# Otsego Middle School Athletic Handbook 2026-27



**To The Parent:** On behalf of the athletic staff at Otsego Middle School, we would like to thank you and your son or daughter for becoming part of the athletic program. Your family interest in this phase of our school program is gratifying. Participation in athletics provides a wealth of opportunities and experiences which will assist students in everyday life.

A student who elects to participate in athletics is voluntarily making a choice of self-discipline and self-denial. There are reasons we place such an emphasis on good training habits. Good training habits are essential for the middle school athlete in preparation for interscholastic competition. Attaining this goal would be a cooperative effort by all involved.

Parents are directed to follow the proper chain of command in the event of a question or disagreement with a coach's general philosophy, amount of playing time your son/daughter receives, or other areas of concern. Parents should first have their athlete contact the coach. After this initial contact, parents should contact the coach, followed by the athletic director, and then the middle school principal. Parents should maintain a supportive relationship between the coach and the athlete. Parents are welcome to observe practice sessions, realizing that the field/court serves as an educational classroom in nature. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the pre-season meeting where coaches explain rules, philosophy and answer any questions you may have.

When your son/daughter elects to try out for a sports team, we feel there is a commitment to certain responsibilities and obligations. This is our opportunity to acquaint you with specific policies necessary for a well organized program of athletics. Please read this information with your son or daughter.

**To the Athlete:** Being a member of an Otsego athletic team is the fulfillment of an early ambition for many students.

It takes a lot of work to become a dedicated athlete. To compete as an athlete for your school is a privilege and not a right. That may mean that you will have to say no to temptations an athlete cannot afford. It will be necessary that you not only understand the traditions of your school, but also be willing to assume the responsibilities that go with them.

You will inherit a leadership role when you join an athletic squad. The student body and citizens of the community will know you, and you are on stage with the spotlight on you. The student body, the community, and other communities judge our school by your conduct and attitude both on and off the

field/court. As a result of this leadership role, you can do a great deal to promote school spirit and community pride.

As a squad member, you assume a serious responsibility to your home, school, and community. When you know that you have lived up to all of the training rules, that you practiced to the best of your ability every day, and that you have played the game “All Out," then your family, school, and community can be justly proud of you.
Don't do anything to let yourself or your family down. Make Otsego proud of you and your community proud of your school by setting a good example and contributing your best to the success of athletics at Otsego Middle School.

## Objectives of Interscholastic Athletics:

1. To provide a diversified and balanced athletic program.
2. To encourage each student to excel to the best of his/her ability.
3. To develop winning teams and programs, realizing that losing is not a disgrace if one had done his/her best.
4. To learn and practice good sportsmanship at all times.
5. To develop and promote the values of physical fitness and sound physical and mental health.
6. To educate and inform the community as to the purpose and place of interscholastic athletics.
7. To promote fun and enjoyment for all participants.
8. To build a winning attitude while also making every effort to involve as many athletes as possible in school-sponsored interscholastic athletics.

## MHSAA Regulations:

The Otsego Public Schools are a volunteer member of the Michigan High School Athletic Association. The M.H.S.A.A. rules listed below are only a summary of some of the regulations affecting student eligibility. Most rules are found in the M.H.S.A.A. Handbook, which can be located at the High School Athletic Office. **Review these rules and ask questions of your principal, athletic director and coaches. Your role in following the rules will assure eligibility to participate in interscholastic sports or prevent your participation as an ineligible athlete, which could result in forfeiture of contests.**

SECTION 1 (A)— 1. To be eligible for interscholastic athletics during the first semester or the first and second trimesters of the school year, a student must be enrolled in a junior high/middle school no later than the fourth Friday after Labor Day. 2. To be eligible for interscholastic athletics during the second semester or the second or third trimester of the school year, a student must be enrolled in a junior high/middle school no later than the fourth Friday of February. 3. Unless a specific exemption is stated in this section or Section 8, a student must be enrolled in and receiving current credit (courses awaiting grades for credit) in at least 50 percent of his/her current course load in the school for which he or she participates.

SECTION 2 (A)—A 6th-grade student who participates in any interscholastic scrimmage or contest limited to 6th-graders must be under thirteen (13) years of age, except that a student whose (13th) birthday occurs on or after Sept. 1 of a current school year is eligible for the balance of that school year. Any 6th-grade student born before Sept. 1, 2006, is ineligible for interscholastic scrimmages or contests in Michigan except that he or she may play on the 7th-grade or 8th-grade squad of that junior high/middle school, or on a team of combined 7th- and 8th-grade students. In each case, all other regulations pertaining to eligibility must be met. SECTION 2 (B)—A 7th-grade student who participates in any interscholastic scrimmage or contest limited to 7th-graders must be under fourteen (14) years of age, except that a student whose (14th) birthday occurs on or after September 1 of a current school year is eligible for the balance of that school year. Any 7th-grade student born before Sept. 1, 2011, is ineligible for interscholastic scrimmages or contests in Michigan except that he or she may play on the 8th grade or 9th-grade squad of that junior high school, or on a team of combined seventh and 8th-grade students. In each case all other regulations pertaining to eligibility must be met. SECTION 2 (C)—An 8th-grade student who participates in any interscholastic scrimmage or contest limited to 8th-graders must be under fifteen (15) years of age, except that a student whose (15th) birthday occurs on or after September 1 of a current school year is eligible for the balance of that school year. Any 8th-grade student born before Sept. 1, 2010, is ineligible for interscholastic scrimmages or contests in Michigan except that he or she may play on the 9th-grade squad of that junior high school, provided all other regulations pertaining to eligibility are met.

SECTION 3 (A) Physical Examinations- Have passed a current year physical examination from an examining physician (M.D., or D.O.). Records must be on file in the school office. The exam must be given after April 15th of the previous school year. The primary purpose of the examination is to screen each athlete for any major or glaring medical deficiency.

SECTION 4-Students in grades 6, 7 or 8 are not limited in the number of semesters or trimesters in which they may be eligible for interscholastic athletics. Ninth-grade students in junior high/middle and senior high schools are subject to Regulation I, Section 4 and applicable Interpretations. Interpretations 21-27 of Regulation I, Section 4 are applicable to junior high/middle schools.

COMPETITION SECTION 5—Students enrolled in grades 6, 7 or 8 are not limited in the number of semesters or trimesters of competition. Ninth-grade students in junior high/middle schools and senior high schools are limited in the number of semesters of competition as in Regulation I, Section 5.

## Awards:

A. A student may accept for participation in athletics a symbolic or merchandise award which does not have a value or cost in excess of $40.00.
B. Awards for athletic participation in the form of cash, merchandise certificates, or any other type of negotiable documents are never allowed.
C. Banquets, luncheons, dinners, and fees or admissions to camps of events, if accepted in kind, are permitted under this regulation.

## Amateur Practices:

A. No student shall be eligible to represent his/her school who: (1) has received money or other valuable consideration from any source participating in athletics, sports, or games listed in Section B, (2) has received money or other valuable consideration for officiating in interscholastic athletic contests, or (3) has signed a professional athletic contract.
B. A student shall be ineligible under this regulation if he or she violates its amateur provisions, only in the following activities: Baseball, Cross Country, Football (11-man, 8-man, or 6-man), Golf, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Cheerleading, Skiing, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Tennis, Track, Volleyball, or Wrestling.

## Limited Team Membership:

A student who after practicing with or participating in an athletic contest or scrimmage as a member of a middle school athletic team, participates in any athletic competition not sponsored by his or her school in the same sport during the season, shall become ineligible for a minimum of the next two (2) contests, and maximum of the remainder of that season in that school year. A student shall not compete at any time in any sport under MHSAA jurisdiction in any of the following events: (1) All star contests, regardless of the method of selection, (2) All star fund raising events of similar exhibitions if they involve contestants other than the students and faculty. of that student's school, (3) Any event which is a national middle school championship, or the qualification thereto. Participation in such a contest by a middle school student shall cause that student to become ineligible for all interscholastic athletics for a maximum period of one year of the school enrollment from the date of the athlete's last violation of the regulation. Outside athletic participation by an athlete in programs such as AAU, AYSO and JO are viewed as complementary in nature to school-sponsored athletics. Such programs should not detract from or take away from school-sponsored athletics. When conflicts arise, it is understood that school athletics will assume priority. Team membership during boys and girls basketball season and girls volleyball season may be limited due to practice facilities and coach availability.

## Otsego Middle School Eligibility:

- All athletes participating in middle school athletics are expected to maintain a high standard of grades and personal behavior.
- Eligibility will be checked on a weekly basis (Friday by 10:00 a.m.). A compiled eligibility report will be given to coaches on Friday and will affect in-season athlete's eligibility to play for the following week Monday through Saturday.

**Academic Eligibility:**

- An athlete must be passing (D- or above) all but one class.
- An athlete failing two or more classes will be ineligible.
- An athlete receiving a D in three or more classes will be placed on a warning list.

**Citizenship Eligibility:**

- A warning will be given to an athlete for two failing citizenship marks.
- If an athlete accumulates three failing citizenship marks within one week they will be ineligible.
- If an athlete accumulates three failing marks from the same teacher three consecutive weeks they will be ineligible.

## Attendance:

A student must be in school all day, in order to participate in afterschool activities that same day.. Any exception must be pre-arranged and approved by the Athletic Director or Principal.

## Training Rules:

Penalties for Violations of Rules Drugs/Tobacco/Alcohol First Violation Penalty - After confirmation of the first violation, the student will be suspended immediately for 25% of the scheduled contests in the sport in which the student is a participant. If the penalty is not fully administered during that sport season, the remainder of the penalty will be applied to the next interscholastic sport season in which the athlete participates and completes.

Second Violation Penalty - After confirmation of the second violation, the student will be suspended immediately for 75% of the scheduled contests in the sport in which the student is a participant. If the penalty is not fully administered during that sport season, the remainder of the penalty will be applied to the next interscholastic sport season in which the athlete participates and completes.

Within 5 school days of confirmation of a violation the student must meet with parents, Athletic Director and a school counselor for the purpose of: (1) determining and discussing the severity of the problem, (2) counseling the student and parents on alternatives for the prevention of the behavior(s)

related to the said violation.

The penalty period will begin from the date of confirmation provided the student/athlete fulfills the counseling requirement within the five-school-day period.

If the student/athlete fails to meet the counseling requirement within the five-school-day period, he/she will remain suspended until a counseling session takes place. The penalty period for the violation will then begin from the date of the counseling session.

No deviation will be allowed without prior approval of the Athletic Director.

Third Violation Penalty - After confirmation of the third violation, the student will be suspended from participation in athletics for the remainder of his/her middle school career and referred to the high school counseling department,

Athlete/Parent Appeal Procedures Under present law, the Principal of Otsego Public Schools are delegated the authority to temporarily suspend a student from school.

1. Parents or legal guardians may request a conference with the principal or designee. Such requests must be made within the period of suspension. The principal shall affirm or modify the decision of the athletic director within two school days from hearing the appeal. The principal's decision in cases of temporary suspension shall be final.

## Miscellaneous

Potential Dangers in Athletic Participation Parents and student athletes should fully understand and appreciate the risk of serious personal injury associated with participation in the educational sports programs provided by the Otsego Schools. The safety and well-being of the participant shall be of prime importance to those in charge.

Rules and Regulations Not Specifically Covered The school reserves the right to set forth as part of the Athletic Code of Conduct those rules and regulations necessary and proper for carrying in to execution the athletic program of the school, which are not specifically stated here or as the need arises. When in judgment of the administration, a student's behavior reaches such proportion or is of a nature that it tends to adversely influence others and/or interfere with the athletic philosophy, or infringes on the right of others, this behavior is grounds for suspension.

Governing Policy Athletes and parents should be aware that the rules, policies and information contained in this handout will govern the athlete once the student has committed him/herself to any of our interscholastic programs at the middle school level.

Non-Discrimination Requirements All students at Otsego Middle School shall have an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from all academic and extracurricular activities and services. No student, on the basis of sex, race, or nationality will be excluded from participation in any program directed by the school unless the exclusion is lawful.

## A Parent's Guide to Concussion in Sports (National Federation of State High School Association)

### What is a concussion?

- A concussion is a brain injury which results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function.
- A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body.
- An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (knocked out) to suffer a concussion.

### Concussion Facts

- It is estimated that over 140,000 high school athletes across the United States suffer a concussion each year. (Data from NFHS Injury Surveillance System)
- Concussions occur most frequently in football, but girl's lacrosse, girls' soccer, boy's lacrosse, wrestling and girls' basketball follow closely behind. All athletes are at risk.
- A concussion is a traumatic injury to the brain.
- Concussion symptoms may last from a few days to several months.
- Concussions can cause symptoms which interfere with school, work, and social life.
- An athlete should not return to sports while still having symptoms from a concussion as they are at risk for prolonging symptoms and further injury.
- A concussion may cause multiple symptoms. Many symptoms appear immediately after the injury, while others may develop over the next several days of weeks. The symptoms may be subtle and are often difficult to fully recognize.

### What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

**Symptoms reported by the athlete**

- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Can't recall events after hit

**Signs observed by parents, friends, teachers or coaches**

- Appears dazed or stunned

- Is confused about what to do
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers Questions slowly
- Loses consciousness
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit

## What should I do if I think my child has had a concussion?

If an athlete is suspected of having a concussion, he or she must be immediately removed from play, be it a game or practice. Continuing to participate in physical activity after a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, increased risk for further injury. and even death. Parents and coaches are not expected to be able to diagnose a concussion, as that is the job of a medical professional. However, you must be aware of the signs and symptoms of a concussion and if you are suspicious, then your child must stop playing.

## When in doubt, sit them out!

All athletes who sustain a concussion need to be evaluated by a healthcare professional who is familiar with sports concussions. You should call your child's physician and explain what has happened and follow your physician's instructions. If your child is vomiting, has a severe headache, is having difficulty staying awake or answering simple questions he or she should be taken to the emergency department immediately.

## When can an athlete return to play following a concussion?

After suffering a concussion, no athlete should return to play or practice on that same day. Previously, athletes were allowed to return to play if their symptoms resolved within 15 minutes of the injury. Studies have shown us that the young brain does not recover quickly enough for an athlete to return to activity in such a short time.
Concerns over athletes returning to play too quickly have led state lawmakers in both Oregon and Washington to pass laws stating that no player shall return to play following a concussion on that same day and the athlete must be cleared by an appropriate health-care professional before he or she is allowed to return to play in games or practices. The laws also mandate that coaches receive education on recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussion.

Once an athlete no longer has symptoms of a concussion and is cleared to return to play by a healthcare professional knowledgeable in the care of sports concussions he or she should proceed with activity in a stepwise fashion to allow the brain to re-adjust to exertion. On average the athlete

will complete a new step each day.  The return to play schedule should proceed as below following medical clearance.

Step 1.  Light exercise, including walking or riding an exercise bike.  No weight-lifting.
Step 2.  Running in the gym or on the field.  No helmet or other equipment.
Step 3.  Non-contact training drills in full equipment.  Weight-training can begin.
Step 4.  Full contact practice or training.
Step 5.  Game play.

If symptoms occur at any step, the athlete should cease activity and be re-evaluated by their health care provider.