

2020-21



Dakota Spirit LLC
Parent-Athlete Handbook &
Program Information

ONE TEAM
ONE SPIRIT

Mission Statement

To promote the spiritual, physical, and mental
development of youth through cheerleading

3910 W 59th St, Sioux Falls, SD 57108
tel 605-373 0414
web www.dakotaspirit.com

CONTENTS

Welcome to the Dakota Spirit Parent-Athlete Information Handbook. We have put this document together to orient you to Dakota Spirit policies and to help you navigate the world of elite cheerleading competitions. Please let us know if you have any questions, we are here to help!

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

Dakota Spirit Office

605-373-0414

info@dakotaspirit.com

Director/Founder, Robin Fritsch

605-373-0414

Robin.Fritsch@dakotaspirit.com

Assistant Director, Joanna Fritsch

605-373-0414

Joanna.Fritsch@dakotaspirit.com

Bookkeeper/Billing

info@dakotaspirit.com

Gym Location

3910 W 59th St

Sioux Falls, SD 57108

Web www.dakotaspirit.com

Social Media

Facebook Dakota Spirit

Twitter @DSCheerleading

Instagram dakotaspirit

HOURS OF OPERATION

Office Hours

Monday-Thursday: 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm.

Contact us to set up an appointment if needed.

Gym Hours

Evenings Monday-Friday, Saturday morning & most Sunday afternoons.

Both the office and gym are closed for business on all major holidays.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote the spiritual, physical, and mental development of youth through cheerleading.

DAKOTA SPIRIT PLEDGE

We strive for a level of excellence that has built a solid reputation in our community, state, and region. Youth development is the focus of our program and parental support is critical to our mission. Dakota Spirit places strong emphasis on character, leadership, service, and academics. We provide an encouraging environment where every child will have a sense of belonging and achievement.

STAFF

Our veteran staff of trained and certified coaches is a great strength of the DS program. Several of the coaches have received state, regional, and national honors. DS is a certified USASF gym.

OWNERS

Robin and John Fritsch have been involved with youth for many years. They have six children, including three daughters who have cheered at DS and the U of M and are currently involved with coaching. John and Robin both have their masters in education. Robin is the founder/director of the program and has been in the cheer industry for over 35 years.

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Dakota Spirit is a member of the United States All Star Federation (USASF) and the American Youth Sports Association. We are dedicated to professional growth and networking in the cheer industry.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This year, Dakota Spirit, celebrates its 22nd season. It was originally known as Supersquads and was founded in 1997 by Robin Fritsch. DS began with 12 young girls and was the first organized youth cheerleading program in South Dakota. It continues to be the largest program in the region with 17 teams.

TEAMS

A variety of teams give every student a place to succeed and a team suited to fit every budget, skill and level of interest. Athletes are placed on teams appropriate to their age and ability. Team members learn motion technique, tumbling, stunts, safety, cheers, jumps, teamwork, performance skills and sportsmanship. Dakota Spirit teams are always striving for excellence, positive sportsmanship, and involvement in the community.

Performance Teams

Performance Teams that are low cost, minimal time commitment, non-competitive and include a maximum of 5-6 performances with one weekly practice. The curriculum includes team time, fundamentals & performance skills! Season is September-March and no experience is needed. Special events include Showdown (Nov), Valentine's Classic (Jan), Spiritfest (Mar) plus 2-3 exhibition performances. Low cost uniform and white cheer shoes needed. Parents will meet the first night of class for a short informational meeting.

Prep League

Beginner to intermediate competitive teams that perform and compete at area events. Experience is not required to participate. These teams focus on skill performances, 5-6 area competitions & choreography camp.

All Stars

Advanced teams for students seeking the highest level of training and excitement! Tryouts are required. All Star teams are for athletes with commitment to skills development, team travel and full participation (cannot miss practice/competitions). Weekly practice includes one tumbling practice and two team practices. Teams practice on Sunday afternoon/evenings beginning in September, choreography and boot camps, and 8-9 competitions per season including local, regional & national events.

TEAM PLACEMENTS

Athletes are placed on our teams based upon their age and skill and experience level as demonstrated to the coaches. There are many factors that must be considered when placing athletes on our teams - it is truly an art and not a science. Team placement is fully up to the discretion of the program director(s). The Dakota Spirit Program Director considers all the applicable factors necessary to create the championship teams that have made us Dakota Spirit.

Reassignments from one team to another are completely subject to the discretion of the Dakota Spirit Staff.

DAKOTA SPIRIT RETAINS THE RIGHT TO

- Place athletes according to where we believe the athlete is best suited & will have the most success.
- Remove or suspend an athlete based on attendance, conduct, skills, payment default or conflicts.
- Remove a parent based on parental conflicts.
- Determine the position the student will play on the team (base, flyer, tumbler, etc).
- Request that an athlete take additional classes to improve skills.
- Add or cancel practices or competitions as deemed necessary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All matters pertaining to your child and family are confidential and respected. Please share with us any concerns so that we can act in the best interest of your child. We will not discuss other members with you, only your own child.

TEAM EXPENSES

- Registration Fee: Due with forms
- Monthly Tuition: Auto withdrawal required (full year payment optional)
- Uniform: It is the student's responsibility to purchase a uniform.
- Cheer Shoes: Any brand white cheer shoe. Let us know if you need help ordering shoes.

- Travel & Choreography Fees: Applies to All Star & Prep teams only.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Athlete Registration Form
- Code of Student Behavior
- Parent Behavior Contract
- Medical & Liability Waiver
- Tuition Agreement.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

After your athlete is evaluated, our Program Director(s) will make team assignments and will develop a practice schedule for each team.

Additional practices are occasionally required to prepare for a competition. If extra practices are necessary, our goal is to give you appropriate advance notice via email, however, in the event of an athlete's sudden illness or injury we will ask for your flexibility when an extra practice is needed on short notice.

PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Practice is required.** Coaches expect students to be at all practices unless there is a required school event or illness. No other excuses are allowed for missing practice/competitions. Please notify coach in advance.
2. Cell phones are not allowed in the gym or lobby during practice. Phones can be put on silent. Athletes should NOT be checking phones during practice, as it is a disruption to practice.
3. Dakota Spirit practice attire is required for All Stars. Rec teams are required to wear black shorts & team practice shirt.
4. **Do NOT** wear your cheer shoes outside or for other activities. Only clean cheer shoes are permitted on the mat.
5. Please wear appropriate practice gear, bow, lipstick, and act with Christ like behavior towards others.
6. Hair must be in a ponytail during practice. No Earrings, piercings, or jewelry.
7. Respect towards coaches, volunteers, parents and teammates is required.

8. Team members must treat our facility with respect and are expected to tidy up after practice.
9. No gum, candy, food or drinks are allowed in the practice gym.
10. Students can bring Birthday treats as long as they are responsible for clean up of all snacks.

If your athlete cannot attend a practice because of a serious illness or an unavoidable circumstance, please send an email to info@dakotaspirit.com. Please do not reach out to individual coaches via personal emails, texts, calls, or social media. The Dakota Spirit social media pages are not monitored hourly, so please do not use social media for messages.

All athletes must be at every team practice during the week immediately prior to a competition. If an athlete misses a practice during this week, they may not be allowed to compete in the competition. Each athlete's situation will be handled individually.

The practice schedule may be modified the week immediately prior to, or following, a competition. The decision to modify practices is at the discretion of the coaches. Cancelled practices do not affect tuition and will not be rescheduled.

If an injury or illness occurs, the coaches will have complete discretion in deciding if the absence(s) is excused. Athletes who participate in school or other sports activities must discuss attendance with the coaches in advance of scheduling conflicts.

COMPETITIONS

Our competition schedule will be distributed to athletes as soon as it is available. Changes may occur during the season, although this is unusual. A Competition Guide has been provided to aid you in understanding how competitions work. Please review your calendar carefully, taking all competitions into consideration. We expect that competition absences be restricted to major life events and emergencies.

Please respect that it takes an entire team to perform our routines and that our choreographers develop the routines by incorporating your athlete's unique talents into it. Our policy is set out of respect to all our amazing athletes. It is a major disruption (both physically and emotionally) to all teams to change routines to accommodate missing athletes. In order to honor the hard work and extraordinary dedication that our athletes demonstrate in working and perfecting their routines throughout the year, we respectfully ask that you not request that your athlete miss a competition unless it is absolutely necessary.

PERFORMANCE/COMPETITION REQUIREMENTS

1. Athletes are required to attend all team practices, competitions and performances. Please be respectful of your commitment to the team. The entire team suffers when members do not show up.
2. Uniform, hair bow, performance make up and cheer shoes are required at all events.
3. **NO** earrings, fingernail polish, long nails, body tattoos or markings at practice/competitions/events.
4. Coaches reserve the right to suspend a student from a performance if they are not fully prepared to perform or if practices have been missed.
5. If you will be absent, you are required to contact your coach in advance.

It is an expectation that each family comes to our program with a strong commitment to the other families on their team to complete the season. This includes a commitment to attend every competition. Leaving your team early, especially at a time in which the routines have developed to their most complex state, causes a great deal of distress for the athletes that remain. Please be respectful of the work and dedication of all the athletes on your team by committing to completing a full season.

COMPETITION LOOK

Female athletes are required to wear the designated competition make-up and hairstyle at all competitions. We will release detailed

information regarding the required competition look for each performance.

COMPETITIONS & TEAM TRAVEL

Parents are responsible for supervision of their child during events, competitions & team trips. Parents who are unable to attend an event are asked to find an adult chaperone for their child. If you cannot respect the rules of travel, curfew, competitions and expectations set forth by Dakota Spirit, we will give you one warning followed by dismissal.

UNIFORMS

The sizing for competition uniforms is done at Dakota Spirit per a schedule as provided and by appointment only. It is important to order your uniform on Uniform Sizing Nights. Uniforms are a custom order and we have limited new or used ones in stock. We will notify you when used uniforms can be resold at Uniform Sizing Nights or Open Houses. Uniforms orders cannot be cancelled and uniforms cannot be returned. **There are no refunds.**

If you choose to discontinue the Dakota Spirit program for any reason prior to receiving your competition uniform, or if your athlete is dismissed from the program, you will receive their uniform after the first competition of the competitive season.

Cheerleaders should wear their competition shoes to every practice as soon as they are delivered.

UNIFORM/SPIRITWEAR PRIVILEGE

It is expected that all Dakota Spirit gear will be worn with all due respect and privilege. DS Articles not worn in a respectable manner will not be tolerated.

COMMUNICATION

Email

All athletes are required to have an email address in order for us to communicate team information, monthly statements, competition information, program updates, fundraisers, & other timely information. Competition

Schedules & team info is provided the week of the event

Parent Information

Parents will receive emails and texts from coaches at DS. **NEW THIS YEAR-** No parent group chats for team communication are allowed. This is to protect you and keep parents from being inundated with texts during work.

Valentine's Classic

All Star parents are required to work one 6 hour shift or purchase the buyout for \$75.

Texting

Rec & All Star teams have group texting for group matters. Coaches will only text a parent/athlete with factual info or time sensitive team info. Please refrain from using texting as a means of communication for important matters.

Dakota Spirit Social Media

Our website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are also sources of information throughout the season.

General Communication

If you have any concerns or suggestions, the Program Directors will be available to address those with you. You can call the gym during office hours, email us, or make an appointment to come into the office. Please do not interrupt any practice at any time to discuss concerns with the coaches. Their job is to coach, and even brief interruptions interfere with their ability to be effective. Please schedule times to speak with the coaches during a time in which they are not coaching.

Please contact your coaches during office hours through their Dakota Spirit email address or to the DS general inbox via info@dakotaspirt.com. Please do not contact your coaches at their homes, through their personal phone numbers, their personal email addresses, or their personal social media accounts. While our coaches are a wonderfully dedicated group, they need time away from their jobs as we all do. Social media messages are often overlooked and may be lost. Please do not send messages via our social media

accounts. Because our social media is extremely busy, these messages could easily be overlooked.

Please feel free to send a hand-written note via your athlete to a coach at any practice. This is particularly helpful if your athlete has an illness or injury that limits their ability to participate fully in their workout. Please describe the illness or injury, the limitation in their activity, and how long you believe the limitation will occur. If the illness or injury is significant, the Head Coach may require a physician's note to excuse the athlete from full participation.

BEHAVIOR & SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship and positive behavior is the hallmark of our program. Parent and Student behavior is a reflection on our entire program and the expectation is to be a beacon of Christ like behavior at all times. The staff will use their discretion as to the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken if there are behavior concerns.

DAKOTA SPIRIT ATHLETE CODE OF CONDUCT

All Athletes of every age must understand that misbehavior may result in probation and possible dismissal. Therefore, we expect athletes to adhere to the code of conduct at all times:

1. I understand that being a member of Dakota Spirit is a special privilege and I will commit to doing my best.
2. I will attend all practices and events and I understand that the coach must be notified if I will be absent. **DS expects parents to contact coaches when an athlete will be absent by submitting an absence request form.*
3. I must come mentally and physically prepared for practice, dressed in proper athletic gear, hair up, no gum or jewelry.
4. I will show good manners and respect towards others including my teammates, coaches, parents, and other teams.
5. I will be responsible for my belongings, parent notes, uniforms and preparedness for practice/events.
6. I will be respectful of all facilities we use.
7. I promise that I will maintain a grade point minimum of a 2.5 (C +) throughout the season.
8. I understand that cheerleading has many risks and I may get hurt therefore I will not stunt, tumble or cheer without the presence of a coach.
9. I understand as a DS member, I am expected to be a servant leader and will volunteer for at least 3 community service projects during my season.
10. I understand there is zero tolerance for use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco; foul language and inappropriate conduct and I will use social media in an appropriate and respectful manner.
11. I will not miss more than 5 Dakota Spirit practices (including tumbling for all stars) per season. I will not miss practice the week of a competition and understand that I will forfeit my position to compete if absent.

Athlete's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Parents are important to the success of our program. We value your involvement and commitment! In our organization, the role of the coach is to coach; cheerleaders to cheer, and parents to support!

- Parents are expected to get their child to all practices, competitions & events.
- Parents must notify their team coach in advance if their child will not be in attendance (required school functions and illness are the only excuses for missing practice or events).
- Parents are responsible for all information pertaining to their child (emails, waivers, student info)
- Parents are not allowed in the practice area.
- Parents must pay to enter all events and competitions.
- Parents are required to supervise their child at all competitions, events and team travel.
- Parents are expected to pick up their child on time following events, practices, and competitions.
- Please be respectful of your coach, teammates, and the program. Dakota Spirit has zero tolerance for parents who create problems for the organization.
- Please do not to call or text coaches after 9:00 pm
- Matters of concern should be brought to the director.

DAKOTA SPIRIT PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

1. I will serve as a beacon of Christ like behavior and an example of good sportsmanship.
2. I will show respect to the coach.
3. I will avoid chronic complaining and will express myself in a courteous manner.
4. *I understand that it is not allowed for parents to be on the practice floor at any time and if I need to speak with the coach I will set up a time to meet.*
5. *I agree to cover all tuition and travel fees at the requested due dates.*
6. *I agree to get my child to all practices and performances, and I understand that it is my responsibility to notify the coach if my child will be absent.*
7. *I will avoid putting pressure on my child to fly, base, tumble, or be the star of the team realizing that each child is a star in their own unique way.*
8. I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the sport is for youth, not adults.
9. I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
10. I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy for others including all cheerleaders, staff and DS families.
11. I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or unkindness towards others.
12. I will demand that my child treat others with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex or ability.
13. I will teach my child that doing one's best is more important than winning.
14. I will never ridicule or yell at my child or other participants for making mistakes or losing a competition.
15. I will promote the physical, mental and spiritual development of the athletes ahead of any personal desire I may have for my child.
16. I will respect coaches and staff and will never question, discuss, or behave in a confrontational manner.
17. I will demand an environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all DS events where children are present.
18. I will stay positive at all times and support the decisions made by DS knowing they are made in the best interest of the entire program, not just my child.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PAYMENT REQUIREMENTS

- Automatic withdrawal is required for all fees (tuition, competition & choreography fee).
- ACH information must be provided. Checks are NOT allowed for monthly payments. If a parent must make a monthly cash payment, payment is due by the 5th of the month or a late fee is assessed.
- Students with outstanding balances will not be allowed to participate until paid.
- Students will be dropped from the program after a two-month lapse of payment.
- All Stars athletes will get a statement for both travel and tuition each month
- Insufficient funds: \$30 charge will be made to your account each time there is insufficient funds
- Changes to Bank accounts: A voided check and new account number will be necessary. There is a \$20 processing fee for us to change the information with the bank. Please contact Linda.lepp@dakotaspirit.com to make a change.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Dakota Spirit provides financial assistance to those who qualify. All information is confidential. A Uniform Loaner Program is available to students in need of a team uniform. A student deposit is required for loaner uniforms. United Way Connecting Kids coupons are accepted for tuition assistance for D League, Rec League and classes. DSCP makes a matching contribution to further help the student athlete. Connecting kids is not available to All Star athletes and there is minimal assistance provided for All Stars.

ALIVIA COON SCHOLARSHIP

Students who are interested in applying for the Alivia Coon Memorial Scholarship should contact the office. Each year since 2013 a scholarship is awarded to a student in our program in memory of Alivia Coon, a former student in DS who perished in 2012 in a house fire.

REFUNDS

There will be no refunds unless a student has overpaid on their account. All Stars who drop must fulfill their travel agreement for competitions.

STUDENT DROPS

Students who drop are responsible for giving a two-week drop notice. Tuition payment through the end of the month is due prior to student departure. Travel payments and Choreography Fees are non refundable. All unpaid travel fees are the responsibility of the parent. Fundraising earnings are non-refundable and will be used for student scholarships.

FUNDRAISING

Dakota Spirit and the DSCP Board of Directors must approve all fundraising activities. Teams and team members cannot organize a fundraiser in the name of DS without prior approval and regulation. Group fundraisers done through DSCP are for the benefit of all participants. Parents must agree to the Fundraising policy included in this information. Monthly statements will indicate fundraising credit. Credit is not applied until 30 days past.

DAKOTA SPIRIT CHEER PARENTS BOOSTER CLUB (DSCP)

Mission statement

Dakota Spirit Cheer Parents, Inc. is a federal non-profit, 501© 3 organization supporting cheerleaders through educational opportunities and financial means such as fund raising, sponsorships and grants. DSCP promotes the motto, "One Team, One Spirit" through community service, charitable activity and program assistance.

All DS students benefit from the Booster Club. Many students benefit from the DSCP Scholarship fund. For the good of the program parents are asked to volunteer for a committee or event.

Parents, family members or friends of Dakota Spirit who work for companies who have charitable giving programs are encouraged to

designate volunteer hours/charitable giving to Dakota Spirit Cheer Parents organization. Charitable giving enables many students to participate in the Dakota Spirit program. DSCP Booster Club Policy

1. All Dakota Spirit athletes & parents are considered members of the DSCP.
2. All money currently in the booster account and all incoming donations, grants or funds will be used for the benefit of the entire Dakota Spirit program.
3. All monies received must benefit the entire program and may not be specified for one athlete. (Exception: Scholarship athletes).
4. Monies may be used for coaches fees as needed to benefit the program (i.e. travel expenses, certification & training)
5. Booster Club Scholarships are approved by the DSCP Board of Directors and are for recipients who meet all requirements.
6. All Fundraising opportunities must be approved by the DSCP Board of Directors and must be for the benefit of the program.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

We have needs for parents to volunteer in a variety of areas each year. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know by contacting the office via email at info@dakotaspirt.com

DAKOTA SPIRIT EVENTS

Dakota Spirit Showdown Raffle & Live Auction

Showdown is our performance season kick off, featuring a raffle and live auction. Proceeds go towards new gym equipment and student scholarships. Every parent is asked to contribute to the event.

Valentine's Classic Cheer & Dance Championship

VC is a competition for dance and cheer teams from the five state region. This is Dakota Spirit's major fundraiser hosted by DS parents, and All Star Parents are required to solicit a program ad and work a VC shift.

Spiritfest

Spiritfest is our grand finale performance to officially end and celebrate a successful season.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE PROJECTS

Team members are asked to participate in 3 Christian service projects. It is a way to bring our families together in a show of support for those who have a special need and it is our way to give back to our community. Blanket Night is one of our annual projects when we all get together to make tied fleece blankets for abused and homeless children at Christmas. Each team has a designated project organized by the TAG TEAM and coaches.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Athletes and parents may not set up social media using our name Dakota Spirit. Dakota Spirit has all legal rights to its name and illegal use or abuse of our brand will result in legal action. Video footage of our routines cannot be placed on any social media for public viewing. All social media postings by members must be favorable and done in good sportsmanship. Students and Parents must refrain from any form of verbal confrontation on social networks. Abuse of social media is grounds for suspension. Parents are asked to monitor their child's social media for the protection and appropriate actions of their child. All Star teams have Members only Facebook pages as a means of communication with their team.

LOGO AND NAME REPLICATION

At Dakota Spirit we sell a variety of Spiritwear items with our logo and name on them. Please watch for opportunities to purchase Spiritwear items in the gym and at annual DS events. We love to have suggestions on new products that you would like to purchase.

We respectfully request that you avoid the unauthorized replication of our logo and company name. We make this request with the goal of protecting the quality of the products that bear our name and to protect the ownership of our brand. Dakota Spirit has

legal rights to its name, logo, and all information in print. Permission must be granted for use of our legal name on any item, team Spiritwear, print material, fundraiser, event, etc. Thank you in advance for honoring our request and respecting our rights. We appreciate it!

PHOTO DISCLAIMER

As a member of Dakota Spirit, parents agree to the disclaimer as stated:

"I grant permission to Dakota Spirit to use photographs taken of my Daughter/Son. I hereby waive any right to inspect or approve the unfinished photographs or printed or electronic matter that may be used in conjunction with photos now or in the future, whether that use is known to me or unknown, and I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising from or related to use of the photograph".

GYM CLOSINGS

The gym will be closed for a few scheduled breaks during the year. For example, we will close for a Thanksgiving Break, a Winter Break (around Christmas and New Year's), and a summer break during the week of Independence Day.

We also close for most major holidays.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that bad weather requires us to cancel practice, we will make every attempt to contact you via email, texting, website, Facebook, & local stations. If there is a tornado or severe weather warning during practice, students will move into the locker room until all is clear. Inclement Weather make-up policy: If it is a class, you are welcome to do a makeup. For team practices, we have 2 extra practices built into our season in anticipation of cancelled practices at some point during our winter season. For this reason, it is not likely that we will reschedule unless we reach 3 or more weather related cancellations.

SAFETY

Every effort is made to ensure proper safety and precaution. Cheerleading has inherent risks of injury by the very nature of the sport. Please be forewarned that every effort is made to prevent accidents. We cannot guarantee that students will not get hurt. Injuries such as concussions, broken bones, sprains, strains, paralysis, and even death are within the realm of possible injuries. Parents are responsible for all medical costs and assume all liability for accidents. Please read carefully the Waiver/Medical Release form and the Concussion Information. Regarding stunting, students are selected for specific positions based on several factors including strength, experience and ability.

In the event of an injury, emergency steps will be taken, the parent will be contacted, and if deemed necessary, the student will be transported to the nearest available hospital by the parent, staff member, or emergency transport. Dakota Spirit strives to run a safe program and prides itself on safety first.

STUDENTS ONLY

Only student athletes are allowed in the gym. Parents must remain out in the lobby during practice. This is an insurance requirement. It is for your own safety and protection as well as ours. Thank you for your cooperation.

LOBBY VIEWING AREA

The lobby is used for student gatherings, video viewing, and parents. Please keep your talk positive and avoid gossip and criticism of our program, our students and others. Please do not bring food to the gym unless it is for a special occasion. On occasion the lobby is closed for viewing in order for teams to have less distraction. We reserve the right to hold closed practices as deemed necessary. Parents are not required to stay at practices.

GENERAL GYM RULES

Please respect that only Dakota Spirit athletes are allowed in the gym. Only instructional activities & coaching occur in the gym. Therefore, no siblings, friends, parents, or athletes who are not working with a coach, are allowed beyond the gym doors. Athletes

are not allowed in the gym unless they are working with a Dakota Spirit staff member or are receiving instruction and coaching.

Only water bottles are allowed in the gym. No food or flavored water is allowed in the gym. Eating is allowed only in the lobby. Food or drinks that are not allowed will be thrown away without notice.

If you drop your child off for practice, and do not remain with her/him, please note that Dakota Spirit is responsible for your athlete(s) only during their scheduled practice time. Please be aware that the building closes at the end of the last practice, and athletes who are not picked up on time will incur a fee based upon the amount of time that the athlete's ride is late.

Athletes are expected to be on time and ready to work at all practices.

Communication between parents and athletes during practice should be pre-approved by the staff and should be kept to a minimum.

Please email (info@dakotaspirt.com), or call the gym for all communications. You may email a coach directly using their Dakota Spirit email only. If you have a coach's personal phone number, please refrain from using it for Dakota Spirit related communication. Coaches are not required to respond to messages through their personal phones, personal email or personal social media accounts.

PARENTS' ROLES

No parent coaching will be allowed at any time during practice. This includes the delivery of hand and body signals from the lobby. Parents are to remain in the lobby and are not allowed in the gym. **NO EXCEPTIONS!** Athletes will remain in the gym during the entire practice and will return to parents in the lobby when practice is dismissed.

GYM VISITORS

All new visitors to the gym must check in with a staff member. Athletes are welcome to have visitors as long as they are not children under 14 who are unsupervised and are not a distraction to practice. All visitors must remain in the lobby. All Star team members are asked not to have friends during practice so that the full focus can be on the team.

PARKING

All athlete drivers and visitors are expected to exercise extreme caution when using, entering, and exiting the Dakota Spirit parking lot. Drivers are expected to abide by all applicable lot markings and signs, and to park their car and walk in to the lobby to pick up young athletes. Young athletes should not leave the Dakota Spirit gym lobby alone or wait outside for rides.

IMPORTANT OFFICE INFORMATION

You may contact us to set up an appointment if you need assistance outside of office hours.

The primary form of communication with the Dakota Spirit office is email. You will receive all updates, newsletters, practice schedule changes, and invoices via email. If you email the office, you will receive a much quicker response. Please email us at info@dakotaspirt.com and check your email often.

NEW PARENTS

If you are a parent who is new to our program, you may find the amount of information you need to absorb to be overwhelming at times! There will be a series of newsletters that follow this handbook as we progress through the season to guide you.

It is important to remember that it takes the support of all of our parents and athletes to make each season a success. Thank you in advance for your commitment to your athlete, your team, and the program as a whole.

Welcome to Dakota Spirit!



ALL STAR AND ALL STAR PREP COMPETITION GUIDE

ALL STAR TEAM COMPETITION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

We have put together this supplemental guide to assist you in navigating the world of elite cheerleading and dance competitions. All athletes and accompanying family members are expected to adhere to Dakota Spirit policies, including the previously outlined Athlete Code of Conduct and Parent Code of Conduction sections of this handbook while at the performance venue and hotel accommodation locations.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Please note that a many competitions companies have a "Stay to Play" policy in which you are required to book through their housing service. Please be sure to book your reservations early to avoid any issues with accommodations. Let us know if you have any issues with the booking links provided.

PLAN FOR BAD WEATHER

Be sure to plan for potentially bad weather, particularly in the winter months. Competitions are rarely cancelled, if ever. A five or six hour drive in good weather can easily become a

ten to twelve hour drive in bad weather. If you are flying to a competition, flights can be delayed or cancelled so we ask that your flight be booked for before the team bus departs.

Please book hotel rooms for the night before the competition begins and plan to be checked in and prepared to have your athlete ready for a team practice the night before the competition.

CHAPERONES & ATHLETE BEHAVIOR

Dakota Spirit Staff will not chaperone any athlete at competitions. If, for any reason, a parent is not available to attend a competition, it is the parents' responsibility to find an adult chaperone to be fully responsible for the athlete — regardless of the athlete's age. Dakota Spirit will not tolerate ANY illegal activities on the part of athletes during competitions. If a situation occurs it will be dealt with immediately.

ATHLETE PARTICIPATION

Competitions are mandatory for all athletes! If, for some serious and uncontrollable reason, your athlete must miss a competition (injury, death in the family, etc.), please notify us immediately. Do not wait until the next practice. In the event of an emergency, get word to the coach and Tag Moms for your team immediately.

Competition fees are part of your Travel fee package and are not refundable. You are still required to pay the competition entry fee and the coach and travel expenses because we will be required to find a substitute for your athlete. The competition organizer requires that the entry fee be paid for your athlete's position - the fee is charged per position, not per athlete.

MEETING TIMES BE ON TIME

Please be courteous and be on time for your Parent Prayer time. Missing athletes are a significant source of stress for the other athletes on the team.

MEETING TIMES AND COMPETITION SCHEDULES

Dakota Spirit will distribute essential information about the competition. This information includes critical times in which your athlete's team will meet, and when and where they will perform.

Dakota Spirit prepares this information as soon as the competition company provides the final information. Generally, the company does not provide the final information any sooner than a week in advance, and sometimes it is only a few days in advance of the competition. It is common for the document to be emailed to you on the Thursday immediately prior to the competition. Please block off the entire day(s) for the competition and be patient and trust that we will get it to you as quickly as possible.

Please be aware that the times may change at the competition. You will be notified if the time changes by your team Tag Mom(s). Please keep your cell phone with you for updates and check it frequently.

IF YOU ARE RUNNING LATE, TEXT OR CALL YOUR TAG MOM IMMEDIATELY

It happens. Occasionally. At least notify somebody that you are on your way. This brings a great deal of comfort to everyone. If you chronically run late to competitions, you will find that your relationships with other parents on the team will suffer, and your athlete's relationship with her/his teammates will suffer. Sometimes a great deal.

COMPETITION EXPECTATIONS

It is important to our coaches and athletes that all athletes stay to support other Dakota Spirit teams throughout the competition. When more than one team is performing at a time or there is overlap, teams will be given direction on which teams to watch to make sure all teams have appropriate support. This is part of our WE over ME philosophy of One Team, One Spirit. These can be long days, but the support of other teams and their families is very much noticed by our athletes, and positively affects their performance. Please be aware that your

athlete's attendance at the competition is required for the entire day on both Saturday and Sunday and that attendance will be taken.

COMPETITION PARENT PRAYER LOCATION & GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Teams will gather for Parent Prayer somewhere in the building near the competition hall. It is not usually an assigned spot prior to the competition, but one that we just find. Please look for this location when arriving to the competition hall (your Tag Mom may have messaged the location to the group so check your phone).

Occasionally, we will be asked to move by employees of the competition organizer, venue, or by building security; please be respectful of these people and please be flexible.

COMPETITION ETIQUETTE

Once your athlete's team has departed with their coaches and has gone to the practice area to prepare for their performance, please clear the meeting area of their bags and belongings and keep them with you. Please do not ask your Tag Moms or Dakota Spirit staff to watch, track, or secure your athlete's belongings. Remember, there will be other teams looking for a meeting spot after your athlete's team has been "launched". Given the size of our gym, leaving unattended belongings in the common areas leads to a great deal of clutter that encumbers the traffic flow and the space available for the following team(s) to meet and prepare for their performance. We also cannot guarantee the security of any personal effects as we leave to cheer for a team that is performing.

The common areas of the venue, including the spot chosen for the team to meet for Parent Prayer is often a place at which families and athletes gather and chat. We encourage this wonderful team building activity. Please be courteous and remove all of your athlete's trash when you leave. It is not the role of Tag Moms or Dakota Spirit staff to clean the area.

VIP AREA

Many competition companies provide "Priority Watching" for supporters to temporarily sit or stand while their teams are performing. This space is often the first few rows of seating immediately adjacent to the stage, or an area to stand in front of the stage. Please be respectful of this temporary viewing area and do not sit/stand in it until a Dakota Spirit team takes the floor. The announcer will often tell you when it is time to move to this Priority Seating area.

Please allow the parents and family members of the teams that are performing to have the front row seats or to stand in the front of the temporary viewing area. If your athlete is not performing, please take the second row of seats, or stand in the back of the temporary viewing area to allow the families of the performers the best view.

GENERAL SEATING & VIEWING

Traveling to and from seats should only be done **between** performances. As a sign of respect for all fans and athletes we ask that you remain seated until a performance has ended, and not walk into and out of the seating area while any team is performing. There are fans from other gyms that are trying to watch and even film their team's performance. We don't want to be disruptive or disrespectful of others.

AWARDS

An award ceremony can be a very exciting time especially when it becomes obvious that one of our teams is going to take first place or be named Grand Champion. It can also be a challenge for our athletes to control their excitement! Please review with your athlete that it is expected that they clap for every team's placement, and that we hold our enthusiastic celebration until our name is called. For example, in a situation in which our team is in the top two positions, and the other team is named as receiving second place, it becomes obvious that we have earned the first place trophy; however, competition etiquette calls for us to hold our celebration until our name is actually announced. We ask our athletes not to celebrate while the second

place team is receiving their trophy (other than the usual polite applause).

It is very important to our coaching staff that we are the most well represented team at the competition, Please come to all competitions wearing your Dakota Spirit gear. If a competition company representative requests that you discontinue the use of a noisemaker, or that you lower your arms when filming or photographing a performance, please do so. At some competitions, there are penalties for inappropriate behavior on the part of athletes and parents.

Athletes are not permitted to change clothes in public at any time. Wearing only sports bras in public is not permitted. Wearing a cheer competition uniform unfastened in public is not permitted.

SECURING YOUR ATHLETE'S ITEMS

Please be sure that you have gathered and secured all your athlete's belongings at all times. Securing abandoned bags is a not a role for our Tag Moms or staff. Unattended bags will be left in the seating or common areas of the venue unsecured and will NOT be gathered and delivered to families at the end of the day.

Mark **ALL** of your athlete's items with your athlete's name. Unless you have experienced it, you cannot imagine the feeling of panic you feel when you wake on a competition morning and find that you are missing a critical item. If someone else has found it and your athlete's name is on it (you would be surprised at how many uniform pieces we find on sidewalks and in bathrooms!), it will likely make its way back to you.

PACKING YOUR LUGGAGE

Before a competition, be sure to double and triple check that you have packed all your essential competition items in one bag. If you are flying, be certain that these items are with you on the plane in a carry-on bag. Do not check this bag with the airline. Especially if you are attending a competition in which only a few teams, or only one team of your type is

attending, there will be very limited opportunities, if any, to borrow from another athlete.

TAG MOMS

All teams have "Tag Moms" that have volunteered to help us ensure the team is ready for the coaches. The Tag Mom will gather the athletes and perform a final check to be sure they are completely ready - including hair, make-up, uniform, required accessories, removal of nail polish and jewelry, etc., before the coaches take the team to warm up. It is not the role of the Tag Moms to prepare the athletes for competition; that is the role of the parents. Parents should ensure that athletes are entirely ready for competition **prior to the Parent Prayer time.**

Remember that preparation of your athlete includes removal of nail polish and jewelry. Jewelry that makes it into the warm up area and is subsequently removed by coaches or competition staff is often lost in the hectic pace of performance preparations. It may not be returned to the athlete, regardless of its value.

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to supervise your athlete at all times during the competition, with the exception of the times that they are with the coaches in the practice area or performing. Parents are expected to remain with their athletes after the Parent Prayer time until the coaches take them to the practice room. It is not the role of the Tag Moms to supervise the athletes.

After your team has performed, the Tag Moms will collect the young athletes and escort them to the Parent Prayer/meeting area and return them to you. Please be courteous and meet the Tag Mom immediately. Again, it is not the role of the Tag Moms to supervise athletes. Older athletes will be released on their own.

You will find your Tag Mom to be a wealth of information and resource for you at competitions. If you have a challenge with which you need assistance (missing uniforms, etc), please contact one of them. Do not interrupt the coaches while they are coaching during a competition. Rest assured that your

Tag Moms will know how to handle nearly every situation or will know how to get the person who does!

Do not forget to bring your cell phones and charger to each competition. This is the primary method by which your Tag Mom will contact you with late breaking requests from the coaches. For example, if the coaches must call a last-minute unscheduled practice, or if your athlete is needed to substitute at the last minute for another team, your Tag Mom will contact you through your cell phone.

Our Tag Moms are extraordinarily wonderful women who volunteer their time for the benefit of your team and our gym. Please be respectful of their donated time by doing everything you can to reduce their stress. First and foremost - arrive on time to every competition. There is nothing that stresses a Tag Mom (or the athletes and coaches for that matter!) more than a late athlete.

Secondly, they are volunteering to assist you, your athlete, and your team in making the competition experience more enjoyable. They are not volunteering to accept complaints about any aspect of our program or the competition. Remember, the Tag Moms are fellow parents who are there to enjoy the competition too! Resolving issues is a role for Joanna and Robin. If you have suggestions or concerns about the program or the competition you would like to discuss, please contact Joanna or Robin Fritsch after the competition.

WHERE TO PICK UP YOUR ATHLETES

After their performance, the team will gather and exit the performance area. Please be courteous and do not approach the team until the coaches have released them. At most competitions, the team reviews a video of their performance and the coaches speak to them before they are released to the parents. This process can take up to 10 minutes, so please be patient.

The Tag Moms will accept the younger athletes from the coaches. They will walk the team

back to the Parent Prayer/meeting location to meet you. If you would like to pick up your athlete while they are walking back to the Parent Prayer location, please feel free to do so just be sure you let your Tag Mom know you have taken her/him! Otherwise, please meet your team at the Parent Prayer or other communicated location promptly after the performance. Older athletes will be released on their own.

WHAT ATHLETES SHOULD WEAR

Athletes **MUST** wear their uniform with their Dakota Spirit program t-shirt/jersey over their uniform at all times. The only exception is when they are meeting for Parent Prayer, while they are in the practice room, and when they are performing.

WHAT ATHLETES MUST WEAR TO AWARD CEREMONIES

Athletes must present themselves to award ceremonies in their **COMPLETE** competition uniform, including their competition shoes. Jerseys and T-shirts are not acceptable, and athletes who present themselves in attire other than their complete competition uniform will not be allowed to join their team on stage.

Athletes may not take their backpacks to the awards ceremonies. If you choose to take a cell phone, it will be done at your own risk. The Dakota Spirit staff will not help you locate any lost items that are taken to the awards ceremonies.

CHAMPIONSHIP AWARDS

Some competition companies provide an individual award to the team members in first place. This can be a trophy or a piece of clothing. It is common to receive a jacket or hoodie as the award. The competition company provide the number individual awards that is based upon the number of registrants on that team. Therefore, if a team has a substitute, who is competing for an original athlete, only one award is provided and the award goes to the athlete who competed (i.e. the sub).

LONG LINES & LOTS OF WALKING

The heading says it all. Wear really comfortable shoes.

EXPENSIVE FOOD

This heading says it all too. Competition food is expensive, and our athletes are always hungry! Be prepared and bring cash - some venues do not accept cards. Buildings that house more than one event (such as Convention Centers) may allow food & drink to be brought in by families. Check the policies at the event. Buildings that house only one event (such as Arenas) often do not allow food from the outside. Prepare accordingly.

CONTROLLED CHAOS

If this is your first year of competitive cheer and dance, the first few competitions can have a feel of controlled chaos, especially your first one. Rest assured that after a while, you will get the rhythm of competitions and by the third competition or so, they will begin to get a familiar feel. By the end of the season, they will feel routine! A key ingredient to a successful competition experience is patience. Be flexible, be patient, and ask questions.