



# **2022-2023 Training Policy for Maine Cheer Officials**

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## **Welcome and Overview**

For those officials that are returning for another cheering season in the State of Maine, WELCOME BACK! And for officials joining our team this season, WELCOME ABOARD! Thank you for your interest in officiating the sport of cheerleading in the State of Maine! The Maine Cheerleading Officials Association (MCOA) is always looking for qualified candidates to be included in the judging pool for the Maine Principals Association (MPA) high school and middle school competition seasons. The purpose of this manual is to define the application process, provide information about new, annual and on-going training requirements and prepare new officials for future professional responsibilities.

## **Minimum Qualifications**

To qualify to become a cheering official for the MPA, you must be 22 years of age and will need to have experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Coached cheering at the high school or collegiate level (This can be at any high school or cheer gym);
- Judged cheering competitions for another State or nationally at the high school or collegiate level;
- Worked on staff for a national cheering organization;
- Cheered at the high school and/or collegiate level; or
- Other relevant cheer experience to be considered on an individual basis.

## **Guidelines for Application**

Cheer applications are accepted until October 15<sup>th</sup> each calendar year. The applications are read by the President of the MCOA and if the applicant meets the criteria noted above, he/she will be invited to attend the mandatory Fall training to begin the process of becoming an official. New officials will be scheduled by the assignor to practice their judging of teams at a minimum of two (2) competitions, based upon availability and space. The goal is for the new official to complete their practice sessions in every category successfully and early enough in the season, so that it might be possible for them to be scheduled to judge a conference or invitational event in the first year.

The formal application and resume will be emailed to:

Susan Hartnett  
President, MCOA  
sehartnett@comcast.net

## **Training and Practice Requirements**

New cheer and/or practicing officials, returning cheer officials as well as any out of state officials (hereafter noted as officials), will need to attend the annual fall meeting or approved similar training to review Federal Regulations, High School criteria and MPA guidelines so that competitions comply with the rules and regulations of the sport. This is a mandatory component in order to officiate in the upcoming season. This meeting is typically held in person, but may be offered on a virtual basis as conditions allow.

All officials will provide their availability to judge the competitions scheduled for the season at the Fall meeting. Please note that this schedule may be adjusted throughout the season depending on matters outside of our control such as for lack of registrations, weather, illness, time conflicts, etc.

It is crucial that all officials fully review and have basic understanding of the entire rubric and score sheet that is in effect for the current upcoming season. Categories overlap skill sets and understanding of how and where skills are incorporated is important to ensure accuracy of scores and knowledge in the sport.

All officials will participate in continued virtual training to start following the annual fall training session and end no later than the last high school competition for that season. These training sessions will focus on use of the current year's rubric and its application in mock or practice video situations where scores are analyzed and assessed for accuracy and consistency. Most virtual training sessions will be scheduled following the annual fall training and before the start of the season unless there is a need for additional training once the season starts.

In addition, all officials scores will be randomly reviewed throughout the season.

### **New Official Training Process:**

New officials are required to practice their judging of at least five teams within each category as represented on the rubric and scoring sheets, except in the area of penalty and lead, at no fewer than two (2) competitions. Lead officials will evaluate performance and send critique of scores to the Chair of the Training & Recruitment Committee for committee review. This will result in either gaining approval to move forward in receiving competition assignments as an official, the need and completion for additional practice sessions before approval is given or dismissal. If a new official's practice performance is successful, the Training & Recruitment Committee will make a recommendation to the President of the MCOA and the MPA to approve the new official to judge at the High School and Middle School/Youth levels.

Practice judging is not allowed at Regional and State championships. If the practice judging is completed early enough in the season, new officials may be assigned to judge conference or invitational events in the first season. New officials will not be assigned to judge the Regional or State championships in the first year. In their second season, new officials may be assigned to judge at Regionals, but not at the State championships. “New” officials may be assigned to judge at any level from their third season on.

New officials will be assigned to practice judge at least 2 competitions as early in the season as possible. The practice official will be assigned categories at each event, judging at least five teams in each category before changing to a new category. All categories must be covered in order for a practice official’s training to be complete. At the conclusion of each competition, the practice official will submit their score sheets and evaluation form to the lead official. The lead official will provide an evaluation of the practice official based on the provided Evaluation form and will submit this along with the training officials’ score sheets to the Chair of the Training & Recruitment Committee within one week of the competition. Once received, the training committee will review all documentation and provide constructive feedback to the practice official prior to their next competition so they can make any necessary adjustments.

Recognizing that there are future officials with a wealth of experience related to the sport, an appeal process to the required practice sessions has been created and is outlined in the Appeal Process section.

#### **Lead and Penalty Training Process:**

Officials interested in Penalty and Lead training will provide notification of interest to the entire Training Committee for consideration. This can be a simple email to the entire group rather than a formal letter but something in writing is required. The following conditions need to be met in order to be considered:

- Official must be in good standing with the board.
- Official must have completed a minimum of 3 years of officiating in the State of Maine with the ability to judge any competition inclusive of Regionals and States.
- Official should have well-rounded knowledge of all categories as outlined on the rubric and score sheets.
- Officials should have above average knowledge of stunting skills and be assigned regularly as an official in the stunting and/or pyramid categories.
- Officials should have above average of the NFHS Spirit rule book for the current year.
- For Lead officials, all of the above requirements should be met as well as assignments of penalty at no less than 4 competitions, one of which is a major competition (conference, regionals or states).

Regular meetings and/or training is conducted throughout the season for lead officials to ensure consistency of rules and guidance, in an above the scoring analysis training for all officials.

### **Appeal Process for Training Override**

1. An aspiring official must appeal his/her practice judging sessions no later than November 15th.
2. To submit an appeal, one must send a formal letter to the Chair of the Training and Recruitment Committee stating strong evidence for being eligible to bypass the required practice judging along with an additional cheer resume to support the claim.
3. Valid reasons to submit an appeal include:
  - a. Prior high school or college level judging experience
    - i. Maine
    - ii. National
    - iii. International
  - b. Serving on a professional cheering staff for 3 or more years.
  - c. Significant coaching experience at the high school or college level and extensive knowledge of current Federation rules.

### **Tracking Form**

At the conclusion of his/her practice sessions, new officials will submit the tracking form (page 7) along with any other materials to the Chair of the Training & Recruitment Committee. Using the evidence provided by the lead official evaluations and the tracking form, the Training & Recruitment Committee will determine if the official shows competency and professionalism in the necessary areas to judge successfully at the High School and Middle School/Youth levels in the State of Maine. A final recommendation will be made to the President of MCOA on behalf of the official.

### **Annual Training**

All officials looking to officiate in the upcoming competition season must attend an annual mandatory training that is typically conducted in the fall prior to the start of the season. Other training may be mandated as well as the season progresses. In addition to completing the training, an updated application, and MPA required items (such as proof of fingerprint) are required to be submitted and on file. Non-compliance with the mandatory training(s), non-submittal of required documentation and/or providing updates or disclosure of any conflicts of interest, may result in re-assignment, removal from officiating panels or from the Maine Cheering Officials Association.

### **Seasonal Training Assessment**

Lead officials will work with all officials on their respective panels throughout the season and work with the Training and Recruitment Committee if there are any areas of deficiency noted with any official throughout the competition season.

Recommendations may result in possible category re-training, re-assignment or removal from officiating panels, up to and including the Maine Cheering Officials Association.

Any official can request further individual or group training from the Training and Recruitment Committee for any area(s) they need/want additional knowledge.

**Training and Recruitment Committee Members:**

Melissa Harvey – Committee Chair  
Leanne Burnham –  
Susan Hartnett –

mharvey1324@gmail.com  
leanne.burnham@yahoo.com  
sehartnett@comcast.net

## Practice Judge Tracking Form

Official's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Category(ies) Judged</b>		<b># of Teams Completed</b>	
<b>Name of Competition/ Lead Official</b>			

### Self-Evaluation Notes:

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<b>Category(ies) Judged</b>		<b># of Teams Completed</b>	
<b>Name of Competition/ Lead Official</b>			

### Self-Evaluation Notes:

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## Lead Official's Evaluation

Lead Official \_\_\_\_\_

Practice Judge \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Competition \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Practiced Category</b> (please circle one)   Stunts   Tumbling   Pyramids   Motions   Jumps   Dance			
Team Name	Official Score	Practice Score	Official's Comments
			Please denote and add the category official's comments directly to the practice judge's score sheet prior to sending.

<b>Practiced Category</b> (please circle one)   Stunts   Tumbling   Pyramids   Motions   Jumps   Dance			
Team Name	Official Score	Practice Score	Official's Comments
			Please denote and add the category official's comments directly to the practice judge's score sheet prior to sending.

<b>Practiced Category</b> (please circle one)   Stunts   Tumbling   Pyramids   Motions   Jumps   Dance			
Team Name	Official Score	Practice Score	Official's Comments
			Please denote and add the category official's comments directly to the practice judge's score sheet prior to sending.



## Lead Official's Evaluation – Continued

### Scale

1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Acceptable, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent

1) The practicing official was dressed appropriately.

1      2      3      4      5

2) The practicing official acted in a professional manner.

1      2      3      4      5

3) The practicing official was consistent with his/her scoring.

1      2      3      4      5

3) The practicing official was confident in their category(s) and asked appropriate questions.

1      2      3      4      5

4) The practicing official was organized and timely with their scoring.

1      2      3      4      5

5) Would you recommend the practicing official to be considered for officiating next season? Why or why not?

6) Additional Notes:

**LEAD OFFICIALS:** Please complete and submit this evaluation form and send via email along with the training officials marked score sheets to the Training and Recruitment Committee at [mharvey1324@gmail.com](mailto:mharvey1324@gmail.com) no later than the Wednesday following the competition so timely feedback can be provided.

## Practice Officials – Tips and Expectations

The following are just some tips and a breakdown of the different areas for cheering competitions to guide and assist you in becoming a successful cheering official for the MPACO!

### Competitions -

Practice officials will receive a schedule for the competitions that they will be practice officiating at for the season. Once received, review this schedule and if there are any conflicts or conflicts of interest, please inform the scheduler immediately for reassignment. For competitions that you are practice officiating at:

#### *Prior to the Competition:*

- Reach out to your Lead official on the Monday prior to the competition to confirm your attendance. The Lead official will also reach out to you with the competition detail information – typically confirming judging assignments, meeting times, directions and any other information that may be relevant to how the overall competition will run. They should also identify car-pooling assignments and/or meeting locations for getting to and from the competition.
- Review your rule book and the official's guide that is sent out! There is a lot of information within the rule book that guides our competitions throughout a season. While the Lead and Safety officials have the primary responsibilities of enforcing the rules within, many eyes on a routine allows us to ensure that teams are in compliance for a safe and successful season! The officials' guidebook that is discussed at the Fall meeting will also provide corrections from printing errors in the rulebook. It is your responsibility to make sure you are utilizing all the current information as it is provided.
- Watch videos. Every season sees new trends and techniques in cheering as it continually evolves and videos are a great way to stay current with what teams are doing and terminology. In addition, videos are a great way to start getting a feel for judging as you can watch a video and judge teams as you go.
- Make a plan. Determine how many teams should be in attendance at the competition (Lead's should have an approximate number) and plan your judging strategy for the day. If you plan to split the competition teams to do half for stunts and half in tumbling, make a list of questions you may have for each official on best practices, what they may write for comments, shorthand used, etc. Every official is different with their scribing and gaining as much insight as you can from several judges will allow you to customize your notes and techniques along the way.

#### *Day of the Competition:*

- Arrive early. All judges should plan to arrive one hour before a competition is scheduled to start. This allows time to arrive, get settled in and prepared for the competition without rushing and creating additional stress to the day.

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➤ Be prepared. There are certain things that are MUST HAVES for the day of the competition that you want to be sure to bring.

- Rule Book and Official Guidebook
- Category Guidelines/Category Rubrics
- Plenty of Pencils as well as a sharpener if needed
- Training Category Score Sheets – Bring enough copies to cover all teams
- Notepaper
- Practice Judging Tracking Form and Evaluation Form

➤ Water is typically provided on the tables though you may also want to bring snacks with you.

➤ Dress appropriately. Attire should be dress casual with no jeans and of a neutral nature as to avoid school colors and color combinations. You should also not have anything that is school “logoed” (bags, clothing, etc.). Shoes/boots should be appropriate and without a stiletto type heel if out on the gym floors as they can cause pitting.

➤ Communication. Work with your Lead official to determine seating location at the table for practice judging. Also touch base with the category officials that are judging the categories you plan on practicing in to ask any questions and gain insight from their experiences. During the competition, for the first couple routines in your category, find out where the officials are at with their scoring so you can compare. Be consistent and ask questions following the competition to determine where scoring might have been off.

➤ Don’t stress! As with anything new, there are bound to be missteps along the way. You will not be as fast as everyone else. You will check off the wrong boxes. You will start to write comments and then forget to give a score and vice versa. You will second guess what you saw. You will question if you even saw certain requirements within a routine. You will want to erase...more than once! This is all ok! We have all been here and this practice is what allows us to become proficient. We have minimum requirements for what is needed for practice judging but ultimately, if you don't feel ready, communicate that out and we won't put you on a panel until you feel comfortable.

➤ Provide the Evaluation Form as well as all your score sheets to the Lead official for review and submission to the Training Committee.

#### *Following the Competition:*

➤ The Training Committee will reach out to you prior to your next scheduled competition with copies of your score sheets as well as any feedback that was provided as well as other information that may assist you as you continue to judge. Please ask questions and share your feedback of how you felt the competition went as far as your overall scoring, the quality of advice and helpfulness, things to improve, so we can create the best opportunities for new officials in the sport of cheerleading.

➤ Determine what worked for you and what didn't in your note taking and organization and modify it if necessary. This is the time to work with different suggestions to see what the best fit is for you.

➤ Re-review the rule book, the category rubric along with any videos to clarify areas of question. The rulebook and its contents will come up all season long as routines are changed and revamped.

***Sampling of Suggested Comments for Routines – Good (constructive specific) versus Bad (generalized)***

➤ Your comments should help justify the scores you gave. If you gave high marks, praise them! If they could improve, then be constructive. If you do see an illegal stunt, note in on your notes and let your lead official know.

➤ **Good Examples:** Low toss(es) – Twist toss or Back left; Work on flyers back/arm/leg flexibility in arab/stretch/etc.; Left back lib timing off; Unsteady high to low right center; Working one less group for advanced section of rubric; Low - Watch head below waist L-side bracer in inversion pyramid; Bent knees/arms in majority of BHS; Low tucks coming forward; Don't drop chest to leg in FH's; Tighten motions in cheer transition; Wide high V's in jump approach; Watch L motions; More formation/level changes in dance; Spacing off on left side dance.

➤ **Bad Examples:** Illegal Stunt; OUCH!, Guys don't fly; Good job!; Messy looking; Don't use poms. Tighten motions; Wide high V's; Timing issues. ☒- Some of these are not bad comments IF you couple it with examples of where in the routine to provide constructive feedback to help coaches determine areas they can work on with their squads.