

Water Polo Manual



SY26

Introduction

Please review the included Terms & Conditions 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).

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.

For communication purposes, all coaches must utilize their cps.edu email address to send and receive correspondence, as well as to obtain access to program documents. (Note: Coaches from charter schools must obtain a "cps.edu" email address. Each charter campus has a "Rapid Portal Sponsor" that can generate usernames for staff at that school. Refer to that individual to obtain an account.)

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New in SY2025–26— Updated Penalties for Team/Coach Participation Non-Compliance

The Chicago Public League (CPL) has updated rules and regulations for the 2025-26 sports seasons. CPL League schools will be accountable for penalties and possible financial consequences during the regular season and postseason during Illinois High School Association (IHSA) events for the following actions:

- **SPORTSMANSHIP:** Any unsportsmanlike conduct resulting in fighting and/or abusive language including taunting during interscholastic contests is unacceptable. Players/coaches ejected from contests by officials for unsportsmanlike conduct, including leaving the bench area during an altercation must serve a one game suspension per IHSA rule. Coaches/players that are subsequently identified as exhibiting unsportsmanlike conduct and/or incidents determined to be more egregious, will be subject to further discipline according to the [CPS Student Code of Conduct \(SCC\)](#) and the Un-Sportsmanship and Misconduct for Student-Athletes and Coaches protocol. The CPL holds sportsmanship as our highest priority and expects our administrators, coaches, and players to abide by these standards as a model to ensure respect, dignity, and the safety for CPL participants in all sports-related activities that we oversee.
- **IHSA PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**
 - **FAILURE TO WITHDRAW FROM IHSA CONTESTS BY THE DEADLINE:** CPL schools who agree to participate and/or host IHSA state series playoff competition and then default as a non-participant, will be assessed a \$500 fine to the school. This was recently approved by the IHSA Board of Directors at their June 2026 meeting.
 - **RATING OFFICIALS:** The IHSA's officiating sub-committee, in a move to highlight ways their governing body can jointly improve the experience for officials and the overall quality of officials, has mandated a minimum number of officials' ratings that each varsity head coach must submit during their specific sports season beginning in 2025-26 or face the following action:
 - Failure to submit ratings for officials will result in an IHSA member coach being put on notice in year one, with the potential for the coach to miss IHSA State Series playoff contests in year two and three. The IHSA will have more education on this process and reasoning throughout the upcoming school year with explanations on the numeric ratings thresholds in future communications to member schools.
 - Schools are strongly encouraged to submit their Top 15 list of officials for each sport in the IHSA Schools Center. Rating our CPL officials promotes the chances for them to have an opportunity to work IHSA Series contests.
 - **POSTSEASON SEEDING:** It is required that all coaches who enter their school in the IHSA state series must take part in the official seeding processes for your designated sport as guided by the IHSA.
- **NON-CONFERENCE CONTESTS SUBMISSION:** It is required that all non-conference contests be submitted to the Office of Sports Administration in the Activity Scheduler for proper accounting and game season limitations. Most importantly, contests submitted to the Activity Scheduler will populate to MaxPreps where applicable and according to our data agreement with these companies.

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I. 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). 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.

II. League Governance & Key Links

The official rules of the [National Federation of High Schools Association](#) (NFHS) shall govern all Chicago Public League competitions. The [Illinois High School Association](#) (IHSA) regulates the competition of interscholastic sports for the state of Illinois, providing guidelines via the [IHSA Constitution & By-Laws](#) and sport-specific [IHSA Terms & Conditions](#). Any exceptions to these rules are listed in the CPL Water Polo Terms & Conditions included herein.

The Chicago Public League is governed by the [Chicago Public Schools Athletics Constitution & By-Laws](#). All coaches **must read the CPS Athletics Constitution & By-Laws** in order to be informed of CPL policies, procedures, and expectations.

Whereas the Terms & Conditions specific to the sport season are listed in this document, the [Chicago Public League General Rules & Regulations](#) serves as an appendix to this document, incorporating topics of general governance, coach expectations, roster management, vertical movement, eligibility and eligibility certificates, as well as other issues of league contest management.

All sport-specific resources relevant to the season are included in the **SY2025–26 CPL Girls & Boys Water Polo Resource Sheet**.

III. Coach Expectations

Athletic coaches are expected to comply with each of the below governing rules and regulations.

Failure to comply with any of the following will result in forfeiture of the coaching stipend and a possible loss of approval for that team.

- NFHS Rules & Regulations (booklet provided by AD)
- [IHSA Constitution & By-Laws](#)
- [IHSA Water Polo Terms & Conditions 2025-26](#)
- [Chicago Public Schools Athletics Constitution & By-Laws](#)
- [Chicago Public League General Rules & Regulations](#)
- The CPL Terms & Conditions of the sport (included herein)

Additional sport-specific requirements include:

- All aquatic coaches must comply with the [CPS Aquatic Activity Safety Policy](#).
- All coaches must comply with the [CPS Student Travel Policy](#).
- Coaches are responsible for ensuring student-athlete eligibility compliance as outlined in the [CPS No-Pass, No-Play Policy](#). Coaches are **required** to have eligibility certificates in their possession for **each contest**, available for trade with the opposing team (whether printed or electronic). Weekly eligibility certificates, valid Monday through Sunday, must be generated by the school Athletic Director and must be kept on file at the school.
- Coaches are responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date rosters in Aspen (with the help of the school Athletic Director), in MaxPreps, and in the OSA Roster Upload Folder.
- **Coaches must submit all league competition results to OSA within 48 hours of the contest.** The **host team** is responsible for maintaining accurate scores and results for home meets throughout the season (see the [IHSA MaxPreps Reporting Procedures](#)).
- Coaches are expected to be aware of challenges that may impede their competition schedule, which may include but are not limited to: pool maintenance challenges, transportation challenges, athlete eligibility challenges, etc. As such, coaches are expected to proactively communicate and problem-solve these challenges in a productive manner. Should a challenge arise, rescheduling of league contests **must** be approved by the Athletic Program Administrator **before 12:00 pm on the day of competition**, as manageable. **Failure to properly notify the APA will result in a forfeit and payment to officials will be made by the school rather than by OSA.**
- Coaches are **prohibited** from serving simultaneously as coach and as an IHSA official during any one sport season. Similarly, **coaches can only receive one stipend for one interscholastic coach position within the same season**; participation with more than one sport/team will result in the forfeiture of the lesser stipend of the two.
- Finally, coaches are responsible for the following:
 - Attendance at the pre-season meeting, which also serves as an organizational meeting for necessary items for the upcoming season.
 - Knowing the proper etiquette of the sport and teaching this to all team members.
 - Organizing and preparing athletes through consistent practices and workouts specifically

designed to enhance their performance.

- o Seeing that all details pertaining to matches are properly arranged.
- o Being creative and productive in engaging and challenging student-athletes.
 - **Running up the score is NOT productive for your team nor for the opposing team and will be addressed as necessary.**

IV. Team Approval

Team approvals consist of 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 approvals will be reflected in the [HS Sport Inventory](#). It is the responsibility of the Athletic Director, assisted by the Head Coach, to communicate with the Athletic Program Administrator regarding confirmation of team approval.

In order for teams to be approved, coaches must account for the following:

- Teams must meet CPL roster minimums by the team roster deadline
- Teams must meet CPL contest requirements, including:
 - o Minimum number of contests according to the CPL Conference
 - o Completion of the CPL schedule
 - o Participation in all city-wide competitions for which they qualify
 - o Receipt of results within the required time frame
- Teams must report dates of all non-conference competitions and ensure they are reflected in their team schedules
- Teams that opt into the IHSA series must meet IHSA requirements, including but not limited to:
 - o Participation in IHSA-sponsored activities as scheduled
 - o Participation in the IHSA seeding process, where applicable
 - o Rating of officials according to IHSA ratings requirements and deadlines

Failure to comply with IHSA series requirements will result in consequences put forth by the Illinois High School Association as outlined in the IHSA Terms & Conditions of the sport.

V. CPL Calendar - Regular Season

Pre-Season Coaches' Meeting	Thursday, February 25, 2026
Start of Season (First Practice)	Monday, March 2, 2026
Team Roster Deadline (Aspen, , OSA Folder)	Friday, March 9, 2026
First Contest Allowed	Monday, March 9, 2026
CPL Regular Season Begins	Monday, March 9, 2026
CPL Regular Season Ends	Saturday, April 21, 2026

VI. CPL Calendar - Championship

CPL Season Summary Deadline	Wednesday, April 22 by 12:00 PM
CPL Championship Seed Voting Deadline	Thursday, April 23, 2025 by 12:00 PM
CPL Championship Tournament	Tuesday, April 28 - Friday, May 8, 2026

VII. IHSA State Series Calendar

IHSA Season Summary Deadline	Wednesday, April 29, 2026
IHSA Team Seeding Deadline	Thursday, April 30, 2026
IHSA Sectionals	Monday, May 11
IHSA State Finals	Thursday, May 21 - 23,

VIII. Team Regulations		
REGULATION	VARSITY	SOPHOMORE (Fresh/Soph)
Minimum Contest Requirements for Team Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-athlete roster minimum • Completion of league schedule (+ required total games below) • Participation in league playoffs (as eligible) • Receipt of results to MaxPreps (48 hours) 	
	Gold: 8 CPL games North & South: 10 CPL games	5 CPL games
IHSA Contest Limitations	30 dates, exclusive of the IHSA series and inclusive of CPL Championship tournament games	
Minimum Students on Roster	8	8
Maximum Students on Roster	25	25
Minimum Students Eligible on Competition Days	7	7
Vertical Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical movement of players is outlined in the CPL General Rules: Only Sophomore-level players can participate in Sophomore AND Varsity games. Varsity-level players must ONLY participate in Varsity games. • Sophomore-level student-athletes participating in vertical movement MUST appear on the Sophomore roster, eligibility, and CORS documents. Freshman and Sophomore student-athletes that appear on the Varsity roster, eligibility, and CORS documents can ONLY participate in Varsity competitions. • Vertical movement is ONLY allowed during the regular season. • Vertical movement players MUST be identified on team rosters before the start of the first game. • Sophomore-level student-athletes participating in vertical movement may play no more than six (6) quarters on a given day. Appearance in the game during a quarter for any amount of time constitutes a quarter played. • Individual schools are responsible for tracking the participation of their students, and exceeding the six quarter maximum will result in a forfeit. 	
Special Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the CPS Aquatic Activity Safety Policy, all activities in the pool must be conducted under the surveillance of a certified lifeguard whose only duty is active surveillance at a 50 swimmer to 1 lifeguard ratio. Coaches are prohibited at any time from simultaneously serving as 	

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	<p>coach and lifeguard in the pool. If coaches would like to utilize a student lifeguard, please contact the Office of Teaching & Learning for guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is CPS policy and the general stance of the Office of Sports Administration to allow student participation in a manner that aligns with students' identity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See the CPS LGBTQ+ Supportive Environments site for more information and guidelines ○ See the IHSA Transgender Policy for IHSA state series protocol ● It is the policy of the IHSA to provide students with disabilities full and equal opportunities to be integrated in IHSA interscholastic sports and activities whenever possible and pursuant to the IHSA Policy for Accommodations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A disability is an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. Disability includes, but is not limited to, physical impairments, mental impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, learning disabilities. ○ A request for an accommodation should be submitted prior to the start of the applicable athletic or activity season, or as soon as is practically possible in light of the accommodation being sought. A student, parent/guardian, or member school may request an accommodation by submitting the Request for Accommodation Form to the IHSA. ○ Coaches need to ensure that all Request for Accommodation paperwork is presented for officials at all contests.
<p>Stipend Forfeiture</p>	<p>Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the sport will result in forfeiture of the coaching stipend and possibly loss of recognition for that team.</p>

IX. League Regulations

<p>NFHS & IHSA Rules</p>	<p>In addition to the terms and conditions included herein, the official rules of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) and the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) shall govern Chicago Public League competitions.</p> <p>Any exceptions to these rules are listed in the CPL Water Polo Terms & Conditions included herein.</p> <p>Special Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NFHS Water Polo Rules Changes 2024-26 ● IHSA Rules Presentation Video
<p>Conference Alignment, League Schedule, & Coach Directory</p>	<p>SY2025-26 CPL Girls & Boys Water Polo Resource Sheet</p>

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Conference Format	Single Round Robin
Conference Standings	Conference standings shall be determined on the basis of games won and lost, as recorded in the MaxPreps website.
Tie-Breaker Rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head-to-head competition 2. Common opponent (record against) 3. Head-to-head goal differential (least amount given up)
Awards & Recognition	Conference champion plaques will be awarded to the team with the best win-loss record in each conference.
Promotion & Relegation of Teams	The promotion and relegation of teams will be determined by the Athletic Program Administrator.

X. League Competition

Official Start Time of Contests	5:00 PM – Boys teams compete first, followed by Girlss teams (this will alternate every year in accordance with the IHSA state series schedule)
Regular Season Dates	<p>Regular season competitions may begin on Monday, March 9, 2026.</p> <p>All league competitions must be completed by end of day on Monday, April 20, 2026 in preparation for the CPL Championship tournament.</p>
Contest Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prior to the game, coaches must provide numerical rosters and eligibility certificates (whether physically or digitally). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vertical movement players MUST be identified on team rosters before the start of the first game. ● Any Request for Accommodation forms must be presented to officials.
Equipment & Field of Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The KAP7 105 is the official game ball for Boys Water Polo. ● The KAP7 104 is the official game ball for Girls Water Polo. ● The field of play and accompanying field markers must meet NFHS rules and regulations. See the NFHS rulebook or IHSA pool diagram for more information.
Home Team & Site Requirements	In coordination with the Athletic Director, the home coach is required to coordinate all necessary details for successful hosting, including proactive communication to the visiting team(s).

	<p>The home coach is responsible for the following prior to the scheduled date of competition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authorized use of the pool ● Safety and suitability of the environment for competition, including staffing a lifeguard ● Assignment and payment of officials (via Assignor & Athletic Director) for any non-CPL games ● Necessary competition items, including game staff and suitable equipment including scoreboard, game and shot clocks, and game horns ● Arrangement of a faculty/staff member, student aide/leader/etc. (if not the home coach) to guide the visiting team upon arrival and departure <p>Note: The hosting coach is responsible for all players until they have left the competition site.</p> <p>The home coach is required to communicate with the opposing coach prior to the scheduled date of competition to confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparation for competition, as outlined above ● The date/starting time of the meet ● The levels of competition (Varsity and/or FR/SO) ● The entrance location to the school and accompaniment by faculty/staff member, student aide/leader/etc. ● Any other consideration that requires mutual consent <p>Any game that is not completed due to the failure of the home management to make proper arrangements shall be forfeited to the opponent.</p>
<p>Results Reporting</p>	<p>All scores must be submitted to the Office of Sports Administration AND MaxPreps. Results must be submitted within 48 hours following the completion of the competition.</p>
<p>Rescheduling Protocol</p>	<p>Any rescheduling of a league contest must be approved by the Athletic Program Administrator. The rescheduling of a league contest without approval may result in a forfeit and/or will not be recognized as a true league contest.</p> <p>Coaches are expected to be aware of challenges that may impede their competition schedule, which may include but are not limited to: pool maintenance challenges, transportation challenges, athlete eligibility challenges, etc. As such, coaches are expected to proactively communicate and problem-solve these challenges in a productive manner.</p>

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<p>Determination of a Forfeit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a team is running late, it is up to the traveling coach to communicate that with the hosting coach. A late arrival of 30 minutes or more without communication will result in a forfeit. • If a team does not show for a contest, the Athletic Program Administrator has the exclusive authority to determine whether the contest shall be recorded as a forfeit, as no contest, or if it must be rescheduled. • Two forfeits will result in the loss of approval/recognition for that team. Article X of the Chicago Public Schools Athletics Constitution & By-Laws addresses cancellations and forfeitures in full.
<p>Score of a Forfeit</p>	<p>5 - 0</p>

XI. Officials & Fees

REGULATION	VARSITY	SOPHOMORE (FR/SO)	CPL CHAMPIONSHIP
<p>Number of Officials</p>	<p>2</p>		
<p>Officials' Payment</p>	<p>\$70 per game</p>	<p>\$55 per game</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$75 as referee • \$150 for working the table across 4 games
<p>Assignment of Officials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all CPL contests, officials will be assigned by the IHSA Assignor of Officials. • For any non-conference, school-scheduled contests, coaches must contact the Athletic Program Administrator to assist with scheduling of officials. • All officials must be registered with the IHSA and officials scheduled for CPS-hosted non-CPL meets must possess a CPS IAMS number in order to be paid. Officials' information, including IHSA identification numbers and IAMS numbers, can be found in the Officials Directory in the season resource sheet. 		
<p>What if Officials Do Not Show?</p>	<p>If an official arrives late, or fails to attend, and both schools agree to play, the game shall stand as played. The Athletic Program Administrator must be notified IMMEDIATELY in these instances, including if only ONE official shows when TWO were scheduled.</p> <p>If the official assigned arrives in time to assume control of part of the game, she/he shall begin only at the termination of a quarter and be paid for the part of the game that he/she has worked.</p>		
<p>OSA League Costs</p>	<p>The Office of Sports Administration budget accounts for payment of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Polo Assignor of Officials • Officials for all league games (CPS vs. CPS) hosted at a CPS school • Awards for the following: 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conference Champion trophies ○ CPL Champion & CPL Runner-Up trophies ○ CPL Championship team medals ● CPL Championship Tournament Operations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Host venue (if outside CPS, and for quarterfinals onward) ○ Game referees ○ Game announcer (quarterfinals onward) ○ Table officials (quarterfinals onward) ○ Game equipment (quarterfinals onward)
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XII. CPL Championship Tournament

Tournament Structure	The CPL championship tournament will consist of a 12-slot single-elimination bracket seeded with the top 12 teams.
Distribution & Explanation of Seeds	<p>Seeding will be based on the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall CPL record (includes all games against CPL opponents in and out of teams' CPL conferences) 2. Conference record 3. Head-to-head record 4. Season summary submission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tie-breakers will be determined according to the least amount of goals given up against common opponents. ● Teams that are entered into the IHSA state series will have priority seeding and selection for CPL playoffs.
Awards & Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chicago Public League Championship shields will be awarded to the team champion and to the team runner-up. ● Team medals will be awarded to the team champion and to the team runner-up.

XIII. Additional Sport Notes

- While a member of a school team, a student-athlete shall not be allowed to represent any other organization in that sport during the official sport season.
- The IHSA offers state-wide [Awards & Recognition](#) in a variety of areas, including:
 - IHSA All-State Academic Team
 - IHSA Team Academic Award
 - IHSA Scholastic Recognition Program
 - Sportsmanship Banner Award
 - Student Section Showdown
 - NFHS Hall of Fame
 - NFHS Spirit of Sport Award

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- o NFHS Citation Award
- o NFHS Coaches of the Year
- o IHSA Officials of the Year
- o IHSA Distinguished Service Award

XIV. Media & 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 athletic staff and student-athletes:

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

CPS Sports Communications Team

- Communications Manager: Joey Gelman – jdgelman@cps.edu
- Communications Specialist: Dominic Scianna – dscianna@cps.edu
- Communications Specialist: Michael Wojtychiw – mmwojtichiw@cps.edu

XV. Digital Citizenship Expectations

Being a good digital citizen means that athletic staff 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. Athletic staff 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 athletic staff, 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.