



*USA Federation for Sport Cheering*

**Official Handbook for USA Cheer National Team Athletes  
and Coaches – 2026 Season**

# Welcome Letter

Dear U.S. National Team Athletes & Coaches,

On behalf of **USA Cheer**, we congratulate you on being selected to represent the United States as part of the **U.S. National Team**. You are among the nation's best athletes and coaches, chosen to represent our sport and our country at the **2026 ICU World Cheerleading Championships (April 21–24, 2026, Orlando, Florida)** and additional domestic and international competitions throughout the season.

With the honor of selection comes the responsibility to represent your sport, teammates, and country with integrity, respect, and professionalism. We know that you will rise to the occasion and make USA Cheer, your program, and your country proud.

Please review this handbook carefully—it outlines the standards, expectations, and policies that guide participation on the U.S. National Team such as logistics, conduct, fundraising, media and more. Congratulations once again, and welcome to the USA Cheer National Team.

Go USA!

## USA Cheer National Team Leadership Contacts

For all National Team inquiries:

- **Executive Director:** Lauri Harris [lharris@usacheer.org](mailto:lharris@usacheer.org)
- **Executive Assistant:** Kristine Paulson [KPaulson@usacheer.org](mailto:KPaulson@usacheer.org)
- **All Girl Teams Director:** Tony Nash [TNash@usacheer.org](mailto:TNash@usacheer.org)
- **Coed Teams Director:** LeRoy McCullough [LMcCullough@usacheer.org](mailto:LMcCullough@usacheer.org)
- **Dance Teams Director:** Stacy Shelton [Dance@usacheer.org](mailto:Dance@usacheer.org)
- **Adaptive/Special Olympics Director:** Lee Trudell [ltrudell@usacheer.org](mailto:ltrudell@usacheer.org)
- **Media & Communications:** [media@usacheer.org](mailto:media@usacheer.org)

# Coaches Next Steps

## Make Team Arrangements for April 21–24, 2026:

All U.S. National Teams will meet on **Tuesday, April 21, 2026**, for an exclusive USA Cheer performance event and Meet-n-Greet with all National Teams.

- **Opening Ceremonies:** April 22, 2026
  - **ICU Cultural Exchange:** April 22, 2026 (evening)
  - **Team Competition Days:** April 22–24, 2026
- (See final schedule of events at [www.cheerunion.org](http://www.cheerunion.org)).

## Fundraising:

Teams must fundraise to cover all costs associated with participation. Fundraising is due **April 1, 2026**. USA Cheer provides access to **Give Lively**, a nonprofit fundraising platform. Teams may raise funds through donations or sponsorships, and all proceeds must be directed to USA Cheer for allocation.

## Media Guide:

As a member of the U.S. National Team, you may be contacted by local or national media. The media guidelines later in this handbook will assist you with appropriate responses.

## Drug Testing:

All athletes and coaches must comply with the anti-doping regulations of the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**, the **International Cheer Union (ICU)**, the **U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)**, and the **U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA)**. Testing may occur at any time.

## Insurance:

Each athlete must maintain personal health insurance coverage.

## Physicals:

Each athlete must have a current physical dated within **12 months of April 1, 2026** verifying they are cleared for cheer participation. Coaches are responsible for collecting this documentation.

## Social Media:

Ensure your social media profiles reflect professionalism and align with U.S. National Team standards. Avoid posting content that includes unsafe skills or unapproved uses of the USA Cheer logo or name.

# USA Cheer Member Code of Conduct

In addition to the Athlete Protection Code and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP) described below, all USA Cheer members must adhere to the following Code of Conduct. Violations of this Code may result in suspension, removal from the team, or other disciplinary action by USA Cheer.

## Prohibited Conduct

The following actions are strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action:

- **Anti-Doping Compliance:**  
All members must comply with anti-doping rules of the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**, the **International Cheer Union (ICU)**, the **United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC)**, and the **U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA)**, including the **USADA Protocol**.  
Members agree to testing at any time and understand that use of prohibited substances may result in disqualification or suspension.
- **Substance Use:**  
Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol, tobacco, vaping devices, or e-cigarettes is prohibited for athletes at all sanctioned events or during any USA Cheer activities.  
Illegal drugs, controlled substances, or misuse of prescription medications are strictly prohibited.
- **Misrepresentation:**  
Use of another individual's identification, badge, or credentials for event access is not allowed.
- **Property and Respect:**  
Theft, damage to property, or any behavior resulting in loss or harm to a person or facility will result in disciplinary action and financial responsibility for damages.
- **Discrimination or Harassment:**  
Members must not engage in harassment, intimidation, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age.
- **Safe Sport Violations:**  
Any conduct violating the **USA Cheer Safe Sport Code** or **MAAPP** (Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies) is prohibited.
- **Inappropriate Business Practices:**  
Members may not use their role or access for personal or commercial gain without authorization from USA Cheer.
- **Conduct Detrimental to USA Cheer:**  
Any behavior—online or offline—that damages the integrity, image, or mission of USA Cheer may be grounds for discipline.

# USA Cheer Athlete Protection Code & MAAPP

USA Cheer is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all athletes. All participants must comply with the **USA Cheer Athlete Protection Code** and **Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP)**, available at [Athlete Protection - USA Cheer](#)

## Scope of Athlete Protection

The following forms of misconduct are prohibited:

- Sexual misconduct or abuse
- Physical misconduct
- Emotional misconduct
- Bullying, threats, or harassment
- Hazing or retaliation

USA Cheer also prohibits grooming behaviors, boundary violations, and other conduct inconsistent with athlete protection.

## MAAPP Overview

All USA Cheer coaches, directors, and staff must comply with the following MAAPP standards:

- **One-on-One Interactions:**  
Must occur in observable and interruptible settings.  
Private meetings with a minor athlete are prohibited unless another adult is present.
- **Electronic Communications:**  
Texts, DMs, or other private messages between adults and minor athletes must include a parent/guardian or approved USA Cheer staff member.
- **Travel & Lodging:**  
Separate accommodation must be maintained for adults and minors unless family members.  
Two-deep leadership is required for all team travel and overnight stays.
- **Athletic Training Modalities:**  
Massages, stretching, or medical treatments must be conducted in open, observable areas by licensed personnel.

## Training & Reporting

- **Training:**  
All members must complete annual Athlete Protection training and testing.
- **Reporting:**  
Concerns of abuse, misconduct, or MAAPP violations must be reported immediately to USA Cheer via: [USA Cheer Athlete Protection Program - Reporting - USA Cheer](#)  
Retaliation against anyone who reports misconduct is prohibited.

# U.S. National Team Coach & Director Agreement and Code of Conduct

Being selected as a coach or director for the U.S. National Team of USA Cheer is a privilege and a responsibility. This Agreement outlines both the operational expectations and behavioral standards required to serve as a representative of USA Cheer.

---

## Role & Responsibility

- The coaching position is voluntary and uncompensated.
- Coaches are responsible for communication, scheduling, coordination with athletes and staff, and ensuring adherence to USA Cheer policies.
- Head Coaches must verify all athlete physicals and insurance within 30 days of team placement.
- Coaches must submit rosters, travel plans, and compliance documentation to USA Cheer.
- Each team may roster up to 32 athletes (24 competing + 8 alternates), one Head Coach, and up to three assistants (subject to approval).
- Practices should occur at least 2–3 times weekly in preparation for competition.
- Regular communication with the USA Cheer National Team Liaison is required.
- Coaches will maintain professionalism, respect, and positive leadership and will report any safety or conduct concerns immediately.

---

## Conduct & Compliance

- Coaches must always display conduct that reflects positively on USA Cheer, their team, and the United States.
- Compliance with all federal, state, and event laws and regulations, including USA Cheer, ICU, and USOPC policies, is mandatory.
- Coaches must complete all required background checks and SafeSport/MAAPP training prior to athlete interaction.
- No harassment, bullying, discrimination, or hazing will be tolerated.
- Substance use (alcohol, drugs, vaping, tobacco) is prohibited during USA Cheer-related travel or events.
- Online conduct must reflect USA Cheer's values; refrain from negative or unprofessional posting, sharing confidential content, or engaging in public disputes.
- Coaches must not use USA Cheer branding, apparel, or logos for personal, promotional, or commercial purposes without written authorization.
- Any potential misconduct or Athlete Protection/MAAPP violation must be reported immediately.
- Violations may result in suspension, removal, or loss of membership as determined by the Executive Director or disciplinary panel.

# Athlete Code of Conduct

Being selected to represent the United States as part of the **USA Cheer National Team** is an honor and privilege. Athletes serve as ambassadors for the sport, the organization, and their country.

## I. Representing the USA Cheer National Team

I understand that selection is a privilege and that my conduct reflects upon USA Cheer and the United States. I will demonstrate respect, pride, and sportsmanship always.

## II. Team Conduct

I will treat teammates, coaches, staff, and competitors with respect. I will not participate in bullying, hazing, harassment, or discrimination of any kind. I will promote unity, positivity, and personal accountability.

## III. Legal & Ethical Compliance

I will abide by all event rules, laws, and USA Cheer policies. I will uphold the values of honesty, fairness, and integrity always.

## IV. Athlete Protection

I will comply with the **USA Cheer Athlete Protection Code** and **MAAPP**, including guidelines for communication, travel, and training. I will report any behavior that violates these policies and understand that retaliation against reporters is prohibited.

## V. Substance & Anti-Doping Policy

I will not use or possess alcohol, tobacco, vaping devices, e-cigarettes, or illegal substances during any USA Cheer event or travel. I will comply fully with all anti-doping requirements of **WADA**, **USADA**, and **ICU**, including drug testing at any time.

## VI. Media & Social Media Conduct

I recognize that my online activity reflects on USA Cheer. I agree to:

- Use social media responsibly and respectfully.
- Avoid posting or sharing negative comments about teammates, opponents, officials, or sport in general.
- Not share confidential team or behind-the-scenes content without permission.
- Refrain from reposting unsafe stunts or skills that violate safety guidelines.
- Direct all media requests to USA Cheer Communications.

## VII. Confidentiality & Representation

I will represent USA Cheer only in approved functions and not use USA Cheer or National Team logos, uniforms, or titles for personal promotion or business activities.

I will not participate in unapproved media or advertising while wearing USA Cheer apparel or referencing the National Team.

## VIII. Travel & Team Expectations

I will respect all travel guidelines, curfews, and event schedules. I will represent USA Cheer with professionalism in public and during all team-related activities.

## IX. Disciplinary Actions

Violations of this Code may result in suspension, removal from the team, or loss of membership privileges. I acknowledge that continued participation depends on compliance with all USA Cheer policies.

## USA Cheer Media, Branding & Social Media Policy

Representing the USA Cheer National Team is both an honor and a public responsibility.

Your conduct in all forms of media — including social platforms, interviews, and public appearances — should consistently reflect the values of integrity, respect, and professionalism.

This policy applies to all athletes, coaches, and staff affiliated with USA Cheer.

### Section 1: General Online Conduct

- Act as a positive ambassador for USA Cheer, the United States, and the global cheer community.
- Avoid posts, comments, or interactions that could harm the reputation of USA Cheer, your team, or the sport.
- Be respectful, inclusive, and professional in all communications.
- Never post or share content that includes harassment, bullying, discrimination, obscenity, or unsafe behavior.
- Avoid profanity, sexual content, or posts featuring alcohol, drugs, or vaping.

### Section 2: Professional Representation & Safety

- Use the correct terminology: refer to your team as the “U.S. National Team,” not “Team USA.”
- Follow all USA Cheer Safety Rules and Regulations when posting skills, photos, or videos.
- Never post unsafe stunts, “cheer fail” videos, or content filmed on illegal surfaces.
- Music used in videos must be free from explicit or offensive lyrics.
- You may repost or share official USA Cheer content.

### Section 3: Brand & Likeness Protection

The USA Cheer name, logo, uniform, and imagery are protected assets. Unauthorized use or alteration is prohibited.

National Team members must not:

- Use USA Cheer branding or uniforms in personal or sponsored promotions.
- Alter, crop, or modify official apparel.
- Film or post videos in USA Cheer apparel for commercial purposes.
- Use USA Cheer or “U.S. National Team” branding in NIL (Name, Image, Likeness) promotions, affiliate links, or sponsorships without written approval.

Requests for any media, advertising, or branding partnerships involving USA Cheer must be submitted to [media@usacheer.org](mailto:media@usacheer.org).

### Section 4: Name, Image & Likeness (NIL) Restrictions

While USA Cheer supports athletes’ rights to use their personal image, participation on the U.S. National Team comes with restrictions:

- You may not use your national team status, uniform, or logo in promotions unrelated to USA Cheer.
- You may not imply USA Cheer endorsement of any business, product, or organization without authorization.
- NIL activities must never conflict with USA Cheer’s nonprofit status, sponsors, or mission.

## **Section 5: Media Relations & Interviews**

At times, you may be contacted by local or national media regarding your participation with the U.S. National Team. Always represent yourself and USA Cheer professionally and respectfully.

If contacted directly by media:

- Politely request the reporter’s name, outlet, topic, and deadline.
- Notify USA Cheer’s Executive Director or Communications Department before responding.
- Coordinate your interview through approved USA Cheer channels.

During interviews:

- Be positive, factual, and concise.
- Avoid speculation, personal opinions on internal matters, or controversial topics.
- Never disclose confidential information about teammates, staff, or internal operations.
- Keep your tone friendly, confident, and focused on the sport and teamwork.

Media appearances coordinated by USA Cheer may be recorded and shared on official channels for promotional use. If you feel uncomfortable or uncertain, you may refer the reporter to USA Cheer Media Relations at [media@usacheer.org](mailto:media@usacheer.org).

## **Section 6: Positive Engagement**

Use your platform to celebrate accomplishments, highlight teammates, and share the values of sportsmanship and inclusion.

Your voice reflects the image of the sport — lead with integrity, gratitude, and positivity.

## **Section 7: Reporting & Consequences**

If you observe inappropriate posts or media behavior by any team member, report it immediately to the USA Cheer management team.

Violations of this policy may result in:

- Written warning
- Suspension from activities
- Removal from the USA Cheer National Team

# **USA Cheer Uniform & Apparel Use Standards**

Applies to all athletes, coaches, and staff participating under the USA Cheer umbrella.

## **Permitted Uses**

- At officially sanctioned USA Cheer events (competitions, practices, and appearances)
- For personal, non-commercial social media posts (e.g., team photos)

- When sharing or reposting official USA Cheer content with credit

## **Prohibited Uses**

- In paid or sponsored content (including brand partnerships or NIL deals)
- For promoting personal training, clinics, choreography, or products
- For endorsing or advertising third-party brands
- In monetized content (e.g., YouTube or TikTok affiliate links)
- To imply official endorsement by USA Cheer

## **Additional Guidelines**

- No altering of uniforms (cropping, cutting, or adding logos)
- Event footage (ESPN, FloCheer, etc.) cannot be reused for promotional purposes without approval
- USA Cheer logos, wordmarks, and national symbols must be used respectfully and never alongside unrelated entities

## **Approval Process**

Requests to use USA Cheer apparel, branding, or media for promotional purposes must be submitted to [media@usacheer.org](mailto:media@usacheer.org) and include:

- Description of intended use
- Platform(s) for distribution
- Any partners or sponsors involved
- Preview images or content if available
- Written approval from USA Cheer must be received prior to publication.

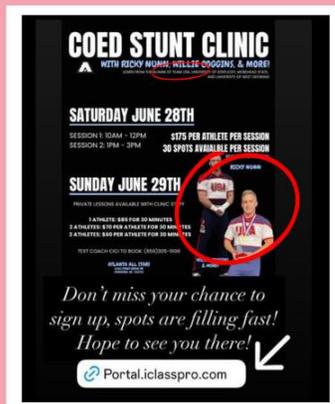
# NON-APPROVED EXAMPLES USE OF USA CHEER/UNIFORM/LOGO USE



## NOT APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: PROMOTIONAL

- ✗ USE OF BRANDED HEADSHOT (US NATIONAL TEAM UNIFORM)
- ✗ INCORRECT BIO ("TEAM USA")



## NOT APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: PROMOTIONAL

- ✗ USE OF BRANDED HEADSHOTS (US NATIONAL TEAM UNIFORM)
- ✗ INCORRECT BIO ("TEAM USA")



## NOT APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: PROMOTIONAL

- ✓ USE OF PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT
- ✗ INCORRECT BIO ("TEAM USA")

## APPROVED EXAMPLES USE OF USA CHEER/UNIFORM/LOGO USE



### APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: PROMOTIONAL

- ✓ USE OF NON-USA CHEER HEADSHOT
- ✓ CORRECT BIO



### APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: PROMOTIONAL

- ✓ USA OF NON-USA CHEER, APPROVED HEADSHOTS
- ✓ CORRECT BIO ("US NATIONAL TEAM")



### APPROVED

CONTENT TYPE: NON-PROMOTIONAL

- ✓ USE OF USA CHEER UNIFORM FOR NON-PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT
- ✓ CORRECT BIO ("US NATIONAL TEAM")

# USA Cheer Fundraising Policy

The USA Cheer National Teams are self-funded programs that rely on the efforts of athletes, coaches, and supporters. This policy outlines expectations and approved methods for raising funds to support participation in official events.

## Purpose and Overview

USA Cheer is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting cheerleading across all levels of participation. All fundraising activities must align with USA Cheer's mission and comply with applicable nonprofit and tax laws.

## Key Dates

- Rosters Finalized and Apparel Ordered: **December 2025 (except dance teams selected in Feb)**
- Fundraising Deadline: **April 1, 2026**
- Event Dates: **ICU World Cheerleading Championships, April 21–24, 2026 (Orlando, FL)**

## Approved Fundraising Activities

USA Cheer provides teams with access to **Give Lively**, a national fundraising platform for nonprofit causes. The following approved activities may be permitted is securing approval before the event.

- Donation campaigns (through USA Cheer channels)
- Corporate sponsorships
- T-Shirt sales (with pre-approval)
- Matching donation programs
- Silent auctions or team events (where legal)

## Prohibited Fundraising Activities

To protect USA Cheer's integrity, the following are **not permitted**:

- Fundraisers that involve alcohol, tobacco, gambling, or illegal activities
- Campaigns or events that conflict with USA Cheer's values or Athlete Protection Code
- Personal GoFundMe or similar fundraising pages not linked through the official USA Cheer platform.

## Compliance & Accountability

- All fundraising must be transparent and documented.
- Funds must be remitted directly to USA Cheer for allocation to team costs.
- USA Cheer reserves the right to audit or review fundraising activity.
- Misrepresentation or misuse of funds may result in disciplinary action or removal from the team.
- All funds raised are processed through USA Cheer's 501(c)(3) account and may be used solely for approved National Team expenses.

## Donor Acknowledgment

All donations made to USA Cheer are fully tax-deductible allowed by law. Donors will receive acknowledgment letters or receipts consistent with IRS requirements.

# USA Cheer Anti-Doping Regulations

USA Cheer and the U.S. National Teams adhere to the highest standards of athlete integrity and fair play.

## Compliance Obligations

All athletes and coaches must comply with the anti-doping rules of:

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)
- The International Cheer Union (ICU)
- The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)
- The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA)

Athletes may be tested at any time, including in-competition and out-of-competition, and must fully cooperate with test administrators.

## Prohibited Substances

Use or possession of substances or methods banned under WADA, USADA, or ICU lists is prohibited. For the latest prohibited list, visit:

[www.wada-ama.org](http://www.wada-ama.org) or [www.usada.org](http://www.usada.org)

## Disciplinary Action

Violations of anti-doping regulations may result in suspension, disqualification, or removal from competition, and are subject to the jurisdiction of USADA and ICU disciplinary processes. All disciplinary reviews will follow USA Cheer's internal Grievance and Appeal Procedures

# Coaches & Athletes Resource Summary

## Sample Budget\* — Cheer Team (32 Athletes, 4 Coaches)

- Uniforms & Practice Wear: \$400 per new athlete
- Registration Fees: \$99 per participant
- Hotel (5 nights @ \$154): \$10,000 total
- Flights: \$6,000 total
- Ground Transportation: \$750 per van
- Equipment (poms, signs, flags): \$600
- Coach Apparel: \$125 per coach
- **Estimated Total:** **\$30,000**
- **Suggested Fundraising:** **\$1,200–\$1,500 per athlete**

## Sample Budget\* Dance Team (24 Athletes, 4 Coaches)

- Practice Wear: \$230 per athlete
- Uniform: \$250 average
- Registration Fees: \$99 per participant
- Hotel (5 nights): \$8,000
- Flights: \$6,000 total
- Transportation: \$750 per van
- Coach Apparel: \$125 each
- **Estimated Total:** **\$25,000**
- **Suggested Fundraising:** **\$1,200–\$1,500 per athlete**

\*These are estimates based off 2025 and are dependent on travel location and roster #'s

# Leadership Contact Information

For all official communication, please contact:

- **Executive Director:** Lauri Harris [lharris@usacheer.org](mailto:lharris@usacheer.org)
- **Executive Assistant:** Kristine Paulson [KPaulson@usacheer.org](mailto:KPaulson@usacheer.org)
- **All Girl Teams Director:** Tony Nash [TNash@usacheer.org](mailto:TNash@usacheer.org)
- **Coed Teams Director:** LeRoy McCullough [LMcCullough@usacheer.org](mailto:LMcCullough@usacheer.org)
- **Dance Teams Director:** Stacy Shelton [Dance@usacheer.org](mailto:Dance@usacheer.org)
- **Adaptive/Special Olympics Director:** Lee Trudell [ltrudell@usacheer.org](mailto:ltrudell@usacheer.org)
- **Media & Communications:** [media@usacheer.org](mailto:media@usacheer.org)

## Signature Page

### Athlete Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the **USA Cheer National Teams Handbook – 2026 Season**, including all Codes of Conduct, Athlete Protection, MAAPP, and Social Media Guidelines.

I agree to abide by all USA Cheer policies and understand that violations may result in disciplinary action.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent/Guardian (if under 18):

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Coach Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the **USA Cheer National Teams Handbook – 2026 Season** and agree to abide by all stated rules, standards, and expectations.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_