

Mercy High School  
Athletic Handbook for Students and Parents

Mission Statement

Mercy High School, a Catholic diocesan high school for young women, is committed to providing an educational experience that responds to individual needs. In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy and their foundress Catherine McAuley, each student is challenged to grow, to realize her full potential, and to provide service to others within an atmosphere that fosters a spirit of community and compassion.

Founded by the Diocese of Norwich, Mercy gives preference in admission to young Catholic women residing in the diocese; however, enrollment is open to all who qualify regardless of religion, race, or nationality.

Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to act as a guide for students and parents and to assist with any questions about the athletic program. It is essential that student athletes and parents be thoroughly familiar with all rules and regulations governing athletic participation at Mercy High School. Each student athlete and her parents are required to read and acknowledge receipt of this handbook before each sport season. Participation in the athletic program is considered a privilege. It is important to remember that Mercy High School reserves the right to revoke the privilege if the student athlete or her parents do not comply with the rules or conduct themselves in an acceptable manner.

Athletic Program

Mercy High School has a long and rich tradition in sports, and its success can be attributed to dedicated and experienced athletic staff and coaches and skilled and motivated student athletes. The athletic program is an integral part of the educational process. The purpose of the program is to motivate students to develop mutual interests, promote spirit and achievement, and improve their physical abilities and knowledge of sports. Competitive athletics emphasizes the importance of scholastic achievement and the development of sportsmanship, health and fair play in the participants and spectators.

Participation in athletic teams involves considerable time for practices and games, strenuous physical effort, and commitment. Each sport is a specialized form of learning experience, and as such, entails numerous responsibilities. Students who try out for any sport should be aware of these responsibilities and willing to assume them.

All qualified students may try out for membership on sports teams. Unfortunately, not everyone who tries out can be accepted. The decision of the coach, in conjunction with the athletic director, is final. Ordinarily, the administration will not intervene in non-selection decisions. Parents are encouraged to help their daughter understand that not everyone is selected.

### *Objectives of the Athletic Program*

- To encourage student athletes to achieve academic success and to keep athletics in proper perspective;
- To develop good citizenship and respect for rules and authority;
- To provide opportunities to exemplify and observe good sportsmanship;
- To increase knowledge of various sports;
- To teach and emphasize the fundamental skills of various sports as a necessary ingredient in achieving individual and team success;
- To stress the importance of physical fitness, conditioning, health habits and safety in athletics;
- To provide opportunities to develop lasting friendships with teammates and opponents.

### *League Affiliation*

Mercy High School is a member of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) and governed by its rules and regulations. Student athletes and parents should be familiar with the CIAC rules and regulations, which are found on the CIAC website ([www.ciacsports.com](http://www.ciacsports.com)). Mercy High School is also a member of the Southern Connecticut Conference (SCC).

### *Athletic Requirements*

- Student athletes and parents must sign a *Student and Parent Consent Form*.
- Parents must complete and sign an *Emergency Information and Medical Treatment Consent* form and an *Insurance Information* form.
- A yearly physical examination is required of all student athletes after June 1<sup>st</sup> for the following school year.
- All student athletes playing interscholastic sports and their parents are required to sign a *Player Contract*.
- Students who are planning to enroll in college as freshmen and wish to participate in athletics at a Division I or Division II school must be certified by the NCAA Clearinghouse. Students should obtain a current copy of the *Student Brochure* and *Student Release Form* from the Mercy Guidance Department. These materials outline all of the requirements and steps to be taken by the students. The form should be mailed early in the fall of the student's senior year. Information pertaining to the NCAA Clearinghouse can be found on the following website: [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) and [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)

### *Interscholastic Sports*

Interscholastic sports offered at Mercy include: Basketball, Cheerleading, Cross-Country, Field Hockey, Golf, Indoor Track, Lacrosse, Outdoor Track, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Tennis and Volleyball.

*Varsity Athletics:* Varsity athletes are those athletes that exhibit the most skill of those who have tried out for the team. They will have the opportunity to compete against equally talented athletes from opposing schools. A purpose of Varsity athletics is to refine the skills of the team in an attempt to provide the school with the best ability to compete at the Varsity level.

*Junior Varsity Athletics:* Junior Varsity athletic programs offer those students who do not yet possess the skills required of varsity athletes an opportunity to participate in a competitive setting. Junior Varsity athletes are in the process of gaining valuable knowledge, skill and experience required for Varsity competition. Occasionally, Junior Varsity athletes may participate in Varsity contests based on the decision by the coaching staff that the athlete has made sufficient progress. This should not be misinterpreted as an absolute move to the Varsity level.

*Freshwomen Athletics:* Ninth grade athletes may participate in all sport programs offered at Mercy. Freshwomen athletic programs may be offered in some sports to those ninth grade students who do not yet possess the skills necessary to participate on the Junior Varsity level. Freshwomen teams are designed to provide a competitive setting in which to gain valuable knowledge, skill, and experience required for promotion to Junior Varsity teams. Occasionally, ninth grade athletes may participate in Junior Varsity and Varsity contests based on the decision by the coaching staff that the athlete has made sufficient progress. This should not be misinterpreted as an absolute move to the next level of competition.

## Athletic Department Policies

### *Athletic Code of Conduct*

Mercy High School, its administration, athletic director and coaching staff feel that high standards of conduct are essential to a sound athletic program. To this end:

- Athletes will conduct themselves as Christian women at all times, remembering that each athlete is a representative of Mercy High School.
- Athletes will conduct themselves in an exemplary manner in school, in the community and on any campus which their team is visiting.
- Athletes are expected to treat opponents, officials, coaches and spectators with respect.
- Proper behavior, language, dress and demeanor are mandatory for all athletes.

Any violation of the above rules, act of unacceptable conduct (including any violation of civil law) or violation of the Mercy High School Student and Parent Handbook may lead to dismissal from the team for the duration of the season or indefinite suspension.

### *Academic Eligibility Policy*

In order to participate in athletics, students must be in good academic standing. Eligibility will be determined by quarter grades and will take effect the day report cards are distributed. Coaches will be notified of a student's ineligibility. A student with one

failure and any other grade below 70 may not participate again in such activities until the next marking period is completed with no failing grades. Required academic assistance takes precedence over all athletic events.

### *School and Class Attendance*

Sports cannot be used as an excuse to miss class or a portion of a class unless the team is departing early from school. Students and teachers are notified in advance by the athletic department of any scheduled early departures. Students are responsible for working with teachers to schedule tests and quizzes, assignments and homework from any missed classes.

Athletes must attend classes regularly and on time. Tardiness and missing classes will not be tolerated. A student who is absent from school or dismissed before 11:15 a.m. on any day may not participate in an after school extra-curricular activity (including a team practice or game) that day. A student who fails to serve detention on the appointed day will not be eligible for participation in any extra-curricular activity (including a team practice or game) until that detention is served. A student who receives an in-school suspension will not be able to participate in an extra-curricular activity (including a team practice or game) on the day(s) of her suspension.

### *Team Practice and Game Attendance*

Attendance at all practice sessions and games is mandatory for all team members. Athletes should be aware that practices and games may be scheduled on Saturday and Sunday. Team members are expected to attend practices and games during vacations that fall within the team season. Parents should make vacation plans with the student athlete's commitments in mind. If for some reason an athlete must be tardy or absent, that athlete must personally speak to the coach and athletic director. Athletes are not permitted to leave practice or a game early without prior approval of the coach. Coaches may have additional regulations pertaining to their specific sport. Information and practice/game policies are provided to students and their parents at the beginning of each season.

### *Captain's Expectations*

Captains play a vital role on a team and are expected to set a positive example for team members. They do this by attending all practices and games, arriving on time, being the first on the field/court for practices and the last to leave, showing and encouraging team and school spirit, and providing morning announcements about game results and team achievements.

### *Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Policy*

Athletes will not use or possess any quantity of alcohol, tobacco or illegal/non-prescription drugs (including steroids). Athletes may not be present at a party or in any

situation where alcohol, tobacco or any controlled substances are consumed by minors. An athlete who violates the school policy regarding alcohol/tobacco/drug use will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with school policy, including immediate suspension and probable expulsion from the team.

### *Hazing*

Hazing is any form or type of physical, verbal, or emotional mistreatment, abuse or harassment of a student athlete in connection with participation on an interscholastic athletic team. Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the mission of Mercy High School and are prohibited at all times, on or off school grounds and whether occurring during, prior to or after the school day or season. Mercy prohibits any activity that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health or safety of a student athlete.

### *Athletic Transportation Policy*

Mercy High School provides transportation to and from away games. All students are expected to travel to and from the site on the bus. Parents may pick up athletes after away games only when the coach has received a note prior to the contest.

Some teams practice at off-campus facilities. Mercy High School provides transportation to off-site practices. Transportation will be by bus or by a staff member driving. Parents must pick up students at the off-site facility. A student may drive herself, but cannot drive other students.

Parents should be aware that, according to Diocesan policy, no student may be left alone with a coach after a practice or athletic event. Therefore, parents should make every attempt to pick up their daughter on time so that the last parent to arrive prior to the tardy parent is not delayed as well.

### *Athletic Equipment and Uniforms*

Athletes are responsible for all equipment and uniforms issued to them. All equipment and uniforms will be returned clean and in good condition in a timely manner when the athlete completes the sport, either at the end of the season or upon leaving the team. Athletes will be held financially responsible for any equipment or uniform damaged or not returned. Any student with an obligation to the athletic department may not participate in another sport until the obligation is resolved.

### *Personal Property*

It is the student athlete's responsibility to safeguard her personal possessions. Mercy High School does not assume responsibility for the recovery or replacement of lost, stolen or damaged personal property.

### *Athletic Injuries*

All injuries suffered by an athlete while participating in athletics must be reported immediately to the coach and athletic director. This is the responsibility of the athlete. An *Injury Report* form must be filled out by the coach and given to the athletic director. In order to return to participation in athletics after an injury, an athlete treated by a physician must be cleared to play by the athletic director, who will need written clearance from the attending physician.

### *Emergency Procedure*

In the event of an emergency, the coach will immediately call 911 to secure medical assistance for the student athlete. Referring to the student athlete's emergency information card, the coach or other designated adult will make the necessary telephone calls to the parent/guardian and athletic director. The athletic director distributes the emergency information to the coaches at the beginning of each sports season.

### *Insurance*

In order to participate in a school sport, a student athlete must be covered by a family's medical insurance. If a family does not have medical insurance, it must obtain insurance through the school. The athletic insurance program of Mercy High School does not cover any medical expense that is paid or payable under any other insurance policy. The family's regular medical insurance policy will cover the student athlete initially.

### *Expectations of Parents*

Parents of student athletes are required to attend a Sports Information Night program at the beginning of each sport season. Parents are expected to encourage their daughter to work hard and to do her best. Parents should insist that their daughter exhibit true sportsmanship during athletic contests.

Parents should not criticize coaches or the school if their daughter is not playing. As spectators, parents are entitled to cheer at sporting events, but should never become belligerent toward players, coaches or officials. Parents are not to be on the team sidelines at games, nor in the locker room before, during or after a practice or game.

### *Communications within the Athletic Program*

Athletes and parents must respect the authority of coaches to resolve any issues that develop. Should a concern arise regarding procedures or policies of the Athletic Program, the student athlete should contact the coach to discuss the situation directly. The student athlete should contact the athletic director if the initial contact with the coach does not resolve the issue satisfactorily.

A parent should approach their daughter's coach directly with questions or requests for clarification. If a situation warrants further concern, or is not resolved to a parent's satisfaction, then the athletic director will address any concern in a timely manner. While the administration remains receptive to parents' questions and concerns, it is not involved in the day-to-day workings of the athletic department. A referral to the principal, if necessary, will only be addressed when all other avenues have been exhausted.