2026 COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

As a TN STARS coach, I pledge to uphold the following Code of Conduct:

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players / cheerleaders ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player / cheerleader as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players / cheerleaders.
- I will review and practice the basic first-aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players / cheerleaders.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players / cheerleaders.
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players / cheerleaders.
- I will not grab or touch any player / cheerleader in an aggressive and/or physical manner (including, but not limited to, grabbing them by the face mask, jersey, clothing, hair, etc.).
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will always display a controlled and undemonstrative attitude toward referees and game officials.
- I will not engage in the use of crude, foul or aggressive language that may be determined offensive and/or engage in any conduct detrimental to the image of the game.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach, and I will teach these rules to my players / cheerleaders.
- I will use coaching techniques appropriate for each of the skills that I teach.
- I will maintain annual coaching certification through USA Football and the CDC “Heads Up” Concussion program.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.
- I will do my best to be a positive role model. As such, I will always conduct myself to maintain the highest principles, integrity, and dignity of the game. I must adhere to both the letter and the spirit of all rules.

By checking each of the above and signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Coaches Code of Conduct and Expected Behavior.

I hereby acknowledge that I will adhere to the TN STARS Coaches Code of Conduct and the TN STARS Rules & Procedures, and I fully understand that if I do not uphold them, I will be held accountable for my behavior. Any violations will result in immediate action by TN STARS. I further acknowledge that if I, or any member of my coaching squad, is found to have placed, or caused to be placed, an illegal and/or unrostered player / cheerleader on a team, my actions will result in the immediate and permanent termination of my ability to coach within TN STARS. By signing this Code of Conduct, I acknowledge that any violation of the TN STARS Rules & Procedures could result in the immediate termination and/or suspension of my ability to coach within TN STARS, and I will fully accept and comply with any disciplinary action taken by TN STARS.

Coach Age Division _____ Community _____ Head Coach / Asst. Coach (circle one) _____

Coach’s Printed Name _____ Date _____

Coach’s Signature _____ Date _____

ADDITIONAL TN STARS COACHING STANDARDS

These standards supplement the Coaches Code of Conduct and reflect current best practices for athlete safety and protection.

Athlete Safety & Abuse Prevention (SafeSport)

- I will complete all required background screening and abuse-prevention (SafeSport-style) training before working with athletes, and keep it current.
- I will follow "two-deep leadership" and avoid being alone, one-on-one, with a player in a setting where I cannot be observed by another adult.
- I understand I am a mandatory reporter: I will promptly report any suspected abuse, neglect, or misconduct involving a child to TN STARS leadership and, when required, to the proper authorities.

Concussion & Injury Protocol

- I will remove any athlete with a suspected concussion from play immediately — when in doubt, sit them out.
- I will not allow an athlete to return to play or practice without written clearance from a qualified health care provider.
- I will inspect the playing area and equipment before each activity, keep basic first-aid supplies on hand, and have an emergency action plan ready.

Communication & Social Media

- I will keep communication with players and families clear, respectful, and transparent, using approved team channels.
- I will not contact athletes privately in a way that excludes their parents or guardians.
- I will represent TN STARS professionally online and in public, and I will not post disrespectful, threatening, or confidential content about players, families, officials, or the organization.

Fair Play & Roster Integrity

- I will field only properly registered, rostered, and age-eligible players, and I will not take part in any effort to play illegal or unrostered players.
- I will teach and model clean flag football — no intentional contact, tackling, or dangerous technique — and require compliance from my players.
- I will ensure players wear required equipment (including mouthguards where required) and remove jewelry before participating.

TN STARS COACHES' CODE OF CONDUCT (WITH EXPECTED BEHAVIORS)

I WILL PLACE THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS AHEAD OF A PERSONAL DESIRE TO WIN.

Expected Behavior:

- Using appropriate language in appropriate tones when interacting with players, league officials, game officials, parents and spectators.
- Treating all players, league officials, game officials, parents and spectators with dignity and respect.
- Playing all players according to the equal-participation rules established by the league and abiding by the spirit of those rules.

I WILL TREAT EACH PLAYER / CHEERLEADER AS AN INDIVIDUAL, REMEMBERING THE LARGE RANGE OF EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SAME AGE GROUP.

Expected Behavior:

- Recognizing the differences of each child and treating each player as an individual while demonstrating concern for their individual needs and well-being.
- Encouraging all players, regardless of skill level, to be included as a member of the team and to remain involved in sports.

I WILL DO MY BEST TO PROVIDE A SAFE PLAYING SITUATION FOR MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintaining a high level of awareness of potentially unsafe conditions including, but not limited to, dangerous weather, inadequate field maintenance, and faulty equipment.

I WILL REVIEW AND PRACTICE THE BASIC FIRST-AID PRINCIPLES NEEDED TO TREAT INJURIES OF MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS.

Expected Behavior:

- Demonstrating concern for an injured player, notifying parents and cooperating with medical authorities for severely injured athletes.

I WILL DO MY BEST TO ORGANIZE PRACTICES THAT ARE FUN AND CHALLENGING FOR ALL MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS.

Expected Behavior:

- Establishing practice plans that are interesting, varied, productive and aimed at improving all players' skills and individual abilities.
- Devoting appropriate time to the individual improvement of each player.
- Conducting practices of reasonable length and intensity appropriate for the age and conditioning of the players.

I WILL NOT GRAB OR TOUCH MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS IN AN AGGRESSIVE AND/OR PHYSICAL MANNER (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, GRABBING A PLAYER BY THE FACE MASK, JERSEY, CLOTHING, HAIR, ETC.).

Expected Behavior:

- TN STARS will not condone any aggressive and/or physical behavior toward any player or cheerleader.

I WILL LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN DEMONSTRATING FAIR PLAY AND SPORTSMANSHIP TO ALL MY PLAYERS / CHEERLEADERS.

Expected Behavior:

- Adopting the position, teaching and demonstrating that it is our basic moral code to treat others as we would like to be treated.
- Exhibiting gracious acceptance of defeat or victory.
- Abiding by and supporting the rules of the game and league as well as the spirit of the rules.
- Using the influential position of youth coach as an opportunity to demonstrate, promote, teach and expect sportsmanship and fair play.
- Never inciting unsportsmanlike conduct, which includes but is not limited to running up the score, getting revenge on another player or team, leading the team in any kind of taunting chants/sayings, and anything else that is not consistent with good sportsmanship.

- Never tolerating any form of unsportsmanlike conduct from any player, cheerleader, coach, parent and/or fan — including negativity, disrespectful behavior, spitting, throwing of objects, hitting, fighting, and/or threats of violence toward any player, cheerleader, coach, official, referee, parent and/or fan.
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players and the spectators.

I WILL NOT ENGAGE IN THE USE OF CRUDE, FOUL, OR DISRESPECTFUL LANGUAGE THAT MAY BE DETERMINED OFFENSIVE AND/OR ENGAGE IN ANY CONDUCT DETRIMENTAL TO THE IMAGE OF THE GAME.

Expected Behavior:

- TN STARS will not tolerate crude, foul or disrespectful language of any kind toward any player, cheerleader, coach, game official, referee, parent and/or fan.
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players and the spectators.

I WILL PROVIDE A SPORTS ENVIRONMENT FOR MY TEAM THAT IS FREE OF DRUGS, TOBACCO, AND ALCOHOL, AND I WILL REFRAIN FROM THEIR USE AT ALL YOUTH-SPORTS-RELATED EVENTS.

Expected Behavior:

- Being alcohol- and drug-free at all team activities or in the presence of players.
- Refraining from the use of any type of tobacco product at all team activities or in the presence of players.

I WILL ALWAYS DISPLAY A CONTROLLED AND UNDEMONSTRATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD REFEREES AND GAME OFFICIALS.

Expected Behavior:

- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players and the spectators.
- Verbal and/or physical abuse will not be tolerated.
- The coach shall neither exhibit nor tolerate any behavior from others (staff, squad, or fans), verbal or otherwise, that might reflect poorly on an official.
- This includes, but is not limited to, arguing a judgment call in such a manner as to incite players and spectators against an official.

I WILL BE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE RULES OF EACH SPORT THAT I COACH, AND I WILL TEACH THESE RULES TO MY PLAYERS.

Expected Behavior:

- Becoming knowledgeable, understanding and supportive of all applicable game rules, league rules, regulations and policies.
- Teaching and requiring compliance with these rules among players.

I WILL USE COACHING TECHNIQUES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR EACH OF THE SKILLS THAT I TEACH.

Expected Behavior:

- Teaching techniques that do not enhance a risk of injury to players and opponents.
- Discouraging illegal contact or intentional dangerous play and administering swift and equitable discipline to players involved in such activity.

I WILL REMEMBER THAT I AM A YOUTH SPORTS COACH, AND THAT THE GAME IS FOR CHILDREN AND NOT ADULTS.

Expected Behavior:

- Maintaining a positive, helpful and supportive attitude.
- Exercising your authority/influence as a coach to control the behavior of the fans and spectators.
- Accepting and adhering to all league rules and policies related to the participation of adults and youth.
- Placing the emphasis on fun and participation while encouraging children to do their best.

I will do my best to be a positive role model. As such, I shall always conduct myself so as to maintain the highest principles, integrity, and dignity of the game. I must adhere to both the letter and the spirit of all rules.

INFORMATION AND SIGNATURE FORM FOR COACHES

(Adapted from CDC "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports")

Read and keep pages 1–3. Sign and return the signature page.

The Facts

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur in any sport.

Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth, causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull. This sudden movement of the brain can cause stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

How Can I Recognize a Possible Concussion?

To help spot a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things:

- A forceful bump, blow or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.
- Any concussion signs or symptoms such as a change in the athlete's behavior, thinking or physical functioning.

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. For example, in the first few minutes the athlete might be slightly confused or appear a little bit dazed, but an hour later he or she can't recall coming to the practice or game. You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

Signs Observed by Coaching Staff	Symptoms Reported by Athletes
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets an instruction	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light
Answers questions slowly	Sensitivity to noise
Loses consciousness, even briefly	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
Shows mood, behavior or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall	Confusion
Can't recall events after hit or fall	Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"

What Are Concussion Danger Signs?

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in an athlete with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, the athlete exhibits one or more of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Why Should I Be Concerned About Concussions?

Most athletes with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. But for some athletes, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks or longer. If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first — usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks) — can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussion can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.

How Can I Help Athletes Return to Play Gradually?

An athlete should return to sports practices under the supervision of an appropriate health care professional. When available, be sure to work closely with your team's certified athletic trainer. Below are five gradual steps you and the health care professional should follow to help safely return an athlete to play. Remember, this is a gradual process. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks or months.

- **Baseline:** Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next step if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.
- **Step 1:** Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate — about five to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking or light jogging. No weightlifting at this point.
- **Step 2:** Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement — moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (reduced time and/or weight from the typical routine).
- **Step 3:** Add heavy non-contact physical activity such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine and/or non-contact sport-specific drills.
- **Step 4:** Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.
- **Step 5:** Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or he or she gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the previous step.

Prevention and Preparation

Insist that safety comes first. To help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries:

- Ensure athletes follow the rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Where the sport requires a helmet, wearing one properly is a must to reduce the risk of severe brain injury and skull fracture. However, helmets are not designed to prevent concussion. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet, so it remains important for kids and teens to avoid hits to the head.

Check with your league about concussion policies. Concussion policy statements can be developed to include: the league's commitment to safety; a brief description of concussion; information on when athletes can safely return to school and play; and a requirement that parents and athletes sign the Information and Signature Form at the beginning of the season.

What Should I Do When a Concussion Is Suspected?

No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play. To help you know how to respond, follow the Heads Up four-step action plan:

1. Remove the athlete from play. Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out!

2. Ensure the athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. As a coach, recording the cause of the injury, any loss of consciousness and for how long, any memory loss, any seizures, and the number of previous concussions can help health care professionals assess the athlete.

3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians. Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents so they can monitor the athlete at home and at school.

4. Keep the athlete out of play. An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care provider* says he or she is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. The decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.

**Health care provider means a Tennessee licensed medical doctor, osteopathic physician or a clinical neuropsychologist with concussion training.*

CONCUSSION — INFORMATION AND SIGNATURE FORM FOR COACHES

Public Chapter 148, effective January 1, 2014, requires that school and community organizations sponsoring youth athletic activities establish guidelines to inform and educate coaches, youth athletes and other adults involved in youth athletics about the nature, risk and symptoms of concussion and head injury. (Adapted from CDC "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports.")

Sign and return this page. Initial each statement below.

Initial	I am aware of / I acknowledge the following:
	I have completed the "Heads Up — Concussion in Youth Sports" Training Program for Coaches. A copy of my certificate has been turned in to my TN STARS Community Director.
	I have read the Concussion Information and Signature Form for Coaches.
	I should not allow any athlete exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with concussion to return to play or practice on the same day.
	A concussion is a brain injury.
	I realize I cannot see a concussion, but I might notice some of the signs in an athlete right away. Other signs/symptoms can show up hours or days after the injury.
	If I suspect an athlete has a concussion, I am responsible for removing him/her from activity and referring him/her to a medical professional trained in concussion management.
	Athletes need written clearance from a health care provider* to return to play or practice after a concussion. (*Tennessee licensed medical doctor, osteopathic physician or a clinical neuropsychologist with concussion training.)
	I will not allow any athlete to return to play or practice if I suspect that he/she has received a blow to the head or body that resulted in signs or symptoms consistent with concussion.
	Following concussion, the brain needs time to heal. I understand that student-athletes are much more likely to sustain another concussion or more serious brain injury if they return to play or practice before symptoms resolve.
	In rare cases, repeat concussion can cause serious and long-lasting problems.
	I have read the signs/symptoms listed on the Concussion Information and Signature Form for Coaches.

Signature of Coach _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Coach _____ Date _____