The Swedish Cheerleading Federation's Coaches Code of Conduct

"A safe environment is created through conscious work with coaching and leadership culture, as well as relationships with guardians and other adults around children and youth activities. It is important to remember that many coaches, leaders, and judges themselves are not yet adults and therefore need both extra guidance and protection from vulnerability.

All adults - regardless of their role in sports - are responsible for children and young people in their vicinity and the activities they are part of or responsible for. Therefore, every adult is expected to act when a child or young person signals that something is not right. In order to act when a child or young person is not feeling well or when something has happened, work with routines and follow-up is crucial. Children and young people, as well as adults, need to know who to turn to, and those who have experienced something should receive support and help. Criticism and reports of misconduct within children and youth activities should always be met with respect and taken seriously."

- **The Swedish Sports Confederation's Guidelines for Children and Youth Sports**[1]

[1] https://www.rf.se/download/18.407871d3183abb2a6133d5/1665042792026/Riktlinjer%20barn-%20och%20ungdomsidrott.pdf

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The purpose of the Code of Conduct

The vision of the Swedish Cheerleading Federation is to ensure that everyone who wishes to engage in cheerleading can do so at their desired level. Cheerleading is a sport distinguished by its emphasis on encouragement, creativity, and teamwork. It inspires athletes to push beyond their perceived limits and fosters an environment of innovation and curiosity. In cheerleading, collaboration and community are paramount, leveraging the sport's inherent inclusivity to create a space where everyone belongs.

For cheerleading to truly be a place for everyone, it requires that all participants in our sport take responsibility and work together to create an inclusive and encouraging environment. Many of the issues present in broader society also appear within sports. Therefore, we have established a common code of conduct that outlines both the expected behaviors within our sport and the actions that are unacceptable in cheerleading. The purpose of this code of conduct is to provide clear guidelines on behavior and to outline how deviations from these standards can be addressed to ensure a safe environment for everyone involved in cheerleading.

The code of conduct should be seen as guidance primarily for coaches but can also be used by other elected officials/and or positions of trust as well as anyone participating in or connected to any form of cheerleading activity.

Cheerleading activities include:

- Practice
- Competition
- Showcase
- Education
- Camps
- Team activities
- Meetings
- Games

Travel to and from these, including overnight stays.

The above applies regardless of whether it is conducted physically or digitally.

By adhering to this code, we can ensure that cheerleading remains a positive, supportive, and inclusive sport for everyone involved.

Structure of the Code of Conduct

We have chosen to arrange the points in alphabetical order (in Swedish) and not in order of priority. Under certain points, there is additional background information to collectively create a consensus within Swedish cheerleading. Some sections include recommendations on consequences for actions that violate the code of conduct. For points that lack a description, the general guidelines for violations and consequences described below apply.

Trust Assignments

Coaches within cheerleading hold positions of trust. This means that the club's board has entrusted individual coaches with significant responsibilities. Regardless of who appoints the coaches, the board holds ultimate responsibility. Holding a position of trust within our sport is not a right; it is a privilege that requires responsibility and respect. The Code of Conduct aims to help us all uphold that trust.

In cases where trust in a coach is lacking, the assignment should be revoked or paused pending assessment by the board. The Swedish Cheerleading Federation and our member clubs have a responsibility to clearly communicate this when assigning responsibilities of trust to an individual.

Please note that the above applies to coaches and other positions of trust within cheerleading, not to individual members of the club. All individuals who wish to support a club have the right to become and remain members. Membership can only be declined, and a member can only be excluded based on the provisions in the respective club's statutes

Violations and Consequences

Coaches within cheerleading have a responsibility to report violations of this Code of Conduct either to a designated person in the club or directly to the board if no such person is designated. The club's board is always ultimately responsible. As a coach, your responsibility is not to investigate what happened nor to report it to the police or legal committee. Your responsibility is to ensure that the appropriate person receives the information, and that person will then handle the matter.

When violations against the Code of Conduct occur, an assessment of trust should be conducted by the organization that granted the trust. The Swedish Cheerleading Federation and member clubs have a responsibility to act upon violations. Consequences should be tailored and reviewed based on the nature of the violations. Events that negatively impact someone can occur unintentionally; nevertheless, each event should prompt a response and, in some cases, a consequence.

A response could be, for example, having a conversation with the person who committed the action to raise awareness of what happened. A consequence could be temporarily suspending the person to investigate the incident, with the club later

developing a plan for the person to regain trust. Both the Swedish Cheerleading Federation and member clubs have the right to terminate a person's trust assignment, such as a coach, if trust no longer exists.

All events where there is suspicion of a crime should be reported to the police, and the individuals suspected should be temporarily suspended from the activity. Then, an assessment by the club regarding trust should be made; in some cases, the club may need to await the police investigation. It is important that events reported to the police are also reported to the Swedish Cheerleading Federation Legal Board. This is because the legal committee can impose a suspension from all sports, which the police cannot do. Therefore, a person may be convicted by the police but remain within sports if not also convicted within the sports disciplinary body.

There are exceptions to the above. For example, reports should not be made to the legal committee for events not related to cheerleading activities, such as crimes in society that may affect your activities. In such cases, a report to the police is sufficient. As mentioned earlier, the responsibility does not lie with individual coaches to make the report; the coach's responsibility is to inform the board or the appropriate person in the club. Events that are or could be violations against the Swedish Sport Confederation's statutes chapter 14 should also be reported to the legal board.

Extract from the criminal records register

As a routine measure, the Swedish Cheerleading Federation and member clubs request a limited extract from the criminal records register[2] for everyone who comes into contact with children and young people in cheerleading activities. This means that, as a coach, you have the responsibility to present your extract to your club. The checking of the register extract should always be done for new appointments. After that, register extracts are checked according to the club's decided policy, such as every year or every other year.

Clubs decide for themselves how to handle a person who has been convicted. Our recommendation is that these individuals are not considered suitable to be entrusted with a position of trust. The extract from the criminal records register must be ordered by the individual themselves from the police and then presented to the responsible person in their club. The club may not retain the extract; it should only be presented for review.

[2] Extract for work with children in settings other than schools and childcare shows if a person has been convicted of serious crimes: murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, kidnapping, all sexual offenses, child pornography offenses, or aggravated robbery.

Need support?

If you have questions, feedback, or need support, you can reach out to your club or the federation. The Swedish Cheerleading Federation and its member clubs should have a specific contact route for directing your inquiries. You can find who can support you at the federation here.

If you do not want to or are unable to contact your club or the federation, you can turn to the Swedish Sports Confederation's sports ombudsman or use the Swedish Sports Confederation's whistleblowing service.

You can also receive support through BRIS – Children's Rights in Society. BRIS has a support line for sports coaches at 077-44 000 42 and one for children at 116 111.

Code of Conducts

Alcohol

The Swedish Cheerleading Federation maintains a zero-tolerance policy regarding alcohol. Alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited during all cheerleading activities. This policy applies to all coaches, participants, officials, volunteers and anyone representing the SCF, regardless of age. Cheerleading is a sport committed to being alcohol-free.

Discrimination

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable. Nevertheless, we are aware that it occurs, especially in society at large. For cheerleading to be a safe and inclusive environment, we must be attentive to those who express that they have been discriminated against.

In this code of conduct, discrimination refers to all forms of unfair treatment, harassment, or differential treatment, whether direct or indirect, based on the following.

The list is not exhaustive:

- Gender
- Gender identity or expression
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age

Drugs and Doping

The Swedish Cheerleading Federation enforces a zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs and doping. Any awareness of narcotics in cheerleading activities should be reported to the police and/or a report of concern should be made to social services.

Doping in sports is prohibited in accordance with the Sports Anti-Doping Regulations (IDR), which aim to safeguard athletes' fundamental right to participate in drug-free sports and thereby promote good health and fairness for athletes. Those found guilty of doping can be punished according to these regulations.

Everyone participating in activities in a sports club or federation is subject to the Swedish Sports Confederation's statutes and anti-doping regulations. Each individual athlete and coach is responsible for being aware of and following these doping rules.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be understood as patterns of non-physical behaviors within a relationship that cause psychological and emotional distress. It is the experience that matters, not the intention; therefore, abuse is defined and determined based on the experiences of the victim, not the perpetrator.

Emotional abuse can occur through:

- Verbal behaviors, such as yelling, ridiculing, using sarcasm, or making demeaning jokes
- Non-verbal behaviors, such as looks, sighs, or other gestures
- Exclusion and ignoring
- Collective and individual punishment
- Favoritism, such as coaches having favorites who are treated better or receive advantages over the rest of the team

Emotional abuse is common in sports due to the strong emphasis on performance and results. Within cheerleading, a prevalent form of abuse is favoritism. The risk of experiencing abuse is higher in elite-oriented performance environments, where individuals are often compared and valued based on their performances. When such evaluations affect how participants are treated, there is a particularly high risk of emotional abuse occurring.

As a coach, you should work preventatively to protect participants from emotional abuse. This can be achieved by increasing awareness and understanding of the significance of these abuses and reducing the focus on performance. Criticizing children and young people for their performance in sports has no value. Instead, the

focus should be on creating a safe and supportive environment where all participants receive equal support, encouragement, and care, regardless of their performance.

It is also important to continuously reflect on values, actions, and choices, and to be receptive to criticism. Through increased knowledge and consciously examining oneself and one's surroundings, there are good opportunities to both counteract emotional abuse and take action if something occurs.

Coaches have a particular responsibility to act and report incidents of emotional abuse to the board or the designated person in the club.

Physical Violence

All forms of physical violence are unacceptable. Physical violence can include pushing, restraining, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, scratching, choking, pulling hair, spitting on, hitting, kicking, throwing objects at, or striking with a weapon. In sports, a form of physical violence is using one's strength to force participants into splits or other uncomfortable positions. This is not permitted in cheerleading.

Coaches have a particular responsibility to act and report incidents of physical violence to the board or the designated person in the club.

Physical Contact During Training

In our sport, training involves close physical contact between participants. This contact can also occur between participants and coaches, especially when performing stunts and tumbling. As a coach, it is crucial to be attentive to verbal and non-verbal cues indicating discomfort.

The recommendation is to always seek consent before any physical interaction, such as spotting during tumbling. Coaches should never assume consent without explicitly asking for it. Clearly explain how physical contact is expected to occur and provide participants with the opportunity to decline if they feel uncomfortable.

Additionally, coaches should foster an environment where negative comments about others' bodies are not tolerated. It is essential to have open dialogues with the team about respectful behavior and to act immediately if any negative comments or expressions of discomfort arise.

Individual Contact and Social Media Guidelines

It is recommended that adult coaches be present during activities involving children and youth. Regardless of age, coaches need to consider their own behavior and how they engage in individual contact with participants, especially minors. The recommendation is to always have two coaches present during individual contact with minors.

Coaches and other officials should avoid individual contact with participants under 18 years of age on private social media platforms. For participants over 18, coaches should approach social media interactions with caution and good judgment. Whenever possible, group chats, group emails, or official communication channels should be used to avoid individual contact, ensuring transparency for the safety of both coaches and participants.

Developmental discussions and similar interactions with minor participants that require individual communication should involve at least two coaches or a guardian. For participants over 18, individual communication can occur without other adults present. However, caution should still be exercised in the forms of communication used, even for those over 18.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are entirely unacceptable in cheerleading activities. As significant societal issues, they unfortunately also occur in sports environments. Coaches have a crucial responsibility to prevent and address bullying and harassing behaviors within cheerleading.

Examples of harassing behaviors include:

- Speaking poorly about or calling others derogatory names
- Criticizing someone's performance in an insulting manner
- Making derogatory comments about someone's body or appearance
- Teasing, making faces, laughing at, or whispering about someone
- Excluding or ignoring someone
- Hitting or fighting with someone
- Taking, hiding, or damaging belongings
- Joking at someone else's expense or ridiculing someone
- Using sarcasm or irony to belittle someone verbally

These behaviors are unacceptable regardless of whether they occur in person or digitally.

Report of Concern

If you suspect that a child or young person is being harmed, it is crucial to report the concern to social services. Coaches in cheerleading are responsible for reporting any such concerns to either the designated person within the club or the club's board. The board holds ultimate responsibility for addressing these matters. While it is possible to make a report anonymously, it is generally best if the club or designated person serves as the primary contact.

In most cases, it is recommended to inform the guardians beforehand that a report will be made, unless the concern involves the guardians themselves.

If you are uncertain about the appropriate course of action, you can contact BRIS, which provides support for sports coaches, at 077-44 000 42. Alternatively, you can reach out to social services in the relevant municipality for guidance.

Mental Health

As a coach, it is essential to foster a training environment that feels safe for both the team and individual participants. Cheerleading should exemplify positive and empathetic leadership. Coaches are responsible for maintaining appropriate conduct during practices and other club activities.

The expectations in cheerleading should always

Expectations in cheerleading must always be adapted to the athlete's age, maturity, experience and level of ambition.

Coaches are responsible for creating an environment where expectations and demands contribute to development and motivation. Expectations that are disproportionate or not adapted to an individual's abilities and circumstances may negatively affect the athlete's self-esteem, motivation and well-being.

Just as we would treat a sprained ankle with immediate care but seek professional help for a more severe injury, there are limits to our competence and responsibility when it comes to mental health. Coaches are not expected to manage mental health issues. Instead, their role is to recognize when someone needs help and to refer these concerns to individuals with the appropriate expertise.

Therefore, if a participant is struggling with mental health issues, the coach's responsibility is to inform the guardians and/or the board or designated person within the club.

Recruitment

Recruitment in our clubs aims to expand participation and is a positive effort to achieve our vision: that everyone who wishes to engage in cheerleading can do so. This includes recruiting both participants and coaches. To ensure good conduct during

recruitment, coaches must stay informed about transition rules and competition regulations for competing teams.

Positive recruitment efforts include:

- Advertising open practice sessions through the club's social media channels.
- Publicly sharing information about the club's values, goals, and vision.

However, certain recruitment practices are unacceptable. Targeted recruitment, which involves approaching participants from other clubs to promote one's own club or solicit new members, is not considered appropriate. All contact with participants should adhere to the guidelines outlined in the section on contact channels. Coaches should not use private social media accounts for recruitment or other purposes.

It is also inappropriate for coaches to encourage participants to persuade others to switch clubs or to engage in third-party recruitment, where participants are pressured to provide information or convince others to join.

Recruitment of licensed athletes and new athletes involves different processes. In both cases, it is the responsibility of the receiving club to inform the participant—and, if applicable, their guardian—about transition rules and licensing requirements.

As coaches, we should avoid pressuring participants to change clubs. All recruitment efforts should be conducted transparently and respectfully.

Relationships

In cheerleading, relationships where one person is in a position of dependence relative to another are common and require special consideration, particularly when one party holds a position of power. Individuals may find themselves in positions of power in one relationship while being dependent in another. The fundamental principle is that those in positions of power must be conscious of their role and responsibility to avoid any abuse of their authority.

The relationship between a participant and a coach is crucial for both performance and well-being. Coaches must acknowledge their responsibility and the impact of their behavior on participants. It is essential for coaches, especially when working with children and youth, to address fundamental human needs such as safety and support. Leadership should be grounded in modesty, recognizing and valuing the individual beyond their athletic performance. This includes promoting a healthy balance between activities, leisure, and cheerleading.

Personal relationships (such as close friendships, romantic relationships, or familial bonds) between coaches and participants create complex dynamics. Such relationships can lead to difficult situations regarding team selections and positions and may

inadvertently pressure participants into relationships with those in leadership roles. The role of a coach carries a responsibility to maintain clear boundaries between personal and sporting relationships. Interactions, decisions, and feedback must always be based on an individual's role within the organisation and must not be influenced by personal relationships or attachments. Romantic or sexual relationships between coaches and minors are strictly unacceptable and may be illegal. Any such violations should result in consequences for the coach, irrespective of who initiated the contact.

For relationships between adult participants and coaches, while not illegal, they are inappropriate and can undermine trust, particularly regarding team selections and other critical decisions. Coaches who attempt to keep such relationships secret should face a reevaluation of their trustworthiness and position.

Sexual Harassment, Harassment, and Abuse

All forms of sexual harassment, harassment, and abuse are strictly prohibited. Such behaviors can manifest in various ways, including physical, verbal, or non-verbal communication, such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions.

Examples include:

- Unwanted physical contact, such as unnecessary touching
- Unwelcome proposals or advances
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images and texts
- Whistling, making inappropriate jokes, or using offensive glances and gestures
- Any behavior or comments that denigrate or ridicule an individual based on gender or sexual orientation

The key characteristic of harassment is that it is unwelcome and unwanted by the recipient. It is the victim's experience that is paramount, not the intention of the perpetrator. Every individual has the right to control their own body and boundaries. If someone expresses discomfort or indicates that a behavior is unacceptable, it must be taken seriously and never ignored.

In cheerleading, any form of sexual invitations or insinuations, whether verbal, written, or through body language, is unacceptable. This includes sending or requesting sexually explicit images.

Coaches have a particular responsibility to address and report incidents of sexual harassment, harassment, and abuse to the board or designated person within the organization.

It is crucial that victims are not required to pursue the matter themselves. Communicating discomfort or distress to a coach should be sufficient. Coaches should not investigate the incident themselves but are responsible for relaying this information to the appropriate authority within the organization or the board.

Social Media

Social media plays a significant role in our sport and continues to grow as a channel of communication. It provides new opportunities to connect and share cheerleading-related content with both our community and the broader public. However, it is essential to approach social media use with caution to ensure it aligns with our values and maintains a positive environment.

We must remain vigilant that harassment and inappropriate behaviors can occur both physically and digitally. Behaviors deemed unacceptable in physical settings are equally unacceptable online. Despite this, social media also has the potential to foster joy and community, enhancing our cheerleading experience both virtually and physically.

While sharing pictures and videos can be enjoyable, always exercise caution and seek consent before posting content that includes individuals. As a coach, it is your responsibility to ensure that participants have given their approval for any content you may share. Additionally, be mindful and respectful of the sensitivity involved in displaying individuals' bodies in various positions in photos and videos.

Stretching and Digital Communication

Coaches must not require or expect athletes to send individual photos or videos, for example of themselves stretching, as this may lead to inappropriate exposure and create an environment in which athletes feel unsafe. Training follow-ups must take place within the regular training environment.

The athlete's privacy and personal boundaries must always be respected during stretching. Stretching should primarily be performed individually, and partner stretching within the team should be avoided, particularly in vulnerable positions. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that stretching takes place in a safe and respectful manner and that all athletes feel comfortable.

Tobacco and Nicotine

We are committed to fostering an environment and culture free from tobacco and nicotine, including vapes and e-cigarettes. It is essential for our adult coaches, athletes, and staff to abstain from using these substances during cheerleading activities, particularly when minors are present. Additionally, underage athletes, coaches, and leaders are expected to refrain from tobacco and nicotine use during and in connection with all cheerleading activities.

Review of the Code of Conduct

The Swedish Cheerleading Federation is committed to periodically reviewing and updating the Code of Conduct to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. This review process takes place at least every two years. The most recent version of the Code of Conduct will always be available on the Federation's website.

To Member Clubs

We encourage all member clubs to clearly communicate the Code of Conduct within their clubs. The Swedish Cheerleading Federation's Code of Conduct can be adopted in its entirety or customized with specific additions relevant to each club. Templates for customization are available on our website.

To ensure that the Code of Conduct is effectively implemented across all cheerleading activities, a collective effort is essential. We welcome and appreciate any feedback or suggestions for revisions and additions from our member clubs to ensure the Code remains comprehensive and effective.