



Policies and Procedures of the Georgia High School Fencing League

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Preface

This document describes the obligations of GHSFL members, procedures for certifying referees, and rules relating to safety.

The policies and procedures are set by the GHSFL Board and questions about them should be addressed to:

- Chair Terry White terry.white@ghsfl.net
- Vice Chair Kathy Vail kathy.vail@ghsfl.net

Related documents

This is one of a series of documents describing how GHSFL operates. The other documents are:

- *GHSFL Competition Format*. Describes how the GHSFL season works and how rankings are determined.
- *GHSFL Tournament Hosting Guide*. Describes how to organize a GHSFL tournament.
- *GHSFL Fencing Time Instructions*. How to use the Fencing Time software to run a GHSFL Tournament.

These documents can be obtained from the Tournament Director, Chris Grimshaw (chris.grimshaw@ghsfl.net).

Changes for the 2019-20 Season

- “GHSFL Team Membership” on page 4 was updated to say that GHSFL teams must be official school clubs.
- “GHSFL Team Membership” on page 4 was updated to say that beginning with their second year in GHSFL, teams must have at least six student members.
- “Faculty Sponsor” on page 5 was updated to say that beginning with the 2020-21 season, coaches must be at least 21 years old.
- “Complaints against Coaches” on page 5 was added.
- “Use of Contact List” on page 9 was updated to say that coaches’ e-mail addresses must be personal addresses and not those of a business or club; and that the list is to be used only for official and approved GHSFL business.
- “Contact with individuals or organizations outside GHSFL” on page 9 was added to say that only the GHSFL Board is authorized to contact outside groups or individuals about GHSFL events.
- “SafeSport” on page 11 was added.

Mission Statement of the GHSFL

The purpose of this organization is to provide support for the development, activities and continuance of high school fencing teams throughout the state of Georgia.

The GHSFL and its members will organize, support and provide guidance for the high schools having or wishing to develop a fencing team.

The GHSFL will provide interface with and between the various high school fencing clubs, their officers and the various county public and private schools.

The GHSFL will actively pursue the goal of making fencing a sanctioned GHSA sport.

Procedures for New Schools to Join GHSFL

Petition to Join GHSFL

The school must petition the GHSFL Board for membership by submitting a signed letter of approval from the Principal or Athletic Director of the school. The letter must be on school stationery and include the following:

- Signature of the Principal or Athletic Director.
- Name and email address of the designated Faculty Sponsor.
- Acknowledgment that the fencing club is an official school club.
- Acknowledgment that practices will be held at the petitioning school.

GHSFL Team Membership

- The school fencing team must be listed as an official club on the website of the high school that they represent.
- The school fencing team must have a Faculty Sponsor.
- The school fencing team must have a fencing coach.
- The school fencing team must have a minimum of three student members in its first year in GHSFL and must have a minimum of six student members in its second year.
- The school fencing team must have signed GHSFL waivers for each member.
- The school fencing team must pay all GHSFL dues.
- GHSFL insurance must be purchased for every fencer who participates in any practice or tournament.
- The team must meet facility and equipment requirements unless waived by the Board
- The team must practice together without fencers from other clubs present
- The school must be a member of the GHSA and participate in GHSA sports

Team Organization

Faculty Sponsor

The Faculty Sponsor is the sole voting representative of the school at GHSFL meetings. As the school Principal's designated representative to the GHSFL, the Faculty Sponsor is recognized by the GHSFL as the team's Head Coach and is the primary point of contact for communications with the member schools. That individual decides on the correct distribution of such communications within his/her school, team coaches, and parents.

In many schools, there is not an individual knowledgeable in teaching the sport of fencing. For that reason, the Faculty Sponsor usually chooses to contract a non-faculty member as an expert consultant, or "assistant coach". In most cases, these coaches are direct reports of the Faculty Sponsor. Faculty Sponsors should manage the team related activities of all consultant/assistant coaches and parents.

The GHSFL strongly encourages, but does not require, the Faculty Sponsor to be present at every tournament (at some schools, the Principal requires Faculty Sponsors to be present at all club activities). GHSFL does require that every school designate an adult (age 21 years or older) to be responsible for their fencers at each tournament. This individual can be the Faculty Sponsor, coach, or any designated adult. The responsible adult must have agreed to stay at the tournament while the school has any fencers present. The responsible adult must sign in on the day of the tournament, and schools will not be allowed to participate in the tournament unless this individual is present. The GHSFL strongly recommends that two adults be present

Faculty Sponsors and coaches must take the approved on-line concussion safety training course: www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html. The Faculty Sponsor is responsible for ensuring the coach(s) for their school has taken the training.

Beginning with the 2020-2021 season, GHSFL coaches must be at 21 years of age or older.

Complaints against Coaches

Any complaint/report regarding coaches behavior must be made in writing by faculty-sponsor or team parent.

- The complaint/report must be sent to the chair or vice-chair of the GHSFL.
- The complaint/report must contain coach's name, the event(s) at which an incident occurred, the date of the event(s), details of the incident and name and contact information of the person(s) making the complaint
- The GHSFL Board will determine, within two weeks, whether or not suspension from coaching at GHSFL tournaments and/or suspension from attending GHSFL tournaments is warranted while the investigation is ongoing.
- The GHSFL Board will examine the written complaint/report.
- The GHSFL Board will contact the accused coach including a copy of the complaint/report
- The contact will include a request for a response from the coach that should include any statements from others (including contact information) to support the coach.
- Should the coach fail to respond to the request by the GHSFL Board within the time designated (2 weeks), that coach will be banned from attending GHSFL tournaments or coaching at GHSFL tournaments for failure to cooperate.
- The GHSFL Board will examine all statements. All statements must be sent to the chair or vice-chair.
- The GHSFL Board will determine whether or not the coach should be banned from coaching and/or attending GHSFL tournaments for the season or a portion of the season on the basis of the evidence gathered.
- The coach and the author of the complaint/report will be informed of the Board's decision.
- At the conclusion of the season or portion of the season from which a coach is removed, the coach may appeal for reinstatement the following season by submitting a written request to the Board

Team Member Qualifications

Team membership is limited to students in good standing enrolled in the member school. Members must also meet the following GHSA requirements:

- **Age:** Students must be no more than 19 years old on May 1 of the current school year.
- **8 semesters:** Students are eligible for 8 consecutive semesters beginning with the 1st semester of 9th grade.
- **Enrollment:** Students must be enrolled full time at the school they compete for. Full time means:
 - In regular attendance
 - Taking courses in the current semester worth at least 2.5 Carnegie Units that count for graduation
- **Previous semester:** Students must have passed (a grade of 70) 2.5 Carnegie Units in the previous semester.
 - The courses must be ones that count towards graduation.
 - This rule does not apply to the 1st semester of 9th grade.
 - Summer school counts as part of spring semester.
 - Previous semester” means the previous calendar semester. A student who is not in school in fall is not eligible in spring even if he or she passed 2.5 units the previous spring.
- **Previous years in high school:** Students must have passed the following numbers of units in previous years.
 - 2nd year students must have passed at least 5 Carnegie Units in their first year.
 - 3rd year students must have passed at least 11 Carnegie Units in their first 2 years.
 - 4th year students must have passed at least 17 Carnegie Units in their first 3 years.
- **College courses:** Students in Dual Enrollment programs may be eligible and college classes can be counted. Students in Joint Enrollment, Early College or Gateway to College programs may not be eligible.
- **Credit recovery/make-up work:** Students who make up the required number of units within the first 14 days of a semester through a program available to all students may be eligible.
- **Students with disabilities:** Students who are enrolled in a special education program (even if not physically located at the school) may be eligible if they meet their IEP (Individual Education Program) requirements.

“Carnegie Units” are measurements used by most or all schools. During a semester with a traditional schedule, a student takes six courses worth 0.5 units, so passing 2.5 units means passing five of the six courses. Students taking year a long course worth 1.0 unit with a single grade at the end of the course are considered to have passed 0.5 units in the fall semester if their grade is at least 70 at the start of the spring semester.

Tournament Hosting

Schools are required to host at least one tournament a season beginning in their third season of competition. Depending on the tournament schedule, schools may be assigned more than one tournament. If a school finds that it is no longer able to host a tournament it has been assigned, it is that school’s responsibility to resolve the situation by hosting at an alternative location (e.g. a middle school or community centre), finding another school to host the tournament, or (with the board’s approval) moving the tournament to a different date.

Tournament hosts must provide a first aid kit in the concessions area with visible signage. The tournament manager must be provided with the school’s weather safety plan and security plan (e.g. fire, intruder, disturbances, etc.).

For more information about hosting tournaments, see the GHSFL Tournament Hosting Guide.

Practices and Tournaments

Team Practices

- While the Faculty Sponsor is encouraged to attend practices, a responsible adult (age 21 or over) must be present at **all** weapons practices. It is strongly suggested that two adults be present at all practices.
- The school fencing team must practice together at their school. Member schools may not hold their practices at private fencing clubs.
- Practices at each member school are limited to students in good standing enrolled in that school.
- An individual from a private fencing club may not participate in any member school's practices unless the individual is a member of the school's fencing team and participates in GHSFL Tournaments.
- The school fencing team may not combine their practices with private fencing club practices.
- With prior written GHSFL Board approval, member schools may schedule scrimmages with other schools. However, individual students from one school may not participate in another school's practices.

Tournament Participation

Unless waived by the Board, the school fencing team must meet all tournament facility and strip requirements (referees and equipment) and must provide advance notification of team rosters (tournament participants). A responsible adult must be present for as long as any of the school's fencers are at the tournament.

All schools, including the host, are responsible for providing scoring equipment and referees. For details, see the Competition Format document.

When a new school joins the GHSFL, it takes time to save money for equipment and train referees. For the first season in which they compete, new schools with less than 15 fencers competing in a tournament will not be assigned any strips but are required to provide one timer/scorekeeper.

Referees

At tournaments, schools are responsible for providing referees for the strips they have been assigned.

Training and Certification of Referees

1. All referees for GHSFL Tournaments are required to be certified by the GHSFL or USA Fencing. As an exception, candidates for GHSFL Certification who have successfully completed the first three steps in paragraph 2 below will be allowed to referee at the tournament where they are being observed and critiqued in accordance with paragraph 2d. If the host school approves, referees who are not certified are permitted to referee at scrimmages to gain experience.
2. Training for GHSFL Certification of Referees must include the successful completion of each of the following:
 - a. Attendance and participation in a GHSFL Referees Clinic.
 - b. GHSFL Written Referee Test.
 - c. Classroom environment practical exam including actual fencers.
 - d. Observation and critique at a GHSFL tournament by the individual conducting the Referees Clinic for the new candidate.
3. For certification to be recognized, the following criteria for GHSFL Referees clinics must be met:
 - a. GHSFL Vice-chair must be notified in writing of the training date and location at least 10-days prior to the training events (including the written test, practical exam and observation).
 - b. GHSFL referee clinics must be conducted using the course materials and tests provided by GHSFL.
 - c. GHSFL referee clinics must be held at a GHSFL member school and may not be conducted on the date of a GHSFL tournament. As an exception, clinics may be held at the GHSFL member school on the date of a scrimmage.

- d. A list of those passing the referees exam, including an email address for each person, must be submitted to the Vice-chair within one week of the date of the clinic.
 - e. Paper copies of the tests must be submitted to the Vice-chair within one week of the clinic.
Note: In order to allow proper reporting and processing of clinic results, 10 days must elapse between the date of a GHSFL referee clinic and the date one can referee at their first GHSFL tournament.
4. All referees for GHSFL tournaments must have successfully completed the GHSFL Referee Test and Clinic within the past 4 years or be a current USA Fencing referee. In order to be a current USA Fencing referee, one must pass the USA Fencing referee exam once every two years as well as attending a USA Fencing rules seminar. Current high school students cannot referee at GHSFL tournaments.
 5. The vice-chair will provide faculty-sponsors with a current copy of the Rules of the GHSFL. Faculty-sponsors are responsible for ensuring that their referees have access to a copy of the Rules of the GHSFL
 6. The vice-chair will provide all "Referees for Hire" with a current copy of the Rules of the GHSFL and an acceptance of understanding sheet. All "Referees for Hire", including USA Fencing referees, must read the Rules of the GHSFL, sign the acceptance of understanding sheet, scan and return the sheet to the vice-chair prior to refereeing at a GHSFL tournament

Complaints Against a Referee

Any complaint regarding referee behavior must be made in writing by faculty-sponsor, team parent or coach.

- The complaint must be sent to the chair or vice-chair of the GHSFL.
- The complaint must contain the referee's name, the event(s) at which an incident occurred, the date of the event(s), details of the incident and name and contact information of the person(s) making the complaint
- The GHSFL Board will determine, within two weeks, whether or not removal from the GHSFL Certified Referees list and/or GHSFL "For Hire" Certified Referees List is warranted while the investigation is ongoing.
- The GHSFL Board will examine the written complaint.
- The GHSFL Board will contact the accused referee including a copy of the complaint.
- The contact will include a request for a response from the referee that should include any statements from others (including contact information) to support the referee.
- Should the referee fail to respond to the request by the GHSFL Board within the time designated (2 weeks), that referee will be removed from the GHSFL Certified Referees list and/or the general GHSFL "For Hire" Certified Referees List for failure to cooperate.
- The GHSFL Board will examine all statements. All statements must be sent to the chair or vice-chair.
- The GHSFL Board will determine whether or not the referee should be removed from the GHSFL Certified Referees list and/or GHSFL "For Hire" Certified Referees List on the basis of the evidence gathered.
- The referee and the author of the complaint will be informed of the Board's decision.
- At the conclusion of the season from which a referee is removed, the referee may appeal for reinstatement for the following season by submitting a written request to the Board and by attending a GHSFL Referees Clinic.

Use of Contact List

The GHSFL contact list is limited to one Faculty Sponsor, one Parent Representative and one coach from each member school.

- The coach must have a personal e-mail address on the contact list. E-mail addresses containing the name of a business or club will not be placed on the GHSFL contact list
- The GHSFL contact list is distributed only to those listed on the GHSFL contact list.
- The GHSFL contact list is to be used only for official and approved GHSFL business. The contact list is not to be used for any other purposes, including, but not limited to, any and all events not directly approved in writing by the GHSFL Board.

Any individual including, but not limited to, fencers, coaches, referees, faculty sponsors and team parents, found to be in violation of the policies listed above will be excluded from participating in any GHSFL practices, tournaments or special events.

Contact with individuals or organizations outside GHSFL

Only the GHSFL Board is authorized to contact USA Fencing or any other organization or individual regarding any activity which includes two or more GHSFL Teams.

Any individual including, but not limited to, fencers, coaches, referees, faculty sponsors and team parents, found to be in violation of the policies listed above will be excluded from participating in any GHSFL practices, tournaments or special events

Rules of Conduct

- Fencers, guests and staff are expected to treat other fencers, guests and staff in a manner free from discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, national origin, gender, age, religion or any other legally protected characteristics.
- Good sportsmanship is expected from all fencers at all times during practices, scrimmages, and tournaments. Fencers will salute at the beginning and end of each bout and shake hands at the end of each bout. Failure to do so will result in immediate disciplinary action.
- Fencers and member schools are expected to keep all equipment owned by them in proper working order and are responsible for the suitability and condition of that equipment at all times. Fencers and member schools may not use equipment that appears to be damaged or unsafe.
- Families, friends and visitors must not interrupt or disrupt any ongoing fencing activity.
- Member schools and their guests attending GHSFL tournaments are bound by the rules of fencing, as well as the GHSFL and USA Fencing codes of conduct.
- If at any time an individual threatens the safety of fencers, guests or staff, they may be immediately escorted from the premise.

General Safety Rules

- Only authorized individuals are allowed in active fencing areas.
- During tournaments, parents, family members, non-fencing students and all other observers will remain in the designated seating areas.
- Fencers in the GHSFL are expected to control their actions and demeanor, conducting themselves in a safe manner at all times. Reckless conduct will not be tolerated.
- A mask, all required protective clothing and athletic shoes must be worn by fencers for all fencing activities. No sandals, “sock feet” or bare feet will be allowed.
- During tournaments and practices, fencers are not allowed to practice fencing in hallways, breezeways, outdoors or other areas where bystanders are present and may be injured.
- Fencers are to carry their weapon with the point toward the floor when moving around the tournament and practice areas.
- The tip of a fencer's weapon is NEVER to be pointed toward an individual who is not wearing a fencing mask.

Fencing Equipment

The GHSFL adheres to USA Fencing rules, regulations and requirements for protective clothing and fencing equipment. The member school is responsible for ensuring that all fencing clothing and equipment used at GHSFL tournaments and practices is in compliance with the current USA Fencing rules and safety standards. Fencers will not be allowed to fence unless they are wearing the following, **all of which must be in good condition:**

- Fencing mask. Foil masks (with conductive material on the bib) are not allowed. Masks must have two points of contact with the back of the head, those with only two straps in the shape of an “X” are not allowed.
- Fencing glove
- Chest protector (required for women, optional for men).
- Plastron (under arm protector)
- Fencing jacket
- Fencing knickers
- Socks that extend higher than the bottom of the knickers
- Suitable athletic footwear

Fencers are strongly advised to wear a neck protector such as a hockey goalie’s neck guard.

Corporate/sponsored advertising is not permitted on strips and scoring equipment at GHSFL tournaments. Business advertisements and/or sponsor logos may not be displayed on equipment, including, but not limited to reels, scoring boxes, floor cords and tables at GHSFL tournaments.

When hosting a tournament, a member school must prominently post the following at the glove/mask check table:

NOTICE

Fencers arm, equip and clothe themselves and fence at their own responsibility and at their own risk. Safety measures are only designed to increase the fencers’ safety and cannot guarantee it.

They cannot, therefore, whatever the manner in which they are applied, impart responsibility to the GHSFL, or to the organizers of competitions, to the officials or personnel who carry out such organization, or to those who may cause an accident.

SafeSport

The Georgia High School Fencing League fully supports the aims of the US Center for SafeSport.

SafeSport is an independent, non-profit committed to ending all forms of abuse in sport. This includes bullying, harassment, hazing, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual misconduct and abuse. The Center is the first and only national organization of its kind. The Center provides services to sport entities on abuse prevention techniques, policies and programs