



**VIRGINIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION**

2025-26 POLICY MANUAL

2025-26 RULE CHANGES

A. Eligibility (Section 7)

To be eligible to participate in VISAA championship events or *any regular-season competition for a sport in which the member school has declared its intention to compete in the VISAA championship*, a student must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in Section 7.

B. Board of Directors (Section 3)

- Directors will serve three-year terms, with a limit of three consecutive terms.
- Upon the completion of the Chair's term, the sitting Vice Chair shall automatically assume the position of Chair, subject to confirmation by the Board.

CONTINUING PRIORITIES

While all rules are important, the following remain key priorities to promote fairness, integrity, and excellence across our programs.

A. Recruiting (Section 8)

Member schools, coaches, and staff must not initiate contact with students who are enrolled at another VISAA school, communicate with any student on the day of a competition involving that student, or make any negative or disparaging remarks about another school, its programs, or individuals. Additionally, once a student or their family requests that recruiting activities stop, all contact must immediately cease.

If a student who is enrolled at another VISAA school initiates contact — by attending an open house, requesting information, or reaching out to a coach — the school may respond, and it is strongly recommended that the school document the initial student-initiated interaction to ensure transparency and compliance.

Allegations should be submitted by the Athletic Director or Head of School, along with supporting evidence, to the VISAA Executive Director.

B. Sportsmanship & Ethical Conduct (Section 10)

VISAA expects all student-athletes, coaches, administrators, officials, students, parents, and fans to conduct themselves in a respectful and sportsmanlike manner. Each individual is responsible for their words and actions and must adhere to the Code of Conduct. Violations may result in disciplinary action, and member schools are accountable for the behavior of their coaches, student-athletes, parents, fans, administrators, and other representatives.

C. Financial Responsibilities (Section 17)

Schools are reminded of the responsibility to submit host financial reports and championship entry fees within 14 days of the event or upon receipt of an invoice. In addition to the assessment of late fees, failure to meet the additional deadlines below may result in more severe penalties:

- **December 15** – Fall Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports
- **March 15** – Winter Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports
- **June 15** – Spring Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports

Failure to meet these deadlines may result in the ineligibility of the school's teams in all sports or the loss of the privilege to host VISAA championship events in any sport.

D. Rules Compliance (Section 9)

Each member school is responsible for adhering to all rules and policies of the Association and for conducting its athletics program in a manner that reflects the core values of respect, fairness, civility, honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct.

Member schools have an affirmative obligation to promptly self-report any instances of noncompliance to the Executive Director. Additionally, schools, along with their coaches, staff, student-athletes, and representatives, are required to fully cooperate with any investigation or review of alleged misconduct. Such cooperation will be considered a positive, mitigating factor. Conversely, failure to cooperate may be treated as an additional violation and/or an aggravating factor when determining sanctions.

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SECTION 1 – PREAMBLE

1.1 Mission. The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA or Association) is the governing body and championship organization for interscholastic athletics among member independent schools in Virginia.

1.2 Vision. To provide opportunities, standards, and guidelines that encourage fair play, inspire excellence in athletics, and foster character development so that student-athletes can reach their full potential.

1.3 Core Values

- a. We balance academics and athletics.
- b. We compete and play fair.
- c. We value teamwork.
- d. We respect our diverse membership.

SECTION 2 – COMMITMENTS TO EDUCATION-BASED ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

VISAA and its member schools prioritize the development of student-athletes as individuals and focus on using athletics to teach important life skills and values. We strive to create a positive and enriching experience for student-athletes that extends well beyond their time in training and competition.

2.1 The Commitment to Rules Compliance. It is the responsibility of each member school to follow and adhere to the established rules and policies of VISAA and to conduct its athletics program in a manner that promotes the fundamental values of respect, fairness, civility, honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct.

2.2 The Commitment to Sportsmanship & Ethical Conduct. VISAA expects student-athletes, coaches, administrators, students, parents, and spectators to exhibit ethical and respectful behavior. Member schools shall embrace a set of values and principles that promote fair play, integrity, and respect for opponents, officials, teammates, and the rules of the game.

2.3 The Commitment to Responsible Recruiting. Identifying and attracting new students is a core function of member schools. To maintain competitive balance, a member school, its coaches and staff shall not initiate contact with a student who is enrolled in any grade level at another VISAA member school.

2.4 The Commitment to Others. As an organization dedicated to serving student-athletes, coaches, and administrators, we recognize that cooperation, benevolence, and empathy contribute to the overall well-being and success of VISAA. This commitment creates a foundation of trust, mutual respect, and a sense of shared purpose.

2.5 The Commitment to Inclusion. VISAA supports a community of inclusion that respects the dignity of the individual in the areas of age, gender, religion, ability, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation. VISAA is committed to operating all events, including those at third-party venues, in an atmosphere that is inclusive, supportive, and safe for all participants.

2.5.1 Requirements for Third-Party Venues. Any third-party venue that hosts a VISAA championship event must agree in writing to (and provide a copy of a policy that demonstrates how it will) deliver and maintain an environment that is safe, healthy, free of discrimination and solicitation, and respects the dignity of all persons.

SECTION 3 – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The business and affairs of VISAA shall be managed under the direction of the Board of Directors (“Board”). In accordance with the VISAA Articles of Incorporation, the Board shall be composed of not less than 12 and not more than 18 Directors fixed from time to time by resolution of the Board. The Board shall consist of a minimum of three Heads of School and six Athletic Directors.

3.1 Classification and Appointment of Directors. The Board shall be divided into three classes (A, B, and C), each having five members, with each class having distinct three-year terms.

Class A is composed of a representative from each of the following conferences: BRAC, LIS, VACA, VCC, and VMAC. Class A will be fully constituted in the 2024-25 year.

Class B is composed of a representative from each of the following conferences: GPAC, VCAC, VPL, one at-large representative, and a joint representative from the ISL/IAC/MAC. Class B will be fully constituted in the 2025-26 year.

Class C is composed of a representative from each of the following conferences: Metro, NVIAC, TCIS, WCAC, and an independent member. Class C will be fully constituted in the 2026-27 year.

The Nominating Committee shall identify and recruit candidates and present recommendations to the Board. The Board shall elect the members of each Class after receiving recommendations from the Nominating Committee. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Board, in its sole discretion, may make such amendments or modifications to the composition of the Classes as it deems necessary or appropriate to reflect, among other things, changes to the conferences.

3.2 Terms of Directors. Beginning with the appointment of each new Class, directors will serve a three-year term, with a limit of three consecutive terms. After serving three consecutive terms, a

director must rotate off the Board for a minimum of one year before being eligible for reappointment.

3.3 Officers

3.3.1 Chair. The Chair leads the Board and presides over all board meetings. The Chair works closely with the Executive Director and ensures the Board fulfills its duties in alignment with VISAA's mission, values, and policies.

3.3.2 Vice Chair. The Vice Chair supports the Chair and assumes the duties of the Chair in his/her absence. The Vice Chair serves as a key advisor to the Chair and Executive Director. The Vice Chair co-chairs the Board Nominating Committee with the Executive Director and helps ensure continuity of leadership within the Board.

3.3.3 Treasurer. The Treasurer provides financial oversight on behalf of the Board, reviews financial reports, chairs the Finance Committee, and assists with budget development. The Treasurer works with the Executive Director to monitor financial performance and ensure proper internal controls are in place.

3.3.4 Secretary. The Secretary maintains accurate minutes of Board meetings.

3.3.5 Election of Officers. The Board shall elect its officers from among the current members of the Board by a majority vote. The officers shall include a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary.

3.3.6 Terms of Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair shall each serve a term of two (2) years. These terms are renewable for one (1) additional consecutive two-year term, for a maximum of four (4) consecutive years in each role. *(Adopted 6/3/2025; Effective 7/1/2025)*

3.3.7 Succession of Vice Chair to Chair. Upon the completion of the Chair's term(s), the sitting Vice Chair shall automatically assume the position of Chair, subject to confirmation by the Board. If the Vice Chair is unable or unwilling to assume the role of Chair, the Board shall elect a new Chair by majority vote. *Adopted 6/3/2025; Effective 7/1/2025)*

3.3.8 Other Officers. The Treasurer and Secretary shall each serve one-year terms and may be reelected without term limits, subject to the will of the Board. *Adopted 6/3/2025; Effective 7/1/2025)*

3.3.9 Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in any officer position, the Board shall appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of the term, who shall be eligible for election to a full term at the conclusion of the interim service.

3.4 Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the Board shall consist of the:

- a. Chair
- b. Vice Chair
- c. Secretary
- d. Treasurer
- e. Executive Director, *ex officio*

3.4.1 Executive Committee Responsibilities. The responsibilities of the Executive Committee shall include organizing the work of the Board, preparing the agenda for regular and special called meetings, and executing any other matters relative to the business of VISAA as directed by the Board.

3.5 Meetings of the Board. The regular meetings of the Board shall be held three times annually during the school year typically in the months of September, January, and May on such dates and at times and places designated by proper notice to the directors. Special or other meetings of the Board may be held at places and at times fixed by resolution of the Board, or upon call of the Chair or a majority of the directors.

SECTION 4 – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director shall be the chief executive officer of the Association, subject to the direction and oversight by the Board. The Executive Director shall have the general charge of the business affairs of the Association and control over its agents and employees and shall do and perform such other duties and may exercise such other powers as from time to time may be assigned to him or her by the Board. The Executive Director shall be responsible for the general supervision of the operations of the Association and shall employ such support personnel as necessary and that are consistent with the budget. The Executive Director shall serve as the principal enforcement officer of the rules and policies of the Association and may conduct, or designate others to conduct, investigations of member schools as provided in this Policy Manual. The Executive Director shall have the responsibility and is authorized to provide rulings and interpretations of the rules and policies of the Association. The Executive Director shall have the powers ordinarily given or incident to the office of the President in a for-profit corporation.

SECTION 5 – MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Membership Eligibility. All non-public schools located within the Commonwealth of Virginia are eligible for membership. Membership is contingent on compliance with the rules and policies of the Association.

- 5.2 Membership Requirements.** To be considered for membership, a school must:
- demonstrate full accreditation by an approved accrediting agency recognized by the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE);
 - complete an annual application for membership;
 - pay the appropriate required annual dues;
 - demonstrate the school's commitment to the mission, vision, and core values of VISAA, and agreement to follow and promote the rules and policies of the Association, and
 - meet any additional requirements established by the Association.

For purposes of determining eligibility for membership, VISAA will consider prior adherence to, or violations of, the rules and policies of the Association.

5.3 Membership Term. VISAA membership is effective for one school year and is reevaluated each year as part of the annual application process.

5.4 Regions. VISAA is divided into four regions: Eastern, Central, Western, and Northern.

5.5 Regional Meetings. Regional meetings of VISAA member schools will be held each year on such dates and at times and places designated by the Executive Director.

5.6 Non-Conference School Participation. A member school not participating in a VISAA recognized conference may apply to participate in VISAA championship events if the school participates in at least 50% of its athletic contests with VISAA member schools. Any such request must be made to the Executive Director.

5.7 Forfeits. A member school is expected to honor scheduled contests and forfeits are to be avoided. Examples of legitimate or justifiable reasons to cancel a contest include weather-related emergencies and school crises. In the event there is a forfeit, and a member school believes that the forfeit was for an unjustified reason, the school may file a report with the Executive Director. The Executive Director, or his/her designee, will review the matter in accordance with the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

SECTION 6 – DIVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Member schools will be classified into divisions by sport. A two-year cycle will be used based on enrollment numbers for boys and girls in grades 9-12.

6.1 Classification. The 2024-26 cycle is based on enrollment numbers provided by member schools in September 2023. The 2026-28 cycle will be based on a four-year enrollment average (2022-2025). The following are the divisions by sport for the 2024-26 cycle.

Boys Basketball (4 divisions):

- Division I - 180 and higher
- Division II - 179-91
- Division III - 90-46
- Division IV - 45 and below

Girls Basketball and Volleyball (4 divisions):

- Division I - 161 and higher
- Division II - 160-76
- Division III - 75- 47
- Division IV - 46 and below

Baseball, Boys Cross Country, Boys Soccer, and Co-ed Golf (3 divisions):

- Division I - 180 and above
- Division II - 179-91
- Division III - 90 and below

Girls Cross Country (3 divisions):

- Division I - 161 and higher
- Division II - 160-76
- Division III - 75 and below

Girls Soccer (3 divisions):

- Division I - 125 and higher
- Division II - 124-66
- Division III - 65 and below

Softball (3 divisions):

- Division I - 165 and higher
- Division II - 164-80
- Division III - 79 and below

Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Lacrosse, Boys and Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Swim & Dive, and Boys and Girls Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field (2 divisions):

- Division I - 161 and higher
- Division II - 160 and below

Football (2 divisions):

- Division I - 200 and above
- Division II - 199 and below

Wrestling and Girls Golf (1 division).

6.2 Option to Play in a Higher Division. A member school may elect to play in a higher division in one or more sports. To exercise this option, a member school must notify the Executive Director by September 1 at the beginning of the two-year cycle. Such an option is effective for the entire two-year cycle.

6.3 Appeal to Play in a Lower Division. A member school may appeal to play in a lower division in one or more sports. Such an appeal must be made prior to September 1 of the school year in which the play down would be effective, and it must clearly demonstrate a drop in enrollment that puts the sport(s) substantially below the division cutoff line. The Board shall consider these appeals on a case-by-case basis and its decisions are final.

SECTION 7 – ELIGIBILITY

A student who does not satisfy the requirements set forth in this Section 7 is not permitted to participate in VISAA championship events or any regular-season competition in a sport in which the member school has declared its intention to participate in the VISAA championship event.

(Adopted 9/23/2024; Effective 8/1/2025)

7.1 Academic Requirement. The student must be:

- a. a regular bona fide student in good standing at the member school, and
- b. enrolled and in attendance at the member school at least 30 days prior to the date of the commencement of the VISAA championship in that sport.

7.1.1 Regular Bona Fide Student. The term “regular bona fide student” shall mean a full-time student taking an average of four hours of classroom instruction per day or at least five academic classes per semester/grade reporting period and working toward graduation requirements at the member school he or she represents.

7.1.2 Distance Learning Courses. Distance learning courses may be applied toward a student’s full-time standing at the member school he or she represents provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The class must be taken on the member school’s campus under the supervision of the school’s faculty.
- b. Tuition for the class must be paid to and collected by the member school.
- c. The class must fall outside the member school’s course offerings (i.e., not a replacement for an existing course offering).
- d. The course must be able to be applied toward the member school’s graduation requirements (may be an elective but must appear on the student’s transcript).

7.2 Age Requirement. The student shall not have reached the age of 19 on or before August 1 of the school year in which he or she wishes to compete. (This rule is not subject to appeal).

7.3 Grade Level Requirement. Students in grades 8-12 are eligible for varsity sports at member schools. Students below the 8th-grade level are not eligible for varsity sports. (This rule is not subject to appeal).

7.4 Reclassification of a Student. A student wishing to repeat a grade (or reclassify) must do so for non-athletic reasons and in compliance with the member school's conference requirements, as applicable. The change in grade status must be reflected in all member school records and publications as soon as practicable following the date of reclassification. A student may not complete the graduation requirements of a school for any diploma category and receive athletic eligibility in the following year.

7.5 Senior Status Requirement. Attending academic classes while classified as a senior at any school marks the student's last year of eligibility. A student who has been classified as a senior at any school, who then transfers during the senior year to a member school, is eligible only during the year of transfer. The student may not gain additional eligibility thereafter. Post-graduate students are ineligible.

7.6 Conference Eligibility. Any student or team ruled ineligible by a member school's conference is ineligible. A conference's determination of eligibility is not appealable to VISAA.

7.7 Multi-Sport Participation. For a student to participate in more than one 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.

7.8 Gender.

7.8.1 If a member school maintains separate teams in the same sport for girls and boys during the school year, regardless of the sports season, girls may not compete on boys' teams, and boys may not compete on girls' teams. If a member 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. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Board 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.

7.8.2 To maintain competitive fairness in VISAA championship events, participation shall be determined by a student's biological sex rather than gender or gender identity. For any regular season competition, such decisions are entrusted to the participating schools. VISAA will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy to the extent required by law.

7.9 Amateur Status. Students must be amateur athletes in the sport(s) in which they participate, and they may not accept compensation in exchange for athletic performance or participation, or as an inducement for enrollment. Students are permitted to benefit from their Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL), provided:

- a. they do not receive compensation contingent on enrollment;
- b. they do not receive compensation for athletic participation or achievement;
- c. they do not receive compensation for work not performed;
- d. there is no affiliation with, or reference to their school or to VISAA;
- e. they do not appear in the uniform of their school;
- f. they do not utilize the marks, logos, or name of their school or VISAA, and
- g. they do not receive compensation from a school *NIL Collective*, defined as a group of alumni, supporters, parents, or other people who form an entity to provide NIL opportunities to student-athletes of a specific school.

7.10 Financial Aid. Any member school having a financial aid program based on demonstrated need must have in place a written policy/procedure approved by the school governing board for calculating and documenting awards. Any financial aid must be awarded in accordance with the school's regular financial aid policies and may not be awarded based on athletic participation. Merit-based aid programs must be made available to all students who meet the qualifications. Any financial aid or merit award offered to a prospective student may not exceed the typical amount awarded to any student of similar need/qualifications regardless of athletic participation. Special privileges shall not be given to parents and/or students. For purpose hereof, a regular financial aid package shall mean financial aid pursuant to a documented procedure/plan that:

- a. is in writing and on file in the school's administrative office;
- b. has been approved by the school board or governing body of the school;
- c. contains details qualifying the financial need criteria for aid;
- d. includes all students in the grade structure of the school;
- e. demonstrates the application and approval process of financial aid requests, and
- f. shows evidence of including non-athletes in the financial aid award process.

7.11 Transfers.

7.11.1 VISAA-to-VISAA Transfer. A student transferring from one member school to another member school (VISAA-to-VISAA transfer) is eligible to compete immediately in a varsity sport at the new school provided the student-athlete:

- a. is in good financial standing upon departure from the first school and receives a statement of release of financial obligations from the first school,

- b. has not engaged in competition in that sport during the current season at the first school, and
- c. meets all VISAA eligibility requirements.

The Executive Director, in his/her sole discretion, may grant a waiver to this transfer rule for extenuating circumstances. An in-season transfer who competed in a sport at the first school is permitted to practice at the new school, provided the student-athlete meets all VISAA eligibility requirements.

7.11.2 Non VISAA-to-VISAA Transfer. A student transferring from a non-VISAA school to a VISAA member school is eligible to compete immediately in a varsity sport at the VISAA member school (even if the student engaged in competition in that sport during the current season), provided the student-athlete meets all VISAA eligibility requirements.

7.12 Sanctions. Alleged violations are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

SECTION 8 – RECRUITING

8.1 Contact. A *Contact* is any form of direct personal communication with a student or his/her family, which includes, but is not limited to, face-to-face encounters, telephone calls, texts, emails, and direct messaging via social media or other platforms.

8.2 Enrolled. A student is considered *enrolled* at a VISAA member school once the family has signed the enrollment or re-enrollment contract.

8.3 Prohibited Conduct. A member school, its coaches, or staff:

- a. Shall not initiate Contact with a student who is *enrolled* in another VISAA member school.
- b. Shall not have Contact with a student from any school on the day of a competition that involves the member school and that student (e.g., head-to-head competition, or participation in the same tournament/meet).
- c. Shall cease otherwise permissible conduct, as outlined in Section 8.4 hereof, once the student or his/her family notifies the school to cease recruiting activities.
- d. Shall not disparage another school, its coaches, programs, teams, or players.

8.4 Permissible Conduct. Once a student who is *enrolled* at another VISAA member school initiates contact with a school (e.g., attends an open house, requests information from that school, contacts a coach, or otherwise indicates an interest in a school), then it is permissible for a coach or other staff member to contact the student and his/her family. It is recommended that a member school maintain a record of the initial contact made by the student or his/her family.

8.5 Sanctions. Alleged violations of the recruiting rule are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof. To report an alleged recruiting violation, the Athletic

Director or Head of School must notify the Executive Director and submit evidence to support the allegation.

SECTION 9 – RULES COMPLIANCE

9.1 School Responsibility for Compliance. In accordance with VISAA’s Commitment to Rules Compliance, it is the responsibility of each member school to follow and adhere to the established rules and policies of the Association and to conduct its athletics program in a manner that promotes the fundamental values of respect, fairness, civility, honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct. Each member school has an affirmative obligation to monitor and control its athletics programs, its representatives, and its student-athletes to ensure compliance.

9.2 Interpretations. As per Section 4 hereof, the Executive Director has the authority to provide interpretations of the rules and policies of the Association. Prior to requesting an interpretation from the Executive Director, a member school should first seek a determination from its conference, if applicable, as to the application of the conference’s rules to the facts and circumstances of the matter. Any questions or concerns regarding the rules and policies from individuals should be directed to the member school(s) involved. VISAA will not respond to such questions or requests from individuals.

9.3 Enforcement of Rules. As per Section 4 hereof, the Executive Director is empowered to enforce the rules and policies of the Association and may conduct, or designate others to conduct, investigations of member schools. Alleged violations are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

9.4 School Responsibility to Report Noncompliance. Each member school has an affirmative obligation to self-report all instances of noncompliance to the Executive Director in a timely manner. Prior to self-reporting to the Executive Director, a member school should first seek a determination from its conference, if applicable, as to the relevance of the conference’s rules to the facts and circumstances of the matter.

9.5 School Responsibility to Cooperate. Each member school, its coaches, staff members, student-athletes, and other school representatives have an affirmative obligation to cooperate fully with and assist the Executive Director and his/her designees in the conduct of any investigation or review of alleged misconduct. Such cooperation will be seen as a positive, mitigating factor. Failure to cooperate may be considered an additional violation and/or be an aggravating factor for purposes of determining sanctions.

9.6 Conference Jurisdiction. A student or team ruled ineligible by a conference is considered ineligible under VISAA Rules. A conference’s determination of eligibility under its rules is not appealable to VISAA.

SECTION 10 – CODE OF CONDUCT

Member schools, coaches, student-athletes, parents, fans, administrators, and other school representatives shall conduct themselves in such a manner that their actions promote the values and principles of the Association. Any member school or individual that brings discredit to VISAA, whether through actions, behavior, or otherwise, shall be subject to disciplinary action.

10.1 The Code. Interscholastic athletics are an integral part of the 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 lead by example by demonstrating fairness, respect, and self-control. Student-athletes, coaches, officials, parents, and fans shall conduct themselves in a respectful and sportsmanlike manner. Each person is responsible for his or her words and actions and shall adhere to the Code of Conduct. Any person who violates the Code of Conduct is subject to disciplinary action by the Association. A member school will be held accountable for violations of the Code of Conduct by its coaches, student-athletes, parents, fans, administrators and any other school representative. Member schools are strongly encouraged to include the Code of Conduct in their athletic handbooks.

10.1.1 Expectations. Each coach, student-athlete, parent, spectator, official, administrator, and any other school representative shall conduct themselves in accordance with the following:

- a. Shall treat others with respect regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sex, or ability.
- b. Shall not engage in unsportsmanlike conduct.
- c. Shall not engage in any behavior which would endanger the health, safety, or well-being of any other individual.
- d. Shall not remove a team before the completion of a competition.
- e. Shall not use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco while at any athletic event. Shall not attend, coach, officiate, or participate in an event while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- f. Shall not use profanity.
- g. Shall not engage in verbal or physical threats or abuse towards anyone.
- h. Shall not initiate a fight or scuffle with any other individual.
- i. Shall not argue with officials or otherwise indicate dislike or disdain for a decision.
- j. Shall not make any degrading remarks about any official, coach, student-athlete, or school.
- k. Shall not detain or attempt to confront any official for any reason, including to request a ruling or explanation of actions taken by an official.
- l. Shall not enter the confines of the playing field/court/competitive area.

- m. Shall immediately comply with the directions of game administration and officials.

10.2 Statement to be Read at All VISAA Events. The following shall be read at all events with a public address system:

“The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association is committed to establishing and developing healthy environments for competition. We ask all spectators to treat the officials and participating teams with respect. Cheer the strengths and victories of your team and do not criticize the performance of your opponents, their fans, or the officials. We expect that all fans will act in an appropriate manner and will refrain from entering the court/field at any time, including at the conclusion of the game/event. Failure to cooperate will result in dismissal from the premises. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.”

10.3 Written Report. A member school shall, within 24 hours after the violation, file a written report with the Executive Director and the chair of the member school’s conference describing the Code of Conduct violation. Failure of a member school to self-report such a violation may result in disciplinary action by the Association.

10.4 Sanctions. Alleged violations are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof. The game officials and/or administrators may remove any person from an event for failure to abide by the Code of Conduct.

SECTION 11 – EJECTIONS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS

Conduct that leads to an ejection or disqualification of a coach or student-athlete is considered serious unsportsmanlike conduct. These offenses carry automatic penalties outlined in Section 11.1 hereof and are cumulative over the high school season in which the first infraction occurs.

11.1 Penalties for a Player/Coach Ejection/Disqualification.

First Offense – If the ejection/disqualification is for unsportsmanlike or flagrant illegal conduct, an official warning, and a one-game suspension will be assessed. If the ejection/disqualification is for fighting, an official warning and a two-game suspension will be assessed.

Second Offense – Suspension until reviewed, and a decision regarding additional penalties to be assessed will be rendered in accordance with the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

Third Offense – Termination of eligibility for the season.

11.2 Written Report. A member school shall, within 24 hours after the ejection/disqualification, file a written report with the Executive Director and the chair of the member school's conference describing the incident and detailing the action taken or proposed to be taken by the school to resolve the matter. Failure of a member school to self-report such an ejection/disqualification may result in disciplinary action by the Association.

If a student-athlete or coach is to be suspended, then the suspension affects the next regularly scheduled game or playoff game. If a member school or coach permits a student-athlete or coach to participate while he/she should have been suspended, then the member school and/or coach will be subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

11.3 Appeals. The member school may file an appeal of an individual's first offense of a season (ejection or disqualification). Appeals beyond an individual's first offense are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outline in Section 12 hereof.

11.3.1 Regular Season Competition. An appeal for an ejection or disqualification occurring during a regular season contest shall be made to the commissioner of officials that assigned the officials to the contest. The determination of the commissioner of officials is final and may not be appealed.

11.3.2 Post Season Competition. An appeal for an ejection or disqualification (an individual's first offense only) occurring during a VISAA post season event shall be made to the Executive Director. The Executive Director may render a decision, delegate such decision to his/her designee, or defer to the commissioner of officials that assigned the officials to the contest. The determination by the Executive Director, his/her designee, or the commissioner of officials is final and may not be appealed. *(Adopted 9/23/2024; Effective 10/15/2024)*

SECTION 12 – ADJUDICATION PROCEDURE

12.1 Initial Process. The Executive Director or his/her designee will review bona fide allegations of violations of the rules or policies of the Association. Upon the completion of a review, the Executive Director or his/her designee may render a decision and impose sanctions, or refer the matter, with a preliminary report, to a Rules & Discipline Panel (R&D Panel).

12.2 Executive Director's Authority. Upon completion of a review, the Executive Director may:

- Conclude that no violation occurred and dismiss the case.
- Accept the member school's self-imposed sanctions.
- Issue a warning or reprimand (not appealable).
- Declare a forfeit for failure to honor a scheduled contest (not appealable).

- e. Declare a forfeiture of games in which an ineligible player or team participated (not appealable).
- f. Impose a suspension for up to two contests (not appealable).
- g. Impose a suspension for a maximum of the remainder of the regular season (appealable to R&D Panel).
- h. Impose a suspension for the VISAA championships (appealable to R&D Panel).
- i. Declare a student-athlete permanently ineligible (appealable to R&D Panel, unless it is a violation of the age rule).

12.3 Rules & Discipline Panel.

12.3.1 Composition. The R&D Panel is composed of three (3) rotating members of the Board. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board Chair, will appoint an R&D Panel for each case. The members of the R&D Panel should not be a party in the matter, nor be a representative of one of the member schools involved in the matter, nor be a representative of a school in the involved member's conference.

12.3.2 Authority. When the R&D Panel is the first to review a case, it may:

- a. Conclude that no violation occurred and dismiss the case.
- b. Accept the member school's self-imposed sanctions.
- c. Issue a warning or reprimand (not appealable).
- d. Declare a forfeit for failure to honor a scheduled contest (not appealable).
- e. Declare a forfeiture of games in which an ineligible player or team participated (not appealable).
- f. Impose a suspension for up to two contests (not appealable).
- g. Impose a suspension for up to one year (appealable to the Board).
- h. Impose a suspension for the VISAA championships (appealable to the Board).
- i. Declare a student-athlete permanently ineligible (appealable to the Board, unless it is a violation of the age rule).
- j. Place a member school on probation (appealable to the Board).
- k. Vacate a member school's VISAA state championship (appealable to the Board).
- l. Recommend to the Board that a school's membership in VISAA be revoked.

12.4 Appellate Authority. There is only one level of appeal.

12.4.1 R&D Panel. When hearing an appeal from a decision rendered by the Executive Director, the R&D Panel may uphold, reduce, or increase the sanctions imposed in the initial review. Appellate decisions made by the R&D Panel are not subject to appeal to the Board.

12.4.2 Board of Directors. The Board's appellate authority only extends to initial reviews conducted by the R&D Panel. When hearing such an appeal, the Board may uphold, reduce, or increase the sanctions imposed in the initial review. If the Board hears an appeal, then the members of the R&D panel that conducted the initial review shall be recused from the Board deliberations and vote as it pertains to the appeal. Appellate decisions made by the Board are not subject to appeal.

SECTION 13 – PLAYING RULES

The official playing rules for VISAA championships are established by the respective sports committee and approved by the Executive Director or his/her designee and are derived from the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), NCAA rulebooks, or national governing bodies. VISAA will publish playing rules for championships in each sport at the beginning of each season. Member schools and conferences may elect to adopt those playing rules for regular season contests.

SECTION 14 – SAFETY OF PLAYERS, COACHES AND FANS

Member schools are responsible to provide safety and security to all participants and attendees.

14.1 Weather-Related Policy. Lightning policy requires that when thunder or flashes of lightning are observed all participants are to seek cover 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.

14.2 Concussion Awareness and Management. VISAA follows the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) protocol for concussion awareness and management.

- a. Prior to the first practice for the applicable season, all coaches must take a recognized course providing both educational and prevention protocol regarding concussions as it relates to high school activities.
- b. It is strongly recommended that all athletes be baseline tested before the start of the season by a nationally recognized baseline test.
- c. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
- d. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate healthcare professional the day of a suspected concussion.
- e. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health care professional prior to resuming participation in classroom activities (RTL) or in any practice or competition.

- f. After medical clearance, RTP and RTL should follow a stepwise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP and RTL based upon return of any signs and symptoms.

SECTION 15 – FILMING & RECORDING

A member school that is not participating in a contest or event is prohibited from filming, recording, or disseminating (e.g., live streaming) that contest or event without the prior written consent of all teams participating. Filming, recording or dissemination of such a contest or event without prior written consent may result in suspension from VISAA championships in that sport.

A member school may not film, record, distribute, or otherwise disseminate any video of a VISAA championship event without the express written consent of VISAA. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, including suspension from VISAA championship events.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a member school may film, record, or disseminate a home contest that is not being filmed, recorded, or disseminated by VISAA.

Alleged violations are subject to the Adjudication Procedure outlined in Section 12 hereof.

SECTION 16 – SPORTS COMMITTEES

VISAA shall maintain Sports Committees for the purpose of managing state championship competition in the various sports. All Sports Committees will operate under the policies and procedures established by VISAA.

16.1 Director of Sports Committees. The Executive Director shall designate a Director of Sports Committees (or similar title). His/her duties and responsibilities should include, among other things, coordinating all activities of the Sports Committees to ensure consistency with VISAA policies and procedures. The Director of Sports Committees, in consultation with the Executive Director, will assign representatives from the Board to serve as liaisons to each Sports Committee.

16.2 Sports Committee Chairs. The Director of Sports Committees, in consultation with the Executive Director, shall appoint a Chair (or co-Chairs) of each Sports Committee. The Chair must be a full-time employee of a member school. If there are co-Chairs, then one must be a full-time employee of a member school. The Chair, or his/her representative, shall attend the regularly scheduled meetings for all Chairs.

16.3 Committee Composition. Each Sports Committee should be composed of representatives from different divisions and regions of the state, and as many conferences as possible. It is highly desirable that each Sports Committee includes Athletic Directors, coaches, and other school administrators. The Director of Sports Committees, in consultation with the Chair of each Sports

Committee, shall establish criteria for service on the committee, duties and responsibilities of committee members, structure of the committee, and length of terms of committee members.

16.4 Committee Meetings. Each committee should meet on a regular basis (as defined by the Director of Sports Committees) to conduct the work of the committee. At a minimum, each committee should conduct a meeting prior to the beginning of the regular season and one prior to the beginning of the state championship. These meetings will take place in person or via a virtual platform (e.g., Zoom).

16.5 Sport Polls/Tournament Selection. For sports that select teams for VISAA championship events, the committee will conduct and publish polls in accordance with procedures approved by the Director of Sports Committees and the Executive Director. Committee members shall fully participate in committee meetings and the rating & ranking of teams. The criteria to be used to determine polls/team selection are listed below. Any deviation from these criteria must be approved by the Director of Sports Committees and the Executive Director.

- a. Win/Loss Record
- b. Head-to-Head Competition
- c. Record Against Common Opponents
- d. Strength of Schedule (includes results versus teams of a different state classification)

16.6 Tournament Bracketing Principles. For sports that seed teams for VISAA championship events, the committee may take into consideration the bracket principles below when adjusting the final seeding of teams.

- a. Avoiding first-round matchups between conference opponents
- b. Distance of team travel

16.7 Championship Events. Committee members should attend championship events and assist in the management of the championship where needed.

16.8 All-State Honors. Each committee, with the approval of the Director of Sports Committees, is responsible for establishing clear and concise criteria for the selection of all-state honors. Each committee will comply with the amount and type of all-state honors established by VISAA.

SECTION 17 – CHAMPIONSHIPS

For VISAA to conduct a championship event in a sport, there must be eight member schools participating in that sport from more than one conference. Championship tournaments shall include the top eight teams in each division. Any exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Executive Director.

17.1 Tournament Dates. The Director of Sports Committees, in conjunction with the Sports Committee Chair and the Executive Director, will establish tournament dates considering a variety

of factors, including but not limited to, calendar concerns, facility limitations and availability, and the number of teams. Generally, eight-team tournaments will be held on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, and twelve-team tournaments will be held on varying schedules that are sport appropriate. The Executive Director may make changes to the schedule of play due to unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances, including inclement weather or other emergency situations.

17.2 Format Changes. Sports Committees seeking to change championship playoff requirements, tournament dates, or number of teams must submit a written request to the Executive Director well in advance of the effective date of the requested change. Sports Committees should communicate with the Director of Sports Committees to formulate requested changes of tournament formats.

17.3 Tournament Locations. Sports Committees seeking to host all or a portion of the championship at a predetermined site must gain approval from the Executive Director prior to securing such a site. Only the Executive Director has the authority to bind VISAA to a contract for the use of facilities. Any third-party venue must meet the requirements of Section 2.5.1 hereof. In championships played at the higher seed, contest sites will be decided when playoff teams are selected and seeded. All sites must meet the requirements of the NFHS.

17.4 Admission to Championships. Admission prices for VISAA championships (e.g., playoff games, tournaments etc.) shall be approved in advance by the Executive Director. Failure of a host school to properly charge and account for admission to championships may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to, loss of the privilege to host future championship contests. Admission prices for regular season contests are set by each member school or its conference.

17.5 Expenses. Sports Committee Chairs must submit a budget for VISAA championship events to the Director of Sports Committees. Valid expenses for semifinals and finals include officials, security, janitorial services, ticket takers, clock operators, announcers, timing devices, lighting expenses, and a certified athletic trainer or medical professional.

17.6 Member School Responsibilities.

17.6.1 Host Schools. For VISAA championship events held at the higher seed, the host school shall:

- a. Comply with the requirements established by VISAA and the Sports Committee.
- b. Provide its facility at no cost to VISAA.
- c. Retain the right to food and beverage sales.
- d. Submit a financial report within 14 days of the event. Failure to submit a financial report on time, will result in a \$100 late fee.

17.6.2 Entry Fees. For championships that require an entry fee for participation, a member school shall submit payment to VISAA within 14 days of the invoice date. Payments made after the deadline will be assessed a late fee of 15%.

17.6.3 Additional Penalties. In addition to the late fees described above, member schools must meet the following additional deadlines to avoid more severe penalties:

- a. Fall Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports must be submitted by December 15th.
- b. Winter Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports must be submitted by March 15th.
- c. Spring Entry Fees & Host Financial Reports must be submitted by June 15th.

Failure to meet the above deadlines may result in the following additional penalties:

- a. The school's teams (all sports) are ineligible for polls and championships until such time as the school meets its financial and reporting obligations.
- b. Failure to file a host financial report may result in the loss of a member school's privilege to host VISAA championship events in all sports.

The penalties described in this Section 17.6 are enforceable by the Executive Director or his/her designee and are not appealable.