

**OFFICIAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES OF THE
VIRGINIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
(As of July 1, 2010)**

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**ARTICLE I
VISION AND MISSION**

Section 1 – Vision. The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) is a service organization with the purpose of promoting athletic participation and sportsmanship through competition among schools accredited by an accreditation agency approved by the Virginia Council of Private Education (VCPE).

Section 2 – Mission. The VISAA was established to:

- provide fair and healthy athletic opportunities for students enrolled in an Independent school accredited by an agency recognized by the VCPE;
- serve as a governing body to provide leadership, vision, and establish guidelines and policies for its member schools;
- promote sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity;
- foster equal opportunities for all member schools to voice concerns, and be fairly represented in all policy and procedures;
- establish and maintain standards for competition that promote education, personal growth, leadership and citizenship; and
- provide leadership opportunities for all member schools.

**ARTICLE II
MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1 – Membership Eligibility. All independent schools located within the Commonwealth of Virginia are eligible for membership. However, membership is not automatic.

Section 2 – Membership Requirements. In order to be considered for membership, a school must:

- be accredited by an approved accrediting agency recognized by the VCPE;
- complete an application for membership;
- pay the appropriate required annual dues; and
- demonstrate the school's commitment to the vision and mission of VISAA by agreement to follow the policies and guidelines of the organization.

For purposes of determining eligibility for applicants, the VISAA will take into account prior adherence to or violations of VISAA policies and guidelines.

Section 3 – Membership Term. VISAA membership is effective only for one school year, and an independent school’s eligibility for membership in the VISAA is reevaluated annually as part of the annual application process.

ARTICLE III GOVERNING BODY

Section 1 – Executive Committee.

A. General. The business and affairs of the VISAA shall be managed and controlled by the Executive Committee of the VISAA (Executive Committee).

B. Terms. The number of Executive Committee members, their terms of service and election to fill vacancies shall be governed in accordance with the VISAA Articles of Incorporation and By-laws. The Executive Committee shall consist of four classes of members for the purpose of staggering terms of service. Terms of service are staggered in order to provide a pool of experienced Executive Committee members present at any given VISAA meeting. Each class of members is elected for a four-year term of service.

B. Classification of Members of the Executive Committee.

- Eastern Region (Class I) – commenced in 2010 with an initial term expiring at the first meeting in 2010 of the Eastern Region.
- Central Region (Class II) – commenced in 2010 with an initial term expiring at the first meeting in 2011 of the Central Region.
- Western Region (Class III) – commenced in 2010 with an initial term expiring at the first meeting in 2012 of the Western Region.
- Northern Region (Class IV) – commenced in 2010 with an initial term expiring at the first meeting in 2013 of the Northern Region.
- Each VISAA member school is entitled to three (3) votes in the election of representatives from the school’s region, which must be cast one (1) vote per nominee. Each region will elect three (3) representatives consisting of two (2) athletic directors and one (1) Head of School or Assistant Head of School or other full-time school representative in a comparable position of authority. The 12 regional representatives thus elected will comprise the Executive Committee.

C. Officers. The Executive Committee shall appoint the following officers:

- Executive Committee Chairman;
- Executive Director;

- Assistant Executive Director;
- Secretary; and
- Treasurer.

D. Responsibilities. The responsibilities of the officers shall include:

- organizing the work of the VISAA Executive Committee;
- preparing the agenda for regular and special called meetings; and
- executing any other matters relative to the business of the Executive Committee as directed by the Executive Committee.

E. Schedule of Meetings of the Executive Committee. The regular meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held quarterly during the months of September, November, February, and May at times and places designated by proper notice to the members of the Executive Committee.

F. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee Chairman at the request of four members of the Executive Committee.

Section 2 – Regions. The state organization is divided into four regions. The regions are identified as Eastern, Central, Western and Northern.

Section 3 – Executive Committee Regional Meetings. Each of the four regional divisions of the VISAA shall hold at least two regional meetings annually, preferably in the fall and spring. The regional meetings are open to school representatives from all athletic conferences of the region. The purpose of the regional meeting is to receive information from schools in the region. All information considered pertinent should be requested to be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled VISAA Executive Committee meeting. Regional meetings shall be chaired by the VISAA Executive Director or his or her designee.

Section 4 – Committees for Competition.

- The VISAA shall establish Competition Committees or recognize previously established Competition Committees for the purpose of establishing state championship competition in the various sports.
- All Competition Committees should be made up of representatives of the four regions of the state, include at least one Athletic Director, one member of the Executive Committee and be chaired by a full time employee of a VISAA member school.
- Each Competition Committee should establish written criteria for serving on the committee. The Competition Committee should specify the length of terms of service and rotation of members on the committee.
- Each Competition Committee shall submit this information to the Executive Committee.

- Regular polls shall be conducted by each Competition Committee. The Competition Committee should have a representative from each conference. If necessary at large representatives may be added to the Competition Committee.

ARTICLE IV SCHOOL DIVISION CLASSIFICATIONS

Section 1 – Classification. VISAA member schools will be classified into the following divisions depending upon number boys or girls enrolled in grades 9-12.

- **Boys’ Divisions**
 - Division I – 181 and higher
 - Division II – 101 – 180
 - Division III – 100 and under

For sports that field two divisions, the breakdown is the following:

- Division I – 161 and higher
- Division II – 160 and under

Notwithstanding the foregoing, for 2010-2011, VISAA member schools will be classified into the following divisions in football:

- **Division I – 231 and higher**
- **Division II – 153 to 230**
- **Division III – 95 to 152**
- **Division IV – 94 and under**

- **Girls’ Divisions**
 - Division I – 150 and higher
 - Division II – 80 –149
 - Division III – 79 and under

For sports that field two divisions, the breakdown is the following:

- Division I – 161 and higher
- Division II – 160 and under

Section 2 – Appeal of Classifications. VISAA member schools and the Competition Committees may appeal to the Executive Committee to adjust divisional classifications. Any such appeal must be made by October 1 of the school year in which such adjustment is to be effective and in accordance with Section 3 of Article X hereof. In order to add a third division, there must be 60 or more teams participating in the sport, unless the sport had three divisions before 2008.

Section 3 – Classification Election. Schools may elect to play in a higher division. Any election under this Section 3 is effective for two school years.

Section 4 – Divisional Classification. A school's divisional classification will be based on such school's enrollment as provided on such school's membership application, which is required to be submitted annually in September.

ARTICLE V ELIGIBILITY RULES

A student who does not satisfy the rules set forth in this Article V is not allowed to participate in any regular season competition between VISAA members schools or any VISAA championship event (defined as a VISAA Event).

Section 1 – Academic Requirement. The student shall be a regular bona fide student in good standing of the school that he or she represents. For purposes of hereof, the term "regular bona fide student" shall mean a full-time student taking at least an average of four hours of classes per day at the school that he or she represents. For purposes hereof, the term "school" shall mean a private, preparatory, parochial or other nonpublic school that is accredited by an accrediting agency approved by the VCPE and that does not derive its financial support from state or local taxes.

Section 2 – Age Requirement. Any student is eligible for VISAA Events if he or she turns 19 years old after August 1 of the academic year in question.

Section 3 – Grade Level Requirement. Students in grades 8-12 are eligible for VISAA Events. Students below the 8th grade level are ineligible for VISAA Events.

Section 4 – Conference Requirement. Any student or school team ruled ineligible by a VISAA recognized conference is considered ineligible for VISAA Events.

Section 5 – Senior Status Requirement. Attending academic classes while classified as a senior at any school marks the student's last year of eligibility for VISAA Events. A student who has been classified as a senior at any school, who then transfers to another school, is eligible for VISAA Events during that transfer year only. The student may not gain additional eligibility thereafter. Post-graduates are ineligible for VISAA Events.

Section 6 – Non-Conference School Participation. Schools not participating in a VISAA approved conference may apply to participate in VISAA championship events if they participate in at least 50% of their athletic contests with VISAA member schools. Non-conference schools must comply with all VISAA tournament dates and times and VISAA eligibility requirements.

Section 7 – Home School Students. Home school students are not eligible for VISAA Events.

Section 8 – Multisport Participation. In order for a student to participate in more than one school sport in a season, the student must be a regular member of both teams participating in practice for both sports and participating in at least two scheduled contests for both teams during the regular season.

Section 9 – Gender. If a school maintains separate teams in the same sport for girls and boys during the school year, regardless of sports season, girls may not compete on boys' teams, and boys may not compete on girls' teams. If a school maintains only a boys' team in a sport, girls may compete on the boys' team. Boys may not participate on a girls' team in any sport other than cheerleading and crew. In the sport of crew, as permitted by the U.S. Rowing Rules, a male coxswain may compete in events for girls, and a female coxswain may compete in events for boys. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Executive Committee determines that boys' opportunities for participation in athletics have been limited in the past, boys may participate on a girls' team, unless the sport involved is a contact sport.

Section 10 – Penalties for Violations. A violation of these rules may result in one or more sanctions, as decided by the Executive Committee in its sole discretion. These sanctions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- forfeiture of any VISAA team or individual championships of which the ineligible student was a member;
- forfeiture of all games played by the school team of which the ineligible student was a member against VISAA opponents or by the school team declared ineligible by its conference;
- forfeiture of any VISAA team championship by the school or team declared ineligible by its conference; or
- ineligibility for VISAA championship competition during the following school year in the sport in which the violation occurred.

Section 11 – Appeals.

- A VISAA member school may request an interpretation or report a violation of these eligibility rules to the Eligibility Committee of the Executive Committee. Any request or report must be in writing. Such request or report should include all supporting information to enable the Eligibility Committee to make a fully informed decision.
- The Eligibility Committee shall consist of three Heads of School (or other school representative in a comparable position of authority) from the Executive Committee, the Executive Director and the two Athletic Directors from the region of the appeal.
- Following a decision by the Eligibility Committee, a VISAA member school may appeal such decision to the Executive Committee. Any such appeal must be in writing and must set forth the specific reasons for the appeal and the specific reasons in support thereof. Such appeal should include all supporting information to enable the Executive Committee to make a fully informed decision. The VISAA member school seeking the appeal shall not vote as a representative on the Executive Committee with respect to that school's appeal. The decision by the Executive Committee with respect to such appeal shall be binding on all parties.

ARTICLE VI RECRUITMENT OR INDUCEMENT

Section 1 – General Rule. Coaches, teachers, administrators, other school employees or persons affiliated with a VISAA member school shall not initiate contact with any student athlete for the purpose of encouraging the student to attend their school. Once a student and his or her guardians have made the initial contact with the school’s admission office and indicated their interest in the school, coaches or other representatives may approach the student about all school programs. This rule should not be interpreted as a restriction of the schools regular student recruitment programs (e.g., the use of newspaper advertisements, direct mail campaigns, media presentations and open houses). VISAA member schools shall not inappropriately induce a student to attend their school.

Section 2 – Specific Examples. Inappropriate contact and inducement include, but is not limited to, the following:

- The student is asked by a member of the school faculty, a coach or member of a “booster club” to transfer from one school to another.
- Special privileges are given to parents and/or students.
- Financial aid is given for transportation, room, board or tuition outside of a regular financial aid package. For the purpose hereof, a regular financial aid package shall mean financial aid pursuant to a financial aid procedure/plan that:
 - is in writing and on file in the school’s administrative office;
 - has been approved by the school board or governing organization of the school;
 - contains details qualifying the financial need criteria for aid;
 - includes all students in the grade structure of the school;
 - demonstrates through documentation the application and approval process of financial aid requests; and
 - shows evidence of including non-athletes in the award process of financial aid.
- Providing any consideration not afforded to all students.

ARTICLE VII CODE OF CONDUCT

Section 1 – Philosophy. The VISAA believes that interscholastic athletics are an integral part of the total educational program. High standards of behavior, scholarship, and citizenship are important to a sound athletic program. Students volunteering to participate in athletics should assume the responsibilities and will lead by example by demonstrating fairness, respect, and self-control. Athletes, coaches, officials and fans shall at all times conduct themselves in a reasonable and sportsmanlike manner. Each person will be responsible for his or her words and actions at all VISAA Events and shall adhere to the Code of Conduct at VISAA Events.

Section 2 – Sportsmanship Expectations. Each athlete, coach, parent, spectator, official or other attendee, by participating in or attending a VISAA Event, agrees as follows:

- I will treat any coach, parent, spectator, player, official, or any other attendee with respect regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sex, or ability.
- I will not engage in unsportsmanlike conduct.
- I will not engage in any behavior which would endanger the health, safety, or well-being of any coach, parent, spectator, player, official, or any other attendee.
- I will not use drugs, alcohol or tobacco while at any athletic event. I will not attend, coach, officiate, or participate in an athletic event while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I will not use profanity.
- I will not engage in verbal or physical threats or abuse aimed at any coach, parent, spectator, player, official, or any other attendee.
- I will not initiate a fight or scuffle with any coach, parent, spectator, player, official, or any other attendee.
- I will not argue with officials or go through the motions indicating dislike or disdain for a decision.
- I will not make any degrading remarks about any official, coach, athlete, or school.
- I will not detain or attempt to stop an official to request a ruling or explanation of actions taken by an official.
- I understand that conduct that leads to my removal from a VISAA Event may be considered a serious violation of the Code of Conduct and may result in discipline by the Executive Committee.
- I understand that, as a coach or as a school administrator, the removal of a team before the completion of the game may be considered a serious violation of the Code of Conduct.
- I hereby agree that, if I fail to adhere to the Code of Conduct while attending, coaching, officiating, or participating in a VISAA Event, I will be subject to disciplinary action by the VISAA Executive Committee.

Section 3 – Penalties for Violations. Any one or more of the following penalties may be imposed upon any school, coach, spectator, or athlete upon a violation of the Code of Conduct. Violations by parents, spectators or other representatives of a VISAA member school may be assessed against the particular VISAA member school.

- Warning – A warning is an official notice that the conduct in question is a matter of record and any such act must not happen again.
- Probation – Probation is a more severe type of penalty and is for a specified time period. A team, individual or coach on probation shall not participate in any VISAA Event.
- Suspension – Suspension is a severe penalty that may be imposed for any VISAA Event.

Section 4 – Procedure.

- The VISAA member school shall file a written report with the Executive Director describing the Code of Conduct violation.
- The VISAA member school may file an appeal of the Code of Conduct violation.
- If a team, athlete or coach is to be suspended, suspension effects the next regularly scheduled game or playoff game.
- Any VISAA member school or coach that permits any suspended team, athlete or coach to participate in any VISAA Event in violation of a suspension will be subject to disciplinary action by the Executive Committee, which may include but is not limited to suspension from VISAA Events for a specified period of time.

Section 5 – Statement to be Read at All VISAA Championship Events.

“The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association is committed to establishing and developing healthy environments for competition. We ask all spectators to remember to treat the officials and participating teams with respect. Cheer the strengths and victories of your team and do not denigrate the performance of your opponents, their fans or the officials. We expect that all fans will act in an appropriate manner, and respect the opposition and the officials. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the premises. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.”

**ARTICLE VIII
EJECTIONS OR DISQUALIFICATIONS**

Section 1 – General Rule. Conduct that leads to an ejection or disqualification will be considered as serious unsportsmanlike conduct. Depending upon the severity of the offense, a player or coach may be (1) warned, (2) placed on probation, or (3) suspended. These offenses are cumulative over the student’s high school season in which the first infraction occurs. The ejection or disqualification of a coach will be considered on a case by case basis by the Executive Committee.

[Note: VISAA acknowledges that, in some areas of player safety, a player may be disqualified from a contest for a safety rule violation (e.g., jewelry violation or batting helmet violation after team warning). This type situation may not carry any additional penalty. As in all cases, it will be reviewed by the Executive Committee.]

Section 2 – Guidelines for a Player/Coach Ejection/Disqualification.

- First Offense – If the disqualification is for unsportsmanlike, or flagrant illegal conduct, an official warning and a one game suspension will be assessed.
- Second Offense – Suspension until reviewed, and a decision regarding the penalty to be assessed, if any, is rendered, by the Executive Committee.
- Third Offense – Termination of eligibility for all VISAA Events for the season (reinstatement may only be granted by the Executive Committee).

Section 3 – Ejection/Disqualification Procedure.

- The VISAA member school shall file a written report with the Executive Director describing the incident that lead to the ejection or disqualification and the action taken by the school to resolve the violation or discipline the player or coach
- The VISAA member school may file an appeal of the ejection or disqualification.
- If a player or coach is to be suspended, suspension effects the next regularly scheduled game or playoff game.
- Any VISAA member school or coach that permits any suspended coach or athlete to participate in any VISAA Event in violation of a suspension will be subject to disciplinary action by the Executive Committee, which may include but is not limited to suspension from VISAA Events for a specified period of time.

ARTICLE IX FILMING OR RECORDING GUIDELINES

A VISAA member school that is not participating in the VISAA Event is prohibited from filming or recording that VISAA Event without the prior written consent of all teams participating in such VISAA Event. Filming or recording of a VISAA Event without prior written consent shall be considered a Code of Conduct violation resulting in possible suspension from VISAA championship events in the sport being played at the time of filming or recording.

ARTICLE X OFFICIAL RULES

Section 1 – General Rule. The official rules for all VISAA Events will be derived from the National High School Federation or NCAA rulebooks.

Section 2 – Exceptions. The Executive Committee may allow exceptions to official rules in some instances.

Section 3 – Enforcement of Rules; Appeals. Enforcement of all VISAA rules is the responsibility of each VISAA member school. A VISAA member school may appeal any interpretation or application of these rules to the Executive Committee. Any such appeal must be in writing and must set forth the specific reasons for the appeal and the specific reasons in support thereof. Such appeal should include all supporting information to enable the Executive Committee to make a fully informed

decision. The VISAA member school seeking the appeal shall not vote as a representative on the Executive Committee with respect to that school's appeal. The decision by the Executive Committee with respect to such appeal shall be binding on all parties.

ARTICLE XI SAFETY OF PLAYERS, COACHES, AND FANS

Section 1 – General Rule. VISAA member schools are responsible to provide safety and security to all participants and attendees of VISAA Events.

Section 2 – Weather-Related Policy. Lightning policy requires that when thunder or flashes of lightning are observed all participants are to seek shelter and safety within a proper shelter. No contest shall be continued until 30 minutes of clear weather has been observed. Agreement is required from officials and each participating school to resume the contest.

ARTICLE XII ALL-STATE SELECTIONS

Competition Committees are responsible for all-state honor selections. Clear and concise evaluation criteria are to be written, submitted and approved by the Executive Committee for the purpose of consistency in all state selections. Students do not have to be selected for all conference honors to qualify for all state honors.

ARTICLE XIII VALID EXPENSES

The VISAA gives concession rights to any host member schools. The VISAA expects rent free facilities from VISAA member schools. Tournament director must submit a budget for VISAA championship tournament to the VISAA that sets forth, among other things, estimated expenses for such event. Valid expenses include officials, security, janitorial services, gate keepers, clock operators, announcers, timing devices, lighting expense and a certified athletic trainer or medical professional. Host schools must submit an expense form and net gate proceeds to the VISAA for all tournament games.

ARTICLE XIV TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES

Section 1 – General Rules.

A. There must be eight member schools participating in the sport in more than one conference in order to have a VISAA championship event. VISAA championship tournaments should include the top eight teams in each division. Any addition or exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Executive Committee.

B. Tournament dates should occur on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday of tournament week. Tournament directors, after consultation with the Executive Director, or the Executive Director may make changes to scheduled play in the case of unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances, including inclement weather.

C. Competition Committees seeking to change championship play-off requirements, tournament dates or expansion of teams must submit a written request one year in advance of the effective date of the requested change. Compensation Committees should meet with the Executive Director to formulate requested changes of tournament formats.

Section 2 – Tournament Locations. Contest sites will be decided when playoff teams are selected and seeded. All sites must meet the requirements of the National High School Federation.

Section 3 – Admission to VISAA Events. Admission prices charged for VISAA championship events (e.g., playoff games, tournaments etc.) shall be approved in advance of the event by the Executive Committee. Regular season VISAA contests costs are set by each athletic conference.

Section 4 – Opt-Out. A VISAA member school may choose not to participate in any VISAA playoff if it so declares in the annual membership application form.

Section 5 – Approval by Executive Committee. Competition Committees may not determine a minimum number of games for tournament eligibility without Executive Committee approval.

Section 6 – Commitment to Participate. Once a team has qualified for playoff competition they must fulfill their obligation or have their absence approved by the Executive Committee. A team failing to fulfill a commitment to a tournament berth may be subject a one year suspension and may be ineligible for the following year's tournament.