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**ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Guide for Student Athletes and Parents**  
**General Standards and Forms for Participation in Interscholastic Athletics**

**Purpose:** This *Athletic Guide* is designed to be useful to student athletes and their parents. The intent is to condense that information which is necessary to effectively understand and participate in the athletic program in St. Mary's County Public Schools.  
 This guide includes a collection of information pertaining to state, county, and Conference procedures and regulations. There may be questions which arise that may not be covered in this guide. Remember, this is only a guide. Only open communications between coaching staff, athletic director, parents, students, and school administrators will ensure an effective athletic program.

**I. General Standards for Eligibility**

1. **Enrollment**  
 Students shall be officially registered and attending a member MPSSAA school. They may represent only the school in which they are registered and at which it is anticipated they will complete their graduation requirements.
2. **Age**  
 Students who are 19 years old or older as of August 31 are ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics.
3. **Physical Examination**  
 A student shall be examined and certified to the high school principal as being physically fit to participate in any tryout, practice, or contest of a school team. The examination shall be performed by a qualified physician. Student physical examinations will cover one calendar year only. It is recommended that the physical be completed during the summer break so as to cover the athlete throughout the school year.
4. **Athletic Insurance and Parental Permission**  
 Every candidate for and participant on an interscholastic team must provide proof of parental permission and have insurance covering possible accident or injury in school-sponsored games, practice sessions, and during travel to and from athletic contests. Such coverage may be provided through the purchase of scholastic accident insurance, or by providing proof of similar or superior insurance protection. Parents and/or guardians of athletes should anticipate the distinct possibility of incurring medical expenses for injuries related to participation in sports that will not be covered by insurance.
5. **Amateur Status**  
 Students who have not used or are not using their athletic skill as players for financial gain, or who have not competed under assumed names as players, shall be considered amateur. Employment as an instructor, counselor, or official may not be considered a violation.

6. **Seasons of Competition**  
 Students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 may participate in interscholastic athletic contests for a maximum of four seasons in any one sport.
7. **Outside Team Membership**  
 Students, while participating on a school team, are permitted to participate on sports teams outside of school during the high school sports season. This participation must meet the following criteria:
  - A. The outside participation shall not conflict with the practice or contests schedule of the school including district, regional, and state championship play unless prior written approval has been obtained from the school principal and coach. NOTE: All requests must be submitted in writing prior to the first playable date of that specific sports season. (See #3 below.)
  - B. Any factor of a non-school athletic activity that causes a student to miss any portion of a school practice or contest constitutes a conflict. Approval requests for an outside conflict will only be considered for a unique opportunity or singular event only.
  - C. Students involved in a conflict without prior approval shall forfeit their eligibility for the remainder of that sports season. Those students will immediately be removed from the team and will not finish the season in good standing. Students must complete the season in good standing in order to be eligible for team and Conference awards.
8. **Transfer Students**  
 All transfers are subject to the academic eligibility standards from their preceding school/school system until they establish grades issued through a SMCPSS report card. All transfers shall provide a copy of their preceding school's academic eligibility standards and their last report card before participating.  
 Students transferring midseason who are interested in trying out must have been participating in the same sport at their previous school. The Athletic Director will determine if a tryout is justified.

9. **Recruiting Statement**  
 No coach or school personnel are to discuss or otherwise promote transfers or changes in residence or residence arrangements with any student, parent, or other person of influence or knowingly permit such activity to take place for the purpose of facilitating athletic participation.

**II. Scholastic Eligibility Code**

1. **Academic Eligibility**  
 Students are academically eligible with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 as determined at the end of the most recent marking period. Fall academic eligibility for all students is determined by the prior year's overall GPA including summer school marks. This does not apply to transitioning eighth graders until the end of the first marking period.
2. **Summer school and quarter recovery credit will apply in the application of the eligibility code.**

**III. Attendance**

1. Each athlete is required to attend all scheduled classes.
2. Students must be enrolled in a minimum of one credit-bearing course in a SMCPSS high school.
3. To be eligible to participate on any given day, a student must be present for at least half of his/her scheduled day. (See *Student Attendance* in the Student Handbook & Code of Conduct guide.)
4. In the case of extenuating circumstances, the principal of the school may grant an exception to #3.
5. Students who are suspended are ineligible to participate until reinstated and having attended classes for one entire day following the suspension.
6. Students on in-school intervention are ineligible the day of the intervention.

7. The cutting of classes may result in disciplinary actions.

**VIII. Awards**

In order to be eligible for consideration for a school athletic letter, other school awards, or Conference honors, an athlete must:

1. Complete the season in good standing.
2. Meet criteria established by the coach and approved by the athletic director for obtaining an athletic letter.
3. Fulfill all team related obligations.
4. Return all uniforms and equipment.
5. Have no outstanding debts to the Athletic Department.

**IX. Transportation**

All teams must travel in bonded carriers to and from all athletic events. All team members must travel as a group to and from all athletic contests. If approved by the local school principal 48 hours in advance, a team member may be released to the custody of parent(s)/guardian(s) at the conclusion of an away contest. Approval must be requested in written form prior to the specified event and signed by the student athlete's parent(s)/guardian(s). The principal or principal's designee shall sign all authorized requests. Any other exceptions to this mode of travel must be approved, in advance, by the local school principal.

**X. Online Forms**

Copies of all the forms and pages in this document may be found under "FORMS" on the school system's Education-Based Athletics website: <https://www.smcps.org/dci/education-based-athletics>.

**XI. Eighth Graders**

Eighth graders participating in pre-season conditioning activities should complete pages 17-19 and return them to the high school coach in charge of the activity.

**XII. Cost of Participation**

Although no participation fee is charged, there may be costs associated with clothing, equipment, and certain optional activities. Please contact the coach for more details.

**XIII. General Inquiries**

Please direct all general inquiries to the AD or:  
Michael A. Watson  
Director of Facility Coordination, Health and Physical Education, and Athletics

**IV. Conduct of Student Athlete**

1. As representatives of their school and team, student athletes are expected to follow all rules and regulations pertaining to their participation and adhere to the Athletic Code of Conduct.

2. Student athletes may not literally or constructively use, possess, or distribute drugs, alcohol, or controlled paraphernalia at any time.

3. Athletes who violate rule #2 above, or those rules set by the coach, could forfeit their right to any post season awards, and/or could be suspended or removed from the team.

4. As a result of misconduct or disruptive behavior, the coach, athletic director, principal, or designee shall be responsible for deciding appropriate discipline.

5. Any player removed from a contest by game officials due to a flagrant foul/unsportsmanlike infraction will be suspended for the next game played. Players suspended for a game are allowed to participate in practice sessions but will not be allowed to accompany the team to the game site or represent the team on the sideline or bench areas. Note: *Before being able to rejoin the team following an ejection, a player must first complete the free NFHS on-line course on sportsmanship and provide the athletic director with a copy of the certificate verifying completion. Course details may be found at: <http://www.nfhslearn.com>.*

6. Bullying is not permitted. Bullying is any intentional negative actions on the part of one or more students, repeatedly and over time that interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs. Defamation, hazing, and stalking may also be considered as bullying. Hazing relates to doing any act or causing any situation which recklessly or intentionally subjects a student to the risk of serious bodily injury for the purpose of initiation into a student organization of a school, to harass by exacting unnecessary or demeaning physical work by way of intimidation.

**V. Squad Membership**

1. The coach of each sport is responsible for the determination of squad membership.

2. A student being taught by parental request at home (home instruction) is not enrolled in St. Mary's County Public Schools and cannot participate in athletics.

3. Seniors are not eligible for junior varsity competition in any sport.

4. Student athletes are subject to all team rules beginning on the first day of try-outs at the start date of the specific sport season.

**VI. Tryouts and Practice**

1. All interested athletes are expected to be present from day one and have all required documentation fully completed if they wish to compete for a place on the team.

2. Starting Dates for Practice:  
• <https://www.smcps.org/dci/athletics/schedules>

3. Students may be required to practice or compete off campus. Contact specific sport coaches at your schools for additional information.

4. Out-of-Season Practice  
The following criteria should be utilized in determining whether or not an activity constitutes out-of-season practice:

a. Member schools and coaches of member schools shall confine all organized or formal practice for a contestant or a team to the seasonal limitations.

b. "A coach may not coach a team representing their school beyond the sports season as defined in MPSSAA Regulation .03."

5. If a student with a disability requires accommodations in order to try out he/she should inform the coach at least two weeks before tryouts. This will allow time for the "Compass Committee" to meet and review the options available.

Further details may be found at:  
<http://www.smcps.org/tpd/athletics/physical-activity-and-lifetime-sports>

**VII. Concerns or questions**

1. Following an athletic event/game, parents/guardians are asked to wait 24 hours before contacting a coach about concerns such as an athlete's playing time, or perhaps a coaching decision. Conversations tend to be more productive and calmer when this request is observed.

2. The following chain of command should be observed when seeking a response to a concern or question. This allows those closest to the situation to respond initially.

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Assistant Coach/Head Coach
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. Athletic Director
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. Assistant Principal i/c of Athletics
- 4<sup>th</sup>. Principal

St. Mary's County Public Schools  
27190 Point Lookout Road  
Loveville, Maryland 20656  
(301) 475-4256, extension 34143

Raymond Sapp, Chopticon High School

**Athletic Directors**

Ryan Hanley, CAA, Great Mills High School

Bruce Henderson, Leonardtown High School

(301) 475-0215, extension 38135

(301) 863-4001, extension 18135

(301) 475-0200, extension 27135