

**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
CATHOLIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION  
ATHLETIC MINISTRY HANDBOOK**



School Year: 2024-2025

# **Archdiocese of Philadelphia**

## **Catholic Youth Organization**

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“The correct practice of sport must be accompanied by practicing the virtues of temperance and sacrifice; frequently it also requires a good team spirit, respectful attitudes, the appreciation of the qualities of others, honesty in the game and humility to recognize one’s own limitations. In short, sports, especially in less competitive forms, foster festive celebration and friendly coexistence with the Christian outlook, becomes a “generative principle” of profound human relations and encourages the building of a more serene and supportive world.”

-Saint John Paul II

Dear friends of CYO Sports,

The 2023-24 school year celebrated another successful year in CYO sports across our Archdiocese of Philadelphia. With the gracious help of our countless volunteers, we are able to serve thousands of young people in their journey to grow closer to Jesus through sports. Their physical, mental, and spiritual evolution is the true award in what we do as adult leaders in the CYO.

As we move into the 2024-25 year, we are continuing to advocate for our young athletes in a world where sports and spirituality are working hand in hand to help our next generation of young leaders. In a world where so much information and opinions crowd the minds of our young athletes, it is imperative that we continue to work to grow our CYO opportunities so that as many young Catholics as possible can participate in the formation of the Church through sport.

The CYO Office is continuing to work closely under the umbrella of the Office for Faith Formation with Youth and Young Adults to facilitate the Archbishop's mission to form strong "Missionary Disciples." With the grand reach that the CYO athletics has, we have a unique opportunity to mobilize our faithful participants and continue to grow the mission of the Church in an impactful way.

In reviewing this handbook, you may notice that some of the language has been condensed and simplified, but most of the policies and procedures remain the same. We will continue our billing and chartering process as we have the last two years. If your program does not officially charter by taking our survey, your CYO is not eligible to participate. Please reach out for that survey if you feel your program needs to Charter.

In closing, I'd like to thank the countless volunteers that power our CYO programs and leagues. The CYO would not function without the tireless effort of so many faithful Catholics who give their time to our young athletes. I look forward to working with these wonderful volunteers in another effort to evangelize and spread faith and hope to our youth, who I am sure will go on to build a better world because of their time in CYO.

-Matt Hasher, CYO Athletics Director

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## I. Introduction to CYO Athletic Ministry

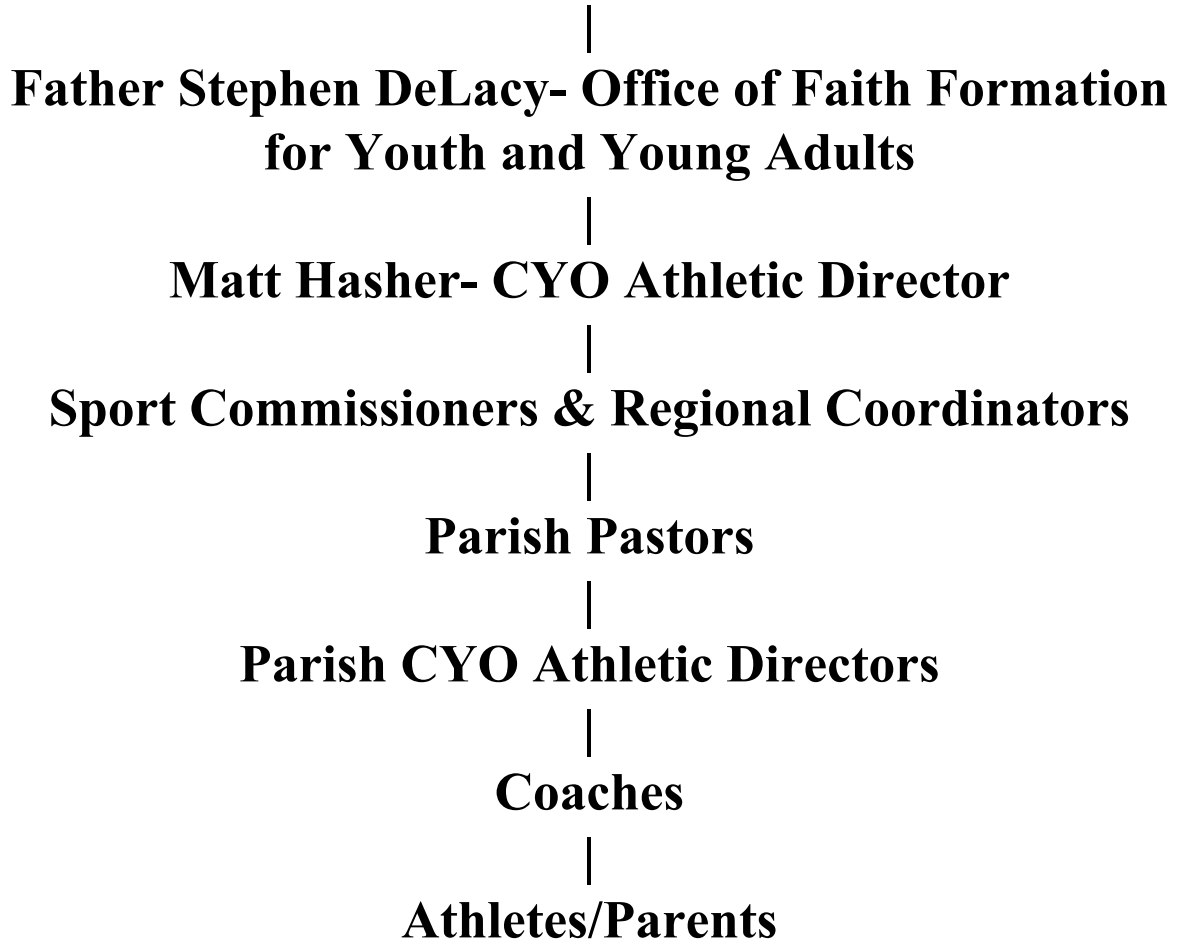
### A. CYO Sports Mission Statement

"CYO sports is the athletic component of a Parish or Catholic school youth ministry program. CYO enables the partnership between religious leaders, coaches, volunteers, and parents to manage and support a sports program that allows youth to grow in their relationship with God and come to a better understanding of themselves and the Catholic faith through sport. Such a program employs a healthy and enjoyable competition. CYO assists parish leadership in nourishing the emotional, spiritual, social, and physical needs of young people. CYO encourages young people to appreciate the gifts they possess and to succeed simply by striving to grow and improve. CYO allows young athletes to witness the life of Christian discipleship in their coaches and adult leaders and encourages the youth to become responsible members of their faith community.

## II. CYO Points of Emphasis

- 1. Ministry-** CYO sports provide a unique opportunity for youth ministry to greatly influence our athletes with spiritual development and appreciation for the gifts they are blessed with. We expect prayer before and after every practice (See p. 20) and weekly encouragement from coaches to attend Sunday Mass. We strongly encourage a focus on a weekly spiritual message, attending Mass as a team, and creating a service project for the community. Athletics provide "teachable moments" for our youth to contemplate and learn how to grow and face adversity through faith.
- 2. Sportsmanship-** All CYO programs must reflect Christian attitudes and values through adults emphasizing good sportsmanship. Coaches are expected to set good standards for proper conduct in sport. All teams should shake hands after games. All participants must show respect for officials and facilitators. CYO will not tolerate shouting, outbursts, or negative expression to any coaches, officials, spectators, or athletes. In short, let the players play, coaches coach, and officials officiate.
- 3. Enjoyment-** Young athletes play sports because it's FUN. Our young players DO NOT need adults to play games. If adults are curbing the enjoyment of players, they will leave, and worse- the essence of youth sports is lost. CYO is not a spectator sport for parents. All practices and competitions should be enjoyable for the players. Good CYO coaches succeed by enabling youth to develop their talents and view that as the ultimate achievement in itself. Good CYO coaches constructively instruct their athletes. It is critical that our youth understand that they get their worth from God as a free gift, NOT from "success" in athletics. We pray that parents will support their children without placing undue pressure on them to win or be the best athlete on their team or in their Region, none of which their child can control. We also ask that spectators cheer in a positive manner. Remember, these are children simply playing a game.
- 4. Organization-** The positioning of regional coordinators and sports commissioners help to bring information, processing, and decision-making closer to the parish level- all under the oversight of the CYO Athletic Department. The tremendous commitment and work by the volunteers serving as Athletic Directors and Board members helps to strengthen the structure of the CYO and continue to enforce the value of living the Gospel through sport.

# **CYO Athletic Department Organizational Chart**



### **III. The Archdiocesan Administration**

#### **A. CYO Athletic Department**

- i. The CYO Athletic Department is led by the CYO Director overseen by the Office of Faith Formation of Youth and Young Adults, and responsible for carrying out the Mission of that umbrella office through the value of sport.
- ii. The CYO Athletic Department relies heavily on the good work and time of many CYO volunteers, without whom an effective CYO program would not be a reality. We continue to look for ways to work more efficiently and more effectively given these limited resources.
- iii. The department's role is to provide the vision and framework from which our administrators, coaches and parents carry out this vital ministry. The department also exercises oversight and governance with regard to Athletic Ministry/CYO Sports. This Handbook is a reference tool to remind all involved of the mission of Athletic Ministry as well as the structure and rules under which this ministry is carried out.

#### **B. Office for Child and Youth Protection**

- i. The OCYP is responsible for overseeing compliance with the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program standards for youth. The office serves parishes, schools, organizations, and programs. If there are any questions regarding clearances for volunteers, class schedules, Mandated Reporting, etc. please contact the OCYP directly.

### **IV. Regional Administration**

#### **A. The CYO Sports Region**

- i. The Archdiocese is currently divided geographically into 13 Regions for the purpose of our CYO Athletics. All programs within our CYO are assigned to a Region, and their teams must participate with that Region's sports leagues. Failure to do so without Archdiocesan permission will result in elimination from Regional, Area, and/or Archdiocesan competition.
  1. In the event that a Region does not sponsor a specific sports league, teams may request to participate in a neighboring Region.
- ii. Regional By-laws
  1. Regional Athletic Boards might identify the need to have by-laws, in addition to rules and regulations provided by the CYO, to assist in governing parish participation in Regionally-sponsored sports leagues (i.e., issue of 'cuts,' issue of minimum playing time for JV, etc.)
  2. Any Regional by-laws can be implemented if they are stricter than what is feasible at the Archdiocesan level.
  3. Any changes to the Regional by-laws must be voted on by the Regional board and/or all participating program ADs.
- iii. Regional Athletic Boards
  1. If a Region is able to form a board, each program would be permitted one representative and one vote on any Regional decisions.

### **V. League Commissioners/Coordinators**

- A. Each sports league should be led by an appointed League Commissioner. This appointee will derive authority from the CYO Director
  - i. Sports League Commissioners will operate the entirety of sports seasons from the Archdiocesan level.
  - ii. Sports League Coordinators will facilitate the same responsibilities at the Regional Level

## **VI. Parish Administration**

- A. The Pastor**, as the canonical authority and governance of the parish, is the final authority on all decisions pertaining to his parish.
- i. The Pastor may designate a Priest Moderator to work closely with the Parish Athletic Director to oversee the CYO program
  - ii. In the case of Regional School-based CYO programs, the contributing Pastors may elect to appoint one Priest Moderator OR allow the School Principal to act as the sole overseer of the program.
- B. The Parish Athletic Director** is appointed by the Pastor and facilitates all CYO sports requirements for the Parish. The AD is responsible for:
- i. Communicating the CYO mission statement to parish sport volunteers and work to uphold its purpose and goals
  - ii. Developing a set of "Parish by-laws" and/or conduct a yearly review with all volunteers
  - iii. Ensuring that only qualified individuals are selected to coach children
  - iv. Working with the parish ministry office to record and house all Coaches clearances
  - v. Working with the parish business manager to facilitate billing for seasonal CYO team fees
  - vi. Ensuring that the annual CYO Charter is filled out and submitted to the AOP office



## **VII. Eligibility Standards**

**The primary enforcer of our rules is the honesty and integrity of the CYO volunteers. Any rationalizing breaking these rules is dishonest and contrary to the purpose of our CYO programs and Mission.**

**Ignorance to the eligibility standards detailed below is NOT A DEFENSE**

## **VIII. Parish Eligibility**

- i. In order for a parish to participate in an Archdiocesan CYO sanctioned and Regionally-sponsored sports league, the following criteria must be met:**
  - 1. Each parish must charter annually with the CYO Office. The electronic survey will be sent each year in the Spring to all Pastors and Business managers and posted to the CYO website. Charter fees will be charged directly to the business manager Quadra accounts.**
  - 2. Each parish team must be in compliance with registration, roster, and fee requirements.**
    - a. Rosters may be mailed or emailed to the CYO Office at 222 N.17th Street or mhasher@archphila.org**
    - b. Team fees will be paid directly from the parish Quadra account. A list of participating teams at each level must be provided with each roster package**
  - 3. Each Parish must ensure all coaches are in full compliance**

## **IX. Coaching Eligibility**

- i. All CYO coaches (including Athletic Directors, Assistants, etc.) must:**
  1. Take the online Catholic Coaching Essentials course found on the CYO website before coaching
  2. Complete required background checks, mandated reporter training, and Protecting God's Children class before coaching
- ii. Age Criteria for Coaches**
  1. Grade School coaches must have reached their 21st birthday before the start of the season
  2. High school coaches must have reached their 25th birthday before the start of the season.
  3. Assistant coaches do not have an age requirement, and high school students are encouraged to volunteer to coach as an assistant.
  4. All coaches over 18 that have any coaching role must complete Safe Environment standards. Assistant Coaches under 18 are not permitted to coach athletes alone.
- iii. CYO Coaches Pledge**
  1. *Upon my honor as a CYO Coach, I pledge myself to the following:  
To guide each player to be a better Christian and a better citizen.  
To be ethical and a good sportsman in my coaching conduct towards all athletes, officials, spectators and coaches.  
To motivate each athlete to compete according to the rules at all times.  
To teach each athlete, especially through my own examples, to be humble and generous in victory and proud and courteous in defeat.*

## C. Grade School Eligibility

### i. Years of Eligibility for Grade School Athletes

1. Junior Varsity - 2 Years
  - a. Participants are to be 5th or 6th grade players who have not reached their 13th birthday before September 1.
  - b. 4th graders, regardless of age, are not eligible to participate on a JV team, other than with Track and Field/Cross Country.
2. Varsity - 2 Years (No Third years are granted)
  - a. Eligibility is served at each level **regardless of participation**. "Red Shirt" years are not permitted. Only special cases where a repeating student missed a season for extenuating circumstances may be appealed to the region and CYO Director.
  - b. 6th graders participating on a Varsity team because there is no JV will be credited one year of JV eligibility, rather than a year of Varsity. They will retain their full Varsity eligibility for their 7th & 8th grade years.
  - c. 8th Graders who have reached their 15th birthday before September 1 may participate for their parish's High School sports team
  - d. Regardless of age, 9th graders and above are not eligible for CYO grade school sports
    - i. Exceptions: Cross Country and Track & Field only are approved to employ different age and grade restrictions.

### ii. Grade School Residence Requirements

#### 1. General Residence Eligibility

- a. Athletes must either be registered members of the parish or attend the parish school, otherwise they cannot participate.
- b. Registered members must be Catholic and must be registered at the Parish before the start of the season.

#### 2. Change of Residence

- a. Before the season starts- If an athlete moves out of his/her parish prior to the official start date of the sports season, the athlete is ineligible to participate with his/her former parish.
- b. After the season starts- If an athlete moves on or after the official start date of the sports season, he/she may choose to participate with their new or old parish
- c. **Changing Parishes without changing Residence-** Individuals or families that change parishes without changing residence will not be eligible to participate with the new parish for a period of one year from the date of transfer. The waiting year does count towards a year of eligibility. The athlete may participate with their old parish program, or can participate on a limited basis with the new program (practices only, not game eligible).

NOTE: After the sport's roster deadline, athletes may no longer change teams. Once an athlete chooses to participate on a team at their new parish (i.e. the change of parish must take place before August 1), he/she cannot participate for any teams at their former parish. The adjustment period is for that CYO Year only. Also, for CYO purposes, no family may change the parish with which they are registered, without a change of residence, during the current CYO Year.

## D. Grade School Scholastic Regulations

### i. Parish-School Students

1. A Student-athlete who attends a parish's school is eligible to participate on that parish's CYO team.
2. A Student-athlete who attends a separate parish's school from his/her registered parish may, in certain circumstances, participate with either parish's CYO.
  - a. Upon establishing a preference, the student-athlete must participate with the designated entity for the remainder of the CYO year.
    - i. Exception: If the chosen entity does not offer a particular sport, then the student-athlete may participate, for that sport only, with the entity that was not originally selected.
  - b. AT NO TIME may a student-athlete participate for the same sport at two different CYO entities.
3. School Transfers- Individuals who transfer schools (including parish, Regional, or Mission) will not be eligible to participate with the new school for a period of one year from the date of transfer. The waiting year does count towards the athlete's years of eligibility. The athlete may participate with their old parish program, or can participate on a limited basis with the new program (only practice, not game eligible).

### ii. Non-Parish-School Students

1. A student-athlete who is a registered member of the parish and attends a school (public, private or Catholic which is not part of CYO) other than their parish's school or is home-schooled is eligible to participate for their registered parish's team.
  - a. **NOTE: It is strongly recommended that non-parish-school students be required to participate in the parish's religious education program. This is ultimately decided by the Pastor.**

### iii. Combined Schools/Regional Schools

1. Parishes who share a "combined school" may either offer CYO sports through their own individual parishes (suggested) or through the school as a combined program. If the parishes choose to combine through the school, the following conditions must be met:
  - a. Participation is limited to the students who attend the school and those registered members of the parishes involved in the combined school
  - b. All involved parishes' Pastors must submit letters of acknowledgment and approval of the combined school CYO program to the Regional Athletic Board and CYO Director.

#### **iv. The Small Parish Merger**

1. Parishes who face smaller participation numbers have the option to merge with another program for specific sports to give an equal opportunity to participate as well as maintain a Parish CYO program

**a. Criteria:**

- i.** Two or more "small parishes" in the same Region may request a merger
- ii.** Parishes without schools may request a merger
- iii.** The merger must be necessary for ALL parishes to sustain a team
- iv.** No merger will be granted that gives any parishes involved a competitive advantage
- v.** Parish mergers must be approved on a season by season basis. Mergers are only granted for one sport, for one season.

**b. Procedures:**

- i.** The cut-off date for requesting a merger is two weeks after the official start date of the season. This allows for teams to conduct registrations and determine numbers
- ii.** The Pastors at all participating parishes must submit written approval to the Region and AOP CYO Director

#### **v. High School or Professional Athletes**

1. Any CYO athlete found to be rostered with any high school team at any level, or any professional team in that same sport will be ineligible and result in the team's ineligibility as well.

#### **vi. Eligibility Violations**

1. Athletes found to be non-compliant with any of the "Eligibility Standards" outlined in this handbook may face the following penalties:

- a.** Immediate discharge of the athlete from the violating team and the athlete will serve a one-year suspension from all CYO sports
- b.** Forfeiture of any competition in which the violating team participated with the athlete

## **D. High School Athletic Eligibility**

### **i. High School Age/Grade Regulations:**

#### **1. Varsity (Class B)**

- a. Athletes must be 11th or 12th grade students who have not reached their 19th birthday before September 1
- b. Athletes in 9th or 10th grade but over 17 years of age may be eligible for Varsity (Class B)
- c. Athletes who would have completed secondary school had they remained enrolled are not eligible
- d. Parishes with not enough players to form a Junior Varsity team may allow 9th and 10th graders to participate with Varsity

#### **2. Junior Varsity (Class C)**

- a. All athletes must be 9th or 10th grade students who have not reached their 17th birthday before September 1.
  - b. 8th graders too old to compete for Grade School Varsity may compete in the appropriate age class for high school
- NOTE: Any team or player found to be in non-compliance to any rule outlined in this Handbook will face sanctions.

### **ii. High School Residence Requirements**

1. Parish Resident- All athletes must be Catholic and registered members of the parish
2. Residents of Parishes with no Team- A parish without enough athletes to form a team may request that their athletes play with a neighboring parish. The Pastors of both parishes must provide written approval to the Region and AOP CYO Director
3. Change of Residence- Athletes changing residence must comply with the same grade school guidelines

### **iii. High School Religious Regulations**

1. **Non-Catholic Athletes-** who live within the parish boundaries are permitted to participate for that parish provided the following criteria is met:
  - a. The athlete complies with all eligibility rules
  - b. The Pastor provides a letter of request to the league Commissioner, Regional Board, and AOP CYO Director. If approved, a letter of approval must be provided by the Pastor
  - c. In order to create fairness, Regions may determine a limit of the number of non-Catholics a team may have
  - d. Teams Rostering non-Catholics are not eligible to participate in State CYO tournaments.

## **VIII. GENERAL POLICIES**

### **A. Code of Conduct**

- i. The following are examples of Offensive Actions and Penalties. No CYO Athlete, Coach, or Spectator is permitted to:**
  1. Refuse to abide by an official's decision
  2. Display objectionable behavior by throwing equipment or any other forceful action
  3. Heap verbal abuse upon any athlete, coach, spectator, or official
  4. Lay hands upon, push, shove, strike, threaten to strike, or physically attack an athlete, coach, spectator, or official
  5. This list is not exhaustive
- ii. Any athlete, coach, or spectator who is found guilty of any of the above violations may face the following penalties:**
  1. Violation of Articles 1-3 = minimum five-game suspension for CYO league and/or playoff competition
  2. Violation of Article 4 = Minimum one-year suspension for a full calendar year from all CYO sports
  3. If the sanctions are ignored or disregarded, his or her team will be suspended from all competition for a calendar year for that particular sport
- iii. Penalties will carry over into the next season available in order to complete**
- iv. If further investigation is necessary, the individual will be suspended until an informed decision can be made**
- v. Cyberbullying Addendum: the CYO has a zero tolerance policy for cyberbullying. This includes, but is not limited to, embarrassing, intimidating, disrespecting, or threatening any player, coach, official, or volunteer either verbally or on social media. If found guilty of these actions, the player, coach, or parent will be removed from the team and program immediately and face further suspensions that span past that year.**

### **B. Safety**

- i. Equipment- Coaches must ensure that all players wear the proper and mandated athletic equipment for their sport**
- ii. Competition Sites- Day of competition Coaches must ensure that all fields and facilities are safe and free from hazards on the day of the competition. Coaches should report any suspicious or unsuitable athletic conditions to the Site Director assigned to the competition immediately. If no Site Director is identified, the Home Team coach takes on responsibility for the safety of all involved at that site.**
- iii. First Aid- All coaches are required to carry at least one First Aid kit**

### **C. Rosters and Fees**

- i. The Roster-** Every CYO team must complete and submit a CYO sports roster to the CYO Office by the date determined each sports season
  1. Once rosters are submitted by the determined date, rosters are locked and players cannot be added
- ii. Required information-** Coaches and/or ADs must ensure that all of the information required on the roster be provided and it be honest, accurate, and in compliance with all Eligibility Rules
- iii. Required Approvals-** The team's roster is considered complete when submitted to the CYO Office and shows that the following individuals have approved it and found it to be in compliance with all Eligibility Rules:
  1. Head Coach
  2. Parish Pastor or School Principal
  3. Parish Athletic Director
  4. Commissioner
- iv. Require Fees-** All teams will carry a seasonal Team Fee that will be billed directly to the parish or school business account. A complete list breaking down the program, sport, and number of teams at each level to charge should be provided with all rosters and roster packets
  1. 2023-24 Team Fees will be \$150 for ALL SPORTS, both JV and Varsity

### **CI. Post-Season Competition**

- i. Varsity Leagues and above may host Regional post-season playoffs.**

Commissioners are responsible for the following:

  1. Establishing clear procedures for determining the Regional Champion and possible at-large bids eligible for the Archdiocesan post-season playoffs
  2. Reporting which team(s) will be representing the Region at the Archdiocesan competition before the deadline determined at the preseason meeting.
- ii. Number of bids per region for tournaments will be determined mid-season after rosters have been submitted**

### **CII. Officials**

- i. League coordinators are responsible for contracting officials for league competitions and Regional playoffs. It is recommended that, in coordination with the Region, an assignor is hired for officials**
  1. The Assignor will schedule officials for the season.
    - a. It is recommended that the Region pay the assignor with one check to cover all competition so that cash is not being handed out at games
    - b. Officials should be proficient and certified in the primary rules of the sport
    - c. Coaches may not officiate in the same Region for the same sport in which they coach

## **F. Admission Fees**

- i. Archdiocesan Competitions** may charge an admission fee in order to cover general expenses of events including site rentals, cleaning fees, etc.
- ii. Regional Competitions** may charge an admission fee in order to cover general expenses of events only when approved by the Regional board or when required by the host site
- iii. Individual Parishes** may charge an admission fee at the parish-hosted competitions in order to cover general expenses. However, if the Commissioner or Regional board finds the charges to be unreasonable or unnecessary, they reserve the right to refuse that parish home game on the league schedule.

## **G. General Protests**

- i.** Protests may be filed on the basis of "Rule interpretation" and/or "Athlete eligibility." They cannot be filed based on judgment calls. All protests must follow the process below:
  - 1.** Before a competition is completed, the Head Coach must indicate to both the head official and the opposing Head Coach that the competition is being protested.
    - a.** The protest should be noted in the scorebook. If the protest is not indicated in the official scorebook, the protest will be dropped.
    - b.** If the Head Official has left the competition area without being notified of the protest, it will be dropped.
  - 2.** The protesting coach has 24 hours from the completion of the contest to send a email detailing the protest to the commissioner
    - a.** "Time-sensitive" protests must be made within 2 hours
  - 3.** If the protesting coach does not consider the protest satisfactorily resolved by the Commissioner, he or she may appeal to the Regional Board
  - 4.** The Region's decision is final on "time-sensitive" appeals
  - 5.** Additional appeals may be made to the CYO Director through the Regional Board. The CYO Director will not review appeals that have not been reviewed by both Commissioner and Regional leadership.
  - 6.** The Regional Board must resolve all protests related to a team prior to submitting them for Archdiocesan post-season competition. No team having been disqualified at any level may participate in Archdiocesan post-season competition

## **H. Lateness**

- i.** A fifteen (15) minute grace period will be granted beginning at the scheduled start of the competition. At the conclusion of this time, the Facility/Field Director or Regional rep or Head Official may forfeit the game. At which time, the forfeiting team will be held responsible for their portion of the officials' fees.
- ii.** A team with a requisite number of players is not entitled to the grace period.
- iii.** The Field/Facility director or Head Official may extend the grace period if the team in question has contacted them, is en route, and will reach the site in a reasonable amount of time.



## **I. Regional Alignment**

i. The CYO Athletic Department reserves the right to assign parishes to the geographic entity known as the Region. When circumstances change within the structure of the Region, it may become necessary for the assignment of a parish(es) to a new Region.

## **J. Insurance and Liability**

- i. **Sanctioned CYO Sports Programs** who sponsor CYO sports in this handbook and are in compliance with all the rules and requirements outlined in this handbook may receive insurance and liability assistance from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
- ii. Any unsanctioned sports that operate under the parish umbrella that are not overseen by the CYO Office or that fall outside of the general eligibility requirements are covered by the Parish liability insurance, but are not supported by the AOP CYO office.

## **K. Calendar Requirements**

- i. Summer Season is a period between June 15th and August 1st where CYO teams in any form may participate together
- ii. CYO teams of any form or by any name may not participate in out-of-season competition. CYO teams competing out-of-season prior to June 15th or after August 1st will jeopardize their parish's participation in the following athletic season
- iii. Fall Sports may run from August 15th thru November 15th
- iv. Winter Sports may run from November 2nd thru March 15th
- v. Spring Sports may run from March 1st to June 15th
- vi. Teams are NOT permitted to conduct any competitions or practices on Sundays before 1pm. Appealing this rule must adhere to the following process:
  1. Both Pastors/Priest Moderators must provide written approval of any competition before 1pm
  2. The Regional and Sport commissioners must both approve
  3. Both teams must attend a team Mass, either separately at their home parishes or together at a Parish in proximity of the competition site
    - a. Teams are encouraged to wear their uniforms to promote team unity to their communities at Mass
- vii. **Blackout Dates:**
  1. Feast of All Saints
  2. Immaculate Conception
  3. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
  4. Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God
  5. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday
  6. Ascension Thursday
  7. September 30th, 2023, Eucharistic Congress

#### **L. Sanctioned CYO Sports**

- i. Fall Season: Football, Soccer, Field Hockey, Volleyball, Cross Country**
- ii. Winter Season: Basketball, Cheer, High School Basketball**
- iii. Spring Season: Baseball, Softball, Track & Field, High School Volleyball**

#### **M. Tryouts**

- i. Coaches must give all eligible athletes a fair and equal chance to try out for a CYO sport team. Tryouts may not be limited to participation or performance at any outside competition and/or membership to any outside team or organization. When more athletes register for a sport than can be accommodated on one team, the parish is encouraged to create additional teams in order to enable more youth to participate. Regions are encouraged to create additional leagues or competition schedules when appropriate. When a parish determines the need to cut players, great care must be taken as this also impacts the development of the student-athlete. At minimum, this process should value each person and not be a public embarrassment to the youth. The parish should seek other ways to engage these youth, whether as team managers or other support roles or other ministries in the Parish. Seeking to help the youth identify, develop and share their gifts is still the goal, even when those gifts may not be through sports for that season.

### **Track and Field Small Merger Addendum:**

**Two or more parishes will be permitted to merge and compete as one CYO Cross Country and/or Track & Field team when all of the following conditions are met:**

**1.) The combined number of unique participants competing in CYO sports in the previous school year for all the parishes involved must be less than 250.**

**a. Unique Participants is defined as all male and female athletes in 4th through 8th grade participating in inter-parish CYO sports programs sponsored by the parish.**

**b. Unique Participants must be verifiable through the parish roster.**

**2.) In any of the previous two years, neither parish fielded a CYO Cross Country team or Track & Field team of more than 18 total athletes (boys & girls combined), respectively.**

**3.) In the year of merger, the merged team will not have more than 36 total athletes (boys & girls combined).**

**The following rules and procedures apply to all requests to merge parishes for CYO Track & Field:**

⌚ **Private Academies are not permitted to merge with an eligible parish for CYO Track & Field.**

⌚ **All requests for merger must be sent to the Archdiocesan Cross Commissioner or Track & Field Coordinator. Separate requests must be sent for each sport. Approval in one sport does not guarantee approval in the other.**

⌚ **The attached form must be used and the requested information must be included with the request. Requests should be emailed to the Archdiocesan Cross Country Commissioner, Mary Ellen Malloy, [sunrisexc@aol.com](mailto:sunrisexc@aol.com) and the Track & Field Coordinator, Terry O'Connell, at [terence.m.oconnell@gmail.com](mailto:terence.m.oconnell@gmail.com).**

⌚ **Cross Country - Requests for approval to merge for the CYO Cross Country season must be submitted before September 10th. All other Cross Country rostering rules still apply.**

⌚ **Track & Field - Requests for approval to merge for the CYO Track & Field season must be submitted before March 20th and the complete roster for the initial merged season must be received by the Archdiocesan Track & Field Coordinator by April 1st.**

⌚ **If approved, merged teams will compete under the existing name of one of the parishes, however, separate rosters must be prepared for the different parishes and approved by the respective pastors.**

⌚ **Once a request for merger is approved, the merged team must remain together for a period of two years. The unique participant rule and total number of cross country/track & field athletes rule apply only in the first year of merger. Merged teams must re-apply after two years competing together and may be denied in subsequent years based on the growth of their CYO or CYO Cross Country and/or Track & Field programs.**

⌚ **Ineligible "large" parishes may be permitted to merge with an eligible smaller parish if credible hardships or other qualitative factors make such a merger the best option for the smaller parish. The decision to waive one or more condition will be at the sole discretion of the Cross Country Commissioner or Track & Field Coordinator, respectively.**

## Missionary Discipleship in CYO Athletics

Archbishop Pérez is asking every Catholic and every parish to work with him to create a culture of missionary disciples in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This is a strong call to all of us to undergo a conversion of mind, heart and behavior: to move out of the “maintenance” mindset, which tends toward spiritual complacency and a business as usual attitude, and into an apostolic mission mindset. CYO Athletics is the most robust and connected mission in the Archdiocese, and our adult leaders have a unique opportunity to grow and guide our young athletes with this mindset.

What is required of us - parish leaders and parishioners - is to commit ourselves to a deeper life of prayer, a greater outward focus and to incorporate mission-oriented thinking in all aspects of parish life and ministry.

At the beginning of your practices and games, you can carve out 5 minutes to pray meaningfully. You make a deliberate Sign of the Cross, pause in silence to allow everyone to open their hearts to God, read a short Scripture passage and then pause again in silence to allow everyone to hear God speaking to them through the passage. Then you close with a Hail Mary prayed at a natural, reflective pace. Then the sports can begin.