

# Norchester Red Knights Football & Cheerleading Parent Handbook



Revised March 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to give parents basic information on what to expect this season with your child's participation in football and/or cheerleading. Please keep in mind that there will be other activities and events that may not be covered in this packet.

Our main goal and function of the Norchester Red Knights is to provide the best possible football and cheerleading learning environment to local youth. We seek excellence in coaching and training to allow each child to reach their greatest potential.

The Norchester Red Knights organization is entirely volunteer run. Therefore, the participation of all parents and guardians is required to make the experience for our kids a success.

## GENERAL NRK EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS

1. Keep the coaches informed of any concerns you have related to your child's health.
2. You must complete payment to register.
3. You must electronically agree to the consent forms and waivers.
4. You must supply your child's birth certificate or other proof of age, as required by the league in which NRK is currently a member.
5. You must have a current physical completed by private physician prior to any practice. You must provide current insurance information and update if changes occur.
6. You are expected to volunteer a minimum of 4 hours per registered Tackle player/cheerleader and 2 hours per registered Flag player/cheerleader during the season. We need your support to create an environment that enables your child to play football or cheer. All participants will provide a volunteer bond check at the beginning of the season (per athlete). If volunteer hours are not performed your bond check will be cashed.
7. You must assist in cleaning up of field after all games and practices.
8. NRK is a Drug-Free /Alcohol-Free / Tobacco-Free Organization. Any violations will result in immediate expulsion.
9. You may not bring any pets to practice or games for sanitation and safety reasons.
10. You understand that the Norchester Red Knights Coaches and Board of Directors has final determination of whether a child is fit and safely capable to participate in all practices, games, or other events.
11. You are expected to provide prompt transportation to and from all games/scrimmages for your child.
12. Communicate with Coach about any scheduling conflicts for Practices or Games as soon as they are known. Children missing from practices and especially games can cause considerable planning problems for all children and coaches involved.
13. Ensure your child has all required equipment and uniform at each practice and game.
14. You agree to return the uniform issued to your child at the end of the season in the same state in which it was issued and will clean the equipment before doing so. If you do not return this equipment or it is no longer in working order due to negligence, you must pay \$300.
15. There will be no refunds of registration money after August 1.
16. Regarding the Equipment and Uniform items provided by Norchester Red Knights

- a. You are accepting financial responsibility for the equipment and gear provided by Norchester Red Knights Parent Organization for the use of your child, and all parents must provide a Bond Check or provide \$150 to be held in escrow by NRKPO until the equipment is returned to an NRKPO representative. Additionally, a \$100 bond check is required for your volunteer responsibilities.
- b. You understand that the equipment must be returned during the designated equipment turn in for the squad your child participated.
- c. Norchester Red Knights will cash the equipment Bond check one week after the designated Equipment turn in if you have not returned all your equipment at this time. Timing exceptions are at the discretion of the current NCRKPO Football & Cheer Directors. You must reach out to them prior to the equipment turn-in date to make alternate arrangements if you cannot make the scheduled turn-in date.
- d. Depending upon the value of the equipment not returned, the organization may proceed with collections for the full value of the equipment.

## BEHAVIOR OF CHILD / ATHLETES

1. As the Parent/Guardian you are responsible for the behavior of your Child on and off the field. If it is determined by the coaches that your child has behavioral issues that are dangerous or violate the CODE CONDUCT FOR FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND CHEERLEADERS, you may be required to be with your child at every game and/or practice to assist the coaching team to manage your child's behavior.
2. This requirement may be modified via a written and signed Behavior Plan, agreed upon by the Coach, Football/Cheer Director, Executive Board Member and Parent.
3. If you are required to assist in managing your child's behavior at practices, games or other NRK events, you will be required to complete a background check and receive a passing response, prior to being allowed on the practice or game fields.
4. If there are known behavioral issues, you may begin this process voluntarily prior to the start of the, and proactively obtain the required clearances to limit disruption to your child's participation in practice.
5. These clearances are required by the Norchester Red Knights Parent Organization bylaws as well as the league in which we currently participate.

## PARENT BEHAVIOR

1. Parents and visitors at practices and games must stay in designated areas reserved for the spectators. Sideline areas on game day and the practice fields are off limits unless the parent has been asked to be involved in some aspect of the practice or game.
2. Parents are encouraged to cheer for their teams from the stands with enthusiasm but should never yell obscenities or derogatory remarks aimed at the opponents, officials, etc. or conduct themselves in an offensive manner.
3. As a result of such action, a team can be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct and the fan may be removed from the grounds.

4. If you are a vocal parent, cheer good plays made by either team. Understand that unsportsmanlike misconduct such as taunting, the use of foul & abusive language, or fighting is grounds for ejection from a game, and you will be asked to remove yourself from the area.
5. Repeated offenses, or seriousness of offense, as determined by the Board of Directors, may result in suspension from the field of play in your next scheduled game, and additional offenses could result in your expulsion from attending Norchester Red Knights games and practices for the remainder of the season/year.
6. Parents should always maintain a cooperative attitude towards coaches, participants, officials, and board members. Remember, all are volunteers.

## PRACTICE UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

### Flag Football Players

Flag players should arrive in practice pants or shorts depending on the weather and a T-shirt that is not too loose and can be tucked in and with a colored mouthpiece (not clear). Cleats (molder rubber) are a nice to have.

### Tackle Football Players

NRK will assign a date and time to hand out equipment. This is usually done approximately one week after practice begins. The equipment will consist of shoulder pads, helmet, and game day jersey, but the jersey may be withheld until the first pep rally.

Football parents are required to provide cleats, chin strap, mouthpiece (not clear), athletic supporter and cup, football pants with pads, practice pants, red practice jersey, tape, socks and white t-shirt.

### Cheerleaders

Cheerleaders are expected to wear appropriate clothing to practice based on the weather. Please do not wear jeans or other pants with rivets or zippers, no strapless or spaghetti strap shirts, or skirts.

Remember that cheer practice typically includes tumbling practice and stunting practice and dress accordingly. Clothing should not be baggy. No jewelry of any kind including post earrings, watches, friendship bracelets, hard plastic headbands, jeweled bobby pins etc. are permitted. Cheerleaders will not be permitted to practice or participate in games or practices if they are not wearing appropriate shoes. Cheerleader parents are required to provide specific cheer shoes (in white). Cheer shoes are not the same as white sneakers. Cheer shoes have a reduced tread so not to injure teammates when stunting.

## GAME UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

### Flag Football Players

Norchester Red Knights will provide your child with flags, a game jersey and game pants. Uniforms and equipment are to be returned clean after the last scheduled game. You will need to provide mouthpiece (not clear) and sneakers or cleats (molded rubber).

### Tackle Football Players

Game uniforms are handed out approximately 1-2 weeks before the first scheduled game or scrimmage. The football uniform will consist of jersey and game pants, as well as additional equipment listed above under practice uniform for Tackle Football Players. Please bring all pieces of the uniform to every game. If a child is missing equipment or uniform pieces they may not be permitted to participate.

All uniforms and equipment are to be returned clean after the last scheduled game. Failure to return equipment will result in a fine of \$300, in addition to the value of the equipment. You will be notified of the equipment turn-in date.

### Cheerleaders

Cheerleaders are provided bodysuit, socks, bloomers, and a competition hair bow. They will be provided a cheerleading uniform, in addition to other pieces listed above. Always bring all pieces of a uniform to every game in case the weather changes, which happens often in the fall. In the event of cold weather, please dress your child in black tights or leggings. They may wear a Norchester sweatshirt or jacket if the bodysuit is not warm enough.

All parents of cheerleaders are required to obtain cheer sneakers. Cheerleading uniforms are to be returned clean after the last scheduled game. Failure to return equipment will result in cashing your bond check. You will be notified of the uniform turn-in date.

## PRACTICES

We will be announcing the location and exact dates of practices prior to the start of the season. Days and times may be changed based upon field assignments and facility availability.

NOTE: Your child will not be permitted to practice without a valid physical.

All players and cheerleaders are expected to arrive on time for every game and practice dressed appropriately and ready to begin. Practices begin promptly and start with warm-up and stretching exercises designed to prepare the children for the activities and prevent injury. If you are going to be late or miss a practice, please notify your coach.

For cheerleading, if you miss practice during the week before a game you may not be permitted to participate in that weekend's game. The routine and stunts are refined during practice, and the safety of the entire team is considered in making this decision. If too many games and/or practices are missed, a cheerleader may not be allowed to participate in the cheerleading competition at the end of the season.

All children should be picked up promptly at the end of practice. If anyone other than the parents or guardian of a child is to pick up a child, please notify your coach in advance.

### Flag Football Players

During the month of August, the intent is to have two evening weekday practices from 6:00-7:30pm, and on Saturday morning, 8:30- 10 AM. Once school starts, practice will remain two weekday evenings from 6:00-7:30pm.

### Tackle Football Players

During the month of August, the intent is to have three evening weekday practices from 6-8 PM and Saturday 8:30-10:30 AM morning practices. Once school starts, practice is three weekday evenings from 6-8 PM.

### Cheerleaders

During the month of August, the intent is to have two evening weekday practices from 6-8 PM. Once school starts, practice will remain two weekday evenings from 6-8pm. Flag cheerleaders practice 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER

We will make every attempt to call off practices as early as possible in the event of inclement weather. Football practices may be held in the rain. Practices will be cancelled/postponed if there is thunder and/or lightening. We will continue to monitor practice once it has begun in case inclement weather is approaching. The nurse or assigned board member keeps on their person a lightening/thunder indicator or app. Practice is called off once the indicator or app signals an alarm within 10-12 miles. If bad weather has been predicted, please make sure that either you or someone else is available to pick your child up in case practice is cancelled once it has begun.

## GAMES

Games are usually on Saturday and occasionally on Friday evening or Sunday afternoon.

The game schedule will be communicated to you via the SportEngine app, once it has been finalized by the league. If you do not have a computer or internet access, please speak with your son/daughter's coach to plan to receive information.

You are expected to arrive at the time designated by your coach, typically an hour to an hour and a half before the game time for football players (45 minutes for flag) and 30 minutes prior to game time for cheerleaders (20 minutes for flag cheer) for warm-ups and practices.

Home games are typically played at the Connie Batdorf Park field on Route 100 (across from Rita's Water Ice, Dunkin Donuts and Bravo Pizza).

For away games, all football teams and cheer squads travel to other conference team locations, usually in Chester and Delaware Counties.

## MEDICAL CONCERNS

We are very diligent in making sure that all children are provided medical care when needed. Volunteer assistants will be at every practice and game to attend to any injuries. Any medical concerns with your child should be addressed prior to leaving practice with their coach. Please discuss with your child that if they ever experience a concern/injury that it is expected that they go to the coaches.

Make sure that your child brings a water bottle with their name on it.

Check your child's nails to make sure that they are clipped short. (Nails do get ripped off during practices/games.)

## PHYSICAL EXAM REQUIREMENT

All children are required to have a physical exam completed by a physician before practicing with the team or squad. This is done at the expense of the parent/guardian. Physicals must be returned to the Football Director/Cheer Director no later than August 1. Your child will not be permitted to practice or play/cheer in games without a physical.

## SAFETY

For everyone's safety no drills, hitting, tackling, stunts or tumbling should be performed without your coaches' supervision at any time. Cheerleading stunts include but are not limited to cartwheels, handstands, lifts, and tosses. We believe in safety first. We will not allow athletes to attempt stunts beyond their skill sets. Anyone caught performing stunts without supervision may be prohibited from participating in a practice or a game. Please contact the Cheerleading Director or Football Director for more information or any concerns you have.

## HEAT ACCLIMATION

NRK follows PIAA rules regarding heat acclimation at the beginning of each season to ensure the safety and comfort of all players. Please see your coach with questions on this policy.

## TEAM & SQUAD SIZE INFORMATION

Team ages and cut-off dates are determined by the league we currently play in. You will be notified once you have completed registration as to which team your child is assigned to. In the event that participation numbers dictate a Varsity and Junior Varsity team at a certain level, the decision as to which team your child is on will be made by the coaching staff prior to the game.



## ROSTERS

Once the roster “freezes,” a player may not be switched to any other team.

## PLAYOFF GAMES

At the end of the regular season, the league will develop playoff game brackets for the teams that qualify in each division. Teams continue in the playoffs to the Division Championship Game in mid-November or until eliminated. Details and schedules will be communicated to parents once they have been finalized by the league.

## CHEERLEADING COMPETITIONS

Each season, our cheerleading squads are invited to participate in the League’s Cheerleading Competition. Each squad prepares an exciting routine combining cheers, music, dancing, stunting, tumbling and crowd participation. Additional competition opportunities may be offered as well. Details will be communicated at the Cheer Parent’s Meeting

Tackle Squads compete against other conference squads in their age, skill level and squad size division. Flag Squad participation is optional but encouraged! The Flag Squad routine is typically an exhibition performance, meaning they do not compete with other flag squads for placement.

## TEAM PICTURES

NRK schedules a professional photographer to take individual and team photos each season for your convenience. No one is required to order pictures, but all players and cheerleaders should be available for the team picture. Pay attention to emails and our website at <http://NorchesterRedKnights.com> for more details.

## AWARDS

There are three major awards given yearly to individual participants:

1. The Caffrey Award: Given to a football player that shows a great love for the game by displaying sportsmanship and desire to achieve, even if he may not demonstrate the most superior football skills
2. The Spirit Award: Given to a cheerleader who demonstrates “true spirit” even if she may not demonstrate the most superior cheerleading skills.
3. The Judy Hahn Community Service Award: Given to a volunteer or alumni who exhibits generosity in community service.

## MANDATORY PARENT VOLUNTEERS

The Norchester Red Knights is an entirely volunteer-run organization — that means you help run it! We require that parents actively be involved with the program or with their team.

During the season, each family must volunteer at least:

- A minimum of **4** hours per registered Tackle Football Player and Tackle Cheerleader
- A minimum of **2** hours per registered Flag Football Player and Tackle Cheerleader

We highly recommend that you help more if you can.

There are many different fun ways to volunteer:

1. Executive Board Member, Director or Committee Chair or Assistant Chair
2. Head Coach / Assistant Coach
3. Team/Squad Parent
4. Concession Stand
5. Team Apparel Store
6. Game Announcers
7. Chain Gang" (assistants to the linesman)
8. Pre-Game Line Crew (night before home games)
9. Game Day Set-up (morning of home games)
10. Post-Game Tear Down (after home games)
11. Homecoming Event Committee
12. Fundraiser Event(s) Committees
13. End-of-Season Awards Ceremony/Banquet Committee
14. Business Sponsorships Committee

Note that for game day scheduling, we recommend you take a shift for the time slot before your child's game, so you do not miss seeing their game.

Again, this organization cannot survive without your involvement. Your kids will not be able to play football or cheer if you do not do your part. Therefore, if you do not meet your minimum mandatory volunteer requirements, your child will not play until you make up your time and/or we cash your bond check.

## FUNDRAISING

To fund our operational budget and keep registration costs as low as possible, we require all families to participate in one mandatory fundraiser.

We will also have several other fundraising opportunities throughout the year, and we ask that you participate as much as possible. Our Fundraising Director will keep us informed in regard to fundraising activities.

## SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

As with any successful non-profit organization, we are dependent on having adequate funds to operate and service the program. Some of the costs of running our organization include equipment and uniforms, practice equipment, field light rental and field upkeep. Please consider supporting our non-profit organization by signing up now for one or more of the Sponsorship Programs available. By sponsoring, you continue to help us purchase the best equipment and provide the best environment for our players and cheerleaders. See our External Vice President or visit our website at <http://NorchesterRedKnights.com/sponsorships/> for more details.

## KICKOFF / PEP RALLY

At the start of every season, the Norchester Red Knights hosts a Kickoff Pep Rally to get us geared up for the upcoming season. This is one of the most popular events for our players and families. Details about the kickoff will be posted online.

## HOMECOMING

Homecoming will take place at one of our home games. During Homecoming, parents are invited to walk their child onto the field prior to the game when their name is announced. It is a fun day to recognize the dedication and hard work of our Norchester families. Other activities occur on this day to make it special for you and your child.

## END-OF-SEASON AWARDS CEREMONY/BANQUET

Norchester Red Knights holds an annual Awards Ceremony at the end of each season. All football players and cheerleaders will be recognized. The winners for the prestigious Caffrey Award and the Spirit Award will be announced, as well as the 5-Year Award recipients.

## GENERAL BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are typically held the second Sunday of every month. The meetings begin promptly at 7:00pm at the Connie Batdorf Park field (across from Rita's Water Ice, Dunkin Donuts and Bravo Pizza). If the meeting location changes, it will be announced on our website. All Board Members, including Directors and Committee Chairs, as well as all Head Coaches, are required to attend all scheduled board meetings. Assistant coaches are strongly encouraged to attend as well.

Parents are also encouraged to attend. This is a wonderful way to know what is going on behind the scenes and what changes are being proposed. If you have any questions or concerns, this is a fantastic opportunity for your issues to be discussed and for you to get further involved!

## NRK CONDUCT RULES / SPORTSMANSHIP

All players, cheerleaders, parents, guardians, and spectators are expected to adhere to NRK Conduct Rules.

All players, cheerleaders and parents are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that they fully represent the spirit of the Norchester Red Knights in a positive light. No un-sportsmanlike conduct will be accepted from anyone, this includes but is not limited to, hitting, spitting, name calling, foul or abusive language, talking negatively about another team or refusing to shake the other teams' hands at the end of each game.

## CODE OF CONDUCT RULES FOR PARENT/GUARDIANS AND SPECTATORS

1. I will not force my child or any child to participate in Youth Football or Cheerleading.
2. I will assist the organization in teaching my child and others in the league that rules are important and should be followed.
3. I understand that children learn best by example and that I will always attempt to set a good example for my child and any other participating children.
4. I will teach and demonstrate by example the importance of good sportsmanship in victory and in defeat.
5. I will not publicly question the honesty, integrity or judgment of the coaches or game officials.
6. I understand that verbal and physical abuse is not to be tolerated – regardless of to whom it is directed. Verbal abuse includes swearing, profanity, and foul or demeaning language.
7. I understand that abusive or violent conduct with any child, parent, staff member, fan, referee, or any participating person is prohibited and shall not be tolerated.
8. I understand that sexual or vulgar conduct or language is prohibited and shall not be tolerated.
9. I understand that language that is considered offensive from a racial, ethnic, religious, or gender perspective is prohibited and will not be tolerated. This includes offensive items printed on apparel.
10. I understand that sexual harassment of any nature is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
11. I understand that drinking alcoholic beverages, using illegal substances or being under the influence of either alcohol or illegal substances at any Norchester Red Knights activity or sanctioned event is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
12. I understand smoking is prohibited at all NRK games, competitions, and practices.
13. I shall responsibly handle disagreements and shall not engage in divisive or destructive activities such as verbal and physical confrontations; gossip and/or the spreading of rumors.
14. I further accept responsibility for my family members, friends, guests and/or anyone who accompanies me to any NRK game, practice, or other activity, and shall ensure they exhibit good sportsmanship and comply with this Code of Conduct.
15. I agree to not bring my pet to practices or to games.

## CODE OF CONDUCT RULES FOR FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND CHEERLEADERS

I understand that a risk of injury is inherent in participation in the sports of Football and/or Cheerleading. I agree these risks have been adequately explained to me and I voluntarily accept/assume them. I hereby pledge to exhibit “good sportsmanship”; act as a “role model”; and comply with the NRK Code of Conduct.

I agree to conduct myself accordingly. I understand that a failure to abide by these rules could result in disciplinary conduct, including but not limited to, a penalty, ejection, game forfeit, suspension, and/or disqualification from further participation. I further pledge that:

1. I will be respectful of my parents, coaches, teammates, opponents, game officials, and teachers.
2. I will complete all homework assignments and work to improve my grades at school.
3. I will attend all practices and games; be on time for practice and games, and ready to play or perform when called upon.
4. I will work to improve as a player/cheerleader, teammate and/or person.
5. I will encourage my teammates.
6. I will bring my own water to practices and games.
7. I will keep all the equipment issued to me clean and safely in my possession.
8. I will notify my coach as far in advance as possible if it is necessary for me to miss a game or practice.
9. I will always take the safety of my teammates into consideration, and I will not act in any way that will create an Unsafe or Dangerous situation.
10. I will listen to my Coaches and participate in practice as directed to the best of my abilities.
11. I will not use foul or demeaning language.
12. I will not mock, taunt, or demean another member of my team or an opposing team.
13. I will not fight with another player.
14. I will not talk back to or be disrespectful to my parents, teachers, teammates, coaches, volunteers, and/or any game or league official.
15. I will not damage the property of another.

## COACH SELECTION, BEHAVIOR & BACKGROUND CHECKS

1. Anyone wanting to coach a team or squad must apply through the online application system.
2. Final selection of all coaches and assistant coaches is decided upon by the Board and Football/Cheerleading Director.
3. All coaches, assistant coaches, and any volunteers in direct contact with children are required to complete and pass a criminal background check and child abuse clearance.
4. All Head Coaches are required to attend Board Meetings; Assistant Coaches are strongly encouraged to attend.
5. Head coaches may not be a coach and/or board member of a competing organization at the youth level. This is to prevent any conflicts of interest between the competing organizations.

6. All coaches must wear NRK branded apparel to all NRK events. Coaching shirts are typically provided by the Board.
7. All coaches must sign the annual Coaches Code of Conduct document and complete all training and certifications currently mandated by the Board or NRK's current league rules.