

Football Manual



SY26



Introduction

Please review the included Football Manual document for key program information, requirements, and rules and regulations as it relates to the season, to the Chicago Public League (CPL), and to the Illinois High School Association ([IHSA Football](#)).

Non-compliance with any of the following information may result in the forfeiture of coaches' season stipend.

Any and all questions can be directed to the Athletic Program Administrator (APA) listed below.

Athletic Program Administrators:

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Assignor of Officials:

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OSA Mission Statement

The Office of Sports Administration (OSA) oversees the equitable implementation of sports programs across all elementary schools and high schools within the Chicago Public School District (CPS) and Chicago Public League (CPL). Through effective sports policy creation and program management, OSA helps create an environment for schools to provide essential athletic and academic development for each student-athlete. It is the goal of OSA to promote sportsmanship, teamwork, integrity and a sense of community as we prepare students for the next level in athletics and in life. Our students will be able to learn the importance of **Academic, Athletic, and Social Awareness** as they advance through our program and become leaders in their communities.



League Governance & Key Links

The official rules of the National Federation of High Schools Association shall govern all Public League competitions. Any exceptions to these rules are listed in these Terms and Conditions.

The Chicago Public League is governed by the [Chicago Public Schools Athletics Constitution and By-laws](#). All coaches must read this document in order to be informed about CPL policies, procedures and expectations.

Whereas the specific Terms and Conditions are listed in this document, the following links that make up the [General Chicago Public League Rules](#), is an appendix to this document which lists issues of general governance, coach expectations, roster management/vertical movement/eligibility and eligibility certificates, and other issues of league contest management.

The [2025 Football Resource Sheet](#) contains other logistical information regarding the season for coaches and athletic directors, including the coaches' directory.

Calendar

[Football Calendar](#)

Team Approval (Protocols and Expectations)

Team Approvals consist in a series of tasks that must be completed by the Athletic Director and Head Coach from each team. Failure to complete the following tasks will result in the resignation of coaching stipends or delayed payments.

Anticipated team approval will be reflected in the [Inventory](#). It is the responsibility of the school Athletic Director (assisted by the head coach) to communicate with the appropriate Athletic Program Coordinator regarding the confirmation of team Approval.

- A. Teams must have at least 22 student-athletes registered per team and submit a hard copy [Central Office Record Sheet](#) to the Office of Sports Administration by the specified deadline.
- B. Teams must compete in all regular-season games. *(2 forfeits in a season results in loss of team approval)*
 1. **In order to play in your Week #1 contest:**
 - a. Schools must have 15 players that have met the practice requirement (through attestation) listed as Eligible in the ASPEN program. This is a week #1 concession as all approved programs must have 22 "eligible" players by the evening of **Monday, August 25**, (audit will be Tuesday AM). Teams unable to meet this requirement will be subject to forfeiting their contest.
 2. **In order to play in your Week #2 contest:**
 - a. Schools must have 22 players that have met the practice requirement (through attestation) listed as Eligible in the ASPEN program. By the evening of **Tuesday, September 2**, (audit will be Wednesday AM) teams unable to meet this requirement will be subject to forfeiting the contest and the rest of the season.



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Schools that wish to field new teams for the 2025 season will need to fill out the [School Request to Add a Sport/Level](#) and contact the sport APA for confirmation of anticipated participation.

Host Arrangements (CPS Stadium Protocols for Home & Away Teams)

A. Pre-Event Etiquette and Considerations

1. Schools scheduled to play each other in varsity football games should reach out to each other prior to game day to confirm/discuss additional game logistics (Expected attendance, pre-sale tickets, halftime activities, etc.). This conversation should take place on Monday during each week of the season
2. When a non-CPS school is traveling from out of town to play in the stadium, the host school should send a “visitor packet” to the visiting school containing information and directions regarding the Stadium and game logistics. Reach out to the school to learn of any special requests.
3. All plans for pre-game rituals using the field (special player entrances, etc.) or halftime performances must be discussed with the school athletic director for games hosted at schools, or the [Stadium Monitor](#) for games hosted in CPS municipal stadiums prior to kickoff so the proper accommodations can be made.
4. Review your Emergency Management Plans ([OSA Template](#))
5. Stadium Emergency Action Plans are available in the stadium office or with stadium staff.

B. Digital Ticketing - GoFan Information - *(Link to be included)*

1. Tickets for all football games must be purchased/acquired through the GoFan Platform.
2. *Admission* - Tickets at all stadiums and for all League contests are \$8.00 and \$5.00 for students (Elementary School and High School with an ID). There is no admission fee for children under 5 years of age.
3. Chicago Public League Football coaches have free admission to football games (using a GoFan Ticket when available). Players dressed in a jersey accompanied by the coach will also be admitted for free.

C. Game Operation

1. *Point Person* - Each school should identify a point person (school administrator) to CPS Security and the [Stadium Monitor](#) (in CPS Stadiums). At any time during the contest, this point person may be contacted to help resolve miscellaneous issues.
2. *Crowd Control* - CPS Security (Red Jackets) will be present at each varsity football game in the stadiums. All participants and spectators are subject to electronic wand and a bag search. In addition to the Red Jackets, **schools are strongly encouraged to provide school-based security/crowd control** to accompany the students from your school.

D. CPS Stadium Contest Workers

Position	Procurement	Responsible for Payment	Price	Notes
Stadium Monitor	OSA	N/A		
Announcer	OSA	OSA		
Clock Operator	OSA	OSA		



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Officials	OSA	OSA when the home team is a traditional school for League contests. Charter schools must always pay the officials when they are the home team	\$120	5 Officials are assigned to every game.
Chain Crew	Home Team	Home Team - 3 individuals - if you formally hire someone. Normally the home teams gets volunteers		Preferably adults
Ticket Takers	Home Team	Home Team discretion		

E. Concessions

1. Concessions - CPS-sponsored concessions stands will not be open in the stadiums. **Schools are prohibited from selling their own concession food in the CPS municipal stadiums.**

F. Team Entry to the Stadium - The stadiums will formally open for student-athletes (including cheerleaders) when CPS security arrives at the gates, or 75 minutes prior to the start of the first contest if accompanied by their coach(es) or the athletic director/principal. Students that arrive early to stadium contests apart from the team bus, etc. will not be admitted inside the stadium unless CPS security is present.

G. Spirit Coaches

1. **Spirit Coaches** must also submit a printed copy of the eligibility certificate to the Stadium Monitor.

H. Locker Rooms

1. The municipal facilities will have multiple games on every weekend during the season. Unless you are scheduled for the first game of the day, you may not have immediate access to the locker room as soon as you arrive at the stadium. You will not be allowed into the locker room until the previous team completely vacates (Stadium security will give each team up to 15 minutes after the post-game handshake to clear the locker room). However, the teams will be hustled off of the playing field into the locker rooms as soon as possible to allow for specialists from the upcoming game to start their warm-up on the field. Because the length of the games is hard to predict, please take this into account when planning your pre-game routine. Stadium staff will be responsible for securing the locker room during the game.

I. Field Access

1. Each team will be allowed at least 30 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes of warm-up on the game field. The actual warm-up time will depend on if, for some reason, the previous game goes into overtime or if there is some other delay we will agree upon an alternative start time a few minutes later if necessary. As the game clock starts to tick 60 minutes prior to kickoff, according to the IHSA manual, the officials will call for the captains with 10 minutes remaining. With 5 minutes on the clock, both teams should be on the field for the National Anthem. Teams are required to line up on their sideline shoulder to shoulder for the anthem, including all coaches and support staff.
 - a. *It is considered disrespectful and inappropriate to a) miss the national anthem by remaining in the locker room, b) have team displays or excessive sideline movement prior to the conclusion of the rendition. Please refrain from these actions.*
2. For the most part, the field will be divided in half with each team warming up on the right side of the field to the team bench facing the field. If specialists need more than 50 yards to kick, the warm-up areas will be extended another 10 yards, width to the hash, in front of the prospective benches upon request to the Stadium Monitor.

J. Contest Logistics

1. Coaches that also serve as military and/or police officers that ordinarily carry firearms must remove them and refrain from bringing them into the stadium.



K. Miscellaneous Field Concerns

1. The consumption of tobacco is prohibited in all CPS Municipal Stadiums and surrounding grounds. Seeds may not be consumed and are prohibited from all CPS Municipal Stadiums and surrounding grounds.
2. Schools must refrain from dumping Gatorade on coaches or team personnel as a post-game celebration. Water is permissible.
3. Individuals who are not dressed in attire distinguishing them as coaches must obtain a sideline pass from the Stadium Monitor or they will be removed from the field. All non-competing team members must wear a jersey if a player, or school paraphernalia if a team manager, etc. for access to the sideline. This includes school photographers.
4. Students or children who are not determined to be game/team workers are prohibited from the sidelines.
5. Two authorized (designated) staff members from the participating schools, and coaches who are scouting the games will be the only entities allowed to film contests. All other entities must acquire permission prior to the contest from the Office of Sports Administration. Please direct all inquiries to the Stadium Monitor before the game to eliminate potential problems regarding this situation.

L. The use of drones is prohibited in all CPS Municipal Stadiums (except when pre-approved for TV broadcasts).

M. Tailgating at CPS Municipal Stadiums is not endorsed or allowed by the Office of Sports Administration.

N. Signage

1. Individual schools do not have rights to display signage inside of the stadiums. CPS Stadium Personnel reserves the right to remove any and all signs brought by schools, especially advertisements, whether or not the signs were contracted. All issues of signage and/or sponsorship must be negotiated by OSA. An individual school should not enter a contract with a potential sponsor offering stadium availability without first contacting and receiving permission from OSA.

O. Post-Game Protocols

1. The stadiums will close 30 minutes after the conclusion of the last contest. Access to the stadium will be restricted at this time. School personnel (coaches, athletic directors) must ensure that all athletes have transportation back to the school from the stadium and remain with student athletes waiting for school-approved transportation.
 - a. In non-emergency situations, at the stadium, a parent can request to take their child from the site upon obtaining permission from school personnel *prior to the start of the contest*. At the conclusion of the contest, the parent must complete and submit the [Student Athlete Dismissal](#) form to the head coach. Otherwise, team members are required to travel as a team back to the school using a school-sponsored/provided method of transportation.
 - b. Parent/Guardian must show photo identification and be verified as being listed on the student's sports contact form by the head coach.

Coach Expectations

- A. Coaches are expected to review the [Chicago Public League Coaches' Code of Conduct and General Expectations](#)
- B. Coaches must complete IHSA and CPS certification requirements before coaching student-athletes. [Certifications for all coaches](#) - Note, all coaches must be at least 21 years old.
- C. All coaches (paid or volunteer) must register with OSA as coaches of record for the team/level for which they are working through the [CPL High School Coach Registration Form](#).
- D. The Chicago Public League requires all of its students, officials, coaches, spectators, and school staff to promote sportsmanship before, during and after every game. Offensive language, including profanity and/or derogatory or intimidating remarks of any kind directed at officials, event staff, student-athletes, coaches or team representatives, will not be tolerated. In order for sportsmanship to prevail, all coaches, students, staff, and spectators must display respect and civility in an effort to enthusiastically support our student-athletes to create a safe and inclusive environment. [Sportsmanship Guidelines](#).



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- E. The coaching staff is expected to organize and prepare athletes through consistent practices and workouts specifically designed to enhance their performance.
- F. The coaching staff is responsible for the following Game Management for every contest:
 1. Confirm contest logistics with the opposing coach.
 2. Preparing a printout (preferably laminated) of emergency contact information identified for each student (name and jersey number) for quick reference by medical personnel. *This must be presented to CPS Stadium management personnel for all games in CPS municipal stadiums.*
 3. Possessing an ASPEN Generated Eligibility Certificate. *Only students listed on this certificate are eligible to participate in that contest.*
 4. Possessing an accurate numerical roster identifying student-athletes by name and jersey number for PA announcer for in-game use coordinated by OSA/APA event staff.
 5. Reporting the score of the game to the Office of Sports Administration designated score reporting mechanism within 24 hours of the contest.
 6. Rating the IHSA officials assigned to the contest through the IHSA Schools Center. It is highly recommended to wait 12 hrs after the game before submitting an official's rating report. *In addition to reporting the score and schedule (Conference and Non-conference Games), the Head Coach is responsible for talking with officials after their game to confirm the names of all yellow/red carded players.*
 7. Refraining from using tobacco products, drinking alcoholic beverages, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or any illegal substance at any time while performing their coaching duties.

Playing Regulations

- A. Coaching Stipends
 1. In order for coaches to receive a stipend, the team must be approved by the end of the season by the Athletic Program Administrator (APA) from the Office of Sports Administration (OSA).
 2. A program will lose team approval after the forfeiture of 2 (two) games due to the lack of participants.
 3. The football staff sponsored by OSA consists of: Head Coach, Assistant Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Junior Varsity Head Coach, Junior Varsity Assistant Coach, Freshman Head Coach.
 - a. A team can be granted an additional varsity assistant coach with 30+ eligible players on the team listed in ASPEN.
 4. A minimum of 22 students listed as eligible on the ASPEN roster is required for varsity team approval.
 5. A minimum of 20 distinct students listed as eligible on the ASPEN roster is required for JV and Frosh team approval.
 6. OSA Staff and Game Officials reserve the right to forfeit games on game day with teams with less than 16 players dressed and ready to participate.
- B. Games and Equipment
 1. Varsity games consist of 4 (four) twelve-minute quarters
 2. JV games consist of 4 (four) ten-minute quarters
 3. Frosh games consist of 4 (four) eight-minute quarters
 4. [Uniform Requirements](#)
 5. [Legal Footballs](#) - The ball used for IHSA playoffs is the Wilson GST WTF 1003
- C. General League Play
 1. [IHSA Pre-Season Scrimmage Protocol](#)
 2. Schedules provided by the Office of Sports Administration: Athletic Program Administrator.
 - a. Only the OSA Athletic Program Administrator can reschedule a contest/game.
 3. Each school will provide its team's football equipment (i.e. helmets, shoulder pads, uniforms, and balls).



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- a. No one can share equipment (i.e. helmets, shoulder pads, leg pads, uniforms, etc).
- 4. Each team must willingly exchange game film via recording service (i.e. HUDL, MaxPreps, or Google Drive).
 - a. [Football Game Tape Procedures \(Private Link\)](#)
- 5. The home team must report game results via the CPL Activity Scheduler (These results will post to MaxPreps).
- 6. OSA assumes game payment for league game officials and the trainer/paramedic for CPS District Managed Schools and the scorekeeper. *Charter Schools must assume payment of officials for games when determined to be the home team.*

Protocols For League Play

- A. Head Coaches should work with the school athletic director to facilitate communication with the opposing team prior to the contest to confirm miscellaneous game details.
- B. The home team must provide a 3-person chain crew for games.
- C. If players designated on the Junior Varsity team are participating in a Varsity contest, the team must provide eligibility certificates for both levels, as well as inclusion of the Junior Varsity players on the numerical roster.
- D. Contests will only be canceled prior to the game by OSA, or at the game by game officials or the OSA stadium manager.
 - 1. Contact the OSA football contact leads in cases of inclement weather or extraordinary circumstances. Football game rescheduling must be done on the premises of the game, including head coaches, the OSA representative and the head official.
- E. Teams can play a maximum of 9 games, excluding the Prep Bowl and IHSA Series.
- F. Teams cannot play more than one game per calendar week.
- G. A *scrimmage* against another school is considered an interscholastic contest/game and is governed by the formal rules of the game.

Officials

OSA designates officials who are charged with assigning referees for each contest. OSA will work in conjunction with these assignors for all conference and playoff game assignments, as well as non-conference games played in CPS venues.

- A. Official Fees for non-league games must be paid through the school designated as the Home team.
- B. Official Fees must be paid by the Charter school when designated as the Home team.

	Varsity	Varsity Playoff	JV	Frosh
Number of Game Officials	5	5/7	4	3
Fees	\$120.00 each	\$120.00 each for Semi and Final	\$70.00 Each	\$60.00 Each

Officials will be paid through Arbiter and confirmed for payment by the assignor.

- C. No official is permitted to work a match in which one of the teams is from the school which he or she is employed, coached in the past, or officiate any of the Varsity playoffs.



- D. The coach shall rate and evaluate each official on the official eligibility certificate and on-line to the IHSA (www.ihsa.org – see Athletic Director for assistance) after each match. [IHSA Schools Center](#)
- E. Notify OSA if one or more officials fail to appear at game.
- F. Suspended Game - If a game is suspended, coaches, officials, and OSA representatives will determine next steps in making a final decision.

Student Eligibility

- A. A student is eligible to participate in a contest when listed as “Eligible” on an ASPEN-generated Eligibility certificate (or otherwise documented pertaining to Charter Schools).
 - 1. [Student-Athlete Eligibility](#)
 - 2. [Home School Student Eligibility](#)
 - 3. [Newcomer Student Eligibility](#)
 - 4. Students who have transferred to your school since the end of the previous season are ineligible for **interscholastic competition without a ruling from the Office of Sports Administration or the IHSA.**
- B. Competitive Levels
 - 1. Varsity and Junior Varsity teams shall consist of students in the first, second, third, or fourth year of attendance who will not reach their 20th birthday at any time during the sports season.
 - 2. For Sophomore competition, the student shall be eligible in the first or second year in attendance and shall not have reached the seventeenth (17th) birthday before September 1 of the current school year.
 - 3. For Freshmen competition, the student shall be eligible in the first year in attendance and shall not have reached the sixteenth (16th) birthday before September 1 of the current school year.
 - 4. Varsity and Junior Varsity players **must have separate** eligibility sheets.
 - 5. Sophomore level players **must have separate** eligibility sheets.
 - 6. Freshmen level players **must have separate** eligibility sheets.
- C. Vertical Movement
 - 1. Once a student appears on the ASPEN Central Office Record Sheet at a designated level, that student cannot participate in a contest on a lower level.
 - 2. Once a student listed on a lower level participated in a higher level, that student becomes designated on the higher level and cannot participate in lower level contests anymore.
 - 3. Students listed on the Junior Varsity or Sophomore level can participate in varsity level competitions and maintain lower level eligibility. Coaches must distinguish between varsity and JV players on ASPEN rosters. Students must not participate in more than what would constitute the number of game time reps in a single contest during a single competition week.
- D. While a member of a school team, a player shall not be allowed to represent any other organization in that sport during the official sport season. Cease non-school practice and competition by week 7 of the IHSA calendar
- E. Contest results can be protested according to [Article XI – Infractions and Protests of the Chicago Public Schools Athletics Bylaws](#) if there is some irregularity or infraction of the rules occurring during the contest.

League Structure & Conference Standings

- A. The League is divided into 3 (three) divisions: Red, White & Blue
 - 1. Red Division
 - a. Consists of 16 teams, each eligible for the IHSA Series and the CPL Championship



- b. Will play a 7-game league schedule with other teams in the Red Division determined by the scheduling formula.
- c. Teams will be ranked in the Division by won/loss record in league games.
- 2. White Division
 - a. Consists of 40 teams divided into 2 (two) Tier 1 conferences , and 4 (four) Tier 2 conferences. All teams in the Tier 1 conference are eligible for the IHSA Series. Tier 2 conference winners are eligible for the IHSA Series.
 - b. In 2023, the 2nd-place teams will crossover in Week #9 for an IHSA playoff berth. Teams will be ranked in the conference by won/loss record in conference games.
- 3. Blue Division
 - a. Consists of the remaining teams divided into 4 (four) conferences.
 - b. Teams will be ranked in the conference by won/loss record in conference games.
 - c. Teams in the Blue Division are ineligible for the IHSA Series.
- B. [2025 Chicago Public League Alignment](#)
- C. The official score of a forfeited game is 1-0, but for CPL tiebreaker purposes, points allowed/point differential for the team charged with the forfeit will be (-) 21 points
- D. [League Standings and Tie-Breaker Policies](#)
- E. [Playoff Qualification and Promotion Relegation Between Divisions](#)

Chicago Public League Playoff & Championship Structure

Summary:

- A. The top 8 teams in the Red Division will play in the CPL Championship tournament and represent the Public League vs. the Chicago Catholic League in the Chicago Prep Bowl. This tournament will be conducted concurrently with the IHSA Series.
- B. The [CPL Championship/Prep Bowl Series](#) link lists the different scenarios and seeding options as the CPL tournament is conducted concurrently with the IHSA Series.

Media and Social Media Expectations

The Chicago Public League is proud to offer in-depth coverage of CPS teams and student-athletes across each sports season. In order to continue to publish these stories, the CPL Sports Communications team asks the following of all participating athletics staff members and student-athletes:

- A. Ensure all student media consent forms are signed via the standard CPS enrollment packet
- B. Ensure coaches and/or players are available as requested for pre- and post-game interviews
- C. Share accomplishments and milestones with the CPS Sports Communications team so your teams and athletes can be recognized
- D. Interact and follow all CPL athletics content via our website CPSAthletics.com or via [Social Media](#).

CPS Sports Communications Team:

- A. Communications Manager: Joey Gelman – jdgelman@cps.edu
- B. Communications Specialist: Dominic Scianna – dscianna@cps.edu
- C. Communications Specialist: Michael Wojtychiw – mmwojtychiw@cps.edu



Digital Citizenship Expectations

Being a good digital citizen means that athletics staff members and student-athletes are positively contributing to the digital space, respecting other people's views even if in disagreement, and reporting issues that disrupt a positive digital environment.

A digital footprint and reputation is left online when videos and pictures are uploaded, and when posts and comments are made on websites and social media. Athletics staff members and student-athletes must consider the temporary and/or permanent effect actions online can have for themselves and their community both in the digital space and in person.

That is why the Chicago Public League asks all athletics staff members, coaches, and student-athletes to engage in respectful and positive social media interaction. Should there be any inappropriate social media being created or shared in your community, please report it to CPS administration within your school building so the situation can be properly assessed and appropriate action can be taken as necessary to ensure a safe environment for all those involved.