

Spartanburg Flames Athletics Handbook

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“Keep the Faith. Finish the Race.”

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Mission Statement

The Spartanburg Flames exist to glorify God through Gospel-centered athletics that build character, cultivate discipline, and develop a spirit of excellence in all that we do.

We believe sports are more than competition, they are a platform for discipleship, teamwork, and integrity. Our mission is to equip young men and women to compete with humility, lead with courage, and serve with joy.

Who We Are and What We're About

The Spartanburg Flames operate under the Upstate Homeschool Athletics Association, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit homeschool athletics association based in Spartanburg, South Carolina. We are a Christ-centered organization existing to serve families who desire a program that pursues both faithful discipleship and competitive excellence.

We provide competitive athletic and extracurricular opportunities primarily to homeschool students, but also accept private, charter, and public-school students whose school does not offer the desired sport or activity. With Board approval, we may also accept students under special circumstances whose participation aligns with our mission and values.

Rather than being relegated to the backbenches of schooling, we believe that homeschool students should be able to compete with their peers across the state and nation—not only in character and faith, but also in athletic and academic achievement as they so desire. We therefore commit to developing the unique God-given talents in each student-athlete to the utmost of their ability while keeping our eyes on Christ, lest athletics become an idol. We view athletic competition as a vehicle to speak the Gospel into our community and as a God-honoring arena where faith may be refined, discipline forged, and Christlike character revealed. Our teams play to win, but we define victory not only by the scoreboard, but by the way our athletes represent their Savior: humble in victory and gracious in defeat.

In keeping with this commitment to faithful formation, Bible study is an organizational requirement for every Spartanburg Flames team. Coaches are expected to provide a team Bible study approximately once each week during the season whenever reasonably permitted by the team's schedule, facility access, travel, and competition demands. The timing and format may vary by sport and may occur before, during, or after a practice, game, team meeting, or other team activity.

Team prayer and Bible study are integral parts of the Flames' Gospel-centered mission. Athletes are expected to be present, attentive, and respectful during these activities. No athlete will be required to profess a belief, personally lead a prayer, or verbalize a religious commitment contrary to conscience. However, all athletes and families must understand that prayer, Scripture, biblical instruction, and Christian discipleship are regular and intentional parts of participation in the Spartanburg Flames.

These gatherings provide intentional time for prayer, Scripture, and reflection on how God's Word shapes our attitudes, competition, relationships, and daily conduct. Whether gathered on the court, field, course, or in a team meeting, they remind our athletes that spiritual growth, Christlike humility, and Gospel witness take precedence over athletic accomplishment.

"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the spiritual gift God gave you..." — 2 Timothy 1:6

Every athlete, coach, and volunteer is encouraged to discover and develop the talents God has placed within them—to "fan them into flame" through faith, perseverance, and humble excellence. Our athletes compete against homeschool, private, charter, and public-school programs across the Upstate and beyond. We believe that when our athletes compete with integrity, train with purpose, and serve with joy, they carry the living Gospel with them into the community.

Our organizational structure reflects this calling. Players are accountable to their coaches, coaches to the Executive Director and Board of Directors, and the Board to

the families and the Lord we serve. Through this structure of prayerful accountability, we seek to ensure that every decision, practice, and game glorifies God and strengthens those who endeavor to pick up their crosses and follow Him.

Statement of Faith

We believe:

1. **The Bible** is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God, the final authority for all faith and practice.
2. **There is one God**, eternally existent in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. **Jesus Christ** is fully God and fully man, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, rose bodily from the dead, and will return in power and glory.
4. **Salvation** is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—not by human works.
5. **The Holy Spirit** indwells believers, convicting of sin, empowering for holy living, and equipping for service.
6. **The Church** is the Body of Christ, composed of believers of every race, nation, and background, called to make disciples of all nations.
7. **Marriage** is the covenant union of one man and one woman, and God created humanity as male and female in His image.
8. **The believer's life** is to be marked by love, humility, and holiness—reflecting Christ in all things.

While our leadership and foundation are unapologetically Christian, **we welcome all athletes and families** who agree to abide by our code of conduct and respect our Gospel-centered culture.

Core Values

1. **Faith First** – Everything we do begins and ends with glorifying God.
2. **Character Over Talent** – We value integrity, humility, and perseverance above scoreboard results.
3. **Team Before Self** – We win together, we lose together, and we honor one another.
4. **Discipline and Growth** – We pursue continual improvement in body, mind, and spirit.
5. **Community and Service** – We encourage our athletes to serve teammates, families, and the greater community.

Code of Conduct

Participation in the Spartanburg Flames is a privilege. Athletes, parents, spectators, coaches, staff, and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the organization's Christian mission, safety standards, and commitment to competitive excellence.

For Athletes

- Play hard, compete fairly, and show respect toward teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, facility staff, and spectators.
- Honor the proper authority of coaches and follow reasonable instructions without argument, contempt, or disruption.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, discipline, humility, and sportsmanship both during Flames activities and while publicly representing the organization.
- Use language that builds others up. Profanity, sexual comments, slurs, threats, gossip, degrading jokes, and derogatory speech are prohibited.
- Refrain from bullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, fighting, retaliation, or deliberately excluding or humiliating another athlete.
- Refrain from public displays of affection or other romantic or sexual conduct inappropriate for a youth athletic setting.
- Attend practices, games, Bible studies, team meetings, and other required activities unless excused by the coach.
- Be present and respectful during team prayer and Bible study.
- Care properly for uniforms, equipment, facilities, and the property of others.
- Report injuries, concussion symptoms, unsafe conditions, bullying, threats, abuse, harassment, or other serious misconduct promptly.
- Refrain from possessing, using, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, cannabis, illegal drugs, misused prescription medication, or prohibited performance-enhancing substances.

For Parents and Spectators

- Model Christlike behavior and help maintain a safe, encouraging, and orderly environment.
- Encourage athletes without insulting, belittling, threatening, or publicly criticizing them.
- Refrain from sideline coaching unless specifically authorized by the coaching staff.
- Never confront, threaten, follow, or attempt to intimidate an official, coach, athlete, parent, opponent, or facility representative.
- Remain in spectator areas and never enter the court, field, bench, dugout, locker room, or other restricted area without authorization.
- Refrain from profanity, fighting, abusive conduct, disruptive behavior, and negative interaction with opposing teams or officials.
- Understand that lineups, strategy, substitutions, positions, and ordinary playing-time decisions belong to the coaching staff.
- Use the Flames' established communication, reporting, and conflict-resolution procedures when disagreements arise.
- Refrain from posting comments, photographs, recordings, or videos that violate another family's privacy, undermine team unity, or could reasonably harm an athlete, coach, official, opponent, or the Flames organization.
- Follow the rules of host facilities, leagues, tournaments, and event organizers.
- Supervise nonparticipating children and promptly retrieve participating athletes after activities.
- Refrain from possessing, consuming, or being under the influence of alcohol at Flames athletic activities or events.

Respect for organizational authority does not prevent a parent from raising a legitimate concern. Parents are expected to raise concerns respectfully, through the proper channels, and without disrupting practices, games, athletes, or other families.

For Coaches, Staff, and Volunteers

- Lead by example in faith, humility, discipline, preparation, service, and sportsmanship.
- Treat every athlete with dignity, fairness, patience, and respect.
- Maintain appropriate adult-minor boundaries at all times.
- Avoid favoritism, humiliation, degrading punishment, inappropriate physical contact, sexualized conduct, and retaliatory behavior.
- Follow the Flames' child-protection, communication, travel, medical, and reporting policies.
- Complete all required background checks and training before serving.
- Never conduct secluded or unobservable one-on-one interactions with a minor athlete.
- Take reasonable action when an athlete is injured, becomes ill, reports misconduct, or appears to be in danger.
- Protect confidential information while sharing safety information with those who have a legitimate need to know.
- Pray with and for the team and provide the required team Bible studies.
- Report serious behavioral, safety, medical, child-protection, or misconduct concerns through the appropriate organizational and public channels.
- Cooperate honestly with authorized organizational investigations and lawful investigations conducted by public authorities.

Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in corrective instruction, removal from an activity, restriction from facilities, suspension, probation, dismissal, or another appropriate response under the Discipline, Investigation, and Appeals Policy.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a Spartanburg Flames team, an athlete must satisfy the following requirements:

1. The athlete must be a live-in dependent of a parent or legal guardian, unless an exception is approved by the Executive Director.
2. The athlete must not have graduated from high school.
3. The athlete must satisfy the applicable age requirements for the team or division:
 - High School: The athlete must not be 19 years old as of August 1 preceding the applicable school year.
 - Middle School: The athlete must not be 15 years old as of August 1 preceding the applicable school year.
 - Under 12: The athlete must not be 12 years old as of August 1 preceding the applicable school year.
 - Under 10: The athlete must not be 10 years old as of August 1 preceding the applicable school year.
 - Under 8: The athlete must not be 8 years old as of August 1 preceding the applicable school year.

A league, tournament, or governing body may impose a different or more restrictive age standard. When that occurs, the applicable outside rule will control participation in that competition.

4. The athlete must be:
 - Homeschooled in compliance with applicable South Carolina law; or
 - Enrolled in a private, charter, or public school that does not offer the desired sport or activity; or

- Approved by the Executive Director or Board under special circumstances consistent with the mission and interests of the organization.
- 5. The athlete must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA for the current grading period, as described in the Academic Standards Policy.
- 6. The athlete must satisfy all registration, physical, medical-release, conduct, payment, and acknowledgment requirements applicable to the program.

Same-Sport Participation

An athlete may not simultaneously participate on another school, club, travel, recreational, showcase, league, or independent team in the same sport during the Flames season.

For purposes of this policy, the Flames season begins on the first official team practice and concludes after the team's final scheduled competition or team activity. Individual lessons, camps, clinics, open gyms, and non-team instructional activities are not ordinarily considered participation on another team, provided they do not interfere with Flames responsibilities or create an unreasonable health or safety concern.

This restriction exists to:

- Protect athletes from conflicting schedules and excessive physical demands.
- Ensure that Flames teammates and coaches can rely upon each athlete's commitment.
- Avoid disputes regarding priority between teams.
- Preserve team continuity, preparation, and competitive integrity.

An athlete or parent who is uncertain whether an outside activity violates this policy must obtain written clarification from the Executive Director before participating. Extraordinary exceptions may be approved in writing by the Executive Director after consultation with the head coach. An athlete who participates on another same-sport team without disclosure or approval may be suspended or removed from the Flames roster.

Reasonable Accommodations

Families may request a reasonable accommodation for an athlete with a disability, medical condition, or other documented need by contacting the Executive Director in writing.

The Flames will consider reasonable accommodations that:

- Allow the athlete meaningful access to the program.
- Do not fundamentally alter the nature or competitive requirements of the sport.
- Do not create an undue administrative or financial burden.
- Do not create a direct and unreasonable risk to the athlete or others.
- Are permitted by applicable league, facility, tournament, and governing-body rules.

The organization may request information reasonably necessary to understand the requested accommodation and determine whether it can be safely and practically provided.

Academic Standards

The Spartanburg Flames believe that academic diligence honors God and that participation in athletics should support, rather than undermine, an athlete's education.

Athletes must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA, or the equivalent of a "B" average, during the current grading period. This standard is based on the athlete's present academic performance rather than cumulative GPA.

Verification

For students enrolled in a public, charter, or private school, eligibility may be verified through a current report card, progress report, school portal record, or written certification from a parent or school official.

For homeschooled students, the parent or legal guardian shall certify the athlete's current academic standing using the family's normal grading method. The Flames do not require every homeschool family to use an identical curriculum or grading system.

When a numerical GPA is needed, the following basic scale may be used:

- A = 4 points
- B = 3 points
- C = 2 points
- D = 1 point
- F = 0 points

The grade-point total is divided by the number of graded academic courses.

Pass/fail or mastery-based coursework may be evaluated according to the family's

ordinary academic records, with successful work treated as satisfactory unless circumstances indicate otherwise.

The Executive Director may request reasonable documentation when an athlete's eligibility is questioned. Academic information will be handled discreetly and shared only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know.

Academic Ineligibility

If an athlete falls below the 3.0 standard:

1. The parent must notify the head coach or Executive Director.
2. The athlete may be withheld from games and competitions until satisfactory progress is demonstrated.
3. Practice participation may continue at the discretion of the head coach and Executive Director when doing so will not interfere with the athlete's academic recovery.
4. Eligibility may be restored when the parent or school certifies that the athlete has returned to a 3.0 GPA or equivalent current-period standing.

Knowingly providing false academic information may result in suspension or dismissal.

Tryouts, Team Selection, and Roster Decisions

Not every Flames program uses the same tryout or team-selection procedure. The head coach may determine the evaluation process appropriate for the sport, age group, available facilities, number of registrants, competitive level, and roster capacity.

Roster decisions may consider:

- Skill and athletic readiness.
- Coachability and attitude.
- Effort and conditioning.
- Positional needs.
- Team balance.
- Attendance and availability.
- Conduct and prior fulfillment of team responsibilities.
- Safety and developmental readiness.

Prior participation with the Spartanburg Flames does not guarantee a roster position on the same team, a different team, or any future Flames team.

Roster, level-placement, and position decisions are ordinarily made by the head coach. A parent or athlete may respectfully request general feedback, but disagreement with the coach's athletic judgment is not grounds for an appeal.

An allegation that a roster decision resulted from unlawful discrimination, retaliation for a good-faith report, a material conflict of interest, or a substantial violation of

Flames policy may be submitted in writing to the Executive Director at director@spartanburgflames.com.

Season fees become due after an athlete is selected and must be paid, or an approved payment arrangement must be in place, before the first official team practice. Failure to complete payment requirements may result in release of the roster position.

Sportsmanship and Character

Flames athletes are ambassadors of Jesus Christ, their families, their teammates, and the Spartanburg Flames organization.

We seek to compete with courage and excellence, win with humility, lose with grace, and respond to adversity with discipline. Disrespect toward coaches, teammates, opponents, officials, spectators, facility personnel, or volunteers will not be tolerated. Prayer and Bible study are regular and intentional parts of Flames athletics. Bible study is an organizational requirement for each team and is expected approximately weekly when reasonably permitted by the team's schedule. Athletes must be present and respectful but will not be compelled to profess a personal belief or personally lead a prayer.

Sportsmanship expectations apply before, during, and after competition, including in parking areas, during travel, in team communications, and on social media.

Practices, Games, Attendance, and Weather Decisions

Attendance at practices, games, competitions, Bible studies, and required team activities is expected.

Notice of Absence

Athletes or parents must notify the head coach as soon as reasonably possible when the athlete will be absent, late, or required to leave early. Except in emergencies, notice should be provided before the activity begins.

Illness, injury, family emergency, unavoidable academic obligations, and circumstances approved by the coach may be treated as excused absences.

Vacations, employment, church activities, participation in other sports, and recurring outside commitments should be disclosed to the coach as early as possible so that expectations can be discussed.

An athlete who is ill, contagious, medically restricted, or unable to participate safely should not attend as an active participant.

Attendance Consequences

Because preparation and team continuity depend upon attendance:

- A missed practice may affect playing time, role, lineup position, or eligibility for the next competition.

- Repeated lateness or absence without adequate communication may result in reduced participation, suspension, or removal from the roster.
- Coaches should consider the reason for the absence, the athlete's communication, team needs, and the athlete's overall record before imposing consequences.
- Athletes are responsible for learning missed material and completing any reasonable make-up expectations established by the coach.

Arrival and Pickup

Athletes must arrive on time, properly dressed, equipped, and ready to participate. Parents must retrieve athletes promptly at the conclusion of practices, games, and team activities. Repeated late pickup may result in a required parent conference or restriction from participation.

Weather, Facility, and Cancellation Decisions

The head coach, event director, or host facility has authority to delay, modify, relocate, suspend, or cancel an activity because of weather, temperature, lightning, air quality, field conditions, facility conditions, scheduling problems, or another safety or operational concern.

These decisions are within the reasonable discretion of the coach or host facility and are final for that activity. Coaches may also reduce activity, require hydration or rest, or withhold an athlete when conditions appear unsafe.

Parents retain the right to use their own judgment regarding travel or participation when weather or road conditions are a concern. The parent should notify the coach as soon as possible.

Families will be notified of schedule changes through the team's customary communication channels as soon as reasonably practicable.

Playing Time Philosophy

Spartanburg Flames teams are competitive athletic programs rather than recreational leagues. Equal playing time is not guaranteed unless a specific developmental program expressly states otherwise.

Playing time may be influenced by:

- Skill and readiness.
- Effort and conditioning.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Coachability.
- Teamwork and attitude.
- Conduct.
- Position and matchup needs.
- Execution of team responsibilities.
- The competitive circumstances of the game.

Coaches determine lineups, substitutions, positions, rotations, and strategy in the best interests of the team.

Athletes are encouraged to speak respectfully with the coach about what they can do to improve or earn a greater role. Parents should not confront a coach immediately before, during, or immediately after a competition regarding playing time.

A parent who believes that an athlete is being subjected to discrimination, retaliation, abuse, harassment, or conduct unrelated to legitimate coaching judgment may use the reporting procedures in this handbook. Ordinary disagreement with playing time,

position, strategy, or roster judgment is not a disciplinary complaint and is not subject to formal appeal.

Safety, Injuries, Medical Conditions, and Emergency Response

Sports Physicals

Every athlete must have a current sports physical valid through the conclusion of the applicable season before participating in practices, games, tryouts involving physical activity, or other team athletic activities.

The Flames may require an updated physical or additional medical clearance when an athlete has experienced a significant injury, surgery, hospitalization, prolonged absence, or material change in health.

Disclosure of Medical Conditions

Parents or legal guardians are responsible for providing accurate and current information concerning medical conditions that could affect the athlete's safety or participation, including:

- Asthma.
- Severe allergies.
- Diabetes.
- Seizure disorders.
- Cardiac conditions.
- Prior concussions.
- Medication needs.
- Physical restrictions.
- Other relevant medical diagnoses or emergency concerns.

Medical information will be shared only with coaches, staff, emergency responders, or others who reasonably need the information to protect the athlete.

Parents must promptly update the Flames when an athlete's condition, medication, restriction, emergency contact, or treatment plan changes.

Medication and Individual Emergency Plans

A parent whose child may require emergency medication or specialized intervention shall provide:

- Clearly labeled medication in its original container when appropriate.
- Written instructions.
- Information concerning when and how the medication is used.
- An emergency action plan from a medical provider when reasonably requested.
- Current parent and emergency contact information.

Athletes may carry and self-administer prescribed inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors, diabetes supplies, or similar emergency medication when authorized by the parent and permitted by law.

Coaches and volunteers are not medical professionals merely because they supervise an athletic activity. They do not diagnose injuries or medical conditions and are not expected to provide care beyond their training and the reasonable response appropriate to an emergency.

The Flames do not guarantee that a coach or volunteer will be able to store, administer, or monitor medication. Families remain responsible for arranging necessary medical support and discussing the athlete's needs with the head coach before participation.

Coach Authority to Withhold Participation

A coach may stop, limit, or withhold an athlete from participation whenever the coach reasonably believes that:

- The athlete may be injured or ill.
- Continued activity may aggravate a condition.
- The athlete has not complied with a medical restriction.
- Required medication or protective equipment is unavailable.
- The athlete presents a safety risk to themselves or others.
- Medical evaluation or clearance is needed.

A coach's decision to withhold an athlete for safety reasons does not constitute a medical diagnosis.

Return Following Injury or Illness

The Flames may require written medical clearance before an athlete returns after:

- Surgery or hospitalization.
- A suspected concussion.
- A fracture or significant musculoskeletal injury.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Heat illness.
- A cardiac or respiratory event.
- A serious infection or communicable illness.
- A prolonged absence related to health.
- Any condition for which a medical provider imposed restrictions.

- Any circumstance in which the coach or Executive Director reasonably believes clearance is necessary.

Medical clearance must identify any restrictions or return-to-activity progression. Coaches may require a gradual return even after clearance when reasonably necessary for safety and conditioning.

Concussion Protocol

Coaches and volunteers who supervise athletic activity must complete approved concussion-recognition and response training at least once every 36 months.

At least once each program year, athletes and parents will be provided concise information concerning the nature, symptoms, and risks of concussion. Receipt may be acknowledged electronically during registration.

If a coach, official, medical provider, or other responsible adult suspects that an athlete may have sustained a concussion or brain injury:

1. The athlete must be removed from practice or competition immediately.
2. The athlete may not conceal symptoms, pressure another athlete to conceal symptoms, or disregard the removal decision.
3. The parent or legal guardian must be notified as soon as reasonably possible.
4. The athlete must be monitored and referred for appropriate medical evaluation.

An athlete removed for a suspected concussion may return during the same activity only when evaluated on site by an athletic trainer, physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner acting within the applicable scope of practice and that professional determines that the athlete does not exhibit signs or symptoms of concussion or brain injury.

When the athlete remains suspected of having sustained a concussion or brain injury, the athlete may not return to practice or competition until written medical clearance is provided by a physician. The athlete must then follow any gradual return-to-play progression or restriction directed by the physician.

The Flames may use the South Carolina High School League Return-to-Play form or another written medical-clearance document containing equivalent information.

A coach may decline to return an athlete even after clearance when the athlete continues to exhibit concerning symptoms or appears unable to participate safely.

Emergency Action Plan

The head coach is responsible for implementing an emergency action plan at each practice, game, competition, or team activity.

Before or at the beginning of activities at a venue, the coach should reasonably familiarize themselves with:

- The venue's address and emergency access point.
- The location of available first-aid supplies.
- The location of an automated external defibrillator, if one is available.
- The best method for contacting emergency services.
- The athlete emergency-contact and medical information available to the team.

If a medical emergency occurs, the coach shall:

1. Stop activity and assess the immediate situation within the limits of the coach's training.
2. Call or direct someone to call 911 when emergency assistance may be required.
3. Begin CPR, use an AED, provide first aid, or take other emergency action within the coach's training.
4. Direct an available responsible person to meet emergency responders when practical.
5. Maintain reasonable supervision of the remaining athletes.
6. Contact the athlete's parent or legal guardian.
7. Cooperate with emergency responders and the host facility.
8. Document and report the event when required.

If only one coach is present, that coach remains responsible for initiating the emergency response and may direct available parents, facility personnel, officials, or other responsible adults to assist.

Any coach who may regularly serve as the sole supervising adult at a practice or team activity must maintain current CPR, AED, and basic first-aid certification. Other volunteers whose duties do not involve athletic supervision are not required to obtain this certification unless specifically directed.

Serious Medical Event Reporting

A serious medical event must be reported to the Executive Director as soon as reasonably possible and no later than 24 hours after the event.

A serious medical event includes an occurrence involving:

- A call to 911.
- EMS response or emergency transportation.
- Hospital admission.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Suspected spinal injury.
- Cardiac or respiratory distress.
- Severe allergic reaction.
- Heat stroke or other life-threatening heat illness.
- Uncontrolled bleeding.
- A prolonged seizure.
- Another event that presented a substantial risk of death or serious impairment.

Routine sprains, strains, minor wounds, or uncomplicated fractures that do not involve emergency transportation or a broader safety concern do not ordinarily require a formal report to the Executive Director, although the coach should still notify the parent and document the injury when appropriate.

Medical Release and Costs

Parents must complete the required medical authorization permitting Flames personnel to obtain emergency assistance when a parent cannot be reached.

Parents remain responsible for the athlete's health insurance and for medical, ambulance, transportation, treatment, and related costs.

Transportation, Team Travel, and Overnight Lodging

Parent Transportation

Unless a Flames-approved transportation arrangement has been established, parents or legal guardians are responsible for transporting athletes to and from practices, games, competitions, and activities.

An athlete remains under the responsibility of the parent until the athlete has been delivered to the designated team meeting location and accepted into the team's supervision. Team supervision ordinarily ends when the athlete is released to the parent, legal guardian, or another person authorized by the parent.

Flames-Approved Transportation

When transportation is organized or approved by the Flames:

- Drivers must be responsible adults with a valid driver's license and legally required automobile insurance.
- Every occupant must use an available seatbelt or legally required child restraint.
- Vehicles may not carry more occupants than the number of available passenger restraints.

- Drivers must obey traffic laws and may not text or engage in unsafe device use while driving.
- A driver may not transport athletes while impaired, fatigued to an unsafe degree, or under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, impairing medication, or another substance.
- Regular volunteer drivers who may have private access to minors are subject to the Flames' background-check requirements.
- Parents must provide consent for their athlete to ride with another adult.

The Flames do not guarantee transportation and may withdraw approval of a driver or travel arrangement for safety, insurance, conduct, or operational reasons.

One-on-One Transportation

An unrelated adult should not transport a single minor athlete alone.

When one-on-one transportation becomes unavoidable because of an emergency or unforeseen logistical circumstance:

- The parent must be contacted as soon as possible.
- Parent permission must be obtained when reasonably possible.
- Another coach, staff member, or responsible adult should be notified.
- Transportation must be direct and limited to the necessary purpose.
- The interaction must remain professional and transparent.

Planned recurring one-on-one transportation requires advance written parent permission and approval from the Executive Director.

Team Trips

Athletes and families must comply with team itineraries, curfews, room assignments, supervision instructions, facility rules, and conduct expectations.

Parents are responsible for costs identified in advance unless the organization states otherwise.

Adults who are responsible for athletes on a team trip may not consume alcohol during the entire period in which they are responsible for the care, transportation,

supervision, or safety of minors. This restriction applies even during times when no athletic activity is occurring.

Overnight Lodging

Written or electronic parent permission is required for an athlete to participate in overnight travel.

Flames coaches, staff members, and chaperones must sleep separately from minor athletes other than their own children. An unrelated adult may not share a hotel room, bed, or private sleeping area with a minor athlete.

Adults should refrain from entering athlete hotel rooms. When entry is reasonably necessary because of an emergency, safety concern, room inspection, illness, or serious conduct issue:

- The adult should announce the entry.
- Another authorized adult should be present whenever reasonably possible.
- The interaction should be limited to the necessary purpose.
- The door should remain open when circumstances permit.

Ordinary coaching discussions, correction, counseling, and conflict resolution should take place in a public or common area rather than an athlete's hotel room.

Child Protection, Reporting, and Background Checks

The Spartanburg Flames are committed to providing an environment in which minor athletes are protected from abuse, exploitation, grooming, harassment, retaliation, and inappropriate adult-minor relationships.

Reporting Concerns Internally

Reports may be made to any Flames coach. A coach who receives a report must forward it promptly to the appropriate organizational authority and in no event later than 48 hours after receipt.

Reports involving suspected child abuse, sexual misconduct, grooming, a credible threat, or an immediate safety risk must be forwarded immediately rather than held for the ordinary 48-hour period.

Reports may also be submitted directly through any of the following channels:

- Board Chair: chair@spartanburgflames.com
- Executive Director: director@spartanburgflames.com
- Board of Directors: board@spartanburgflames.com

If the report involves a coach, the report should be made directly to the Executive Director, Board Chair, or Board.

If the report involves the Executive Director, it should be made to the Board Chair or Board.

If the report involves the Board Chair, it should be made to the Executive Director or Board at large.

Reports to Public Authorities

An internal report to a coach, Executive Director, Board member, or other Flames representative does not satisfy or replace any individual duty imposed by law to report suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, or criminal conduct to the South Carolina Department of Social Services, law enforcement, emergency services, or another appropriate public authority.

A person who is legally required to make an external report must do so directly and must not wait for permission, Board action, or the conclusion of an internal review.

The Flames will not delay or interfere with a required public report in order to conduct an internal investigation. Flames personnel must not attempt to conduct their own detailed interview of a child or determine whether an allegation is true before making a legally required report.

When a child appears to be in immediate danger, 911 or the appropriate law-enforcement agency should be contacted immediately.

Good-Faith Reporting and Retaliation

No athlete, parent, coach, volunteer, or staff member may retaliate against a person for making a good-faith report, participating in an investigation, requesting help, or raising a safety concern.

Knowingly making a materially false report in bad faith may result in discipline. A report that cannot be substantiated is not, by itself, evidence that the report was made in bad faith.

Interim Measures Involving an Accused Adult

When an adult is accused of child abuse, sexual misconduct, grooming, serious boundary violations, violence, or another offense that could place athletes at risk, the adult may be placed on immediate administrative leave and prohibited from contact with athletes, facilities, team communications, or Flames activities while the matter is reviewed.

Administrative leave is a protective measure and is not, by itself, a finding of guilt.

The Board or Executive Director may modify the interim restriction based on:

- The nature and credibility of the allegation.
- The potential risk to athletes.
- Guidance from law enforcement, DSS, counsel, or the insurer.
- The need to preserve evidence and protect the integrity of an investigation.
- The rights and safety of everyone involved.

An adult may not return to service until authorized in writing by the appropriate Flames authority.

Observable and Interruptible Interactions

Program-related interactions between an adult and a minor athlete should be observable and interruptible.

Written parent permission does not, by itself, authorize secluded or secret adult-minor interaction.

Adults shall not:

- Ask an athlete to keep a relationship, communication, gift, meeting, or activity secret from the athlete's parent or the organization.
- Establish a romantic or sexual relationship with a current minor athlete.
- Engage in sexualized conversation, sexual jokes, flirtation, grooming, or inappropriate physical contact.
- Meet with an athlete in a locked, secluded, or unobservable location.

- Use private or disappearing-message applications to communicate with an athlete.

Private Lessons and Individual Workouts

Private lessons and individual workouts connected to the Flames must occur in a location that is observable and interruptible.

Whenever reasonably possible:

- A parent or another responsible adult should be present or nearby.
- The parent should know the location and duration of the activity.
- Doors should remain open.
- The activity should occur at an athletic facility rather than a private residence.
- Communication regarding scheduling and payment should include the parent.

A coach may not use a Flames position to create secret or inappropriate access to an athlete.

Locker Rooms, Bathrooms, and Changing Areas

Locker rooms, bathrooms, showers, and changing areas are private spaces.

The following rules apply:

- Photography, video recording, livestreaming, and audio recording are prohibited in these areas.
- Mobile devices may not be used to photograph or record any person who is changing or partially dressed.
- Adults should not enter an athlete changing area while athletes are changing unless entry is reasonably necessary for safety, emergency response, facility access, or supervision.
- When adult entry is necessary, the adult should announce their presence before entering and should be accompanied by another authorized adult when reasonably possible.
- Coaches and adult volunteers may not shower, undress, or change clothes in the presence of minor athletes.

- Coaches should conduct team discussions outside changing areas whenever practical.
- Parents, siblings, and spectators may not enter athlete locker rooms or changing areas without authorization.
- Athletes must respect privacy and may not engage in hazing, horseplay, harassment, exposure, or inappropriate conduct.

Electronic Communications

Group and parent-included communication is the preferred standard for ongoing team communication.

Coaches, coordinators, and staff should use:

- Team group messages.
- Parent-included email threads.
- Official team applications.
- Other communication channels approved by the organization.

If an athlete contacts a coach directly with a brief logistical question, the coach may provide a brief, factual, and professional response. The coach should include or notify the parent whenever reasonably possible.

A direct conversation that extends beyond a single logistical exchange must be moved to a parent-included or group channel promptly.

Communications with athletes must:

- Be appropriate for parent or Board review.
- Remain professional and related to legitimate athletic, spiritual, academic, safety, or team purposes.
- Avoid secrecy, sexualized content, favoritism, or emotional dependency.
- Avoid disappearing-message applications.
- Avoid personal social-media direct messaging whenever an official or parent-included channel is available.

Persons Requiring Background Checks

A background check is required for coaches and volunteers whose role regularly involves athlete supervision, private access to athletes, transportation, overnight travel, athlete-only spaces, or access to facilities in circumstances that could permit unsupervised contact.

Covered roles ordinarily include:

- Head and assistant coaches.
- Volunteer coaches.
- Athletic trainers and regular skills trainers.
- Team coordinators with athlete-supervision duties.
- Regular volunteer drivers.
- Overnight chaperones.
- Other volunteers designated by the Executive Director or Board because of the nature of their access.

A background check is not ordinarily required for a volunteer whose work is brief, public, and does not provide private or unsupervised access to athletes, such as:

- Taking tickets.
- Selling concessions.
- Working a public merchandise table.
- Assisting with a single public event while under ordinary supervision.
- Performing another limited spectator-area function.

Frequency and Authorization

Covered persons must complete and receive approval through the organization's background-check process before beginning service. Background checks must be renewed at least once every 36 months.

The Flames may require an earlier or supplemental review when new information becomes available.

Background-check records will be handled confidentially and limited to individuals responsible for evaluating eligibility.

Permanently Disqualifying Matters

A person will ordinarily be permanently disqualified from a covered role for a conviction, guilty plea, no-contest plea, substantiated official finding, or registration requirement involving:

- Sexual assault or another criminal sexual offense.
- Sexual exploitation of a minor.
- Child pornography or unlawful sexual material involving minors.
- Child abuse or severe child neglect.
- Human trafficking.
- Kidnapping or abduction.
- Murder or attempted murder.
- An offense requiring registration as a sex offender.
- Another substantially similar offense in any jurisdiction.

Material falsification or concealment during the background-check process may independently disqualify an applicant.

Pending Charges and Reviewable Matters

A person facing a pending charge, active investigation, protective order, or unresolved allegation involving child abuse, sexual misconduct, serious violence, stalking, kidnapping, trafficking, or another substantial safety concern may not serve in a covered role until the matter has been reviewed and resolved to the satisfaction of the Board.

Other criminal, disciplinary, or conduct history may be evaluated individually. The Board may consider:

- The nature and seriousness of the conduct.
- The person's age at the time.

- The amount of time that has passed.
- The relationship between the conduct and the proposed role.
- Evidence of rehabilitation.
- Subsequent conduct.
- References.
- Candor during the application process.
- Any recommendation from the insurer, counsel, or background-check provider.

A serious offense that is not permanently disqualifying may be considered for review after the person has completed all legal obligations and maintained at least 15 consecutive years without further criminal conduct or serious misconduct. Review eligibility does not guarantee approval.

Continuing Duty to Disclose

Covered coaches, staff members, and volunteers have a continuing duty to disclose promptly:

- An arrest or criminal charge.
- A conviction or guilty or no-contest plea.
- A restraining or protective order.
- An investigation involving child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or sexual misconduct.
- Professional discipline related to work with minors, healthcare, education, coaching, or public safety.
- Suspension or revocation of a driver's license when the person transports athletes.
- Any other development that could reasonably affect the person's fitness to work with athletes.

Failure to disclose may result in immediate suspension or removal.

Anti-Bullying, Hazing, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

The Spartanburg Flames prohibit bullying, hazing, harassment, sexual misconduct, intimidation, and retaliation.

This policy applies to conduct:

- During practices, games, meetings, travel, lodging, camps, clinics, Bible studies, and organizational events.
- Through text messages, social media, team applications, gaming platforms, or other digital communication.
- Outside Flames activities when the conduct creates a substantial safety concern, materially disrupts the team, or directly affects a Flames participant.

Bullying

Bullying includes repeated or severe verbal, physical, social, or digital conduct intended or reasonably likely to harm, intimidate, isolate, humiliate, or control another person.

Examples include:

- Threats.
- Repeated insults or slurs.
- Spreading humiliating information.
- Deliberate exclusion used as punishment or intimidation.
- Cyberbullying.
- Physical aggression.
- Destruction or theft of property.
- Encouraging others to target a person.
- Retaliation against someone who reports mistreatment.

Ordinary coaching correction, appropriate discipline, competitive team selection, and isolated interpersonal disagreement do not necessarily constitute bullying.

Hazing

Hazing is prohibited regardless of tradition, intent, seniority, or apparent consent.

Hazing includes requiring or pressuring a person to participate in:

- Humiliating or degrading conduct.
- Forced or excessive exercise.
- Dangerous physical activity.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Nudity or exposure.
- Consumption of food, drink, supplements, alcohol, medication, or another substance.
- Personal servitude.

- Threats, intimidation, or initiation rituals.
- Conduct that violates law, Flames policy, or personal dignity.

An athlete's apparent willingness to participate does not excuse hazing.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

Prohibited conduct includes:

- Sexual comments, jokes, gestures, advances, or propositions.
- Sharing or requesting sexual images or messages.
- Unwanted touching.
- Sexual intimidation.
- Stalking.
- Exposure.
- Voyeurism.
- Grooming.
- Requests for secrecy.
- Romantic or sexual relationships between a coach, staff member, or volunteer and a minor athlete.
- Using authority, favoritism, gifts, playing time, spiritual influence, or emotional pressure to create an inappropriate relationship.
- Retaliation against a person who rejects, reports, or participates in an investigation of such conduct.

An adult may not pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with an athlete who remains under that adult's coaching, supervisory, or organizational authority, even if the athlete has reached age 18.

Reporting

Reports involving an athlete may be made to a coach, Executive Director, Board Chair, or Board under the Child Protection and Reporting Policy.

Reports involving sexual harassment or adult misconduct should ordinarily be made to the Executive Director at director@spartanburgflames.com. The matter may be escalated to the Board.

If the Executive Director is involved, the report should be sent to chair@spartanburgflames.com or board@spartanburgflames.com.

No person is required to confront an alleged bully, harasser, abuser, or offender before making a report.

The Flames may impose immediate protective restrictions while a matter is investigated.

Substance Abuse and Public Safety Policy

Athletes

Athletes may not possess, use, distribute, provide, sell, or be under the influence of:

- Alcohol.
- Tobacco.
- Nicotine or vaping products.
- Cannabis or marijuana products.
- Illegal drugs.
- Drug paraphernalia.
- Prescription medication not prescribed to the athlete.
- Prescription medication used contrary to medical directions.
- Prohibited performance-enhancing drugs.
- Another intoxicating or impairing substance.

This prohibition applies during practices, games, travel, lodging, team activities, and any event at which the athlete is representing the Flames.

Properly used prescribed and over-the-counter medications are permitted, subject to the Medical Conditions and Medication Policy.

Adults at Athletic Activities

Parents, spectators, coaches, staff members, volunteers, and other adults may not possess open alcohol, consume alcohol, or be under the influence of alcohol at a Flames athletic practice, game, competition, camp, clinic, or team event.

A person may be denied entry, directed to leave, or barred from an event when Flames staff or facility personnel reasonably believe that the person has been drinking or is impaired, even when the alcohol was consumed before arrival.

No adult may use alcohol during any portion of a team trip in which that adult is responsible for transporting, supervising, lodging with, or otherwise caring for minor athletes.

Coaches, drivers, staff members, and volunteers may not perform their responsibilities while impaired by alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, misused medication, or another substance.

Adult tobacco and vaping use must comply with facility rules and may not occur in athlete areas, indoor facilities, team vehicles, or in a manner that exposes minors.

Response

The Flames may:

- Remove or suspend a participant.
- Contact a parent.
- Deny transportation.
- Contact EMS or law enforcement.
- Restrict future attendance.
- Require an evaluation or other reasonable safety measure.
- Impose discipline under the handbook.

The immediate safety of athletes and families will take priority over avoiding embarrassment or inconvenience.

Weapons and Sanctioned Sporting Equipment Policy

The Spartanburg Flames seek to maintain a safe and orderly environment while respecting lawful ownership and legitimate sporting uses of firearms, bows, knives, and other equipment.

Unauthorized Possession or Use by Athletes

Athletes may not carry, display, handle, brandish, threaten with, or use firearms, knives, blades, or other weapons during Flames activities or while representing the organization, except as part of a specifically authorized sport or event.

Ordinary pocket knives or multi-tools must remain secured in a vehicle, closed bag, or other appropriate location and may not be displayed or handled during a team activity.

Any object used to threaten, intimidate, or intentionally harm another person will be treated as a weapon regardless of its ordinary purpose.

Parents and Spectators

Lawful firearm possession by parents and spectators remains subject to:

- South Carolina law.

- Host-facility rules.
- Event rules.
- Posted restrictions.
- Directions from law enforcement or facility personnel.

Firearms and other weapons may not be unnecessarily displayed, handled, transferred, or used at Flames events. Any threat, brandishing, unsafe handling, or misuse will result in immediate removal, contact with law enforcement when appropriate, and organizational review.

Coaches and Staff

A coach or staff member may not carry a firearm while performing coaching or supervisory duties unless:

- The possession is lawful.
- The facility permits it.
- The Board has expressly authorized it.
- The person complies with any conditions imposed by the Board or insurer.

This provision does not restrict an on-duty law-enforcement officer acting within official responsibilities.

Sanctioned Sports and Events

This policy does not prohibit weapons or weapon-like sporting equipment used as part of a Board-approved sport, clinic, training activity, demonstration, fundraiser, or special event.

Authorized activities may include:

- Archery.
- Shooting sports.
- Clay-target or clay-shooting fundraisers.
- Hunter-safety instruction.
- Other Board-approved sporting or educational activities.

At a sanctioned activity:

- Equipment may be possessed, transported, stored, handled, and used only in accordance with applicable law, venue rules, range rules, and the event safety plan.
- Participants must follow the instructions of authorized coaches, range personnel, safety officers, and event staff.
- Equipment may be used only in designated areas and for the approved purpose.
- Unsafe handling, horseplay, threats, unauthorized access, or disregard of safety instructions will result in immediate removal.
- The Board may require additional waivers, age restrictions, supervision, training, protective equipment, or insurance.

The Flames do not authorize or accept responsibility for a personal weapon merely because it is present at an event.

Discipline, Investigation, and Appeals

The purpose of discipline is to protect athletes and families, preserve order, correct conduct when possible, and maintain the integrity of the Flames' mission.

This policy applies to athletes, parents, spectators, coaches, volunteers, and staff.

Available Actions

Depending upon the circumstances, the Flames may impose:

- Verbal correction.
- Written warning.
- Parent or participant conference.
- Required apology or restorative action.
- Loss of a team privilege.
- Removal from a practice, game, trip, or event.
- Playing-time or participation consequences.
- Behavioral probation.
- Restriction from team communications or facilities.
- Suspension.
- Removal from a roster or volunteer position.
- Dismissal from the organization.

- Referral to a facility, league, insurer, DSS, law enforcement, or another appropriate authority.

The Flames are not required to use every step or impose discipline in a progressive order. Serious conduct may result in immediate suspension or dismissal.

Coaching Authority

A coach may impose ordinary team discipline, including correction, temporary removal from activity, playing-time consequences, and reasonable behavioral conditions.

A head coach may suspend an athlete from an upcoming activity when prompt action is needed, but should notify the Executive Director of a significant suspension as soon as reasonably possible.

Season-long suspension, dismissal from a team, removal of a coach or volunteer, or a long-term spectator ban should ordinarily be approved by the Executive Director or Board.

A coach, official, facility representative, or Flames leader may remove a person immediately from an event when necessary to restore order or protect safety. The removal remains effective for that event even if a later review is requested.

Interim Restrictions

The Executive Director or Board may impose temporary restrictions while a report is reviewed. These may include:

- No contact with specified athletes.
- No attendance at events.
- Temporary suspension from coaching or volunteering.
- Temporary removal from team communication.
- Modified travel or supervision arrangements.
- Another reasonable protective measure.

Interim restrictions are not a final finding of wrongdoing.

Review Process

The person assigned to review a report may:

- Obtain a written complaint.
- Speak with the reporting person.
- Speak with the accused person.
- Interview witnesses.
- Review messages, photographs, video, documents, or other relevant information.
- Consult coaches, Board members, counsel, the insurer, facility representatives, medical personnel, or public authorities.
- Decline or pause an internal review when requested by law enforcement, DSS, or counsel.

The accused person should ordinarily receive notice of the general concern and a reasonable opportunity to respond, except when doing so could place a person at risk, compromise evidence, violate law, or interfere with an external investigation.

Confidentiality

The Flames will seek to handle reports discreetly, but cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Information may be shared with individuals who need it to evaluate the matter, protect participants, comply with law, obtain advice, or carry out a decision.

Recusal

A person with a material personal involvement, conflict of interest, or close relationship affecting impartiality should not make the final disciplinary decision. The matter should be reassigned to the Executive Director, Board Chair, or disinterested Board members as appropriate.

Appeals

Unless another policy states otherwise, a person subject to suspension, dismissal, or a substantial long-term restriction may submit a written appeal to the Executive Director within seven calendar days.

The appeal should explain:

- The decision being appealed.
- The reason the person believes it should be changed.
- Any material information not previously considered.
- The requested resolution.

If the Executive Director made the original decision or is personally involved, the appeal may be submitted to chair@spartanburgflames.com or board@spartanburgflames.com.

The reviewing authority may affirm, reverse, modify, or return the matter for additional review. Board decisions are final.

Ordinary playing-time, position, strategy, and good-faith roster decisions are not subject to formal appeal.

Conflict Resolution

The Spartanburg Flames encourage ordinary interpersonal conflicts to be addressed in a manner consistent with Matthew 18:15–17, with humility, truthfulness, patience, and a desire for reconciliation.

Ordinary Conflicts

For ordinary disagreements:

1. When age-appropriate and safe, athletes should attempt to address minor peer-to-peer misunderstandings respectfully.
2. An athlete may seek assistance from a parent, coach, or assistant coach.
3. A parent or athlete with an unresolved team concern should request an appropriate conversation with the head coach.
4. The conversation should occur at an agreed time rather than immediately before, during, or after a game.
5. If the matter remains unresolved, the parent may submit the concern in writing to the Executive Director.
6. A person dissatisfied with a substantial decision of the Executive Director may request Board review when permitted by the Discipline and Appeals Policy.

Parents must communicate respectfully and may not use the conflict-resolution process to harass coaches, repeatedly relitigate ordinary athletic decisions, or disrupt the team.

Matters That Do Not Require Direct Confrontation

The ordinary Matthew 18 process and direct discussion with the accused person are not required for reports involving:

- Suspected child abuse or neglect.
- Sexual misconduct or grooming.
- Sexual harassment.
- Bullying or hazing.
- Threats or violence.
- Stalking.
- Retaliation.
- Criminal activity.
- Serious medical or safety concerns.
- Misconduct involving a substantial power imbalance.
- Conduct by a coach, staff member, Executive Director, or Board member when direct confrontation would be unsafe or inappropriate.

These matters may be reported immediately through the Child Protection and Reporting Policy.

No athlete or parent will be required to confront an alleged abuser, harasser, bully, or threatening person as a condition of receiving assistance.

Parent Volunteer and Sibling-Supervision Expectations

The Spartanburg Flames depend upon family participation and volunteer service.

Every family may be asked to serve in at least one capacity during a season.

Volunteer opportunities may include:

- Concessions.
- Gate or ticketing.
- Scorekeeping.
- Scoreboard operation.
- Event setup and cleanup.
- Team communication.
- Fundraising.
- Transportation.
- Other program needs.

Volunteer assignments do not transfer parental responsibility for nonparticipating children.

Parents and legal guardians remain responsible for supervising siblings and other children who are not rostered participants in the activity. Nonparticipating children may not:

- Roam facilities without supervision.
- Enter playing surfaces, benches, dugouts, locker rooms, equipment areas, or restricted spaces.
- Interfere with practices, games, officials, athletes, or facility operations.
- Use athletic equipment without permission.
- Be left in the care of coaches unless a specific arrangement has been approved.

Coaches are responsible for supervising rostered athletes during team activities, not for providing general childcare for siblings.

Repeated failure to supervise children may result in the family being required to remove the children from the event or make different supervision arrangements.

Uniforms and Equipment

Uniform and equipment arrangements vary by sport and program. Some items become the property of the athlete, while others remain the property of the Spartanburg Flames.

The applicable team will identify which items must be returned, any return deadline, and any replacement cost before or during the season.

Athletes and families must:

- Use uniforms and equipment only for their intended purpose.
- Keep organization-owned property reasonably clean and secure.
- Promptly report loss, damage, unsafe condition, or equipment failure.
- Return organization-owned items when directed.
- Pay reasonable replacement costs for items lost, intentionally damaged, or not returned.

Uniforms may not be cut, permanently altered, decorated, re-lettered, or otherwise modified without written approval from the head coach or Executive Director.

Temporary fit adjustments that do not damage the item may be permitted with coach approval.

Athletes may not participate without required safety equipment or while using equipment that a coach reasonably believes is damaged, improperly fitted, or unsafe.

Financial Assistance

Limited scholarships or financial assistance may be available for certain Spartanburg Flames programs when funding permits.

Financial assistance:

- Is not guaranteed.
- May cover all or part of eligible program fees.
- Is subject to available funds.
- Must be approved by the Board.
- May be limited by sport, season, program, or funding source.
- Does not automatically include travel, optional apparel, personal equipment, or third-party expenses.
- Must be requested through the procedure announced for the applicable program.

Requests will be handled discreetly. The Board may consider financial need, available resources, family circumstances, prior assistance, program costs, and other relevant factors.

A registration balance remains due unless and until assistance is approved in writing.

Financial-assistance decisions do not create an entitlement to assistance in a future season.

Refund Policy

The Spartanburg Flames are operated by a nonprofit organization. Fees are used to pay for facilities, leagues, officials, uniforms, equipment, insurance, registration systems, scheduling, supplies, and other program expenses.

Many of these costs are committed or become nonrecoverable before or at the beginning of the season.

Tryout Deposits

A program may require a tryout deposit to reserve an evaluation position.

Unless otherwise stated:

- An athlete who attends the tryout will have the deposit applied to season fees or returned according to the program announcement.
- A deposit may be forfeited when the athlete fails to attend without prior communication or an approved extenuating circumstance.
- A tryout deposit does not guarantee selection.

Season Fees

Season fees become due after selection and before the first official team practice.

An athlete may not participate in the first official practice unless:

- Fees have been paid in full;
- An approved payment plan is active; or
- Written financial assistance has been approved.

Withdrawal Before the First Practice

A family that withdraws before the first official team practice may request a refund.

The refund may be reduced by:

- Payment-processing fees.

- Nonrecoverable registration costs.
- Personalized uniforms or apparel already ordered.
- Equipment or supplies purchased specifically for the athlete.
- Other costs already committed on the athlete's behalf.

Withdrawal After the First Practice

Once the athlete attends or becomes eligible to attend the first official team practice, season fees are nonrefundable.

This policy applies to withdrawal resulting from:

- A change of mind.
- Scheduling conflicts.
- Participation on another team.
- Relocation.
- Injury or illness.
- Academic ineligibility.
- Conduct-related suspension or dismissal.
- Disagreement regarding playing time, position, coaching, or team assignment.
- Failure to attend.
- Another personal or family circumstance.

The organization may consider a written appeal in an extraordinary case, but no exception is guaranteed.

Refund appeals must be sent to director@spartanburgflames.com within 14 days of the event giving rise to the request. The Executive Director may approve, deny, or refer the request to the Board.

Program Cancellation Before the First Practice

If the Flames cancel a program before the first official practice because a team does not form, a facility cannot be secured, or the organization elects not to operate the

program, payments will ordinarily be refunded, less any expressly identified nonrefundable third-party charges.

Cancellation or Interruption After the Season Begins

The Flames are not responsible for providing refunds when a season, competition, or activity is shortened, interrupted, relocated, or canceled because of circumstances beyond the organization's reasonable control, including:

- Severe weather.
- Natural disaster.
- Unsafe field or facility conditions.
- Facility closure.
- Utility failure.
- Public-health restrictions.
- Government action.
- League or tournament cancellation.
- Insufficient opponents.
- Civil disturbance.
- Transportation disruption.
- Acts of God.
- Another force-majeure event.

Because uniforms, equipment, insurance, registration, facility, and administrative costs may already have been incurred, no refund is guaranteed after the season begins.

The Board may, in its discretion, provide a partial credit or refund when uncommitted program funds remain. A discretionary credit or refund in one circumstance does not require the same result in another.

General Terms

- Third-party processing fees are nonrefundable.

- Approved refunds may require reasonable processing time.
- Refunds will ordinarily be issued to the original payment method.
- Unpaid balances remain due unless waived in writing.
- Filing a payment dispute or chargeback does not replace the refund–appeal process.

Organizational Leadership

The Spartanburg Flames operate under the Upstate Homeschool Athletics Association, a South Carolina nonprofit organization recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3).

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing authority of the organization. The Board is responsible for:

- Protecting the organization's Christian mission and Statement of Faith.
- Establishing organizational policy.
- Providing financial and legal oversight.
- Appointing and supervising executive leadership.
- Approving major programs, coaches, and organizational initiatives.
- Addressing serious disciplinary, safety, governance, and accountability matters.
- Ensuring that the organization is operated in a responsible and lawful manner.

The Board serves as a governing body rather than as the day-to-day manager of each team.

Executive Director

The Executive Director oversees ordinary organizational operations and implements Board policy.

Responsibilities may include:

- Coordinating athletic programs.

- Supporting and supervising coaches.
- Managing registration and communication.
- Addressing family concerns.
- Reviewing eligibility and disciplinary matters.
- Coordinating facilities, schedules, and administrative systems.
- Referring major matters to the Board.

Coaches and Team Leadership

Head coaches have authority over the ordinary operation of their teams, including:

- Practice planning.
- Athletic instruction.
- Lineups and strategy.
- Playing time.
- Team expectations.
- Attendance consequences.
- Athlete development.
- Ordinary team discipline.

Coaches remain accountable to the Executive Director and Board and must follow organizational policy.

Team coordinators, assistant coaches, volunteers, and committees serve under authority delegated by the head coach, Executive Director, or Board.

Governing Documents

This handbook provides a family- and coach-oriented summary of important organizational policies. It is not a complete copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, Board resolutions, or internal operating procedures.

The bylaws govern formal corporate and Board matters. A current copy may be requested by emailing secretary@spartanburgflames.com.

If this handbook conflicts with the bylaws regarding corporate governance, Board authority, officer authority, or another formal governance matter, the bylaws control.

Liability Waiver and Assumption of Risk

The separately executed registration waiver controls if it differs from this handbook summary.

Participation in athletics, conditioning, training, travel, transportation, camps, clinics, competitions, and related activities involves inherent and other risks, including the risk of serious injury, illness, disability, property damage, and death.

By signing the applicable registration waiver, the signing parent or legal guardian acknowledges and agrees as follows:

Assumption of Risk

I understand that participation is voluntary and that athletic activities may involve risks arising from:

- Physical exertion.
- Contact with other participants.
- Falls or collisions.
- Equipment use or failure.
- Playing surfaces and facility conditions.
- Weather and environmental conditions.
- Travel and transportation.
- Acts or omissions of other participants.

- Emergency circumstances.
- The ordinary risks associated with the applicable sport or activity.

I knowingly accept and assume these risks on behalf of myself and, to the extent permitted by law, the participating minor.

Release

To the fullest extent permitted by South Carolina law, I release and hold harmless:

- Upstate Homeschool Athletics Association.
- Spartanburg Flames.
- Their directors, officers, coaches, staff members, volunteers, and representatives.
- Approved drivers.
- Leagues, event organizers, and tournament hosts.
- Churches, schools, parks, gyms, fields, ranges, and other third-party facilities used for activities.
- The owners, employees, and representatives of those facilities.

This release applies to claims arising from participation in or presence at practices, games, competitions, travel, approved transportation, lodging, camps, clinics, fundraisers, meetings, and other sanctioned activities, including claims arising from ordinary negligence to the extent such claims may lawfully be released.

This release does not apply to conduct that cannot legally be released.

Transportation

I understand that transportation may be provided by parents, volunteers, coaches, third-party carriers, or other approved drivers. Transportation carries risks including collision, driver error, road conditions, vehicle failure, and the actions of other motorists.

When I authorize my child to use Flames-approved transportation, I accept the ordinary risks associated with that transportation.

Medical Authorization

If I cannot be reached during an emergency, I authorize Flames coaches, staff members, volunteers, and representatives to:

- Contact emergency services.
- Obtain emergency evaluation and treatment.
- Arrange ambulance or other necessary transportation.
- Provide medical personnel with relevant information available to the organization.

I understand that the Flames do not guarantee any particular medical outcome.

Insurance and Costs

I am responsible for maintaining any health or accident insurance I consider appropriate.

I accept responsibility for ambulance, emergency, hospital, physician, rehabilitation, medication, transportation, and other medical costs arising from the participant's involvement, except to the extent another party is legally responsible.

Authority of Signer

The signature of one parent or legal guardian is sufficient for the child's registration.

By signing, I represent that:

- I am the child's parent or legal guardian.
- I possess legal authority to consent to the child's participation and emergency care.
- No court order or legal restriction prevents me from granting the stated permissions.
- The information I provide is accurate.

The agreement binds the signing adult and authorizes the child's participation. It does not purport to waive the independent legal rights of a non-signing person beyond what applicable law permits.

Severability

If any provision of the waiver is found invalid or unenforceable, that provision shall be limited or removed only to the extent necessary, and the remaining provisions shall continue in effect to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Image, Media, and Privacy Release

The Spartanburg Flames photograph and record teams, athletes, coaches, volunteers, and events for legitimate organizational purposes, including:

- Website content.
- Social-media content.
- Newsletters.
- Promotional materials.
- Fundraising.
- Team recognition.
- Historical archives.
- Livestreams or game recordings.
- Coach education and athletic instruction.

Permission

Unless a parent completes the applicable opt-out process, registration grants the Flames permission to photograph, film, record, reproduce, publish, and display the athlete's likeness, voice, and athletic participation without compensation.

For ordinary public promotional content, the Flames will generally identify minor athletes by first name and last initial. A full name may be used for rosters, awards, recruiting recognition, athlete features, record announcements, or similar purposes when parent permission has been provided or the use is otherwise reasonably customary and appropriate.

Privacy Protections

Official Flames media shall not knowingly disclose:

- A minor athlete's home address.
- Private contact information.
- Medical information.
- Academic records.
- Sensitive family information.
- Information that would create an unreasonable personal-safety risk.

The Flames should avoid real-time public identification of an athlete's precise location when a family has disclosed a safety, foster-care, custody, adoption, or privacy concern.

Photography and recording are strictly prohibited in:

- Locker rooms.
- Bathrooms.
- Showers.
- Changing areas.
- Other places where a person has a reasonable expectation of bodily privacy.

Parent and Spectator Media

Parents and spectators are expected to use reasonable judgment when photographing or recording events involving children other than their own.

Parents should not:

- Photograph or record children in private areas.
- Publicly identify a child contrary to a known media restriction.
- Post content intended to humiliate, mock, threaten, or harm an athlete.
- Publish private medical, disciplinary, academic, or family information.
- Use team media to attack officials, coaches, opponents, athletes, or families.

The Flames may restrict photography or recording when required by a facility, event organizer, parent safety concern, or organizational need.

Opt-Out Requests

A parent wishing to limit official use of an athlete's image must notify the head coach, team coordinator, or Executive Director in writing.

The request should explain whether the family is requesting:

- No identifiable public images.
- No use of the athlete's name.
- No individual athlete features.
- No livestream or video inclusion when reasonably avoidable.
- Another specific restriction.

The organization will communicate the restriction to relevant personnel and make reasonable efforts to honor it.

An opt-out may affect an athlete's inclusion in team photographs, livestreamed competitions, public awards, or other group media when exclusion cannot reasonably be accomplished.

Removal Requests and Limitations

Upon written request, the Flames will make reasonable efforts to remove an athlete's identifiable image from official platforms controlled by the organization.

The Flames cannot guarantee removal from:

- Printed materials already distributed.
- Third-party websites.
- League or tournament media.
- News coverage.
- Parent or spectator accounts.
- Screenshots.
- Downloads.

- Reposts or archived copies.
- Recordings not controlled by the organization.

A family with a serious safety concern should notify the Executive Director as early as possible so that a practical protection plan can be developed.

Handbook Administration

Publication Date: July 28, 2026

Handbook Version: 1.1

Registration Acknowledgment

This handbook is distributed as a downloadable policy document. The required agreement and acknowledgment will be completed separately through registration or another approved electronic or written process.

At registration for each sport, camp, clinic, event, or activity:

- Families will be informed that they must review and agree to the current handbook.
- The current handbook version will be made available.
- Parents and athletes may be required to complete additional acknowledgments, releases, medical forms, concussion information, travel permissions, facility waivers, or sport-specific agreements.
- Participation may be denied until all required forms and acknowledgments have been completed.

Authority to Amend

The Board of Directors may adopt, amend, interpret, suspend, or replace handbook policies when reasonably necessary to:

- Protect participants.
- Comply with law.
- Satisfy insurance requirements.

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- Comply with league or facility rules.
- Address an unforeseen circumstance.
- Improve organizational operations.
- Protect the Christian mission and integrity of the organization.

The Executive Director may issue temporary operational instructions consistent with Board policy when immediate guidance is needed. Material or permanent policy changes remain subject to Board authority.

The current published version of the handbook supersedes prior versions.

Notice of Changes

Families will ordinarily be notified of material handbook changes through registration, email, team communication systems, the organization's website, or another reasonable method.

Continued participation after notice may require a new acknowledgment when the Board or Executive Director determines that the change is substantial.

Supplemental Rules

This handbook establishes organization-wide standards. Additional requirements may be imposed by:

- A particular sport.
- A head coach.
- A league or athletic association.
- A tournament.
- An event organizer.
- A church, school, park, gym, range, field, pool, or other host facility.
- An insurer.
- A medical provider.
- Applicable law.

Team or sport-specific rules may supplement this handbook but may not reduce its child-protection, safety, conduct, eligibility, or organizational-accountability requirements without written authorization from the Executive Director or Board.

Policy Hierarchy

When two rules appear to conflict, the following order generally applies:

1. Applicable federal, state, and local law.
2. Emergency directions from law enforcement, emergency responders, or authorized public officials.
3. Formal corporate governance documents, including the Articles of Incorporation and bylaws, for organizational-governance matters.
4. Mandatory league, tournament, insurer, or host-facility rules for the applicable activity.
5. The current Spartanburg Flames Athletics Handbook.
6. Sport-specific or team-specific written policies.
7. Ordinary instructions issued by coaches or team coordinators.

A more restrictive safety or facility rule may control a particular event even when the handbook is less restrictive.

When uncertainty remains, the Executive Director may provide an interim interpretation subject to review by the Board. The Board's interpretation of organizational policy is final.

Questions

- Executive Director: director@spartanburgflames.com
- Board of Directors: board@spartanburgflames.com
- Board Chair: chair@spartanburgflames.com
- Corporate Records and Bylaws: secretary@spartanburgflames.com

Spartanburg Flames Athletics

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” — Colossians 3:23

Email: info@spartanburgflames.com

Website: www.spartanburgflames.com

Executive Director: director@spartanburgflames.com

Board: board@spartanburgflames.com

Board Chair: chair@spartanburgflames.com

Secretary: secretary@spartanburgflames.com

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