

# VHSL Sports Officials Handbook

## OFFICIALS CODE OF ETHICS NATIONAL FEDERATION INTERSCHOLASTIC OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

The NFIOA Board of Directors has developed and officially adopted the following Code of Ethics for high school officials.

### Declaration of Policy

Schools have entrusted us to assist them in the educational development of their youth through athletics. The proper operation of such a process requires that officials be independent, impartial and responsible to people they serve. In recognition of these expectations there is hereby established a Code of Ethics for all officials. The purpose of the Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all officials.

**An official** must devote time, thought and study to the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to carry out these rules so that one may render effective and creditable service in a fair and unbiased manner.

**An official** must maintain self-control under all conditions.

**An official** must be prepared both physically and mentally, dress according to expectations, and maintain a proper appearance that is befitting the importance of the game.

**An official** must make clear all interpretations and rulings during the progress of a game, yet conduct the game in an unobtrusive manner.

**An official** must resist every temptation and outside pressure to use one's position as an official to benefit oneself. Under all circumstances, officials must avoid promoting the special interest of any person or group of persons other than the athletes under one's jurisdiction.

**An official** must refrain from commenting upon or discussing a team, play or game situation with those not immediately concerned.

**An official** must conduct the games as to enlist the cooperation of players, coaches and spectators in the interests of good sportsmanship.

**An official** must work with fellow officials and the state association in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during debate of points or rules at issue.

**An official** must remember and recognize that it is important to honor contracts regardless of possible inconvenience or financial loss.

Every member of the officiating profession carries a responsibility to act in a manner becoming a professional person. The conduct of any official influences the attitude of the public toward the profession in general as well as toward the official in particular.

## INTRODUCTION

An integral part of the Virginia High School League athletic program is officiating. Recognizing the need for qualified game officials for high school athletic contests, the League's Legislative Council authorized the Executive Director to administer the officials training and classification program by the regulations printed in this VHSL OFFICIALS' HANDBOOK.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Virginia High School League Officials Program is to advance the best interests of interscholastic competition by:

1. Aiding officials, coaches and players in acquiring thorough knowledge of playing rules in all sports;
2. Encouraging observance of the spirit and letter of playing rules and ethical codes on all occasions;
3. Encouraging and assisting interested men and women to become qualified officials;
4. Establishing a classification of officials according to qualifications and experience;
5. Fostering the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play.

### **ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES FOR VHSL SANCTION**

An association which is sanctioned by the VHSL is (1) listed in the VHSL Directory each year; (2) included on VHSL mailing lists; (3) given consideration in setting state clinic and examination sites and (4) given consideration in assignments for state tournaments and playoffs.

#### **To receive VHSL sanction as an association:**

1. Must be approved by the district and region in which it works. This approval shall be for contract period.
2. Shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, national origin or sex in either its membership or assignment policies.
3. Shall provide an assignment committee and/or grievance committee to review game assignments and to hear possible grievances by members.
4. Shall accept any transfer official from either in-state or out-of-state associations without requiring an excessive waiting period. A one-year probationary period is the maximum permitted. This maximum does not apply to new or beginning officials.
5. Shall not require members to join national organizations of officials (Example - IAABO, NAGWS) as a condition for officiating VHSL member school contests, nor require as a precondition of voting membership in the local association the taking of any examination other than the examination of the National Federation of State High School Associations.
6. Shall periodically review policies, fee assignments and membership requirements with member schools, districts and/or regions.
7. Shall not deny membership to properly recognized VHSL officials without stating in writing its reasons to the Executive Director of the League.
8. Shall not have any rule or regulations which conflict with the rules and regulations of the Virginia High School League.
9. Shall have a minimum of 15 members unless approved by the League office.
10. Shall officiate for a minimum of six VHSL schools unless approved by the League office.
11. Shall hold a minimum of six local meetings at which rules and mechanics are discussed.
12. Shall submit all requested reports to the League office by the announced deadline dates.
13. Shall file with the League office a copy of its constitution and bylaws and a list of current members.

### **ASSIGNMENT OF OFFICIALS**

The League staff does not assign officials for regular season contests. Where possible, schools and districts should contract with a local officials association to furnish officials for their contests. Where officials associations exist, officiating assignments should be made through that association(s). District approval must be given for a school to contract outside

an association.

It is strongly recommended that an official not be assigned to officiate a contest involving a school:

1. From which the official graduated; or
2. In which the official has had his/her children previously attend.

No employee of a school shall be assigned to officiate a contest involving that school. (In an emergency situation and by mutual agreement this provision may be waived).

Prior to all contests the officials' names, (and where applicable, position) shall be presented to each school and shall be printed clearly in each team's scorebook.

Only Officials Associations recognized by the VHSL and listed in the VHSL Directory are eligible to work playoff or tournament contests at any level.

No official shall be assigned to officiate a contest involving a school in which the official has children currently attending.

**Officials for District, Regional and State Tournaments and Playoffs** -- Criteria for assignment of officials to district, regional and state tournaments and playoffs have been adopted by the Virginia High School League.

Only Certified Officials are eligible to work these contests. Coaches' ballots, commissioners' recommendations and VHSL staff observations are taken into consideration in selecting tournament and playoff officials.

The League makes available Certificates of Distinctive Service for officials who have officiated for 10, 15, 20 and 25 years in Virginia. These certificates are available upon request by the association for presentation to the officials. Certificates are also available for all officials' who officiate a contest at the state level.

**Suspension**—An official may be suspended for any act which brings discredit upon the Virginia High School League. The length of the suspension will be determined by the Executive Director and may be appealed to the VHSL Executive Committee. An association may be sanctioned by the League when the association's performance does not meet standards.

An association may be sanctioned by the League when the association's performance fails to meet League standards.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICIALS**

**Uniforms** --The required uniform is specified in the appropriate National Federation Official Manual or Rule Book or, in sports which do not have published uniform requirements, will be announced prior to the season. Any exceptions regarding uniform requirements must be approved by the League office.

**Emblems** -- An official shall wear the VHSL Officials' Emblem on the left shirt pocket or in a corresponding place on the left side of a shirt without a pocket.

**Physical Examinations** -- Each official should take a physical examination prior to officiating each year.

**Sportsmanship Reports** -- Many League districts utilize Sportsmanship Report Forms on which the official rates the players, coaches and spectators of the competing teams. Officials are expected to cooperate with these districts by promptly filing these forms with the district chairman, secretary or other designated person.

An official must report all sportsmanship violations to the local commissioner. The commissioner shall contact the principal of the school or schools involved and all concerned will determine if the matter can be resolved locally (between the association and the school and/or individuals involved). The report shall be filed with the Executive Director for possible VHSL review by the Sportsmanship Committee. Items that might be interpreted as violations of an accepted code of good sportsmanship are included in the VHSL Handbook. When requested by a principal or the VHSL staff, an official shall promptly file his sportsmanship report with the requesting party.

## Officials Advisory Committees

Periodically representatives from local associations and school administrators are selected to serve on the Officials Advisory Committee. This committee evaluates current procedures of the officiating program and makes recommendations to the League's Executive Committee. Recommendations from local associations should be submitted to the Virginia High School League Assistant Director at the conclusion of their officiating season.

## REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

### New Applicant

1. Register with the association and submit a VHSL Officials Application Form.
2. Pay local and state registration fees to association.
3. Pass an examination as outlined under "Examination".
4. Attend State Rules Clinics are outlined under "State Rules Clinics".

**Independent Applicant**—In most cases an official will need to affiliate with a local association to get assignments. For a few exceptions this is not the case. To register as an independent:

1. Submit the VHSL Officials Application Form each year.
2. Pay your VHSL State registration fee directly to the League office.
3. Pass an examination as outlined under "Examinations" It will be administered by a local school principal or athletic director.
4. Attend State Rules Clinic as outlined under "State Rules Clinics".

**Previously Registered Applicant**—An official who has registered with the VHSL during the previous year.

1. Submit VHSL registration fee to the local association which will forward the registration fees and forms for all association members to the League office.
2. Pass an examination as outlined under "Examinations."
3. Attend State Rules Clinic as outlined under "State Rules Clinics." Transfer Official – The League will honor officiating records submitted by any state high school association which is a member of the National Federation of State High School Associations. Records from local officials associations or boards are not acceptable, unless verified by the state high school association. A transfer official must contact his/her previous state association office (addresses are available from the League office upon request) to have his/ her officiating record forwarded to the VHSL office. The official's record must include his/her previous year's National Federation exam grade and his/her number of years of high school officiating experience. Upon receipt of this information and the official's completed registration, VHSL will verify that the official is eligible with a corresponding rating to that held in his/her previous state. An official who did not take last year's National Federation exam shall pass a supervised examination under the conditions outlined under "Examinations" and will be given credit for previous years of experience.

### Registration Policies

1. The registration year will be from July 1 through June 30.
2. An individual must be 18 years of age, or a high school graduate, to register to officiate contests in the interscholastic program.
3. A high school senior who is at least 17 years of age may register with an association but must officiate below the high

school level.

4. An official shall not officiate until the procedures are completed. An official who officiates a VHSL varsity contest without having completed the registration procedures shall be suspended for the remainder of that officiating season.

5. An official should carry the VHSL Official's Card to all contests to present upon request to school officials.

6. An official who is inactive due to illness, job requirements or other similar reasons may retain his/her classification by registering with the League office and passing a supervised exam during the season in which he/she is inactive. The maximum time he/she retains this privilege is one year.

7. The Virginia High School League has reciprocity with North Carolina. All eligible VHSL officials will be permitted to officiate in North Carolina upon payment of that state's reciprocity fee. Eligible officials from this state are permitted to officiate in Virginia upon payment of reciprocity fee (\$1.00) to the League office.

### **REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

**FEE:** Registration fees are established annually by the VHSL Executive Committee and announced prior to each sports season. Contact the VHSL office or the local sports commissioner to obtain this information.

**REGISTRATION DATES—**The registration period for each sport is listed below. Registration received after the latter date will be assessed a \$5.00 late fee unless a waiver is granted by the Officials Assistant Director.

[Officials Registration Form](#) (posted 7/2/03)

**NOTE:** ALL SPORTS OFFICIALS MAY REGISTER DURING THE MONTH OF JULY SO THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FULL BENEFIT OF NFIOA MEMBERSHIP.

**EXAMINATION --** Each official must annually pass the supervised National Federation examination. Examinations will be given at centralized locations selected by the officials associations and given on the following designated days. Exams taken at these times apply toward the officials eligibility for the current season. An official who is unable to take the examination on the scheduled date and who has a valid excuse (illness, service or business commitments, etc.) may take an "emergency" exam under the supervision of the local association's commissioner. However, there is a \$5.00 late fee if the exam is postmarked later than seven days from the exam date. No exam will be accepted after 14 days of the exam date unless prior approval has been granted by the League office. Associations are expected to have their exams postmarked the day following the exam date. Failure to do so may result in a late fee being assessed.

**EXAMINATION DATES --** Each year VHSL provides its testing program in several sites by the schedule shown below.

Second Monday in August – Football

Second Monday in September- Field Hockey, Volleyball

Monday Preceding Thanksgiving - Gymnastics, Winter Basketball

First Monday in December - Wrestling

First Monday in February - Soccer

Second Monday in March – Softball

Third Tuesday in March - Baseball

Track & Field (deadline date) - March 10

**STATE RULES CLINICS --** Each year the League conducts a series of rules clinics at various locations throughout the state. To be eligible to officiate varsity contests and state qualifying tournaments and play-offs, an official must have attended the rules clinic that year for that particular sport. An official who fails to attend a state rules clinic for two

consecutive years will not be permitted to register the following year, unless excused by the Assistant Director.

### **OFFICIALS CLASSIFICATION**

**CERTIFIED** --May officiate varsity contests and (if selected) district, regional and state tournaments or play-offs.

**Criteria which must be met:**

- Score a minimum of 80% on the exam required by VHSL.
- Attend the state rules clinic most immediately preceding the state tournament or play-off in that sport.
- Meet the requirements set by the local association.

It is recommended that each Certified official have a minimum of three years interscholastic experience.

**APPROVED** -- May officiate varsity contests.

**Criteria which must be met:**

- Score a minimum of 70% on the exam required by VHSL.
- Attend the state rules clinic most immediately preceding the state tournament or play-off in that sport.
- Meet the requirements set by the local association.

It is recommended that each Approved official have a minimum of two years interscholastic experience.

**REGISTERED** -- May officiate sub-varsity contests.

**Criteria which must be met:**

- Score a minimum of 70% on the exam required by VHSL
- Must not have missed two consecutive state rules clinics.

### **REPORTING SPORTSMANSHIP VIOLATIONS**

Official(s) involved will report the incident immediately to their commissioner. A written report of the violation will be sent to the commissioner upon request within two days of the incident, with a copy forwarded to the school(s) involved. The commissioner will contact the principal or athletic director of the school(s) involved no later than the first school day following the incident.

All situations which are a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule must be reported to the League. These include but are not limited to:

1. Incidents involving damage to school property, including buses or other vehicles.
2. Physical or verbal altercations or other unsportsmanlike conduct between players, coaches, spectators or officials.
3. Verbal abuse by players, coaches or spectators directed toward opposing teams, coaches or officials.
4. Public criticism of officials by coaches in news media.
5. Coach ejection from the game.

6. Player ejection from the game.

## EJECTION PROCEDURES

1. Officials must make it clear to the head coach that the athlete has been ejected. This should be accomplished by an official accompanying the athlete to the team bench.
2. Officials should not send athletes from the playing area to the sideline to prevent what they perceive as a potential problem. Officials may communicate that concern to the captain and/or the coach but it would be the coach's decision only to remove the athlete temporarily or permanently from the contest.
3. It is the school's responsibility after an ejection to follow the correct procedures as it pertains to the penalty (one or two game suspension) or an appeal.
4. An athlete or a coach's ejection must be reported to the school as soon as possible, preferably the following day, either by phone, fax or email. The commissioner of the officials association must also send to the school, on the proper form, a report of the incident. A copy of that report must also be sent to the VHSL office.
5. All ejections, athletes or coaches, must be reported to the VHSL office by the offending school.
6. All ejections, athletes or coaches, must be reported to the VHSL office by the officials association working that contest.

## EXCERPT FROM 2000 VHSL HANDBOOK

**27-6-1 OFFICIALS RULE** -- *Officials for all League athletic contests shall be mutually agreed upon by the faculty representatives of all schools concerned. Officials for varsity football, basketball, wrestling, baseball, soccer, softball, winter gymnastics, volleyball, field hockey, and either the starter or the referee in outdoor track and swim & dive shall be on the authorized officials' list of the Assistant Executive Director. Administrative details of officials registration, classification and other regulations are included in the Virginia High School League, Inc. Official's Handbook, available on request. This Officials Handbook is an extension of the VHSL Handbook, and its policies are binding upon member schools.*

- (1) Districts are strongly encouraged to use a single officials' association in any given sport. The use of associations serving less than six schools is prohibited unless an exception is granted by the VHSL.
- (2) Beginning in 1990, any officials' associations being used by a district must be approved by that district and the region of which that district is a part. Such approval must occur prior to each respective sport's season.
- (3) Districts shall meet with each of their officials' associations at least once every two years to review appropriate concerns and policies.
- (4) Neither League districts nor local officials' associations may make regulations concerning fees, travel allowances or working conditions which change existing understandings until there has been an opportunity for mutual consultation and agreement. Districts and associations should appoint either mutual consultation committees or representatives to meet with the other when consideration is being given to problems affecting the two groups. Agreements on fees, procedures and policies should be made for a specific period of time (example - 3 years).
- (5) Only officials associations recognized by the VHSL and listed in the VHSL Directory are eligible to work playoff or tournament contests at any level.

### **27-6-2 Interpretations:**

- (1) VHSL registered officials should be used for Junior Varsity contests.
- (2) Officials should be selected and agreed upon well in advance of the contest. A principal or principals may request prior to the season that certain officials be eliminated (scratched) from working his/her contests provided that he/she makes his/her "scratches" by the procedures agreed upon by the local officials associations and the schools or districts involved. Additional "scratches" after the season begins will be permitted only if requested by the principal of one of the schools

involved.

(3) A coach or student may not officiate in contests in which students from his/her school may be participants except by mutual consent in writing and signed by all coaches concerned. This interpretation does not apply to track.

(4) A member school principal may in an emergency employ a non-registered official provided that a registered official was employed and failed to be present or when, in the judgment of the home school administrator, no registered official is available and the emergency official is mutually acceptable to all teams involved, and the home school principal writes a full explanation of the case and within three days after the contest sends the explanation to the VHSL Assistant Director and to the district chairman.

(5) Complaints by officials regarding sportsmanship or other incidents must be filed within seven days in a report to the schools involved, the officials' association commissioner and the League office.

**OFFICIALS HANDBOOK REVISED: 2003**