

From the TSSAA Handbook, Pages 18-20

Article II Eligibility

Section 17: Recruiting Rule

Athletic recruiting is prohibited. Athletic recruiting is the use of influence on a student or the parents or guardians of a student, by any person(s) directly or indirectly associated with the school, to secure or retain a student for athletic purposes. In the event that there is a violation of this rule, there shall be a penalty against the school, and the student(s) who was the subject of the violation shall be ineligible for a minimum of one year.

The penalty and any additional period of ineligibility beyond the one-year minimum will be determined by the Executive Director based on a consideration of the number of violations involved, the number of student-athletes involved, the nature of the violation(s), the individual(s) responsible for the violation(s), and the extent to which the violation may have been knowing, deliberate, or in reckless disregard of the provisions of this rule and the commentary that accompanies this rule.

Guidelines for Understanding the Recruiting Rule

1. Athletes or prospective athletes should be treated no differently than students who are not athletes. Students should be seen as students and not singled out based on their potential athletic ability.
2. To avoid the appearance of impropriety, a coach who is contacted by any student or family or individual about attending a school where he or she is the coach should inform that person that he or she needs to contact the administrative official or officials of the school who normally deal with the admission process. 2023-24 TSSAA Handbook Page 19 July 18, 2023
3. To avoid the appearance of impropriety, any meeting with coaches regarding athletes or prospective athletes should be a part of the admissions process at the school and should take place at the school.

Q. How is influence for athletic purposes interpreted in the recruiting rule?

A. Examples of influence for athletic purposes may include, but are not limited to:

1. Offers of or acceptance of any special privileges not afforded to other students, whether athletes or not.
2. Offers of financial aid based on need to any prospective student-athlete by any member of the coaching staff. All financial aid questions should be referred to the principal or person in charge of financial aid.
3. Inducing or attempting to induce or encourage any prospective student-athlete to attend any member school for the purpose of participating in athletics even when the special remuneration or inducement is not given.
4. Any initial contact or prearranged contact by a member of a coaching staff or representative of the school and a prospective student-athlete in the seventh grade and above.
5. Offering or acceptance of any item with school advertisement (shirt, caps, jackets, etc.) to a prospective student; provided that this example does not apply to items of only nominal value (pencils, etc.) that a school gives to all families that participate in the school's admission process.
6. Admitting students to athletic contests free of charge based on their participation in athletics with nonschool teams.
7. Recognizing students at athletic contests based on their participation in athletics with non-school teams.
8. Coaches or their representatives sending questionnaires, cards or letters, contacting, or visiting

prospective student-athletes and/or their families at their homes. For purposes of the example, the terms “coach” assumes that the individual initiating the contact is acting in his or her capacity as a coach. If that person serves another role at the school and is not acting in his or her capacity as coach, then there may be no violation, unless the contact is really a method for what is in fact the use of influence for athletic purposes.

9. Coaches or their representatives providing refreshments, gifts, and/or asking prospective student-athletes or family members for contact information.
10. Any social media post that encourages prospective student-athletes to consider attending the school.

Q. What is allowed or permitted by member schools in contacting prospective students?

A. The Recruiting Rule is not intended to prevent a member school from marketing its total school program or conducting programs designed to attract students based on the school’s overall educational and extracurricular programs. However, such programs must not be used as a method for securing students for athletic purposes. Examples of programs or things that would be permissible include, but are not limited to:

1. With the permission of the administration of both schools, a school may present programs or give information to elementary, junior high, or middle schools, which explain their total educational program. There should be a diversity of presenters, speaking on a variety of topics to students of all interests.
2. Once a student has pre-enrolled at a school in the spring or summer, taken necessary steps, been accepted or approved, paid a deposit (if required), and signed a contract indicating they will attend, the school may contact the student or family concerning summer programs, camps, physicals, etc., provided the student has: a. Completed his/her classes and exams at his/her previous school; b. Signed the independent school’s enrollment contract; and c. Paid the deposit required by the independent school.
3. Mass marketing of a school directed to a general population of students.
4. Mass media advertising.
5. Responding to inquiries from parents of prospective students about various aspects of the school’s program.

Q. Are there activities that might appear inconsistent with the Recruiting Rule and the Guidelines but have been historically engaged in by many member schools and are permitted under the current Recruiting Rule and Guidelines?

A. Yes. Over the course of many years, there are a number of activities that many schools have customarily engaged in and that have not been regarded as violations of the Recruiting Rule. So long as the activity does not single out particular student-athletes, and so long as the activity is not being used to circumvent the Recruiting Rule, the following such activities are permissible regardless of any apparent inconsistency with the Recruiting Rule or the Guidelines:

1. With the permission of the administration of both schools, a coach may present programs or give information to elementary, junior high, or middle schools, which explain their total program. All information concerning a particular sport program must be given out at one or both of the schools. Any program must be presented at one or both schools. Those students in attendance or who receive information must be determined by the administration of both schools.
2. Students on school teams and/or all students in a school or particular grade may be admitted to athletic contests free of charge provided it has been approved by the administration of both schools.
3. Students on school teams and/or all students in a school or particular grade may be recognized for their accomplishments at athletic contests provided it has been approved by the administration of those schools.