



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

We Transform the World!

**CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS**

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON



Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association (GHCAA)

Handbook 2025-2026 Handbook Committee

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“Be active members! Go on the offensive! Play down the field, build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity.” – Pope Francis

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MISSION STATEMENT

Centered in the Eucharist, the Catholic Schools Office advocates for and supports Catholic Schools in the formation of disciples, educated in faith and intellect, who transform the world through service and evangelization.

VISION STATEMENT

As theological leaders centered in the Eucharist, we serve our school communities in their efforts to thrive as effective Catholic schools committed to unceasing growth, academic excellence, and the evangelizing mission of the Church. Our Catholic school graduates reflect the face of God as faithful disciples, active learners, critical thinkers, and effective communicators.

GHCAA MISSION STATEMENT

Rooted in our Catholic Faith, the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association fosters the holistic development of student-athletes by promoting sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline, and integrity. Through athletics, we cultivate faithful disciples who honor God with their talents, grow in character and leadership, and serve as witnesses to the Gospel in their communities and beyond.

DEFINITIONS

The Archdiocese of Galveston Houston- The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is the local Church, and it serves more than 1.7 million Catholics in 146 parishes across 10 counties, a geographic area of 8,800 square miles in the State of Texas.

Athletic Director- The person appointed by the school Principal to oversee, organize, direct and implement the athletic program on the campus.

Catholic Schools Office (CSO) - The Catholic Schools Office is charged with the general administration and support of the Catholic Church's educational ministry of the Archdiocese.

Commissioner- The person responsible for organizing and directing their assigned sport across member schools. Commissioners are appointed by the GHCAA Director.

Galveston – Houston Catholic Athletic Association (GHCAA)- The Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association is charged with overseeing and organizing sports activities within the Archdiocese so that member Catholic Schools may participate.

GHCAA Director- The person appointed by the Superintendent of Catholic Schools to organize, direct, and implement the sports programs for use by the member Catholic Schools in The Archdiocese of Galveston Houston. The GHCAA reports to the appointed CSO liaison.

GHCAA Executive Committee- The GHCAA Executive Committee, made up of a principal from each cohort and a CSO Liaison, collaborates with the GHCAA Director in matters of policies and procedures.

GHCAA Handbook- The handbook includes the policies and procedures of the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association.

Superintendent of Catholic Schools- The person appointed by the Archbishop to represent him in the administration and supervision of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese.

GHCAA ELIGIBILITY/MEMBERSHIP

GHCAA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The GHCAA Director is responsible for the overall running and organization of the GHCAA. The GHCAA is supported by and reports to the CSO Liaison, as appointed by the Superintendent. The GHCAA Director appoints commissioners for each sport, who are responsible for oversight and organization of the assigned sport.

SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

All Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston who have PreK to 8th grade students are eligible for membership in the GHCAA.

Schools must:

- Complete Membership Registration Form
- Pay annual Membership Dues and other required fees
- Follow the guidelines and policies set forth by the GHCAA.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- Students must be enrolled in a Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.
- Students must be in good standing in both academics and conduct in accordance with their school's handbook guidelines.
- Students must be in good standing with regard to past sportsmanship as defined by the Sportsmanship Code for Parents, Students, Spectators, and Players.
- In any given school year, students who turn 13 prior to September 1 may not play on a Junior Varsity level team (5th and/or 6th grade). In any given school year, students who turn 15 prior to September 1st are ineligible.
- Students must play on a team at the school they attend provided one is offered at their age and gender level. Students will be viewed as their biological sex at birth, and the student is to wear the uniform, be called the pronoun, use the restrooms and locker rooms, and play on sports teams that are of their biological sex at birth.
- Students may play on a team at another member school if none is offered in their age/gender level at their school of attendance and must be approved by the GHCAA and each school's principal. Schools should contact the GHCAA Director.

- Teams are determined by the school's Athletic Director with principal approval.
- Students are permitted to "play up" (above eligible grade level) in regard to grade level with AD and principal review and approval.
- Students are not permitted to play down (below eligible grade level) in regard to grade level.

Pre-Participation in Athletic Sports

Catholic Schools Office

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

To promote the safety and health of students involved in school-sponsored athletic programs, a thorough medical evaluation is required before participation in sports. This requirement is applicable to all students in grades K–8 within the Archdiocese who wish to take part in any extracurricular athletic activities. Each student must provide documentation of a current pre-participation physical evaluation, commonly known as a "sports physical," before engaging in any school-related athletic events, including tryouts, practices, training sessions, and competitions. This form is essential to confirm that students fulfill the necessary health criteria for safe participation in athletics. Parents or guardians are required to complete this form annually. Students who do not submit valid physical documentation by the deadline will be ineligible for participation until compliant.

Requirements

1. Timing of Physicals

- A valid physical must be completed **annually** by a licensed medical provider
- The sports physical must be dated within **12 months** of the first day of participation.

2. Accepted Documentation

- The physical examination must be documented on the school-approved **Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation Form**, which includes:
 - Health history completed by parent/guardian
 - Physical examination completed by a licensed provider
 - Medical provider's clearance for participation

3. Submission Deadline

- Physicals must be submitted **before the first day** of any athletic activity.
- Students without valid physical documentation will **not be permitted to participate** until requirements are met.

4. Medical Concerns or Restrictions

- If a medical provider identifies any health concerns or places restrictions on activity, the student may only participate in alignment with those medical recommendations.
- Any updated clearances or restrictions must be submitted in writing by the attending physician.

5. Responsibility for Compliance

- Schools are responsible for ensuring all student-athletes have valid physicals on file before participation.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for scheduling the physical exam and submitting the required forms.

6. Recordkeeping

- All physical examination records will be kept in the student's confidential health file maintained by the school.
- Records will be securely stored in compliance with FERPA guidelines.

TEAM ELIGIBILITY

- Teams will be deemed eligible provided that all players are meeting the eligibility criteria as stated in the Student-Player eligibility section above.
- Teams are required to have accurate, completed team rosters on file with the GHCAA prior to any athletic competition.
- All coaches listed on the team's roster must meet all eligibility requirements.
- Failure to meet the student and team eligibility requirements could place the team in danger of forfeiting based on the discretion of the GHCAA and the GHCAA Executive Committee.

COACH ELIGIBILITY

Schools select coaches to represent their teams. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the coach has completed all required trainings by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Principal approves selected coaches to represent their school teams. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that all coaches complete the necessary coach eligibility requirements prior to the first practice.

By listing the coach on any required GHCAA form and allowing the coach to act as its agent, the school is acknowledging that the coach is considered eligible at the school level.

Should a coach violate school rules, it will be considered a school matter and the school will determine the consequences for the coach.

Should a coach violate league rules, it will be considered a league matter and the GHCAA will determine the consequences using the GHCAA Discipline Guidelines.

A given sport's disciplinary rules (if applicable) will also be used in helping determine appropriate consequences.

Coach Eligibility Requirements:

- Complete Frontline (Formerly Applitrack) application.
- Complete CMG Connect Safe Haven training along with background clearance.
- Sign the Archdiocesan Confidentiality Agreement for Volunteers.
- Sign the Volunteer Coach Applicant Memorandum of Understanding.
- Sign the Coaches Roles and Responsibilities document.

- Complete Capernaum Annual Health and Safety Trainings.
- Sign and Notarize Pre-Volunteer Affidavit for Applicant.

SPECTATOR ELIGIBILITY (FANS)

Please see the Sportsmanship Code for Parents, Students and Spectators, found in this Handbook. This will be used as a primary basis, along with the GHCAA Disciplinary Guidelines (also found in the Handbook) when determining consequences for spectators that fail to meet minimum acceptable standards for behavior at school and league events. Attendance at youth sporting events is a privilege, not a right. This privilege can be revoked if a spectators' past or present behavior gives the facility supervisor, the school, officials, or the GHCAA sufficient cause for concern in regard to safety or ability to continue a given contest without unnecessary interference or interruption from the spectator in question. Failure to adhere to consequences imposed by any of the aforementioned parties may result in the spectators' future attendance being jeopardized and the team forfeiting the contest(s) involved.

OFFICIALS' ELIGIBILITY

The GHCAA determines the officials that moderate league games. GHCAA strives to provide competent officials for all sports. Schools can only use referees from the approved GHCAA officials' source. Schools located in an area without an affiliated official's chapter must obtain prior GHCAA approval of all officials.

ATHLETIC TRAINER ELIGIBILITY

If your school utilizes an athletic trainer, he/she must meet the following requirements:

- Submit a request to provide services through the CSO Services Request Link.
- Complete CMG Connect Safe Haven training.
- Criminal Background Clearance
- License/Certification
- Certificate of Insurance including Archdiocesan minimum requirements
- Review and sign Confidentiality Agreement.
- Sign Memorandum of Understanding

STRUCTURAL GUIDELINES

TEAM PLACEMENT

- All eligible students that desire to compete in a sport will be given the opportunity to participate.
- Member school (Athletic Director, Coach, Principal) determine team assignment for its players within GHCAA guidelines for each sport.
- Member schools may utilize fair and reasonable evaluation tools (tryouts, skill based and physical fitness assessments, etc.) to determine team assignments.

PLAYING TIME

Member schools should make every effort to ensure that playing time is given adequately

and fairly for all players. It is recommended that players play on one team per day. However, they may play on a second team on the same day if needed due to lack of players. The GHCAA is a grade level based competitive league and is not age based. However, there are age limits, which can be found in the Student Eligibility section of the GHCAA Handbook. Competitive teams will be offered to 6th, 7th, and 8th grades with appropriate skill levels. Schools may allow students in lower grades (5th and 4th) to participate if needed to field a team. The campus principal must give the approval after considering the maturity, skill and safety of the lower grade student.

GAMES

SCHEDULING

Scheduling will be designed to offer as many games as possible for each team with older teams sometimes getting more games than younger teams. The scheduling of games is also affected by a school's geography and facilities. All games, regardless of sport, are expected to start at the scheduled time. Any game not starting on time is a forfeit. However, some exceptions include:

A team is not able to field the legal minimum number of players at start time, but knows that it will be able to do so shortly thereafter,

- Officials are required to officiate an official game.
- If official is running late, conversations with coaches, AD and/or facility administrator to determine if the game will be delayed, cancelled or rescheduled.
- Inclement weather or due to the hot weather guidelines.
- Facility concerns

If a game cannot start on time, discussions amongst the coaches, referees, AD and/or facility administrator to determine if the game will be delayed, forfeited, cancelled or rescheduled, so that it does not affect other games scheduled for the remainder of the day.

RE-SCHEDULING GAMES

Only athletic directors and principals may request re-scheduling. A request to reschedule games may be made to the GHCAA for the following reasons:

- School and/or Church functions not originally submitted to the GHCAA
- Facility concerns that prevent a game from safely completing or starting

Requests for re-schedules due to conflicts with external leagues and social events will be denied. All game changes must be sent to the commissioner.

LEAGUE REVIEW OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RE-ALIGNMENT

The GHCAA Director and Commissioners review policies and procedures annually with its' school athletic directors. The policies and procedures can be accessed on the GHCAA webpage by all Athletic Directors, Coaches, and Principals. The GHCAA utilizes a divisional

placement versus an enrollment based system for its teams.

Commissioners and GHCAA Director will review annually competition within divisions based on middle school enrollment and geographical location. GHCAA Director will make adjustments as deemed appropriate.

Rules and guidelines may vary from sport to sport. Refer to the National Federation of High Schools Sports (NFHS). Note that annual modifications may be made by GHCAA.

LEAGUE STRUCTURE

The GHCAA Director will determine division structure in each sport after receiving the annual enrollment figures from the Catholic Schools office.

Divisions and Districts will be divided in the best interest of the entire league, not an individual school or team. Districts will be determined based upon the number of participating teams and geographically to balance each district. The principal of schools involved must be notified of any mid-season moves.

POSTSEASON STRUCTURE

Only varsity teams will advance to the playoffs and are eligible to participate in championship games. Only the top 2 teams in the smaller districts will progress to the playoffs. Only the top 4 teams in the larger districts will progress to the playoffs. All playoff games are based on single elimination. The 2 remaining teams will compete in the championship game.

GHCAA SPORTSMANSHIP CODES

SPORTSMANSHIP CODES FOR PARENTS, STUDENTS, SPECTATORS, AND PLAYERS

COACHES: This code is to be considered supplemental to each school's expectation for conduct.

- GHCAA competitions exist for students to foster sportsmanship, leadership and teamwork; parents, coaches, students and spectators should set the example of good sportsmanship.
- Coaches are to comply with all school and GHCAA rules and expectations.
- Coaches should always exhibit respect for the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings at all times, both on the field or court and away, through his/her individual conduct behavior. If violated, consequences may incur including no longer being able to serve as a coach.

- Coaches are to be respectful of self and others (students, parents, other coaches, officials, opponent, etc.), supportive and encouraging in words and actions. Words, verbal or written, should always be encouraging with love and authenticity and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Coaches should address concerns to officials in a professional manner at all times.

PARENTS, STUDENTS AND SPECTATORS:

This code is to be considered supplemental to each school's expectation for conduct.

- GHCAA competitions exist for students to foster sportsmanship, leadership and teamwork; parents, coaches, students and spectators should set the example of good sportsmanship.
- Parents, students, and spectators are to be respectful of self and others (students, parents, other coaches, officials, opponents, etc.), supportive and encouraging in words and actions. Words, verbal or written, should always be encouraging with love and authenticity and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Parents, non-participating students and spectators are not allowed to address officials at any time, before, after or during a game. Coaches, Athletic Directors, and school administrators are the only individuals permitted to speak to officials.
- The only people who talk to players during a competition are the coaches, officials or student participants, never parents or fans. All coaching directives and input during a competition should only come from the participating coaches and/or officials. Parents, students, and spectators should refrain from any coaching directives and input during a competition.
- Parents, students, and spectators should always exhibit respect for the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings at all times, both on the field or court and away, through his/her individual conduct behavior. If violated, consequences may incur including suspension from future athletic competitions.

PLAYERS - This code is to be considered supplemental to each school's expectation for conduct.

- GHCAA competitions exist for students to foster sportsmanship, leadership and teamwork; parents, coaches, students and spectators should set the example of good sportsmanship.
- Student should make every effort to attend all practices and participate fully.

- Students that indicate a desire to play a given sport are fully expected to honor that commitment regardless of their eventual team assignment. Each member school has discretion of possible consequences for those that do not fulfill their initial commitment.
- Players should address concerns to their coaches and officials in a respectful manner at all times.
- Parents, students, and spectators should always exhibit respect for the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings at all times, both on the field or court and away, through his/her individual conduct behavior. If violated, consequences may incur including suspension from future athletic competitions.

DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES

Sportsmanship is the foundation for athletic competitions. Violations to the Sportsmanship Code, including technical fouls, ejections, and unsportsmanlike penalties, by coaches and players will be reported by the participating coaches to the GHCAA Director using the GHCAA Incident Report. The GHCAA Director, Commissioner and GHCAA Executive Committee will review the reported incident, and consequences may incur including game suspensions.

Violations of the Sportsmanship Codes by parents, students, and spectators will be reported to the appropriate school principal by the participating Coach or Athletic Director and addressed at the local level.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

The purpose of this process is to provide an orderly procedure for equitable and prompt resolution of complaints. This process is intended to resolve disputes through subsidiarity, at the lowest possible level, in a cooperative, conciliatory Christian atmosphere.

For:	Concern With	Level I (in writing)	Level II (in writing)	Level III (in writing)	Level IV (in writing)
Spectators/Parents	Coach	Athletic Director	Principal	GHCAA Director	GHCAA Executive Committee
Coaches	Spectator (spectator issue) OR Athletic Director (player or game issue)	Athletic Director	Principal	GHCAA Director	GHCAA Executive Committee
Athletic Directors	Coach (player or game issue) OR Spectator (spectator issue)	*Principal (school issue) OR GHCAA Director (league issue)			

*The school Principal has the final say on any school matter, and the GHCAA Director has the final ruling on any league matter. Only a school Principal may file a grievance on behalf of the school. The GHCAA Director may seek the assistance of the GHCAA Executive Committee for the purpose of filing a grievance against a school.

The GHCAA has the right to change or amend this policy at any time.

APPENDIX



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

School Year
20__ - 20__

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All Athletic Directors are given a copy of the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association Handbook for the current school year.

Initial each line below:

_____ I have received a copy of the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association Handbook.

_____ I will read and refer to the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association Handbook.

_____ I will follow the policies and procedures in the Galveston-Houston Catholic Athletic Association Handbook.

_____ I will seek clarification from the Principal for any policies and procedures if unclear.

Athletic Director's Printed Name School

Athletic Director's Signature Date