PYA Cheer Safety Action Plan

Effective Date: August 15th, 2025
Prepared by: Pembroke Youth Association Cheer Program

Purpose

The safety and well-being of all cheer athletes is our top priority. This plan establishes mandatory safety measures, training requirements, injury prevention strategies, and reporting procedures to minimize the risk of injury, particularly in high-risk activities such as stunting and tumbling.

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1. Mandatory Training

1.1 NFHS Spirit Safety Certification

- All PYA cheer coaches will complete the *NFHS Spirit Safety Certification* annually.
- This training is recognized nationally and aligns with the safety standards of the majority of competitions our program attends.
- Completion certificates will be kept on file with the PYA Cheer Commissioner.

1.2 CDC "HEADS UP" Concussion & Injury Response Training

- All coaches, commissioners, and volunteers assisting with cheer practices or events will complete CDC's *HEADS UP* training.
- Covers symptom recognition, emergency response, and return-to-play protocols for head, neck, and spinal injuries.
- Certificates will be kept on file.

1.3 First Aid/CPR Certification

- All head coaches will maintain current First Aid and CPR certification.

2. Written Cheer Safety Protocols

- PYA will develop and distribute written safety protocols covering:
    - Approved stunt progressions and spotting requirements.
    - Athlete readiness standards before attempting new skills.
    - Warm-up and conditioning expectations.
    - Emergency response steps and chain of command.
- **Acknowledgment Form**: Athletes and their legal guardians must sign and return the acknowledgment form before participating in stunting or tumbling.

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3. Enforcement of Stunt Safety

- Coaches will strictly monitor proper stunt technique, spotting, and attentiveness.
- Any athlete not meeting safety expectations—due to distraction, horseplay, or incorrect execution—will be immediately removed from stunting activities.
- Re-entry will only occur after demonstrating readiness and compliance during a supervised review.

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4. Injury Reporting & Parent Notification

For **any potential head, neck, or spinal injury**:

1. **Stop Activity Immediately** – Remove the athlete from activity and assess.
2. **Emergency Response** – Call emergency services if necessary.
3. **Parent/Guardian Contact** – Notify the parent or guardian immediately, regardless of perceived severity.
4. **Written Report** – Document the incident including date, time, location, supervising coach, description, and actions taken.

5. **Follow-Up** – Athlete may not return to stunting until cleared by a licensed healthcare provider if injury risk was present.

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5. Concussion Helmet Initiative

- To further reduce the risk of head injury during stunting, PYA will purchase specialized **concussion prevention helmets** for use during practices.
- Funding for these helmets will come from proceeds raised at the **Purse Bingo** event and/or through funds obtained from the grant application recently submitted by PYA.
- Helmets will be available for all stunt group flyers and any athlete recovering from a head injury before medical clearance for full return.

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6. Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

- Each practice and event location will have an Emergency Action Plan including:
    - Emergency contact numbers.
    - Location of the nearest hospital or urgent care facility.
    - Roles for calling 911, meeting emergency responders, and contacting parents.
- All coaches, commissioners, and volunteers will review the EAP before the first practice of the season.

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7. Equipment Safety Checks

- Pre-season and mid-season inspections will be conducted for:
    - Mats (no tears, proper thickness, no slipping).
    - Practice spaces (free of debris and hazards).
    - Cheer shoes (bases/spotters must have secure soles).
- Any unsafe equipment will be repaired or replaced before use.

8. Athlete Conditioning & Readiness

- Coaches will incorporate strength, flexibility, and conditioning exercises to support safe skill progression.
- Flyers must demonstrate core stability and control before attempting new stunt levels.

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9. Parent Education

- Before the season starts, parents will receive written guide covering:
    - Signs and symptoms of concussion.
    - Safe stunt spotting principles.
    - Program safety rules and expectations.
- Parents will be encouraged to communicate any injury concerns promptly to coaches.

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10. Annual Safety Review

- The Cheer Commissioner and Board will review this plan annually to ensure compliance with **NFHS, AACCA, and CDC guidelines**.
- Updates will be made as needed to reflect the most current safety standards.

By implementing this plan, PYA reaffirms its commitment to providing a safe, disciplined, and supportive cheer environment where athletes can thrive while minimizing risk.

Concussion Symptoms and Safe Stunting Principles

Concussion Symptoms

A concussion is a brain injury that can occur after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head—or from a fall that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull.
Symptoms may appear immediately or hours later.

Signs Observed by Others

- Appears dazed, stunned, or confused
- Forgets instructions or position
- Moves clumsily or loses balance
- Answers questions slowly
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or pressure in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, or “foggy”
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things

If any of these symptoms are present:

- Remove the athlete from activity immediately.
- Seek medical evaluation before returning to practice or competition.

Safe Stunting Principles

1. Proper Progressions

- Athletes must demonstrate mastery of basic skills before attempting more advanced stunts.
- No skipping levels — progressions build strength, technique, and confidence.

2. Athlete Requirement

- Every stunt must have the correct number of trained athletes in position before starting.
- Spotters must stay fully engaged and ready to catch at all times.

3. Athlete Readiness

- Flyers must have strong core control, body awareness, and flexibility before attempting elevated stunts.
- Bases must have stable footing, proper grip, and enough strength to hold the flyer safely.

4. Clear Communication

- Use clear, agreed-upon counts and commands for lifts, transitions, and dismounts.
- Everyone in the stunt group should know exactly what skill is being performed before beginning.

5. Safety Over Skills

- Never attempt a stunt if fatigued, or distracted.
- It's always okay to "bring it down" if something doesn't feel right — safety comes first.

Pembroke Youth Association Cheer Safety Protocol Acknowledgment Form

Athlete Name: _____
Team/Level: _____
Season: _____

Acknowledgment of Safety Protocols

As a participant in the Pembroke Youth Association (PYA) Cheer Program, I understand that cheerleading involves physical activity that carries inherent risks, including the risk of injury during stunting, tumbling, and other cheer skills.

PYA has implemented the **Cheer Safety Action Plan** to protect all athletes, which includes:

1. **Mandatory Coach & Volunteer Training**
    - All coaches, commissioners, and volunteers complete the *NFHS Spirit Safety Certification* and *CDC HEADS UP* concussion training before the start of the season.
2. **Written Safety Guidelines**
    - Clear rules for stunting, tumbling, conditioning, and emergency response procedures.
3. **Enforcement of Proper Technique**
    - Athletes must follow safety instructions at all times.
    - Athletes not following safety expectations will be removed from stunting until they can demonstrate readiness to return.
4. **Injury Response & Reporting**
    - Any potential head, neck, or spinal injury will result in immediate removal from activity, parent/guardian notification, and documentation.
    - Return to stunting requires clearance from a licensed healthcare provider if injury risk was present.

5. **Concussion Helmet Use**
    - PYA will provide concussion prevention helmets, funded by Purse Bingo proceeds and/or grant funds, for use during practices by stunt group flyers and any athlete returning from a head injury until full clearance.

Athlete Agreement

I understand and agree to follow all PYA cheer safety rules and protocols. I will give my full attention during practices, follow coach instructions, and maintain safe technique at all times. I understand that failure to follow these rules may result in removal from stunting activities.

Athlete Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian Agreement

I have read and understand the PYA Cheer Safety Action Plan and agree to support its implementation. I will encourage my athlete to follow all safety protocols and understand that these rules are in place to reduce the risk of injury.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For Office Use Only
☐ Safety Plan Provided to Family
☐ Signed Acknowledgment Received
☐ Athlete Cleared for Participation in Stunting/Tumbling