

STUDENT-ATHLETE HANDBOOK
VERNON CENTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
2024-2025



Vernon Center Middle School
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message to Parents/Guardians	4
Message to Athletes	4
Core Values	5
Philosophy	5
Mission Statement	6
Goals	6
Purpose of the athletic policy	6
Violations of the code of conduct	7
Discipline procedures	7
Athletic Levels of Participation	7
Requirements for Participation	8
Academic Eligibility	8
School Attendance	9
School Suspension/Detention	9
Try-outs	9
Playing Time	10
Travel to and from Athletic Events	10
Awards	10
Captain's Practice	11
Care of Equipment and Locker Room	11
Conflicts in Activities	12
Dress Code	12
Insurance	12
Reporting Injuries	13
Sportsmanship	13
Vacation Policy	13
Student-Athlete Code of Conduct	13
Athlete Social Media Policy	14
Athletic Participation and Physical Education	14
Fighting in Interscholastic Sports	14
Gambling	14
Hazing, Bullying and Initiations	14

Performance Enhancing Drugs	15
Substance Use	15-19
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	19
Verbal or Physical Abuse of Officials or Coaches	19
Other Serious Violations	20
Athlete's Rights of Due Process	20
Parent Code of Conduct	20
Parent-Coach Communication Procedure	20
Communication Procedures	21
Summary	22
Non-Discrimination Policy	22
Resources	23

MESSAGES

To the Parent/Guardian

This material is presented to you because your son or daughter has indicated a desire to participate in interscholastic athletics, and you have expressed your willingness to permit them to participate. We believe that participation in sports provides a wealth of opportunities and experiences which help students grow and mature.

A student who elects to participate in athletics is voluntarily making a choice of self-discipline. This discipline involves following all rules and the code of conduct included in this handbook, as well as, the school's student handbook. Failure to comply with these rules of conduct will result in disciplinary action up to and including exclusion from interscholastic athletics.

It is the role of the department of athletics to make rules, policies, and procedures that govern the spirit of competition for the school. We hope that this publication clearly articulates those rules, policies, and procedures. It is expected that parents/guardians will review this publication thoroughly with your student athlete.

To the Student-Athlete

As a member of an interscholastic team of Vernon Center Middle School, you have inherited a wonderful tradition; a tradition you are challenged to uphold. We desire to be successful, and to honor our athletes, our school, and our community. When you wear the name and colors of your school, we expect that you are willing to assume the responsibilities that go with them.

1. **RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOUR SCHOOL:** By participating in athletics to the maximum of your ability, you are contributing to the positive reputation of your school. The student body, the community and other communities judge our school by your conduct and attitudes, both on and off the field. Because of this leadership role, you can contribute greatly to school spirit and community pride. Make VMCS proud of you, and our community proud of our school.
2. **RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHERS:** When you know in your heart that you have practiced to the best of your ability every day, and that you have played the game "all out," your teammates and family can be proud of you. Great teams are made of great teammates. Be the best teammate you can be. The younger students in the Vernon Public School system are also watching you. Set great examples for them.
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOURSELF:** You have a responsibility to broaden yourself and develop strength of character. You owe it to yourself to get the greatest possible good from your high school experiences. Your academic studies, your participation in other extracurricular activities, as well as, in sports prepare you for your life as an adult.

CORE VALUES

The Vernon Center Middle School Athletic Department has identified four core values that it holds in high regard. These values are our guiding principles for all coaches, athletes, and members of the athletic program. Our four core values are:

- **ACADEMICS**- Student athletes in our program are students first. Academic success is a priority for all members of our athletic teams.
- **COMMITMENT**- Student athletes will commit to their team. This may mean sacrificing other areas to fulfill the commitment they have made to their teammates, school, and community.
- **TEAMWORK**- Vernon Center Middle School student athletes will work together to achieve their goals. Nobody is bigger than the team, but everybody has a role on the team. Vernon Center Middle School student athletes will strive to be great teammates.
- **SPORTSMANSHIP**- VCMS student athletes, coaches, spectators, and other members of the athletic department will strive to show positive sportsmanship at all times.

PHILOSOPHY

The athletic program at Vernon Center Middle School is an integral part of the educational process. The purpose of the program is to stimulate students to develop their character, contribute to the community, build lifelong friendships, and refine life skills through sport.

To be of maximum effectiveness, the athletic program must be closely coordinated with the general instruction of the school. It must be such that the number of students accommodated, and the educational aims achieved, justify its inclusion in the overall educational program.

The interscholastic athletic program shall be conducted in accordance with existing Board of Education policies, rules and regulations. While the Board of Education takes great pride in success, it does not condone “winning at any cost” and discourages any and all pressures that might tend to neglect good sportsmanship and good mental health.

Athletics are offered to all students who are physically able to participate, who qualify under the eligibility requirements, and who adhere to the rules set forth by the state and local school officials. We believe that participation in athletics will contribute to the following:

- Improvement of the health, fitness, life skills, and general welfare of all individuals taking part in the program.
- Engaging a maximum number of students in our athletic program will improve overall school culture.
- Stimulating all participants to achieve credible academic progress and to make a contribution to the general educational program of the school.

Vernon Center Middle School is committed to working with student-athletes and parents by promoting meaningful academic and athletic programs for all student athletes. We look to develop student-athletes in the pursuit of excellence in education, sportsmanship, and citizenship through all levels of competition.

MISSION STATEMENT

The VCMS Department of Athletics aims to provide our student athletes a great opportunity to learn and grow as athletes and as young adults. We strive to provide our student athletes with necessary life skills acquired through the challenge of participating in athletics.

GOALS

- To encourage student-athletes to achieve success by maintaining academic eligibility and to keep athletics in proper perspective.
- To develop positive citizenship, honesty, emotional control, dependability, and respect for rules, property and authority.
- To provide an opportunity to exemplify and observe good sportsmanship.
- To maintain a high standard of credible and positive performance and conduct on and off the field.
- To teach and emphasize the fundamental skills of the various sports as a necessary ingredient in achieving team and individual success.
- To stress the importance of physical fitness, conditioning, health habits, and safety in athletics.
- To provide opportunities to develop lasting friendships with teammates and opponents.
- To teach athletes to work together as a cohesive unit in order to achieve a common goal.
- To provide a well-planned and well-balanced program of interscholastic athletics for as many secondary school students as reasonable.
- To provide high quality leadership for all athletic programs so as to exemplify to students a desired behavior to be developed from each athletic program.
- To provide opportunities for the development of a feeling of unity and belonging, team pride, school, spirit, teamwork and commitment.

PURPOSE OF ATHLETIC POLICY

Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege and not a right; therefore, reasonable rules and regulations related to athletics at Vernon Center Middle School have been established for all students who choose to participate.

The purpose of these athletic policies is to establish a code of discipline which will promote high ideals of sportsmanship and individual conduct in all areas of an athlete's life.

These rules and regulations reflect the positive athletic policy established by the administration and coaching staff of Vernon Center Middle School, and we invite all students who can play within these guidelines to be a part of our proud athletic program.

All head coaches will review the athletic department handbook along with team rules with their players at the start of each season. The student-athlete and the parent/guardian must sign a statement of acknowledgment of these rules and the willingness to follow the rules and regulations of the athletic

department and athletic team (FamilyID). This statement of acknowledgment and acceptance is required in order for an athlete to participate in the VCMS athletic program.

VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The student-athlete is expected to comply with existing school, athletic and team regulations. Failure to do so will result in discipline as deemed appropriate for the offense.

If an athlete violates rules, discipline up to and including suspension or dismissal from the athletic program may result. The precise period of suspension or dismissal will depend on the violation and be dealt with on a case by case basis.

School-related suspensions results in suspension from athletics as well. Repeated school violations may result in total suspension or dismissal from participation in any interscholastic athletic program. Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege reserved for those students who are in good standing academically and behaviorally. Athletes are expected to adhere at all times to the high standards set by both school and athletic department rules.

General athletic policies and consequences are covered in this handbook. Each individual sport may also have team rules. In some cases, these rules may be more stringent than the general athletic rules. The student-athlete is expected to abide by all team rules and understand the consequences for any violation of these identified rules.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

A coach may immediately discipline a player for violation of athletic department and/or team rules. If suspension and/or dismissal from a team is warranted, the coach will discuss the suspension and/or dismissal with the athletic director. All suspensions and/or dismissals will be documented by the coach and put on file with the athletic director. Any suspensions and/or dismissal from a team shall be determined by a meeting between the athlete and coach. If necessary, a follow-up meeting with the athletic director shall be called. The coach must submit a written statement of the violation and contact the parent/guardian to inform him/her of the suspension and/or dismissal.

Any athletic department suspension and/or dismissal makes an athlete ineligible for any awards or post-season honors for that sport season.

School administration reserves the right to suspend or dismiss a student athlete for violation of school rules. We advise that parents and students review the school's student handbook for school policies.

ATHLETIC LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS

The purpose of middle school athletics is to develop skills and provide a safe and fun experience for the students involved. Coaches will work to develop skills of each student athlete and prepare them for the next

level. While success on the scoreboard is a positive thing, it is not our main goal. Safety, athletic improvement, character development, and life skills are all prioritized above winning the game.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

Participation in athletics is a privilege that must be earned and not a right.

In order to participate in any sport at Rockville High School the following requirements must be met prior to participation:

1. Sports Health Assessment/Physical Form completed within the last 13 months by physician and submitted to and approved by the school Nurse (available on the Athletic Website)
2. Parent/Athletic Acknowledgement/Emergency Medical Form completed electronically (FamilyID).
3. Student and Parent Concussion Informed Consent Form signed electronically (FamilyID).
4. Student and Parent Sudden Cardiac Arrest Informed Consent Form signed electronically (FamilyID).
5. Parent Heat Related Illness Form signed electronically (FamilyID).
6. Parent mental health form signed electronically (FamilyID).
7. All academic eligibility requirements must be satisfied. (see board policy below)
8. Student-Athlete Handbook Contract signed electronically (FamilyID).
9. Students must be free from all obligations to other sports in which they may have previously participated. Prior to participating in any sport, students must return all school property, equipment or uniforms that may have been issued to them and resolve any outstanding disciplinary matters.

School's athletic website- <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/vernon-center-middle-school-home/athletics>

FamilyID- <https://www.familyid.com/organizations/rockville-high-school-vcms>

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

Student athletes are held to a higher academic standard than other students. School administration and the athletic department stress academics over athletics.

Student athletes' grades will be monitored throughout the season. If students are struggling they will be required to fill out progress reports with all of their teachers every two weeks during the season. These progress reports must be submitted to the coach to determine eligibility. If students are struggling we will do our best to provide support to improve their performance in the classroom. If a student continues to struggle they will be referred to school administration or athletic director for further determination of eligibility. It may be decided it is best for the student to not participate in athletics and solely focus on academics.

The school principal may declare a student ineligible if it is felt that the student is not taking care of his/her responsibilities both as a student and citizen of VCMS

NOTE: All students are academically eligible to begin the school year. Each coach should, at the initial day, review the rules with the entire squad.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Student athletes cannot play or practice on days that they are absent from class or school. If an athlete is too ill to attend class or school, they are too ill to practice or play. There are certain exceptions, such as funerals, and family-related matters etc. Barring emergencies, the coach and athletic director must have knowledge of these circumstances prior to the absence. The athlete may be allowed to participate with **prior** approval from the athletic director or school administration.

Student-athletes are expected to attend school during their season of play as well as the rest of the school year. Repeated absenteeism will not be tolerated. Repeated absenteeism will require a meeting with the student-athlete and the coach and/or athletic director to discuss the proper course of action.

Anyone who is excessively late to school cannot practice or play on that day. Exceptions to this rule are only allowed with the athletic director's prior approval and with a valid excuse signed by the athlete's parent or guardian.

Repeated tardiness will not be tolerated. If a student-athlete has a history of being late to school, her/his case will be forwarded to the athletic director/school administration for review and appropriate disciplinary action.

A student being dismissed from school must be present for half the school day to be eligible for participation in practices or games. A student is not eligible for a game if they are not in attendance on the day of a game, but they may play in a Saturday contest if they were absent on Friday, providing they obtain permission from the athletic director and/or the principal.

Athletes are expected to be at all practices. To be excused from practice, the athlete must see their coach prior to the practice and not send word by a teammate. Coaches will excuse athletes for extra help with studies, however, students should make an attempt to seek help when it least interferes with after-school activities. Repeated absence from practice for any reason will likely result in reduced playing time and potential dismissal from the team.

SCHOOL SUSPENSION (In-School or Out of School) /DETENTION

The athletic department supports all school rules and a student assigned an in-school or out-of-school suspension may not participate in or attend practices or contests while under suspension. A student assigned to detention must complete the detention prior to participating in a practice or athletic contest. It is the student's responsibility to inform the coach of a suspension or detention. An athlete whose suspension ends on any school day is ineligible to practice or play until the next school day. Coaches may apply additional discipline on top of the discipline given by the school administration.

TRY OUTS

Students may try out for any sport while at VCMS as long as they remain in good standing with the current Athletic Department policies.

A student will not be allowed to drop one sport for another in the same season once they have played a contest in that sport. Athletes have one week after the first contest to switch sports in a season as long as they have not played in a contest for the sport they are leaving. If a student does not make the team for one sport, they may try out for another in the same season.

PLAYING TIME

If a student has questions as to their “playing time” they are encouraged to discuss them with the coach. Coaches and the athletic director will not discuss playing time with anybody except the student athlete having the concern. The following are coaches’ guidelines for this topic:

Middle School Teams

At the middle school level the emphasis is on participation for all athletes. Coaches will make a conscious effort to play all team members for as much time as is practical. There are many factors that govern an individual’s playing time but perhaps the most important are practice attendance, quality of effort, attitude, commitment, and athletic ability. In some sports there is an opportunity for a JV period at the end of the varsity game. Coaches are encourage to explain their philosophy to the entire team and give feedback to all athletes on how they can improve. Coaches have an open door policy to discuss any issues with the student athletes.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM ATHLETIC EVENTS

All athletes must ride the team bus to and from all contests when a bus is scheduled. If an athlete desires to ride home with their parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must sign a travel release form and obtain the athletic director’s or coach’s signature on the form prior to leaving from the game. Coaches must have a copy of the signed form in order for the athlete to be dismissed with their parent/guardian. Students can only be dismissed with their legal guardian.

Students are expected to exhibit proper behavior when riding the school bus. A coach has a right to assign seats to maximize control, and the driver of the bus is the individual in charge of the bus. All posted rules and regulations governing how students must behave on the school bus will be followed. Damage to the school bus by any player or team will not be tolerated. Problems of this nature will result in team disciplinary action or player disciplinary action. At the conclusion of a trip, team members will insure the bus is clean. Food may be allowed on the bus, but glass is not allowed. Spikes or cleats are not allowed to be worn on the bus for any sport. Use of electronic devices is at the discretion of the coach. The noise level must not interfere with the bus driver's ability to hear emergency signals. Improper behavior will result in consequences to be determined by the coach and athletic director.

Travel release forms can be found here- <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/vernon-center-middle-school-home/about-us/documents-and-forms>

AWARDS

The requirements for certificates, and awards differ in each sport. Coaches will develop specific criteria to earn a certificate or award. All award winners will be evaluated on the basis of participation, contribution to the team, leadership, sportsmanship and overall personal conduct.

All participants who complete the season in good standing will receive a pin. No letters are awarded at the middle school level. Coaches will also choose additional awards such as most valuable player/athlete, most improved player/athlete, and/or coach’s award. These athletes will be presented with a plaque or trophy.

Any student athlete who does not finish the season in good standing will not be eligible for post-season honors or awards.

CAPTAIN'S PRACTICE

The term "Captain's Practice" usually means the team's captain is organizing and conducting practice sessions for the sport without adult supervision. The CIAC, CRAL, and VCMS do not in any way sanction, encourage or condone "Captain's Practice" in any sport. "Captain's Practice," depending on the member school's involvement, may be a clear violation of the season limitations eligibility rule or certainly a violation of the spirit of the rule.

CARE OF UNIFORMS, EQUIPMENT, AND LOCKER ROOM

Any equipment issued is the property of the school. Proper use and care of this equipment is the athlete's responsibility, and students will be required to pay for misused, damaged, lost or stolen articles.

It is the coach's responsibility to see that equipment that has been issued for the team and individual sports is to be used only for practice and/or games. It is not for personal use during physical education classes, going to and from home, or outside of school. Uniform jerseys can be worn in school on game days or sports recognition days. At the conclusion of a sport season, equipment and uniforms must be returned to the coach. Uniforms should be washed prior to being returned.

The coach will then produce an inventory list with the names of athletes who have failed to return uniform or equipment items, and what pieces of team equipment are missing. Payment or return of articles by the athlete must be authenticated by the coach or athletic director before the athlete will be allowed to compete in any other sport. 8th graders who have uniform or equipment obligations will not receive a cap and gown until the matter is resolved.

Lockers should be kept locked at all times to protect your personal and sports equipment. Athletes who share lockers with team members must cooperate to maximize security. If combinations are lost or not remembered, ask the coach or athletic director for assistance. The locker room should be kept clean by disposing of trash in the proper receptacles. No storage of food or glass containers in the lockers will be allowed.

Follow all care instructions handed out with any school-issued uniform or warm-up gear. General care instructions consistent with those issued include the following:

- Do not dry clean uniforms
- Do not iron uniforms, particularly the numbered areas
- Launder uniforms as soon after they are worn as possible
- Do not allow uniform to lay on itself when wet
- Wash in cold water
- Wash white uniforms and clothing separate from colored uniforms and clothing
- If applicable, remove belts and pads before laundering
- Line/hang dry – do not put uniforms or warm-up gear in a dryer
- Be sure uniforms are completely dry before storing
- Fasten hook and loop tapes (i.e., Velcro or similar), etc. to avoid snagging uniforms or clothing during washing

Athletes should bear in mind that uniforms may be worn for several years after this season and another athlete may wear their uniform the next year. They should be given a clean uniform for the season.

CONFLICTS IN ACTIVITIES

An individual student who attempts to participate in several activities will likely run into scheduling conflicts. The athletic department recognizes that each student should have the opportunity for a broad range of experiences, however, scheduling of athletic events cannot always be changed in order to accommodate other activities. Student athletes are expected to commit to their team and **attend all team events during the season.**

Students have a responsibility to do everything they can to avoid continuous conflicts. This includes being cautious about belonging to too many activities where conflicts are likely to occur. If a conflict does arise, the student-athlete is expected to notify the coaches or faculty advisors involved as soon as possible. The coaches and advisors will attempt to work out a solution.

Activities that carry academic weight take precedence over athletic activities. The student will not be penalized by the athletic coach or athletic department for participating in the academic event. Missing team practices or games in order to attend another commitment (non academic) will have consequences for the student athlete that may include loss of playing time.

If it becomes obvious that a student cannot fulfill the obligation of a school activity, they should withdraw from the activity.

Note: Athletic teams may have games and practices over school vacations (Winter and Spring). Vacations or other plans should not be scheduled during this time. Commitment is one of the core values of the VCMS athletic program.

DRESS CODE

The athletic department expects all student-athletes will maintain a clean, neat, and modest appearance. Appropriate shirts, shorts/pants, and shoes must be worn at all times. Student-athletes will refrain from wearing tee shirts with inappropriate logos including and/or endorsing profanity, alcohol consumption and tobacco or drug use. Bare midriffs and removal of shirts are prohibited.

All student athletes will dress properly at all home and away games. The dress code will be established by the coach for each respective sport. Team members not in compliance with the team dress code are subject to team discipline. Dress code is to follow the VCMS Code of Conduct.

INSURANCE

A plan of *Excess Insurance* covering interscholastic sports has been purchased by the Vernon Board of Education. The form of this coverage provides that valid claims for injuries received as a result of participating in interscholastic athletics will be paid on an *excess basis*. This *Excess Insurance Policy* may cover bills after a parent/guardian's health insurance has been first applied. Remember, the Vernon School District will cover only those debts up to the limits set forth in the *Excess Policy*. This insurance plan is for accidents only and does not cover sickness. Additional insurance can be purchased by families for the year. For more information contact the business office.

REPORTING INJURIES

All injuries should be reported to the coach immediately. The coach must record all injuries reported to him/her no matter how minor. If an athlete sustains a significant injury, the parent/guardian will be contacted by the coach on the same day of the incident. The coach must complete, sign, and date an accident report form. The parent/guardian of the student athlete can request a copy of the report by contacting the athletic office.

Any visit to a doctor for treatment of a sport-related injury must be reported to the school nurse/coach. A note clearing the athlete for activity must be provided upon return to the team. Without a doctor's note the athlete will not be allowed to participate.

Any student who sustains a disabling-type injury that requires surgery or immobilization for a period of time cannot return to any sport activity without written permission from the attending physician. This written permission is needed to be filed by the school nurse.

The coach and school nurse will adhere to a physician's determination related to an athlete's readiness to return to or continue active participation in athletics. The coach and athletic director may require additional practice time, rehabilitation, or assessment before athlete is fully cleared to participate.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Rockville High School is a Class Act Sportsmanship School. We encourage these same standards at the middle school level also. This is a CIAC initiative which conducts an educationally based athletic program to enhance the physical, emotional, social, and educational growth of its participants by providing healthy and challenging competition. All spectators and participants are asked to contribute to these goals by supporting the efforts of our athletes and by refraining from any actions toward our opponents and officials, which interferes with the realization of these goals.

A complete set of expectations can be found at: http://ciacsports.com/site/?page_id=10438

VACATION POLICY

Vacations by athletic team members during a sport season are very strongly discouraged. Parents/athletes wishing to take vacations during sport seasons may need to reassess the athlete's commitment to that sport team. The middle school does not play games over school vacation periods. Practices during school vacations will be optional. Note that once students enter high school that athletic teams will practice and compete during school vacations. In the event of an absence due to a vacation that is unavoidable, an athlete must:

- 1.) Contact the head coach by the start of the season to inform him/her of the vacation.
- 2.) Upon return from the vacation, practice at least one full practice prior to playing in a game. Coaches will assess the physical condition of the athlete and determine when it is appropriate for them to return to competition.

* We recognize that each situation is different. As such, coaches and athletes can discuss the situation if an athlete will miss a period of time. Coaches will then create a plan that is fair to all parties regarding the return process for that athlete.

STUDENT-ATHLETE CODE OF CONDUCT

Athlete Social Media Policy

Since participation in athletics is a privilege and not a right, an athlete needs to accept responsibility for appearing or posting on social media sites.

When visiting or appearing on any social media site, athletes of Vernon Center Middle School will maintain acceptable standards. These acceptable standards will be based on the policies and regulations described in the Vernon Center Middle School Student Handbook and individual team rules.

Any posting or communication via social networking sites that disrupts either the educational or athletic environment or which advocates the violation of any athletic department, school, or team policy or rule is unacceptable. This would include but not be limited to:

- The consumption of alcohol or the use of illicit drugs
- Inappropriate sexually-oriented material
- Activities involving bullying, hazing or harassment
- Any display of negative sportsmanship or hostility towards others
- Anything that represents Vernon Center Middle School and the athletic department in a negative way.

It is the intent of Vernon Center Middle School to provide leadership, education and the protection of athletes from the dangers involved with some internet sites and to maintain the positive aspects of an education-based athletic program. Inappropriate social media posts may result in athletic discipline up to and including suspension or dismissal from the team.

Athletic Participation and Physical Education

The student-athlete must actively participate in physical education class in order to practice or play in a game on that day. A doctor's or school nurse's note excusing the athlete from P.E. also denies the athlete participation in practice or game on that day. Student-athletes are expected to be a positive influence in physical education class as well as a helper to the physical education instructor.

Fighting in Interscholastic Sports

Violation of this rule shall bring an automatic suspension for the remainder of that game plus suspension from the next scheduled game at that level. The student-athlete's case will be reviewed by the athletic director and further disciplinary action may be taken. Team members who leave the bench during a fight are also subject to discipline.

Gambling

Gambling is not an acceptable behavior for any athlete and will not be tolerated. Any athlete who plays cards for money, bets on games, places bets at casinos or race tracks or engages in any other form of gambling jeopardizes his/her amateur and eligibility status.

Hazing, Bullying, and Initiations

Hazing or initiations of student-athletes by other team members are not acceptable and any practice of this type of behavior will not be tolerated. Actions (such as but not limited to taunting, teasing, bullying, and harassment) of this type may be illegal, and those involved may be subject to police action as well as

dismissal and/or suspension from participation in any athletic program. Any student athlete who is aware of this type of behavior should report it to the coach, athletic director, or school administration immediately.

Bullying means committing an act against a student, or coercing a student into committing an act, with the intent to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the other student. This type of behavior will not be tolerated. The Vernon School District has adopted a policy on bullying. Student-athletes will be held to this policy as well as dismissal and/or suspension from participation in any athletic program if they violate this policy. For the board's full policy visit- <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/board-of-education/policies/5000-students>

Performance Enhancing Drugs

The CIAC expects member schools to monitor their student athletes to assure that they are free of performance enhancing substances and to report any violations in a timely manner.

A student-athlete who has been determined to have used, in or out-of-season, androgenic/anabolic steroids or other performance enhancing substances shall be declared ineligible for all CIAC-controlled activities for one hundred eighty (180) school days on each occurrence. The one hundred eighty (180) school day period of ineligibility commences on the day the CIAC Board of Control makes such determination.

Any student-athlete who refuses to submit to testing as part of a member school's Board of Education-approved random drug testing policy shall be ineligible to participate in any CIAC-controlled activities.

Performance enhancing substances and practices subject to this policy include but are not limited to, the following:

- A) Anabolic Agents, Diuretics, peptide Hormones and Analogues.
- B) Blood doping (the intravenous injection of whole blood, packed red blood cells, or blood substitutes).
- C) Substances and practices identified as banned by the NCAA and the USOC.

The CIAC allows member schools to make exceptions for those student-athletes with a documented medical history demonstrating the need for regular use of substances that are banned in this policy. These identified substances shall be medically prescribed by the student-athlete's doctor for therapeutic purposes. The documentation should contain formation as to the diagnosis, medical history and dosage prescribed.

Substance Use

The Athletic Department policy is that the confirmation of possession and/or use and intent to use or possession of tobacco, vaping products, smokeless tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and drugs of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician, are prohibited.

The Athletic Department also takes a very strong position regarding the athlete's attendance at peer-centered activities where alcoholic beverages and/or drugs of any kind are available. These activities are off-limits to all VCMS student-athletes. The athlete understands that there is no time the above mentioned actions will be tolerated. If an athlete violates this policy they will be immediately suspended from the team. Further consequences will be determined after meeting with school administration, athletic director, and the coach.

In Season Violation and Consequences:

Consequences for use of, being under the influence of, or possession of drugs and/or alcohol (including drug paraphernalia) and for intending to purchase, sell, and/or distribute drugs and/or alcohol:

First Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the first violation, the student-athlete will be suspended immediately for the remainder of the sport season. If there is less than 50% of the sport season remaining when the penalty began, the penalty will be applied to the rest of the present sport season and the next sport season in which the athlete participates. *(For example, if an athlete violates the substance policy in week 6 of a 10 week season, the athlete will be suspended for the remaining 4 weeks of the present sport season plus one week of the next sport season in which the athlete participates.)*

Note: An athlete will be allowed to try-out for the next sport season while under suspension. If the athlete makes the team, the penalty applies. If she/he does not make the team, the penalty will carry over to the next sport team of which he/she becomes a member.

An alternative to the above-mentioned consequence is the Community Service Option. The athlete will be suspended for the remainder of the sport season in which the violation occurred, but may choose to do 15 hours of community service in order to be reinstated at the start of the next sport season in which the athlete participates. This option is subject to approval by the athletic director and/or principal. A Community Services Verification Form must be completed and returned to the athletic director prior to the athlete's participation.

- The athlete will be required to meet with a member of the school counseling staff for a problem assessment. The athletic director and school counselor will make further decisions as necessary based on the recommendations of the school counselor. If the assessment and/or recommended program is refused by the athlete, he/she will be denied further participation in athletics.
- The athlete forfeits all opportunities for awards and post-season honors for that sport season.
- The athlete agrees to have revoked any leadership positions, such as, but not limited to team captain, and will not hold any leadership position on athletic teams for the remainder of the school year.

Second Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the second violation, the student-athlete will be suspended immediately from participation in sport programs for the remainder of the school year.
- The athlete will be required to see a substance abuse professional at a community based agency for further problem assessment. Referral and arrangements can be made through the school social worker. The athletic director or his designee will make further decisions based on the recommendations of the counselor. If the assessment

and/or any recommended program is refused by the athlete, he/she will be denied further athletic participation.

All contacts with community agencies and with the school social worker will be confidential (except for compliance and recommendations) and no part of the process will become a part of the student's permanent record.

- The athlete forfeits all opportunities for awards and post-season honors for that sport season.
- The athlete agrees to have revoked any leadership positions, such as, but not limited to team captain, and will not hold any leadership position on athletic teams for the remainder of the school year.

Third Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the third violation, the student-athlete will be suspended from participation in athletics for the remainder of his/her middle school career. After one calendar year from determination of guilt, an appeal can be made to school administration for reinstatement contingent upon substantiated rehabilitation.

Consequences for use and/or possession of tobacco (including smoking paraphernalia e.g. lighters, matches, electronic cigarettes/vape products and oils):

First Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the first violation, the student-athlete will be suspended immediately for a minimum of 20% of the season's contests. If there is less than 20% of the sport season remaining when the penalty began, the penalty will be applied to the rest of the present sport season and the next sport season in which the athlete participates. *(For example, if an athlete violates the substance policy in week 9 of a 10 week season, the athlete will be suspended for the remaining weeks of the present sport season plus one week of the next sport season in which the athlete participates.)*

Note: An athlete will be allowed to try-out for the next sport season while under suspension. If the athlete makes the team, the penalty applies. If she/he does not make the team, the penalty will carry over to the next sport team of which he/she becomes a member.

An alternative to the above-mentioned consequence is the Community Service Option. The athlete will be suspended for the remainder of the sport season in which the violation occurred, but may choose to do 15 hours of community service in order to be reinstated at the start of the next sport season in which the athlete participates. This option is subject to approval by the athletic director and/or principal. A Community Services Verification Form must be completed and returned to the Director of Athletics prior to the athlete's participation.

- The athlete will be required to meet with a member of the school counseling staff for a problem assessment. The athletic director and school counselor will make further decisions as necessary based on the recommendations of the school counselor. If the

assessment and/or recommended program is refused by the athlete, he/she will be denied further participation in athletics.

- The athlete agrees to have revoked any leadership positions, such as, but not limited to team captain, and will not hold any leadership position on athletic teams for the remainder of the season.

Second Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the second violation, the student-athlete will be suspended immediately from participation in sport programs for the remainder of the season. If less than 50% of the season remains there may be additional suspensions applied to the next season that student athlete participates in.
- The athlete will be required to see a substance abuse professional at a community based agency for further problem assessment. Referral and arrangements can be made through the school social worker. The athletic director or his designee will make further decisions based on the recommendations of the counselor. If the assessment and/or any recommended program is refused by the athlete, he/she will be denied further athletic participation.

All contacts with community agencies and with the school social worker will be confidential (except for compliance and recommendations) and no part of the process will become a part of the student's permanent record.

- The athlete forfeits all opportunities for awards and post-season honors for that sport season.
- The athlete agrees to have revoked any leadership positions, such as, but not limited to team captain, and will not hold any leadership position on athletic teams for the remainder of the school year.

Third Violation Consequence:

- After due process and confirmation of the third violation, the student-athlete will be suspended from participation in athletics for the remainder of his/her high school career. After one calendar year from determination of guilt, an appeal can be made to school administration for reinstatement contingent upon substantiated rehabilitation.

Out of Season Violation and Consequences:

Out of Season is defined as any time when an athlete is not directly involved in a school-sponsored athletic program. This also includes the summer vacation. Although athletes are out of season they still represent our school and our athletic programs. Consequences for their actions may impact their participation in those programs once the season starts.

After due process and confirmation of violation, the student-athlete will be required to do 15 hours of community service.

Attending Peer- Centered activities where alcohol and/or drugs are available:

Peer centered activities where alcoholic beverages and/or drugs of any kind are available are off-limits to all VCMS student athletes. If a student athlete attends such an activity and does not use any substances:

First Violation: Athlete will be given a warning.

Second Violation: Athlete will be suspended for 10% of the season's contests.

Third Violation: After due process and confirmation of the third violation, the athlete will be suspended for the remainder of the season.

- The athlete agrees to turn back all awards received during the school year and will not be eligible for any post-season honors or awards.
- The athlete forfeits the opportunity for any leadership position for one year after the suspension.

NOTE: If a student-athlete is not truthful regarding the substance abuse, the student-athlete forfeits his/her opportunity to participate in sports for one calendar year.

Self-Referral by Student Athletes:

Student-athletes may take advantage of a self-referral procedure to seek information, guidance, counseling and assessment in regard to the use of tobacco, smokeless tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. **Voluntary referrals do not carry punitive consequences.**

Guidelines for self-referral:

- A) Referral is allowed one (1) time in a student's three year middle school career.
- B) Referral must be made only by the athlete or a member of the athlete's immediate family.
- C) Referral must be prior to the first violation of the policy.
- D) Referral cannot be used by athletes as a method to avoid consequences once a Code of Conduct rule is violated and a student has been identified as having violated one of the Code of Conduct rules.
- E) Referral must be made to a coach, athletic director, teacher, administrator, school counselor, or social worker.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Any student-athlete ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct will not be permitted to participate in the next scheduled contest at that level (i.e. varsity). They must also sit out any contest at all other levels until the suspension is served (CIAC ejection rule).

Verbal and/or Physical Abuse of Officials or Coaches

Verbal or physical abuse of officials or coaches by student-athletes will result in immediate discipline which may include suspension or dismissal from the team for the remainder of the season.

Other Serious Violations

The following behaviors will be considered serious violations of the athletic code and school policies and will result in suspension or dismissal from the team. The length of the suspension will be determined by a meeting of the athlete's coach and athletic director.

- A) Civil law infractions.
- B) Theft or malicious destruction of individual private or school property.
- C) Plagiarism
- D) Infraction of school rules requiring administrative action.
- E) Misconduct by an athlete that is potentially detrimental to the athletic program, school or school district.

ATHLETE'S RIGHTS OF DUE PROCESS (in CIAC matters)

For the full policy visit the CIAC Handbook.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

This parental code centers on five areas:

1. Let the coaches coach your athlete. Refrain from shouting advice during the game (i.e., "coaching" your athlete from the sidelines/stands). This can be confusing and frustrating for the athlete.
2. Be an exemplary role model by positively supporting all members of the team.
3. Model good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive behavior at all times toward the officials, opposing players, fans, and coaches.
4. Support the coaches and their decisions about playing time. Playing time is strictly the decision of the coach. If your athlete has an issue with playing time they are encouraged to speak to the coach.
5. Follow the Parent-Coach Communication Procedures if there is a need to contact a coach. The procedures are located below.

PARENT-COACH COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

Parent-Coach Relationship

By working together, parents/guardians and coaches are able to ensure that each student-athlete will benefit from the athletic program. As a parent/guardian whose athlete is involved in the VCMS Athletic Program, you have the right to understand what expectations are placed upon your student-athlete.

As a member of an athletic team, your athlete will experience many rewarding moments. It is important to understand there may also be times when things do not go the way they would like. If this occurs, the athlete is encouraged to discuss the concern directly with the coach. If the student-athlete has spoken to the coach and the issue continues to need clarification, it may be appropriate for a parent/guardian to intervene.

Communication parents/guardians should expect from the coach:

1. Philosophy of the coach and the program
2. Expectations the coach has for all student-athletes involved in the program
3. Logistical information- schedules for practices, games, busing, etc.
4. Team requirements, rules, disciplinary procedures, etc.
5. Medical procedures and information.
6. Sportsmanship expectations for all student athletes, parents, and fans.

Communication coaches should expect from parents/guardians:

1. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance
2. Specific concern about a coach's behavior and/or expectations
3. Notification of your child's change in medical information, change in behavior, and change in academic standing.

Concerns parents/guardians may discuss with coaches:

1. The treatment of your athlete, mentally or physically
2. Ways to help your athlete improve their performance
3. Concerns about your athlete's behavior

Issues that will not be discussed with the coaching staff:

1. Positions
2. Level of participation
3. Playing time
4. Other student athletes
5. Game strategy
6. Team preparation/practice

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

The school administration requires **24 hours** between any incident and the time of your contact with any member of the athletic department.

If you have a concern to discuss with a coach, please utilize the following procedures:

1. Have your athlete meet with the coach to try to resolve the issue.
2. If the meeting between the student and the coach does not resolve the issues, the parent/guardian may call the athletic department (860-870-6050 x4023) to schedule an appointment for you and your athlete to meet with the coach.

3. If the meeting with the coach did not provide a satisfactory resolution, call and schedule an appointment to meet with the Director of Athletics and the coach.
4. If the meeting with the Director of Athletics did not provide a satisfactory resolution, call and schedule an appointment to meet with the building Principal to discuss the situation.
5. If the meeting with the building Principal did not provide a satisfactory resolution, please submit in writing a detailed description of your issue or concern to the Superintendent of Schools in care of the Vernon Public School Central Office, 30 Park Street, Vernon, CT 06066.

SUMMARY

The rules contained in this handbook are general in nature and are inclusive of all sports. The coach of each sport will provide each athlete with a set of written rules for his/her particular sport in addition to this handbook. Athletes must adhere to the general and specific rules outlined or face disciplinary action. The effectiveness of these rules lies with the integrity of each player and the coach.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Vernon Board of Education to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students and to prohibit discrimination because of race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, national origin, sex, or physical disability in the education programs and activities including but not limited to course offerings, athletic programs, guidance and counseling and tests and procedures through an intensive affirmative action program which shall be an integral part of every aspect of educational policies and programs to the maximum extent possible.

The Vernon Public Schools pledge to avoid discriminatory actions and, instead, to seek to foster equal human and educational relations which will help to attain:

- Equal rights and opportunities for students and employees in the school community.
- Equal opportunity for all students to participate in the total program of the schools.
- Continual study and development of curricula toward improving human relations and understanding and appreciating cultural differences.
- Training opportunities for improving staff ability and responsiveness to educational and social needs.
- Opportunities in educational programs which are broadly available to students with access not solely based upon race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, national origin, sex or physical ability.

Any complaint regarding the implementation of this policy shall be addressed in writing to the respective coordinators: Affirmative Action, Section 504 (Handicapped Access and Accommodation) and Title VI (Age Discrimination)—Dr. Joseph McCary, Superintendent, 860-870-6000; OCR (Civil Rights) and Title IX (Gender Discrimination)—Mr. Robert Testa, Assistant Superintendent. 860-870-6000.

Upon investigation of the complaint, the coordinator shall effectuate any changes deemed necessary to eliminate any discriminatory practices and shall inform the complainant in writing of his or her actions within thirty days of the receipt of such complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the action of the individuals above, within twenty days, the complainant may appeal the action to the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent shall hold a hearing within 20 days of receipt of such written request and shall decide what, if any, deemed discriminatory. The Superintendent shall notify the complainant in writing of this decision within seven days after such hearing.

Resources

VCMS Athletic Website- <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/vernon-center-middle-school-home/athletics>

CIAC Handbook- https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/ciachandbook_2324.pdf

Schedules Via CIAC- http://ciacsports.com/site/?page_id=105

Schedules Via Arbiter Sports and to register for schedule changes- <https://www.arbitersports.com/>

FamilyID- <https://www.familyid.com/organizations/rockville-high-school-vcms>