

Section 1 – Philosophy

Golden Empire Youth Football and Cheer is Kern County's largest high school feeder program operated for the benefit of its youth participants. As a League-sponsored activity, cheerleaders serve as a support group for the athletic program Golden Empire Youth Tackle Football (GEYF). We are a Semi-competitive football sideline cheer organization. GEYC cheerleaders are Student Athletes in that order. We seek to develop well-rounded young men and women who learn not only the fundamentals of cheerleading, stunting, dance and chants but also the importance of education, in an atmosphere conducive to developing sound mind, body, and character. Inspire youth to practice the ideals of sportsmanship, self discipline, teamwork, leadership, and physical fitness.

Cheerleaders should strive to boost spirit, promote good sportsmanship, and develop positive crowd involvement! Cheerleaders should focus on directing the cheering of all GEYF fans. In this role, cheerleaders are positive, effective leaders. Their activities should be focused on: creating a cooperative spirit among the cheerleading teams, athletes, and the community; recognizing outstanding plays and examples of good sportsmanship on the part of competing teams; and aiding the organization and game officials in the promotion of good sportsmanship by the spectators.

Section 2 – Participation Eligibility

Golden Empire Youth Cheer does not conduct tryouts. All Cheerleaders that sign-up will be placed on a squad. Squad (Division) placement is based on Age & "Squad Placement Evaluations". Evaluations are solely for the purposes of Squad placement.

- All GEYF/GEYC Participants must be a minimum of 6 years of age on or before **November 15th** of the current calendar year for the Rookie Division.
- All GEYF/GEYC Participants must be a minimum of 8 years of age on or before **November 15th** of the current calendar year and cannot exceed the age of 14 years and or be enrolled in high school regardless of Division. For the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior Varsity and Varsity divisions.

Every cheerleader must meet GEYC registration requirements.

At the time of registration, all GEYC Participants must provide:

- original birth certificate as well as two copies, and proof of residency (utility bill) as well as a physical.

Recruitment of participants within an area is the sole responsibility of the Cheer Representative and head coach of each division.

- Participant must reside (the place where the participant sleeps, eats, bathes, studies, and interacts with his siblings and/or parent(s), guardians, or foster parents) within an area's boundaries, and must provide proof of residency in that area.
- Upon proper verification, participants involved in a dual family/residence scenario have the option to play in either respective area upon providing appropriate proof of residency at time of registration.
- Participants attending parochial schools must provide appropriate enrollment documentation to establish program eligibility

Section 3 – Risk Factors

There is an inherent risk involved when participating in sports. Please be aware of this risk and ways to help prevent injury. It is extremely important to report any injury to your coach

immediately and to your doctor as soon as possible. This is applicable except for a catastrophic injury which should be reported to the league cheer director immediately.

**Cheer Representatives must report all injuries to the Board Member in Charge of the Area, and Participant report of accident must be filled out and submitted to the league within 24 hours of injury. All current league GEYC policies for return to play are enforced.*

Section 4- Cheerleader conduct

Role of Cheerleaders Cheerleading is a team sport! Every cheerleader is important to their team. Being a part of a team is a privilege for each participant. An important purpose of GEYC cheerleaders is to promote and uphold team spirit along with unity, pride, and leadership. Attitude is everything. Participants should have the attitude that the team is bigger than themselves. Players should exhibit 100% commitment and effort. Sportsmanship is expected both on and off the field of practice or play. GEYC Cheerleaders represent not only themselves but the entire GEYC organization. Therefore, cheerleaders agree to uphold the following ideals:

- Conduct themselves in a respectable manner to coaches, teammates, and others. This includes speech, actions, and attitude. This includes games and practices as well as community and online. Practice is mandatory.
- If a practice is missed when new material is presented, cheerleader may have to sit out the next game.
- Cheerleaders will not use a cell phone during practice or during games without receiving permission from coach.
- No chewing gum is allowed during practice or during games.
- Cheerleader will not display any public forms of affection while in uniform (this includes practice uniforms).
- No smoking, drinking or drugs is allowed at any GEYC event including but not limited to games and practices.
- When on sidelines, no talking between girls, players or family/friends at the games.
- Between cheers girls need to be in their "cheer stance."
- Leaving the sidelines during a game is not permitted except for emergencies or if instructed by coach.
- Arrive on time to games in complete uniform, ready to warm up and remain in uniform until exiting field. Unless otherwise instructed by coaches, GEYC cheerleaders should arrive one hour prior to game time. By registering cheerleader and parent/guardian agree to support and endorse all the rules, policies and procedures discussed in the rest of this handbook.

Disciplinary Policies Violation of any of the rules and regulations found within this document can jeopardize the privilege of any participant to cheer.

All disciplinary issues are handled following the Chain of Command. Board Members and Cheer Representatives are ultimately responsible for implementing policy & protocol.

Cheerleaders found to be verbally or physically abusive (hazing) to their fellow teammates or coaching staff will be indefinitely suspended and be required to meet with the GEYF Board Member, coaching staff, and Cheer Representative. All Cheerleaders must adhere to GEYFC's Zero Tolerance policy as stated in the GEYC Registration and Parental Agreement Contract.

Cheerleaders exhibiting poor sportsmanship towards their own teammates, including but not limited to rude comments, negative attitudes, rumor fostering, gossiping, etc. will be required to meet with the coaching staff.

- 1st offense--Verbal warning & parents contacted
- 2nd offense-Next game benched (see below)
- 3rd offense--Dismissal from squad - Minor infractions and behavior problems will be dealt with on a case by case basis with consequences ranging from cheer homework up to removal from team.
 - ****Benched Athletes** - Cheerleaders who are benched still need to meet all requirements: full uniform, arrive on time and remain on the bench next to coach.

Leaving a Team Individuals leaving a squad without the coach's permission or because of GEYC Code of Conduct Rule violation forfeit all awards, banquets and fees paid. Such individuals may not participate on any other athletic team during the same season and may be prohibited from playing during the next season as well. Students involved in extra-curricular activities are held to a higher standard. Cheerleaders in uniform or wearing any item of squad or team identification represent GEYC and GEYF Therefore, team members must always conduct themselves in a manner which aims to display a purpose greater than themselves.

Section 5 – Cheerleader Absences

Cheer is a team sport, if a cheerleader is absent, her entire stunt group can't practice. This has a major impact on the squad as we are limited on practice time. Cheerleaders will be allowed 3 excused absences for cheer practice during the season. NOTE: Excused Absences to practices are for:

- School sponsored events (must discuss in advance with Coach in order to be excused)
- Religious Holidays
- Family Emergencies/Death in the family
- Serious medical illness (MUST have Dr. Note) – if able, cheerleaders are expected to attend practice to watch and learn, even if they are not practicing
- Excused Absences cannot be used for Camps, Kick-Off Classic Practice, Cheerfest "Battle of the Bleachers" or October Mandatory Practice weeks and Competitions
- Homework is NOT an excused absence
 - ** It is as the discretion of the Cheer Representative of Cheer to determine any special circumstances. GEYC has an excused attendance policy, but it is not designed for a cheerleader to pick 3 days to be absent because they "feel like it, homework, party, the fair, or other unexcused activities." This is designed for unforeseen emergencies and illness. Game and practice attendance are mandatory, if your child is absent, her entire stunt group and squad suffers.

Section 6 – Cheerleader Appearance

Cheerleader Appearance dress code Practices-- Arrive at practice dressed in full practice wear as designated by coach which includes:

- Practice wear top
- Practice wear bottoms
- Cheer Shoes
- Hair up in a ponytail, bun or braid with practice bow in hair
- No jewelry of any kind (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, watches or body jewelry)
- Fingernails must be sport length: no long or fake/acrylic nails--NO EXCEPTIONS

Cheerleader Appearance dress code Games--Arrive at games dressed in full uniform which includes:

- Shell top and/or Team Jacket or Team Sweater
- Skirt
- Cheer Shoes
- Hair in a PONYTAIL with game bow in hair (*unless otherwise instructed by coach)
- No jewelry of any kind (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, watches or body jewelry)
- Fingernails must be sport length: no long or fake/acrylic nails--NO EXCEPTIONS.

Section 7 - Player Registration / Uniform Fees

- Registration Base – Families are assessed a registration fee as well as any additional applicable program fees associated with the cost of running a program.
- Uniforms are purchased in May/June of the Current Season. Uniforms are only ordered for those cheerleaders that are paid in full by the uniform order date. GEYC Cheerleaders must be in full game and practice attire in order to participate.

Sections 8 - Chain of Command

In the event there is a question concerning your child, the chain of command must be followed in order to solve any issue. The chain of command is as follows:

1. Player/Parent to Coaches
2. Player/Parent to Cheer Representative
3. Player/Parent to Area Representative

**Approaching a coach or Cheer Representative before, in the middle or after games with dilemmas (except for game time emergency issues) is not an appropriate time to discuss these topics. We ask that you reserve that conversation for practice time in order to resolve those issues. GEYC is always looking for ways to improve, resolve conflicts, and ensure that your participant is learning and having fun in our programs.*

Section 9 – Game Day Sideline Equipment

The following sideline equipment can be used during games.

- Speakers
- Microphone for Captains
- Megaphones
- Pom Poms

Equipment Not permitted:

- Cheer boxes
- Ladders
- Mats

Section 10 - Team Size and Divisions

There are five (5) divisions allowed per Area. Each division is as follows and is allowed no more than thirty (35) participants per division with a maximum of one hundred seventy-five (175) participants per area. *(Age is determined as age on or before of 11/15 of the current season)*

- **Rookie / Freshmen Division:** Ages 6, 7, 8 years. (8U)
- **Sophomore Division:** Ages 10 & 11 years. (10U)
- **Junior Varsity Division:** Ages 11 & 12 years. (12U)
- **Varsity Division:** Ages 12, 13 & 14 years. (14U)
 - (All 8th graders must be on Varsity level squads)

Cheer participants age and division bracketing is used for classification purposes only. **Divisions** can be combined for single or multiple squad usage. Divisions can **only** be combined into the following categories:

- **Rookie/Freshman**
- **Freshman/Sophomore**
- **Sophomore/JV**
- **JV/Varsity**
- **Full Unity**

Section 11 – Coaching Eligibility

All head GEYC Head Coaches must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. All practices and games will always be supervised by a Head coach. All coaches will submit an application and subjected to a “Live Scan” background check before being interviewed and approval submitted by Board to coach. **Coaches must not have been convicted of any crime, which cause them to register under Section 290 of the California Penal Code.** Coaches, Board Members, and or league employees are all subject to a background check. Criminal convictions and or arrests may disqualify an applicant.

- GEYC Squads are limited to 4 total coaches per squad, maximum number of coaches is 20 if you have

Coaches in high school are eligible to coach as follows:

- High School Freshman– Rookie, Freshman Divisions
- High School Sophomore – Rookie, Freshman, Sophomore Divisions
- High School Junior Varsity – Rookie, Freshman, Sophomore, JV Divisions
- High School Senior – Rookie, Freshman, Sophomore, JV Varsity

Coach’s duties include but not limited to the following:

- 1. Properly plan the activity.** Make sure that athletes are in proper condition. Teach skills in a progression so that athletes are prepared to handle more difficult skills.
- 2. Provide proper instruction.** Keep up-to-date on better and safer ways of performing techniques. Teach athletes the rules and the correct skills and strategies of the activity.
- 3. Provide a safe physical environment.** Periodically inspect playing areas and the practice area for hazards and remove them. Prevent improper or unsupervised use of facilities.
- 4. Match your athletes.** According to size, physical maturity, skill level, and experience.
- 5. Supervise the activity closely.** Do not allow athletes to practice difficult or potentially dangerous skills without proper supervision. Forbid horseplay. Do not allow athletes to use facilities without supervision.
- 6. All Coaches (including Assistant Coaches)** must be First Aid and CPR certified, and must provide to their Cheer Representative a copy of their current certification

Section 12 – Practice Schedules

- After school starts and during the regular/post season, practice for all divisions will be limited to three (3) two and a half hour (2.5) practices in a seven (7) day period.
- Once school has let out for the summer, all teams are allowed to practice a maximum of 5 2 ½ hours practices in a (7) seven day period.
- Practice locations **must be** approved by the Area Representative.
- Head Coaches, and/or Cheer Representatives must be present in order for practice to take place.

The following suggestions can help the coach to set up practices.

- Place—this should be a safe environment. Practice sessions must be held in a location suitable for spirit activities, i.e., appropriate matting, grassy area, free of obstructions, free of distractions and excessive noise.
- Time—If possible, have a consistent start time each day. Start on time and wrap up at the end of practice. Distribute a monthly calendar with a schedule of all practices and games.
- Goals—Set goals for each practice. Involve the students in goal setting
- Conditioning—A well-conditioned athlete will have fewer injuries and will recover more quickly from injuries. Conditioning should be done before practicing jumps, stunting and tumbling.
- Have a variety of activities for each practice by incorporating all aspects of cheerleading.
- Review safety techniques at every practice.

Section 13 – Stunting

Stunting is ONLY permitted by coaches that have been certified through GEYC. Stunt certification is done on an annual basis, and good for one season. A copy of all current stunt certified coaches by level will be available upon request from the Cheer Representative of that team. Stunting is an exciting and growing aspect of cheerleading requiring endurance, strength, balance, flexibility and timing. As the athleticism and complexity of stunting increases, it is important that coaches are well trained.

Section 14 – Varsity Competition

- A. The top two (2) true Varsity teams are *required* to attend only the competition approved by GEYFC. The third (3rd) place Varsity team has the option to attend, with written confirmation no later than 24 hours after qualifying date of Battle of the Bleachers.
- B. Original Rosters must be maintained with written acknowledgment of any changes given to the Cheer Director. Changes that will be accepted as normal operational situations can include but are not limited to: medical, scholastic, drops, parental situations, behavior etc.
- C. If a parent decides to pull their child from competition during competition practice there must be a resignation letter fully understanding that their child may not have the opportunity to try-out the following year.
- D. If at the time of Evaluations & Sign-ups a parent decides not to allow their child to compete, they must understand that their child will not be a part of some of the practices and training and that they cannot change their mind later unless it is full agreement with GEYF Board and Coaching Staff.
- E. Competition will be hosted by JAMZ at Magic Mountain or another compatible venue. Date of Competition will depend on Venue availability.
- F. Cheer Rules as outlined by GEYC will be the standard. These rules can be found while taking the GEYC Training and in the coach's handbook.
- G. A Competition Cost sheet must be available to all cheer parents and given reasonable opportunity to Fundraise.
- H. All questions with regards to GEYC/JAMZ Competition will be directed to the Cheer Representative or Cheer Director. Coaches are not to contact JAMZ direct regardless of the situation. Proper Chain of command is Coach to Cheer Representative, Cheer Representative to Cheer Director, Cheer Director to GEYF Board of Directors.