



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the 2026 Jr Bulldog Cheer Season!

This handbook was created to help our cheer families familiarize themselves with the specifics of our Competitive Cheer program and its outline of the season's details, guidelines and expectations.

Review and signature of this Parent/Athlete handbook is mandatory to participate in the 2026 season. Cheerleading is a team sport in which each person has an important role and is heavily relied upon. After reviewing the handbook, if you feel you will not be able to uphold the expectations, please reconsider joining the program as there are no refunds after May 13th.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out.

Sincerely,

Annette Chase, Director of Cheer
director-cheer@bfcabulldogs.com

GO BULLDOGS!!

[2026 Jr Bulldog Competitive Cheer Handbook](#)

[Overall Program Description:](#)

Our Competitive Cheer program is designed for athletes entering 2nd through 8th grade in the Fall of 2026. The program emphasizes proper technique and foundational skills that support long-term development and prepare athletes for future high school athletics. While learning the essential skills of cheerleading is our primary focus, we also place strong importance on coachability, teamwork, discipline, respect, leadership, confidence, and sportsmanship.

During the fall season, athletes will train in choreography, cheers, conditioning, flexibility, jumps, stunting, pyramids, synchronization, and standing and running tumbling skills. These fundamentals are essential to developing a competitive three-minute routine that meets scoring criteria, competes successfully against other programs, and earns squads a bid to the State Championship.

Our philosophy prioritizes the success and welfare of the team as a whole. Individual needs will not take precedence over the collective team, and all decisions will be made with the team's performance, scoring, and overall success in mind. Coaches will establish both individual and team goals for the season, and athletes will work diligently alongside their coaches to achieve them—building a strong work ethic that extends beyond the season.

As members of the Illinois Cheer Association (ICA), we adhere to all ICA rules and codes of conduct, in addition to our own policies as outlined in this handbook and the Jr. Bulldog Football and Cheer Bylaws and Code of Conduct.

[Squad Formation:](#)

We anticipate forming the following squads for the 2026 Fall season (based on grades for the 26/27 school year)

3rd Grade Squad: Consists of athletes in 2nd and 3rd Grade

5th Grade Squad: Consists of athletes in 4th and 5th Grade

8th Grade Squad: Consists of athletes in 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade

Space is limited as squads will be capped based on coach commitment and availability. Each squad will have a maximum of 36 athletes. Notifications on waitlist acceptance will be sent out shortly after registration closes.

[Parent Expectations:](#)

Parent involvement is essential to a successful season. Parents are expected to promote a positive, respectful, and supportive environment at all practices, games, and competitions. The athlete's head coach is the primary point of contact for all questions or concerns. If an issue is not resolved, parents may contact the Director of Cheer, VP of Operations or Director of Conduct and By-Laws.

Jr. Bulldogs maintain a strict Zero Tolerance Policy regarding alcohol consumption. This policy applies to all locations at home games and competitions, including parking lots. Violations will result in immediate removal and may lead to further disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from future events, as outlined in the Jr. Bulldog Code of Conduct.

Jr. Bulldogs is a 100% volunteer-run organization. Parents are expected to treat coaches, board members, and all volunteers with professionalism and respect at all times.

Athlete Expectations:

The Jr. Bulldog leadership team and coaches expect full commitment, hard work, and consistent attendance at all practices, games, and competitions. All athletes must understand and comply with the policies in this Handbook. Parents and guardians are responsible for reviewing these expectations and codes of conduct with their athlete.

The program will implement an Athlete Disciplinary Process to ensure clear, consistent communication and accountability among coaches, athletes, and parents/guardians. The purpose of this process is to address misconduct in a structured and progressive manner, with an emphasis on athlete development, responsibility, and respect. The disciplinary process includes the following steps:

1. Verbal Reminder

The coach will remind the athlete of expected behavior during practice. The coach will clearly identify the behavior that must stop and inform the athlete of the consequences that will occur if the behavior continues. Consequences may include running a lap, being moved from a position, losing a desired free time activity, etc.

2. Consequence

If the behavior continues, the consequence articulated in Step 1 will be enforced.

3. Written Notice to Parent/Guardian

Should the behavior continue after the consequence from step 2 is implemented, the coach will document the behavior and communicate it to the parent/guardian.

4. Parent Conference

If the behavior continues after 2 notices to parents have been sent, a meeting will be scheduled.

5. If behavior does not improve after Parent Meeting, recommendation for discipline or removal from the Program will be brought to the Jr Bulldogs Board

Removal from the program is a last resort and will only be considered if the athlete fails to demonstrate improvement after previous steps have been implemented. Should a recommendation be made, the Jr bulldog Board will determine appropriate actions in line with Section 2.3 of the Jr Bulldog Bylaws.

Examples of misconduct include:

- Tantrums, outbursts
- Profanity, lewd language
- Showing disrespect to a coach by talking back, eye rolling, etc.
- Showing disrespect to a fellow teammate
- Lack of participation or poor attitude
- Unnecessary or excessive talking or disruption of practice
- Disrespecting practice facilities

- Showing disrespect or lack of support to opposing cheer teams at competitions or football games
- Bullying is unacceptable and will result in immediate removal from the squad

Attendance:

Effective practices require full participation. Cheerleading is a team sport, and an athlete's absence impacts the entire squad—particularly stunt groups, which cannot practice without all members present. When coaches must reteach missed material, valuable practice time is lost for the whole team.

Out of respect for the team and our volunteer coaches, attendance at all practices, games, and competitions is mandatory.

If an athlete knows they will be absent, the family is responsible for notifying the coach in advance through our Communication App and providing a valid reason. Attendance is taken at the start of practice. Arriving late or leaving early is considered unexcused.

In **June and July**, athletes are permitted **three (3) unexcused absences**.

From **August through State**, athletes are permitted **three (3) unexcused absences**.

Exceeding this limit will result in recommendation to the Jr Bulldogs board for discipline and may result in the following consequences:

- a) adjustment of competition routine placement
- b) removal from competition performances
- c) removal from the squad

Athletes affected by these consequences are still required to attend games and competitions in uniform to support their squad. Failure to attend will be recorded as an additional unexcused absence.

Specifics on advanced notice and excused/unexcused absences are below:

Excused Absences:

- Injury (must still attend and watch practice)
- Contagious illnesses, including lice (please provide 2-hour notice when possible)
- Death in the family
- School event (1-week notice)
- Religious obligation (1-week notice)
- Vacation that takes place in July
- Special events with advanced Head Coach approval

Note - No approvals will be granted the week prior to a competition. If you know you will be out the week before a competition, please reconsider joining Competitive Cheer.

Unexcused Absences:

- Any absence from a game, practice, competition or special event that occurs that is not excused/has not been communicated to the athlete's Head Coach
- Leaving early/arriving late for another sport/program this is not Jr Bulldogs (Jr Bulldog Competitive Cheer is expected to be a priority commitment during the season)
- Vacation beginning August 5th

- Playdates
- Birthday or Birthday Parties

Practice Rules:

The following rules will help ensure our practices run smoothly. We expect all parents and athletes to abide by the rules below:

- Practices are drop-off only. Parents will not be allowed in the practice area unless requested by the Head Coach
- Athletes should go to the bathroom before practice begins
- Hair must be pulled back and away from the face
- Athletes must wear cheer shoes
- No jewelry
- Positive attitude
- No phone or Apple watches (keep in backpack)
- Gum chewing, eating and any beverage other than water are not allowed during practice
- No excessive goofing off or rough play
- Personal issues are to be left at the door
- Focus and concentration are required at all times for the safety of each athlete and their team's safety
- New skills are to be attempted only after proper preparations and practice, and only under the supervision of a qualified coach
- Athletes will wear their practice outfit one day a week

Program Commitment and Information:

Please read the below carefully. If you are unable to abide by the below commitments, we kindly ask that you reconsider joining the Competitive Cheer program.

- Competitive Cheer is open to all athletes enrolling in 2nd through 8th grade for the 2026-2027 school year.
- Competitive Cheer must not be supplemental to any other sports. You are joining Jr Bulldogs with the understanding that Competitive Cheer is your first priority, after academics. Missing/arriving late/leaving early for cheer practice, games, or competitions to attend another sport or club will not be tolerated and will result in your removal from the Competitive program.
- Practice will be 1.5 - 2 hours each.
 - For 4th - 8th Grade Athletes, practice will be 2x a week in June and July and begin 3x a week in August.
 - For 2nd - 3rd Grade Athletes, practice will be 2x a week with the possibility of practice increasing to 3x a week as the season progresses and at coach discretion. If a third practice is added, it will be on Wednesdays to coincide with 5th and 8th Grade practice.
- Weeks leading up to competitions, especially State, may result in additional practice days or times. Flexibility and the ability to attend additional practices is crucial to participation.
- Will attend ALL home games that are on either Saturdays or Sundays that DO NOT conflict with competition dates. Home games are MANDATORY.
- WILL NOT attend away games, with the exception of playoff games.*

* Jr Bulldog Football is a member of The Chicagoland Youth Football League (TCYFL). TCYFL works on a flex schedule with games scheduled based on wins and losses. Jr Bulldogs find out the specific dates/times 2 - 4 weeks in advance.

Mandatory Parent Meeting - Competitive Cheer Requirement:

In order for your athlete to be placed on a squad, at least one parent must attend one (1) of two (2) mandatory parent meetings being held on **Wednesday, May 6th OR Tuesday, May 7th**. Returning families may attend on Zoom. Families new to our competitive program **MUST** attend in person.

Competition Skills:

Below are skills that are typically seen in a competition routine and are key to receiving the highest number of points per the judges scoring rubric. Regarding tumbling, we don't expect every athlete to have all the skills that are listed. At a minimum, we expect athletes to be working towards developing these skills. Practices will focus on the team as a whole, and personal skill development will require commitment to consistent work at home and training classes that do not conflict with practice times.

2nd & 3rd Grade:

- *Jumps:* Proper 8 count for jumps, proper straight jump, proper tuck jump, concept of a toe touch
- *Motions:* Clean motions (high V, low V, T, broken T, daggers, candlestick, touchdown, clap/clasp, diagonal)
- *Tumbling:* Correct front roll, cartwheel, roundoff, bridge, back walkovers preferred
- *Practice/Gym Etiquette:* Maintains attention span, knows the significance of an eight count (5,6,7,8), can follow a course, willing to learn and grow and dedicate their time

4th-8th Grade:

- *Jumps:* Proper toe touch, proper pike jump, proper herkie jump, proper hurdler jump
- *Motions:* Clean motions (high V, Low V, T, broken T, daggers, candlestick, touchdown, diagonal)
- *Tumbling:* Cartwheel, roundoff, back walkover, handspring, and standard back tuck
- *Practice/Gym Etiquette:* Can perform a 4-6 8ct cheer routine, works independently, endurance, willing to learn and grow and dedicate their time.

Please note: While certain skills are needed to create a routine that will earn the most possible points, the most important skill we are looking for is COACHABILITY. Listening to and respecting your coaches is #1. Athletes that cause disruptions, are not dedicated, or have a poor attitude will bring the morale of the entire squad down. Athletes that want to be present and are eager to learn and grow are what sets us up for success.

Volunteer Hours:

Jr Bulldog Football and Cheer depends on the support of its volunteers. Each family with a single athlete in the program is required to complete a minimum of four (4) volunteer hours. Families with more than one athlete in the program (cheer or football) must complete four (4) hours for their first registered child and two (2) hours for each additional child in the program. For example, if you have one athlete in competitive cheer and two athletes in football, your family must complete a total of eight (8) volunteer hours. These hours may be satisfied by serving as security or in concessions at Jr Bulldog Home Football Games, or fulfilling other

duties designated as official volunteer hours by the Jr Bulldog Board. All hours will be satisfied if a parent serves as a coach, team parent, or on the Jr Bulldog Board.

This requirement will be strictly enforced and must be honored in order for your family to remain in good standing with the organization. You will be asked to place a credit card on file at the beginning of the season and sign an acknowledgement of this volunteer hour requirement. If your hours are not completed by the end of the season, Jr Bulldogs will charge your credit card \$350.

If families wish to opt out of this requirement, Jr Bulldogs offers a \$300 opt out fee which you may select at the time of registration.

Program Pricing:

4th - 8th Grade: \$625 + Mandatory Purchase of Competition Uniform (new uniform for 2026), Jacket and Competition shoes.

2nd - 3rd Grade: \$575 + Mandatory Purchase of Competition Uniform (new uniform for 2026), Jacket and Competition shoes.

Registration includes: Practice facility rental, mat maintenance/storage, game day bow, new practice/game day uniform (tank and skort set to be kept at the end of the season), 12 hours of professional choreography/assistance, and fees for competitions. Sibling discount available for families with more than one athlete in the football or cheer program.

Registration price will increase by \$50 after April 1st.

Competition Dates:

Please note the below dates and make sure you are available for each before registering your athlete. If your athlete is unable to attend any of the dates below, they will not be eligible to participate in the competitive program. Athletes in grades 4th - 8th will attend four (4) regular season competitions. Athletes in grades 2nd - 3rd will attend three (3) regular season competitions. We will announce the competitions we will attend no later than May 12th.

Regular Season Competitions:

- September 12th or 13th, Cheercago
- September 19th or 20th, The Red Carpet
- October 3rd or 4th, Cheer Pink
- October 10th or 11th, Cheer Rodeo
- October 24th or 25th, Spirit Spooktacular

ICA State Championship:

Like last year, the ICA State Championship will take place over two weekends. Each qualifying squad will compete on BOTH weekends. **New this year, the 8th Grade Squad will compete on Friday evening of each weekend.** We anticipate that the 3rd Grade Squad will compete on Saturday each weekend and the 5th Grade Squad will compete on Sunday each weekend, but the exact dates your athlete's squad will compete will be finalized in November. If your athlete is unable to attend any of the dates below, they will not be eligible to participate in the competitive program. The State Championship registration fee is not included in your fall registration. Should your athlete's squad qualify for State, this fee must be paid in full by

November 1st, 2026. Jr Bulldog Cheer will provide fundraiser opportunities for State related expenses.

State Championship:

- 6th - 8th Grade Athletes: Friday, November 13th AND Friday, November 20th
- 2nd - 5th Grade Athletes: Saturday, November 14th or Sunday, November 15th AND Saturday, November 21st or Sunday, November 22nd

Practice Schedule:

ICA guidelines state that organizations can begin their season in May and must enforce a two-week "no contact" period during the season. With that in mind, our practice schedule will look like the below and days will be finalized in early May:

4th - 8th Grade Athletes:

- **June 15th - July 4th:** 2x a Week Practice
- **July 5th - July 18th:** ICA Required 2-Week No Contact Period. There will be no practice and no contact from Jr Bulldogs during this time
- **July 20th - July 31st:** 2x a Week Practice
 - June and July have 10 practices in total. Athletes are allowed three (3) unexcused absences during these months.
- **August 3rd - State in November:** Practices will increase to 3x a week
 - Athletes are allowed three (3) unexcused absences during these months

2nd to 3rd Grade Athletes:

- **July 2nd:** Kick-off Practice
- **July 5th - July 18th:** ICA Required 2-Week No Contact Period. There will be no practice and no contact from Jr Bulldogs during this time
- **August 3rd - State in November:** 2x a Week Practice.

Mandatory Camps and Choreography:

This year all athletes will attend both a mandatory two-day Skills Camp and a mandatory Choreography Camp. In addition to these two camps, athletes on the 8th Grade Squad (6th, 7th, and 8th graders) must attend ICA Summer Spirit Camp, a sleep-away camp at Carthage College. These camps are not a try-out but will aid our squads in being as competitive as possible. If your athlete is not available for the dates listed below, they will not be eligible for placement on a squad.

Camps

- **6th, 7th and 8th Grade Athletes:**
 - Fee:** \$625 includes camp registration and training fees for both camps PLUS lodging, food, clothing, and transportation to and from ICA Summer Spirit Camp.
 - Deposit:** \$150 due at time of registration. The remaining balance may be included in your payment plan at the time of registration.
 - Skills Camp - May 16th AND 17th from 1:00pm - 4:00pm @ The MAX
 - ICA Summer Spirit Camp - June 4th - 6th @ Carthage College
 - **There will be fundraising available to cover the costs.**
- **4th and 5th Grade Athletes:**
 - Fee:** \$160 includes camp registration, training fees, and camp t-shirt.

Deposit: No additional deposit is required. This fee may be included in your payment plan at the time of registration.

- Skills Camp - May 16th AND 17th from 9:00am - 12:00pm @ The MAX

- **2nd and 3rd Grade Athletes:**

Fee: \$160 includes camp registration, training fees, and camp tshirt.

Deposit: No additional deposit is required. This fee may be included in your payment plan at the time of registration.

- Skills Camp - July 25th AND 26th from 9:00am - 12:00pm @ The MAX

Choreography

Our mandatory choreography session is where squads work with a professional choreographer to learn their competition routine. This camp cost is included with registration.

- **6th, 7th, 8th Grade Athletes:** Sunday, June 14th, 1:30 - 5:00pm, Location TBD
- **4th and 5th Grade Athletes:** Sunday, June 14th, 9:00 - 12:30pm, Location TBD
- **2nd and 3rd Grade Athletes:** Sunday, August 2nd, 9:00 - 12:00pm, @ The MAX

Game Day and Competition Policy:

On game days and competitions, upon arrival, athletes must wear their uniform, cheer shoes, spunks, required bow and any other apparel/accessories outlined by the Head Coach. Full uniform is to be on upon arrival to the game or competition.

Tardiness at games and competitions will not be tolerated.

Uniforms:

Football Games:

- Athletes will order their sideline/practice uniform at the uniform fitting. The cost of this uniform is included in your registration fee. This outfit will be yours to keep. You will also need to purchase white athletic shoes that are different from shoes used for Competitions.

Competitions:

- Jr Bulldogs are getting new uniforms for 2026!
- We will hold a mandatory uniform fitting on Saturday, April 25th that ALL athletes must attend. You will sign up for your athlete's fitting appointment during registration. Payment for the uniform is due at the uniform fitting. Payment plans are available.
- All athletes are required to buy new competition shoes. These shoes are ONLY to be worn on competition days.

Warm-Ups:

- We will be using the same warmup jacket as the 2025 Season. All new members or members whose warmup jacket no longer fits must purchase a warmup jacket. Sizing will be available at the uniform fitting. Athletes may wear any black sweatpants. Payment is due at the uniform fitting. Payment plans are available.

Important Dates for Competitive Cheer:

- **Monday, February 23rd:** Registration Opens for athletes who competed in the 2025 Competitive Cheer Season
- **Sunday, March 1st:** Registration Opens to the General Public
- **Wednesday, April 1st:** Registration cost increases by \$50
- **Wednesday, April 22nd:** Registration Closes
- **Saturday, April 25th:** Uniform Fitting
- **Wednesday, May 6th:** Parent Information Meeting - Option #1
- **Thursday, May 7th:** Parent Information Meeting - Option #2
- **Wednesday, May 13th:** Last Day for Refund
- **Saturday, May 16th and Sunday, May 17th:** 4th - 8th Grade Skills Camp
- **Thursday, June 4th - Saturday June 6th:** 6th - 8th Grade Overnight ICA Summer Spirit Camp
- **Sunday, June 14th:** 4th - 8th Grade Choreography
- **Tuesday, June 16th - Thursday, July 2nd:** 2x a Week Practice Begins for 4th - 8th Grade
- **Thursday, July 2nd:** 2nd - 3rd kick-off Practice
- **Saturday, July 4th:** 4th of July Parade
- **Monday, July 6th - Sunday, July 19th:** 2-Week No Contact Period
- **Tuesday, July 21st - Thursday July 30th:** 2x a Week Practice Continues for 4th - 8th Grade
- **Saturday, July 25th and Sunday, July 26th:** 2nd - 3rd Grade Skills Camp
- **Sunday, August 2nd:** 2nd - 3rd Grade Choreography
- **Week of August 3rd:** 3x a Week Practice Begins for 4th - 8th Grade / 2x a Week Practice Begins for 2nd - 3rd Grade
- **September 12th or 13th:** Cheercago Competition
- **September 19th or 20th:** The Red Carpet Competition
- **October 3rd or 4th:** Cheer Pink Competition
- **October 10th or 11th:** Cheer Rodeo Competition
- **October 24th or 25th:** Spirit Spooktacular Competition
- **November 13th AND November 20th:** State Championship for 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders
- **November 14th or 15th AND November 21st or 22nd:** State Championship for 2nd - 5th Graders

Jr Bulldog Cheer Parent/Athlete Agreement

I have read and understand the Jr Bulldog Cheer Policies for the 2026 Season. These responsibilities have been discussed amongst parent(s) and athlete(s), and we agree to adhere to the expectations listed above:

Athlete Name: _____

Athlete Signature: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Director of Cheer: _____

Date: _____

Please retain a copy of this handbook for your records.