the culmination of the athletic experience and is the highest level of competition in high school athletics. Emphasis at this level is on the use of the fundamentals of the sport, dedication, desire, hard work, and sacrifice. Playing time is at the coach's discretion and should be geared toward winning the competition while upholding both school and team rules. Success is not necessarily indicated by a win or loss, but measured by the quality of the effort, performance, and achievement of goals.

MISSION STATEMENT

Athletic Mission: To challenge all student athletes to achieve success, a sense of self-esteem, and teamwork through participation in competitive athletics. It is through participation in competitive athletics that students will develop the necessary skills to become productive members of society.

*****

Freedom has a history of success in high school athletics. Not only are the administration, staff, and community committed to building upon that history, but it is also committed to maintaining a high level of integrity throughout its athletic program. Students are encouraged to develop responsibility and commitment, an understanding of the importance of teamwork, and respect for self and others.

Young people learn a great deal from their participation in interscholastic athletics. Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competition, and how to win and lose gracefully are an integral part of each team in our athletic program. Athletics play an important role in helping the individual student develop a healthy self-concept as well as a healthy body.

In keeping with our philosophy to fully develop our student athletes, and in line with keeping our athletic teams as competitive as possible, student athletes are strongly encouraged to participate in a variety of sports for Freedom if they are capable of doing so.

A student's physical and mental health is just one of many concerns that the administration, coaches, and teachers have for your child's total well being. Although there is no set policy against a student participating in more than one sport during any one season, and occasionally it works for the student-athlete, it is recommended that students should play only ONE sport during the fall, winter, and spring sports seasons. This is largely due to the grueling practice and academic workload for high school students. Students must remember that they are students first and athletes second. Trying to do too much will affect a student's health and also his/her academic and athletic performance.

SCHEDULING

All schedules with be posted on the athletic web site www.gofreedombulldogs.com
Parents and students can sign up for text and email alerts for schedule changes and cancellations.
Please log on to the athletic website to sign up for these alerts.
The alerts are sent immediately following any schedule change.

CODE OF ETHICS

According to the PIAA Constitution and By-Laws, the following is the **Athletic Courtesy By-Law** that every school, student athlete, coach, official, athletic director, principal, and fan must abide by to ensure a strong Code of Ethics is maintained.

Athletics should foster clean sports. It is the privilege and duty of every person connected with athletics to exemplify these principles in that person's own actions and earnestly advocate them before others.

1. *The rules of the game are to be regarded as mutual agreements, the spirit or letter of which no honorable person would break. The stealing of advantage on sport is theft.*

2. *No advantages are to be sought over others except those in which the game is understood to show superiority.*

3. *Unsportsmanlike or unfair means are not to be used, even when they are used by opponents.*

4. *Visiting teams are to be honored guests of the home team and should be treated as such.*

5. *No action is to be taken which would seem unsportsmanlike or dishonorable if known to one's opponent or the public.*

6. *Remember that the student spectator represents his school the same, as does the athlete at all home and away contests.*

7. *Any spectator who continually evidences poor sportsmanship should be requested not to attend future contests.*

8. *Decisions of Contest officials are to be abided by, even when they seem unfair.*

9. *Contest officials and opponents are to be regarded and treated as honest in intention. In contests when opponents conduct themselves in an unbecoming manner, and when contest officials are manifestly dishonest or incompetent, future relationships with them should be avoided.*

10. *Good points in others should be appreciated and suitable recognition given.*

11. *The practice of "booing" is regarded as discourteous and unsportsmanlike.*

Conflict Resolution Process

Freedom strives to provide an opportunity for student athletes to learn through active participation in sports. An athlete's success within the athletic program is often determined by the level in which he/she is participating. Fundamental growth, progression from one year to the next, increased physical fitness, personal development, as well as winning can all be successes of the individual athlete. With that in mind, it is the intent of the athletic program to involve as many students as possible. With the exception of cheerleading, Freedom has a "no cut" policy. Any member who desires to be a part of the team may do so if they adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by the athletic department and individual team coaches. Being a member of the team does not guarantee playing time, however all members will be given a fair and equal chance to earn their positions on each team.

Concern/Complaint Process:

If a student or parent has a concern regarding issues within athletic teams, they should follow the chain of command set forth below:

1 – Student should address question to the coaching staff.
2 – Parent and student should request a meeting with the coach or coaching staff.
3 – Parent, student, and coach will meet with the Athletic Director.
4 – Parent, student, coach and Athletic Director will meet with the Principal.
5 – Unresolved issues will be referred to the district Superintendent/Board of Education.

This chain of command needs to be followed. The Athletic Director will ask you if you have spoken to the coaching staff. The principal will ask you if you have spoken to the Coaching Staff/Athletic Director. The Superintendent will ask you if you have spoken to the coaching staff, Athletic Director, and Principal. Please do not bypass any person within this chain of command.

The Freedom Athletic Department believes that coaches are in the best position to determine each athlete's position on the team. Discussions involving playing time and positions will not be debated, however the coaches should provide positive constructive actions that may increase a student's role and playing time on a team.

ELIGIBILITY

Physical Examinations

Requirement: The Freedom School District must follow the guidelines set forth by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (P.I.A.A.) in requiring that all athletes participating in interscholastic competition have a pre-participation physical examination.

This exam must occur no earlier than May 1st for all sports in the upcoming school year.

The health and well being of every student is our top priority. It is also important that our students learn responsibility and the ability to set priorities. The following procedures will help ensure that the school district is in compliance with P.I.A.A. regulations requiring that all athletes participating in interscholastic competition have a pre-participation physical examination:

1. The school will offer pre-participation physicals at times prior to some of the seasons. The date and place of these pre-participation physicals will be announced and publicized in the school approximately four (4) weeks prior to physicals being administered. There will always be an offering before school breaks for summer (after June 1) . It is strongly advised that students get their physicals for the following school year at this time.
2. Students must obtain the PROPER forms (PIAA CIPPE) from their coach, through the Athletic Office or online via the school website. ***No other forms will be accepted***.
3. Completed physical forms MUST be turned in to the athletic trainer or athletic office at least one week prior to the first designated practice. **If completed physical forms are not received, the student will NOT be allowed to practice or participate in that sport until all paperwork is received. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
4. All students must be registered on Arbiter Sports for the school year.
   Students will have to do one of two things PRIOR to the first day of tryouts in order to satisfy the Physical requirement.

1 – IF the student has not had a physical AFTER May 1 they will need to have a complete examination and fill out the entire packet.

2 – IF the student had a physical to participate during the fall or winter season of the current school year, they will only need to fill out the recertification paperwork of the CIPPE.

Academics

In order to be eligible for interscholastic athletic competition, a pupil must pursue a curriculum defined and approved by the principal as a full-time curriculum. Where required, this curriculum or its equivalent must be approved by, and conform to, the regulations of the State Board of Education and the Pennsylvania School Code, as well as any local policies established by the local school board. The pupil must be passing at least four (4) full-credit subjects, or the equivalent, AND not be failing (2 or more CORE Classes) or (3 or more total classes). Eligibility shall be cumulative from the beginning of a grading period and shall be reported on a weekly basis. Student grade reports will be pulled at noon on Friday(or the last day of school that particular week). If a student fails to meet the academic eligibility standards, he/she will be deemed ineligible to participate in athletic contests the following Monday – Sunday. Ineligible students are permitted to practice, however coaches should put a plan in place for academic improvement and balance study and practice time.

Eligibility for the first 15 days of each school year will be based on the previous school year final grades. The pupil must have passed at least four (4) full-credit subjects, or the equivalent, AND not have failed (2 or more CORE Classes) or (3 or more total classes).

Eligibility for the first 15 days of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th nine weeks will be based on the previous quarter grades. The pupil must have passed at least four (4) full-credit subjects, or the equivalent, AND not have failed (2 or more CORE Classes) or (3 or more total classes).

Age

Maximum Age Rule: A pupil shall be ineligible for interscholastic athletic competition upon attaining the age of nineteen (19) years, with the following exception: If the age of 19 is attained on or after July 1, of year in question, the pupil shall be eligible, age-wise, to compete throughout that school year.

How to Determine Age: In determining the age of a pupil, the date of birth (as recorded in the State Bureau of Vital Statistics) shall be considered as conclusive if filed in a State Bureau of Vital Statistics within one year after the date of birth. If a birth record from a State Bureau of Vital Statistics is not available, proof of a pupil's age may be determined by requiring the submission of a birth certificate which was issued within one year after birth; or in lieu of a birth certificate, a passport with the date of birth recorded thereon; or in lieu of a passport, an affidavit by the parents or legal guardian, filed not later than one year after the pupil's admission to the first grade of an elementary school. In the event of the non-existence of any of these records of evidence, the earliest date of birth as recorded in the records of the school or schools attended by the pupil shall be considered the date of birth.

Attendance

In order to be eligible to participate in any interscholastic athletic contest, a pupil must have been regularly enrolled in a secondary school and in full time attendance thereafter. A pupil is eligible only at the school at which he/she is enrolled.

Students will be ineligible to participate in any activity or sport if he/she has missed more than **twenty (20) school days during a semester**, and shall not be eligible to participate in an Inter-School Practice, Scrimmage, or Contest until the student has been in attendance for a total of forty-five (45) school days following the student's twentieth (20^{th}) day of absence except where there is a consecutive absence of five (5) or more school days due to confining injury, death in the immediate family (as defined in Section 1154 of the Public School Code of 1949, as amended), court subpoena, or quarantine, or an absence of five (5) or more school days due to the same confining illness, such absence may be waived from the application of this rule by the District Committee. **Attendance at summer school does not count toward the required forty-five (45) days.**

Students must attend at least a half day of school each day to participate in games and/or practices. Tardy students must arrive by 10:30 AM. Exceptions to this rule include pre-approved college visits, funerals, medical appointments, and other special circumstances approved in advance by the Principal.

Amateur Status

Student athletes must be amateurs in order to participate in any PIAA sponsored contest. An amateur student is one who engages in athletic competition solely for the educational, physical, mental, social and pleasure benefits derived thereof. At the time of printing this Handbook, a loss of amateur status occurs when:

- The student or student's parents receive compensation for related athletic ability, participation, performance, services, or training in a sport.
- The student plays on a professional team or as an individual professional athlete in that sport.
- The student signs a contract whereby the student agrees to compete in any athletic competition for consideration.
- The student sells or pawns the student's athletic achievement awards.

Period of Participation

At the time of the printing of this Handbook, the period of participation is limited to students who have not:

- Been in attendance more than 8 semesters beyond the 8th grade; except in cases of long, confining illness or injury which necessitates repeating a grade. To waive the 8-semester limitation, providing all other eligibility requirements are met; requires approval by the WPIAL Board of Directors; OR.
- Played four seasons beyond the 8th grade in any one form of interscholastic athletics; OR
- Completed the work of grades 9, 10 ,11,12 (inclusive).
- NOTE: A pupil is considered as representing his school during a particular season or sport only if he has participated in a game or interscholastic scrimmage or any part of a game or interscholastic scrimmage. A pupil who enters school in the second semester and plays two partial seasons in the same sport in separate school years shall be considered as playing the equivalent of one season.

All-Star Contests

It should be noted that the PIAA determines whether a student athlete loses eligibility for participating in an all-star contest in that sport if the criteria does not conform to the PIAA By-Laws. You will lose your athletic eligibility in the respective sport for a period of one year if you participate in an all-star contest in that sport. Please contact the Athletic Director to determine if the competition in question falls under this rule.

Discipline

All athletes will abide by the current school discipline Code of Conduct. Since participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege and not a right, that privilege can be taken away from a student if that student does not comply with the policies and procedures described in this handbook.

Athletes who are assigned detention must report to detention, even if they have a practice scheduled. Students may not practice or play while under out of school suspension. For example, if a student is suspended for Friday, Monday, and Tuesday they may not participate in weekend school-related activities, including practice. A student who completes his/her suspension on Friday remains ineligible to play or practice until the next calendar day.

At any time Administration reserves the right to review a violation and distribute further discipline if necessary. Coaches and sponsors may further restrict, suspend or remove a student from the team as documented in the individual sports' team rules.

Violation of the school discipline code may result in an immediate suspension or complete termination of a student's participation in activities and athletics. Our student athletes must represent the very best of the district, both on and off the competition surface. Extracurricular activities are a privilege, not a right, and this privilege can be revoked at any time with just cause.

MEDICAL ISSUES

Health Insurance

Freedom Area School District requires all prospective student athletes to have adequate health insurance prior to any participation.

Athletic Trainers and Training Room Information

Athletic Trainer: Provided through UPMC
Location: Training Room, High School Gymnasium
Hours: Approximately 2 pm – 7pm plus varsity events during regular school days. If you need to set up a time to meet with the trainers individually, please call the athletic office.
NOTE – The training room is a place to care for and prevent injuries. Student-Athletes are not permitted to "hang out" in the training room before and after practice.

Injury Procedure

The athletic trainer will be responsible for the management and treatment of all athletic injuries. All injuries must be reported to the athletic trainer as soon as possible.

Any athlete who is taken to a physician as recommended by the athletic trainer or by the parent as a result of a possible injury, must provide a written medical release to the athletic trainer in order to return to participation in his/her sport.

The coach must notify the parents and/or guardians of any serious injuries. If necessary, the athlete will be taken to the hospital for necessary care.

The athletic trainer, not a coach, will determine whether an injured player is capable of practicing and/or playing.

If there is a difference of opinion between the athletic trainer, coach, athletic trainer, parent in the athletes' ability to practice or play, the family is required to provide a written medical release to override the decision of the certified athletic trainer.

Emergency Telephone Numbers:

Police/Ambulance Emergency……..….. 911
Freedom Police……...…….....(724) 728-4835
New Sewickley Township Police…….(724) 774-2473
Dave Badamo Athletic Director..……..…(724) 312-6952
Medic Rescue Ambulance Service…….…….(724) 728-3620

ATHLETIC AWARDS

All awards will be distributed to the coaches by the Athletic Director and then to the individual athletes. Anyone who quits or is removed from a team prior to the completion of the season, including post-season playoffs, will not receive a letter nor any other individual or team award even if the criteria for earning that award had been met prior to quitting or being removed.

Requirements for earning a Varsity Letter:

1. Student-Athlete must be on the Varsity Roster by the end of the season.
2. Student-Athlete must meet a **minimum** standard of participation. Student-Athletes must make an appearance in at LEAST 50% of varsity quarters/halves/innings/etc.
3. Coaches may require additional stipulations or more stringent standards to earn a varsity letter. If this is the case, student-athletes will be made aware of these requirements at the beginning of the season.
4. Student-Athlete must complete the season in good standing with the school. A student will not receive a Varsity Letter if they quit a team or are removed due to coach or school disciplinary reasons.
5. At the discretion of the Coaching Staff, and approval from the Athletic Department, student-athletes suffering from prolonged injury, illness or family hardship may be awarded a Varsity Letter based on their anticipated playing time had their situation not occurred.
6. All Seniors are eligible to receive a Varsity Letter as long as they meet requirements #1 and #4.

Awards Distributed for Varsity Letter Winners:

First Year: Certificate, chenille "F", respective sport pin and service bar.
Second Year: Certificate, sport pin, and 2nd year pin.
Third Year: Certificate, sport pin, and 3rd year plaque.
Fourth Year: Certificate, sport pin, and 4th year plaque.
TRI ATHLETE: Tri Athlete Plaque (earn three varsity letters in the same school year).

Students only receive the 2nd year pin, 3rd/4th year plaque, and Tri Athlete Plaque once.

Varsity Jackets

Varsity letterman jackets are handled by an external company. Contact information for said vendor along with general jacket information and sizing samples will be available in the athletic office. It will be the family's responsibility to deal with the individual company if they are dissatisfied with the product or service they receive when ordering a varsity jacket. Some booster groups provide funding for letterman jackets.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Freedom School District provides transportation to all scheduled away events. It is important for students to ride the bus to and from all contests for many reasons. Such reasons include: team unity in victory and defeat, shared responsibility for team equipment during travel, coach's discussions and instructions before and after contests, etc. However, certain occasions arise that a parent must drive their child to or from a contest. In such cases, they must complete and comply with the "Athletic Travel Release" form in advance of the event, and preferably 2 days before the event, to ensure all appropriate signatures are obtained.

STUDENT TRANSFERS

All transfer students and questions of residence will be thoroughly checked by the Athletic Director and approved by the Principal to see if they are in compliance with all PIAA rules before the students can be declared eligible to compete on an interscholastic sports team. Please contact either the Principal or the Athletic Director immediately if you have transferred into the district or plan to transfer out.

HOME-SCHOOLERS IN ATHLETICS

All home-schooled students must abide by the same set of rules as set forth by the PIAA and described in this handbook. Home-schooled athletes must also show evidence of academic eligibility, required immunizations, and appropriate health screenings. If there are any questions regarding home-schooled children, please contact the Athletic Director immediately.

EQUIPMENT RETURN PROCEDURE

Students are responsible for any and all equipment (including uniforms and practice gear) issued by the school. You will be expected to return all equipment at the end of the season; otherwise, you will be financially responsible for any missing items.

Issued equipment is not to be used for any activity outside of the practices and competitions of the school sport in which it was issued. It is unfortunate that some people steal but that does not void your responsibility for returning or paying for all that was originally issued to you. If you fail to pay for non-returned or overly-abused equipment, you will not be permitted further athletic participation at Freedom and records and transcripts will not be released until all obligations have been cleared.

TEAM RULES

Coaches are encouraged to develop a set of "Team Rules" which governs the individual sport. These rules must be approved by the Athletic Director and kept on file in the athletic office. When a student becomes a member of a team or group, he/she is committing to all the rules and expectations of that team/organization and coach/advisor.

These rules, regulations, and expectations are published prior to the season and provided to the student and his/her parents/guardians at that time.

Full participation in extracurricular activities by any student requires skillful time management and prior planning for involvement in multiple events and activities. This is part of the skills and advantages that participants develop and nurture through membership in extracurricular activities.

Acknowledging that students by nature of their youth and inexperience are still developing life skills which include time management and prioritization of responsibilities, the Board of School Directors, Administration, and Coaches shall encourage each extracurricular activity participant to strive to achieve the highest academic as well as athletic standards as an individual and as a team.

All coaches and sponsors will reinforce the premise that the student has the responsibility to maintain sound academic standings.

If, during the course of planned season activities, a situation develops which places an academic activity at risk, it is the **student's responsibility** to bring this issue to the attention of their **immediate team head coach or sponsor** with a proposed resolution **prior to the start of the activity**.

Full participation and attendance at all competitions, practices, and events is expected of all participants. In the event of an extreme personal or family emergency and/or a conflict with academic demands, at the request of the parents/guardians and with the approval of the immediate team head coach or Athletic Director participation may be excused or abbreviated. This may only be arranged at the discretion of the team head coach or Athletic Director prior to the event. The head coach or Athletic Director may also grant these exceptions when the schedule presents an undue burden or academic strain on the students as a result of competitions/events being scheduled on two or more consecutive school evenings. **All arrangements must be made prior to the start of the event/competition.**

HAZING POLICY

It is the goal of the Freedom Area School District to provide a safe and positive environment for students and staff that is free from hazing. Hazing activities are inconsistent with the educational goals of the district. As the Freedom Area School District has adopted a "Hazing Policy," the current hazing policy and any other relevant policy shall be part of this Handbook.

The school's staff, administration, and coaches do not and will not condone any form of initiation or harassment, known as hazing. Please refer to the School District Policy 247 for full text of the current policy and any other relevant policies.

ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS AND RECRUITING

Student athletes should conduct a meeting with their high school coach at the end of their junior season. Let your coaches know that you are very interested in participating in collegiate athletics and discuss your potential as an NCAA Division I, II, or III player. Do not be afraid to ask for their help. Your coach will help you, but there are limitations as to how much he/she can do. There are over 3,000 colleges and universities that offer athletic programs. Contacting each and every one of them is impossible for your coach. See the informational section of this handbook for more recruiting tips.

CANCELLATION OF EVENTS DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

Based on a cancellation or early dismissal of school, as directed by the Superintendent of Schools, due to inclement weather, the following shall apply:

1. All rehearsals, practices, competitions, performances are canceled unless administrative approval is given. Administrative consideration will be given to the need for the rehearsal/practice based on the immediacy of the competition/performance and the severity of the weather/road conditions.

2. Coaches/sponsors may request permission to use school facilities on the day of cancellation. This must be done on a single day basis.

3. Students cannot be required to attend an approved activity/practice/rehearsal during a school closing. Participation must be voluntary.

4. All home activities involving spectators are canceled unless administrative approval is given.

5. If an early dismissal occurs, all activities are canceled.

INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENT ATHLETES

1. Athletes will not be permitted in any area of the building after school, except those areas designated by the coaches or Athletic Director.

2. Athletes should report immediately to the locker rooms after the dismissal bell in the afternoon and practices should be scheduled to begin at a definite time.

3. No practice arrangements – formal or informal – are permitted without the presence of supervisory coaching personnel.

4. Students are not to remain after school unless coaches are present, or arrangements are made for supervision.

5. Athletic shoes with spikes are not to be worn in the building.

6. Athletes are to leave their automobile in the designated student parking areas. NO EXCEPTIONS.

7. You may not practice without properly signed physical packets.

8. You are responsible for all of the enclosed guidelines.

WEIGHT ROOM REGULATIONS

1. Shirts and shoes are required at all times; tank tops are acceptable.

2. Nobody is to be in the weight room alone. Wait outside the weight room for a coach. Under NO circumstances is any student permitted to be in the weight room unsupervised.

3. Lifters must work with a partner.

4. Replace all weights on racks immediately following use.

5. Know your limits! Work with the instructor in determining your limits.

6. Do the lifts correctly. It is better to use lighter weights for lifting than heavier weights and run the risk of injury.

7. Warm up with the proper stretching exercises.

8. No food or drinks (except water or sport drinks) are allowed inside the weight room.

9. No horseplay or profanity.

10. Do not abuse the equipment. This equipment will have to be used for years to come. Please respect all the school district property.

11. Any equipment that is broken must be reported immediately to the Athletic Director.

12. To reduce the risk of infections, wipe equipment after use to sanitize before the next individual uses the equipment.

Social Media Guidelines for Student-Athletes

The following guidelines are intended to provide the framework for student-athletes to conduct themselves safely and responsibly in an online environment. As a student-athlete at Freedom, you should:

1. Be careful how much and what kind of identifying information you post to online social network sites. Anyone can access your page. It is unwise to provide information such as full date of birth, social security number, address, cell phone numbers, class schedules, bank account information, or details about your daily routine. All can facilitate identity theft or stalking. Social Media provides numerous privacy settings for information contained in its pages – use these settings to protect private information. Once posted, the information becomes the property of the website. Please understand, privacy settings may help protect private information, but it is not a guaranteed safeguard. Any text or photo placed online is completely out of your control the moment it is placed online, even if you limit access to your site.
2. Be aware that Freedom employees, including coaches, faculty, and administrators, can access these sites just as easily as your peers. Colleges, current and future employers often access online social network sites for information. Many graduate programs and scholarship committees search these sites to screen applications. You should think about any information you post on Social Media as it provides an image of you to a prospective employer. The information posted is considered public information. Protect yourself by maintaining a self-image of which you can be proud.
3. Do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech. Understand that freedom of speech is not unlimited. Inappropriate postings on social network sites may easily result in serious repercussions.
4. Be cautious about what you share about your team. You may not post information about yourself, your teammates or your coaches that will put you or your team at a competitive disadvantage, including but not limited to injury reports, game plans and strategy.
5. Be aware that you are personally liable for any copyright violations you may commit, whether intentional or inadvertent. Copyright violations may include posting photographs, audio, or video of people or things that are not you or your personal property, or for which you do not have express written permission to distribute.
6. Be aware that you are personally liable for any violations of other students' privacy rights, including violation of rights protected by state and federal privacy laws.
7. Understand that malicious use of online networks, including derogatory language or comments about any person, demeaning statements about, or threats to any third party, incriminating photographs or statements that depict private behavior, hazing, sexual harassment, vandalism, stalking, underage drinking, illegal drug use, or other inappropriate behavior will be subject to investigation and possible sanctions by the Freedom School District and/or the Police Department.
8. Students that post material that is offensive and/or detrimental to teammates, coaches, officials, opponents, or any other person associated with the athletic programs are subject to discipline including but suspensions and removal from athletic teams. **THINK BEFORE YOU POST**
9. Consider these recommended practices:
   • Profile/privacy settings are set to only friends.
   • Contact information is set to only friends.
   • Be selective in what information your friends can share about you.
   • Even though pictures are included in "profile information," be very careful of what types of pictures you place on a social networking site.
   • Be mindful of what pictures you are allowing to be taken that can be posted by friends.

M.R.S.A. Prevention

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) infections, once seen primarily in hospital settings among older and sicker patients, have become increasingly common in recent years in community settings among healthy adults and children, including athletes who are in close contact with one another and share athletic equipment and locker room facilities. Anywhere from 20% to 50% of the general population may have staph bacteria present in or on their body without causing illness, and some proportion of these staph are antibiotic-resistant. Any staph can penetrate the skin and cause infection, which may result in redness, warmth, pimples or boils, sometimes with or without puss. Staph bacteria are spread mainly by skin-to-skin contact, especially via openings in the skin such as cuts, wounds or abrasions; by direct contact with contaminated items or surfaces; and also may result from poor hygiene.

Health officials recommend the following precautions to reduce the risk of MRSA infections:

- Wash hands with soap and warm running water frequently, especially after contact with nose secretions and drainage from skin openings.
- Skin openings -- cuts, wounds or abrasions -- should be covered at all times with clean, dry bandages.
- Dispose of used bandages in a manner so others don't have contact with infectious drainage.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors and clothing that may have come in contact with an infected wound.
- Wash soiled linens and clothing in hot water and detergent. Drying in a hot dryer is better than air-drying.
- Clean potentially contaminated surfaces with a commercial disinfectant or a bleach-water solution -- ¼ cup of household bleach to one gallon of water.

ImPACT Concussion Management System

In the interest of safety for student athletes, the Freedom School District has invested in the UPMC ImPACT Concussion Management System. This program helps assist medical personnel in making safe return to play decisions following a concussion. Students will take a Baseline Exam every (2) two years. It is recommended that students entering grades 7-9-11 take the Baseline Exam. Students must have an exam on file that was administered within 2 years.

Following a suspected concussion, the athlete will undergo a second evaluation identical to the first. Baseline data from the initial evaluation (along with current injury symptoms) will serve as a direct comparison to determine the athlete's recovery from injury. At that time, the injured athlete should see a certified medical doctor trained in reading the specific results of this test. From there a diagnosis can be rendered.

Parents' Guide for Head Injuries

The following is informational only and parents should contact a doctor for specific directions and not rely solely on the information contained in the guide.

Any head, face, neck or jaw injury has the potential to become dangerous if not treated properly. The danger may not appear immediately so the first 24 hours is vital to determine possible severity. The following is offered to help guide parents during the time after their child's head injury. These guidelines are not meant as, and should not be used as substitutes for competent medical care.

1. Awaken the athlete every two hours to check for these symptoms and his/her general mental clarity.

2. Administer NO medication during the first 24 hours, including aspirin, Tylenol or Advil unless they are prescribed by a physician.

3. Allow only clear fluids, avoid excessive eating or drinking.

4. If any of the following occur, seek medical assistance immediately:
   a. Severe or increasing headaches
   b. Dizziness
   c. Inability to arouse or awaken the athlete
   d. Pupils of unequal size
   e. Nausea or vomiting
   f. Tingling, numbness or lack of control in arms or legs
   g. Blurred or double vision
   h. Mental confusion
   i. Clear drainage from the ears of nose
   j. Breathing difficulties

Collegiate Athletic Options (Levels of Play)

1. **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)**

   NCAA Division I. This is the highest level of play and they offer the most scholarships. These are the large schools with large student populations.

   NCAA Division II. Smaller specialty schools that provide scholarships as well as financial aid grants.

   NCAA Division III. No athletic scholarships but many high school graduates receive academic scholarships, financial aid, grants, and jobs on campus, also known as work-study programs.

2. **National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)**

   NAIA can give athletic scholarships as well as other benefits to enable a player to attend school.

3. **National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)**

   Financial aid is provided for the cost of tuition and books. If you are not ready physically or mentally to attend a 4-year college, then a junior college that offers athletic programs may be the answer.

Recruiting Tips

1. Determine if you are good enough to participate at the collegiate level. Build support groups that can give you good sound advice that would consist of your parents, coaches, principals, Athletic Director, and community members that have participated in collegiate athletics that have seen you play.

2. Once you have set your goals for collegiate athletics, begin to market yourself. You can only be offered a college scholarship if a college coach or scout has an opportunity to see you play. This is where you need to begin to market yourself to the colleges of your choice.

    a. Go to the guidance office, athletic office, or the Internet and obtain addresses of the colleges that you would be interested in.
    b. Prepare a letter to be sent to the college coaches.
    c. Prepare a resume of your career.
    d. Prepare a highlight tape and game tape to send with the resume (be sure to label your game tape with the appropriate information – name, address, school name, etc.).

3. Send the information before your senior season.

4. The majority of the colleges will send you a questionnaire; complete it and return it to the colleges immediately.

5. If you are an outstanding student, you will have opportunities to obtain athletic and academic scholarships. Many of the top academic universities have stringent minimum academic entrance requirements where many athletes cannot qualify. Talk with your guidance counselor/coach to obtain the names of academic universities in which you may obtain an athletic scholarship. This is a great opportunity for you if you are an outstanding student.

6. It is suggested that you attend a summer camp to increase your chances of being noticed. You will have the opportunity to perform in front of the college coaching staff for four or five days. Your high school coach or the Athletic Director can help you obtain information for summer camps.

7. If all else fails, you have the opportunity to walk on at the college of your choice and have the chance to earn a college scholarship later. It is very feasible to walk on a team and earn a partial or full scholarship for your remaining years if you become a starter.

College coaches are looking for all around athletic ability first. They look for coordination, speed, jumping ability, size, and strength. College coaches recognize that superior all-around athletes are usually good at a variety of sports. Just by participating in different sports, you are showing scouts that you have some unique gifts – unique because most young athletes can barely excel at one sport, much less two or three. If you are a standout at two or three sports, then you are a special talent.

NCAA Eligibility Center and Guide for College-Bound Student Athletes

A guide for college-bound student athletes and their parents may be obtained by logging on to http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/CBSA15.pdf or by calling the Athletic Office for a printed copy.

Find out if you are on track to meet academic eligibility and core-course requirements. See what the graduation rate of the athletic program is and that the athletes in your sport are at the colleges in which you are interested. Ask what academic support services are available and how academic progress is tracked.

Recruiting: What Do I Need To Do?

- **Grade 9**
  - Verify with your high school guidance counselor and the online core-course listing to make sure you are on track.
  - Start identifying field of study to pursue and schools of potential interest.

- **Grade 10**
  - Verify with your high school guidance counselor and the online core-course listing to make sure you are on track.
  - Talk with your High School Coach and other coaches to determine your highest potential level of play in college.
  - Begin composing a personal bio form and highlight film.

- **Grade 11**
  - Register with the eligibility center.
  - Make sure you are still on course to meet core-course requirements (verify you have the correct number of core courses and that the core courses are on your high school's 48-H with the eligibility center).
  - After your junior year, have your high school guidance counselor send a copy of your transcript. If you have attended any other high schools, make sure a transcript is sent to the eligibility center from each high school.
  - When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility center (the code is "9999").
  - Begin your amateurism questionnaire.
  - Update personal bio form and highlight film. Send to potential schools of interest.
  - Contact coaches at schools you are interested in.

- **Grade 12**
  - When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility center (the code is "9999").
  - Complete amateurism questionnaire and sign the final authorization signature online on or after April 1 if you are expecting to enroll in college in the fall semester. (If you are expecting to enroll for spring semester, sign the final authorization signature on or after October 1 of the year prior to enrollment.)
  - Have your high school guidance counselor send a final transcript with proof of graduation to the eligibility center.
  - Finalize personal bio form and highlight film. Send to schools still of interest.
  - Continue to contact coaches from schools of interest.

PARENTS

Positive Athletic Parenting

- Be a positive motivator.
- Do not degrade the coach or their staff; we all make mistakes. Instead emphasize loyalty and perseverance, and use it as a teaching moment.
- Encourage your child to play for the enjoyment of the experience.
- Do not focus on personal statistics, game scores, or athletic scholarships.
- Encourage participation in several sports. Specialization leads to decreased enjoyment/burnout.
- Be realistic about your child's abilities.
- Be a good role model for your child.
- Encourage good decision making.
- Talk to your child on a daily basis.

Parent/Coach Relationship

Communication/Information Coaches Should Provide to Parents:

- Coach's expectations of players and their parents.
- Locations and times of all practices and contests.
- Team requirements (i.e. special equipment, off-season conditioning, etc.).
- Team rules and guidelines.
- Lettering requirements.
- Disciplinary procedures.
- Information regarding procedures to contact coaches.

Communication / Information Parents Should Provide to Coaches:

- Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.
- Specific concerns in regard to the coach's expectations of their child.
- Information regarding student injuries and medical conditions.

Appropriate Concerns for Parents to Discuss with Coaches:

- Treatment of their child.
- Ways to help their child improve.
- Concerns about their child's behavior.

Concerns NOT Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches:

- Playing time / positions / assignments.
- Team strategy.
- Play calling.
- Other student athletes.

POOR BEHAVIOR TOWARD OFFICIALS, COACHES, and PLAYERS at athletic contests will result in loss of privileges to attend Freedom Athletic Events.

Freedom Area Athletics PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

All parents and guardians shall pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for their child participating in activities of the Freedom Area School District by following this CODE OF CONDUCT.

Attending and watching interscholastic sports is a privilege not a right. Failure to behave in an appropriate manner at athletic contests may result in ejection from events and possible suspensions for a period of time to be determined by district officials. Spectators asked to leave may also be required to complete PIAA sportsmanship courses.

OTHER SPECTATORS – Parents agree to respect other fans and not engage in any verbal or physical confrontations. Parents should be role models for their children, display sportsmanship, and conduct themselves with dignity as a member of the Freedom Athletic Community.

DISTRICT PROPERTY AND POLICIES – Parents agree to respect district property and abide by all district policies including but not limited to purchasing tickets for events with admission fees and the use of alcohol and drugs including tobacco while on school grounds.

OPPOSING PLAYERS AND COACHES – Parents agree to display proper sportsmanship and avoid any taunting or intimidating of opposing players or coaches.

COACHING STAFFS – Parents agree not to engage in any debate of any kind with coaches during a time period from 2 hours before the game until the morning after the game. Parents understand that coaches are not obligated to discuss issues of playing time or positioning. Parents will not question coaches about any particular play calls or game strategies. It is suggested that parents contact the Head Coach of the team and schedule an appointment to discuss any concerns specific to their son/daughter. If desired, the parent or coach may request that the Athletic Director be present while the concerns are discussed. Any yelling at or public confrontation of any coach will not be tolerated. This includes both home and away events. Parents may communicate with coaches via telephone or electronic communication, however all communication must be handled in a calm and civilized manner. Any threatening or derogatory messages will be considered a violation of this code of conduct.

OFFICIALS – The adults that officiate our games are neutral parties who are trained in the sport that they preside over. While parents and fans may disagree with an official's call or judgment from time to time, parents do not have the right to yell at or criticize any working official during our games.

BOOSTER GROUPS – Parents are asked to become involved with respective Booster Groups. Booster Groups work in conjunction with the coaches to provide support for the teams. Booster Groups are not a part of the district, but parents are asked to conduct themselves in a manner aligned with this same CODE OF CONDUCT.

SOCIAL MEDIA – Parents will refrain from posting material that may be deemed negative or detrimental to the Freedom Athletic Program and its teams, coaches, players, opponents, and all others associated with the athletic contests that our teams participate in.

ENFORCEMENT – Any time district personnel or hired security feel that a parent or fan is in violation of any of the above, the person(s) involved may be removed from the facility depending on the severity and cooperativeness of the person(s) involved. Depending on the severity or repetitive nature, the district reserves the right to issue a verbal or written warning or ban individuals from attending events.

CHAIN OF COMMAND – The chain of command to handle disagreements or issues is as follows:

1) **Discussion with Coach**
2) **Discussion with Athletic Director**
3) **Discussion with School Principal**
4) **Discussion with Superintendent of Schools**
5) **Request discussion with Board of Education**

By signing below I certify that I have read, understand, and will comply with the Freedom Area Athletic Parent Code of Conduct. I understand that interscholastic athletics are designed to teach student-athletes sportsmanship and team work. I promise to let the Players Play, the Coaches Coach, and the Officials Officiate so that all fans can enjoy the contests.

_____ _____

Student – Athlete's Name (Please Print) **Date**

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian #1 (Please Sign) **Parent/Guardian #2 (Please Sign)**

THIS FORM MUST BE SIGNED BY ALL PARENTS/GUARDIANS LISTED ON THE STUDENT'S SCHOOL RECORD FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR

Acknowledgement

Player Name_____

Grade_____

Sport_____

Parent Name_____

Parents Name_____

We have reviewed the Freedom Parent-Student Athletic Handbook and acknowledge the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures set forth therein. We pledge to do our best to adhere to the set guidelines established to build and maintain a safe and enjoyable athletic program for the students within the Freedom Area School District.

Player Signature_____ **Date**_____

Parent Signature_____ **Date**_____

Parent Signature_____ **Date**_____