Region and State Final Cheerleading Bulletin
2026-2027

2026 Fall Cheerleading Timeline

August 1st: deadline to submit Invitational requests	**November 7th:** Region Final Harford Community College East Region: 12:00pm West Region: 5:00pm
August 12th: first practice date	
September 4th: first play date and deadline to submit competitive intention	
November 2nd: last date to submit County scores	**November 14th:** State Final Harford Community College 3A/4A Final: 12:00pm 1A/2A Final: 5:00pm
The last day of the competitive season is the State Final Cheerleading event. The last day of the spirit season is the last MPSSAA event for your school.	

2026-2027 Winter Cheerleading Timeline
Dates subject to change based on venue availability

November 1st: deadline to submit Invitational requests	**February 8th:** West Region Final Harford Community College **February 9th:** East Region Final Harford Community College
November 14th: first practice date	
December 5th: first play date and deadline to submit competitive intention	
February 5th: last day to submit County scores	**February 16th:** State Final Harford Community College **February 15th, 16th, 26th:** Snow Dates
The last day of the competitive season is March 1st. The last day of the spirit season is the last MPSSAA event for your school.	

* Rotation Schedule
  ~ Regions will take place as a double-header with the following stipulations:
    - The West will go first in the odd years, and the East will go first in the even years.
    - At the Fall State Championship, the 3A/4A classifications will go first in the even years and the 1A/2A in will go first in the odd years.

This publication contains information pertaining to state tournament competition for the 2026-2027 season. It is divided into two sections. The first section contains general information. The second section contains rules for cheerleading.

Section 1: General Information

I. State Tournament Policies

a. The Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee, representing the counties that recognize cheerleading as a sport, shall administer and supervise the tournament at the region and state level.

b. All participating schools shall abide by the rules established by the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading Committee.
c. Although certain aspects of the tournament may vary from year to year, the tournament committee shall observe the following basic policies:
    i. A tournament may not interfere with local school policy.
    ii. A school or school system has the privilege and right to decide whether it will participate in a tournament prior to the start of the tournament which is the County Competition. Must communicate to the County Representative by the first play date of the season.
    iii. A school shall compete in its classification when a tournament is so structured.
    iv. A school shall compete in its given county competition. New participating teams should join the closest county competition.
        1. Anne Arundel / Queen Anne's / Worcester
        2. Baltimore
        3. Carroll
        4. Cecil / Harford
        5. Charles
        6. Frederick / Garrett / Washington
        7. Howard
        8. Montgomery
    v. Certified and approved officials' organizations shall be assigned competitions in a fair, equitable, and nondiscriminatory manner.
    vi. All awards and recognition shall conform to MPSSAA Bylaw .08.
    vii. The tournament committee shall make every effort to establish competition sites that minimize extensive travel for participating teams. New participating teams should join the closest county competition as stated in Section 1.I.c.iv.
    viii. All policy and procedure changes for a state tournament shall be subject to the approval of the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee serving in an advisory capacity. The State Cheerleading Director may make emergency decisions on tournament policies and procedures.
    ix. When a student athlete is found ineligible during the progress of a tournament, the competition shall be forfeited, and the team with the next highest score shall take its place.
    x. All-star teams of best individual athlete awards **may not** be selected from an approved tournament.
    xi. Sports at the state tournament level shall be governed by approved competition rules.
    xii. If a team or any student participating in state tournament play leaves the performance floor or venue before the completion of a contest, or is guilty of misconduct detrimental to the tournament (such as but not limited to a team qualifying for the Region and/or State Final and then not attending), then the team, coach, and the student athlete(s) may be suspended from further participation in the current tournament and from the same tournament in the succeeding year, upon the determination of the tournament committee and the director.

xiii. The rules of the association do not provide authority to order competitions replayed or open to video review. Protests arising from decisions and interpretations by officials during competition will not be considered. Their decisions and interpretations are final. Feedback from regular season may be provided to coaches by the county representative for educational / growth purposes only.

xiv. Member schools proven to have violated MPSSAA/CC by-laws will be excluded from participating in post-season MPSSCC championship competitions (i.e. Region and State Final)

1. The local County Supervisor will determine if an act is in violation of the MPSSAA/CC by-laws. The team/act will then be referred to the Appeals Committee, which will review the infraction and make a decision about eligibility.
2. A member school, student, or coach may appeal the imposed penalty within 30 days and request a hearing before the Appeals Committee of MPSSCC.
3. The Appeals Committee of MPSSCC serves in a quasi-judicial capacity.
4. The membership of the MPSSCC Appeals Committee shall include one representative from each county or LEA, which participates in the MPSSCC tournament series. Five members will constitute a quorum.
5. The MPSSCC Chairperson shall notify the Appeals Committee of the hearing and establish a date, time and hearing site. The appealing school, student, or coach, or all of the above, shall be notified of the date, site and time of the hearing.
6. The MPSSCC Chairperson shall present the case to the Appeals Committee behalf of the MPSSCC.
7. The principal of the involved school, the student, or coach, or all of the above shall present grounds for appeal. If appropriate, the local school system's supervisor of interscholastic athletics involved in the appeal may present the case.
8. The MPSSCC Appeals Committee shall convene in closed session and vote to deny or uphold the appeal or modify the penalty. A majority vote is required to deny or uphold an appeal or modify the penalty.
9. The MPSSCC Appeals Committee shall report its findings to the concerned parties.
10. The decision of the MPSSCC Appeals Committee is final.
11. A member of the MPSSCC Appeals Committee may not hear an appeal if that member has offered advice, made a recommendation, rendered a decision, or in any other way participated in the case being appealed.

II. Responsibilities of Schools Participating in a Tournament

a. Postponed competitions shall be rescheduled on the next available (nonscheduled) playing date. A school may not request a postponement of their participation in

any tournament competition because of illness, injury, or unavailability of some of its student athletes.

b. All schools entering a tournament must agree to arrangements made by its tournament committee. This includes the time and place of each competition and the selection of officials. All competitions will be held under the rules of the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee. In cases not covered by written regulations, the tournament committee in charge is empowered to make decisions.
c. Competitions will be held on the basis of shared responsibilities. Personnel from the visiting schools must accept their joint responsibilities with the persons in charge for the supervision and maintenance of good behavior on the part of the students, spectators, and participants. Good sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, and the protection of property are of primary importance before, during, and following each competition. It is recommended that faculty representatives of the competing teams anticipate and study problems that could arise from such contests and plan cooperatively to deal with these problems.
d. Schools hosting tournament competitions are responsible for providing a qualified site manager other than the participating coach.
e. The possession or use of any alcoholic beverage or nonalcoholic substitute (i.e. nonalcoholic champagne) is considered to be misconduct detrimental to a tournament. An individual or team using such products in any form of consumption or celebration will be subject to disciplinary action.
f. Coaches are responsible for providing their own medical kits including pre-wrap and tape for all their athletes.

III. Point of Emphasis / Social Media

a. Point of emphasis for coaches. Coaches are reminded that they set the tone for their team and are the foremost influential figures representing their school. Coaching attire and actions should reflect a professional approach that signifies a respect for the competition, respect for the school, and respect for themselves.
b. Social Media (such as Twitter, Snapchat, Vine, Facebook, Instagram, etc) should be used to promote teams and uplift athletes, not as a bullying or complaining platform. Coaches should stress to their athletes that bullying or unsportsmanlike conduct displayed over social media will not be tolerated. At this time, infractions will be investigated and dealt with at the county/school level. Coaches are encouraged to read the NFHS Code of Ethics in the NFHS Spirit Handbook.

IV. Scheduling Conflicts

Following are some guidelines to be used when scheduling conflicts arise:

a. Multi-team events will be contested as scheduled.
b. Only conflicts with school sponsored activities will be considered for modification to the schedule. Dinner reservations, hair appointments, limo pickups, photo sessions, after-prom fatigue, etc., are optional activities and are not considered official school activities.

V. MPSSAA Passes

a. MPSSAA passes will be accepted for admittance.
    i. Passes must be ~~signed and~~ from the current academic year.

ii. Each pass should have the bearer's name ~~printed~~ on the pass ~~prior to distribution.~~
iii. A valid driver's license is required to be displayed with each pass.

b. Passes will be accepted for the bearer only. All other individuals aged seven or older will be changed admission.

VI. Medical Personnel

The Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee has budgeted for qualified medical personnel to be employed at each region and state competition. Host schools should employ those medical personnel from local sources, and they will be paid at the local rate. Coaches are still required to bring their own medical kits including pre-wrap and tape for their athletes as outlined in section II.f. above.

VII. Security

The qualified host site manager will employ adequate police protection to supervise parking lots and assist with crowd control.

VIII. General Information

a. Plans for the competition were formulated and approved by the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading Committee, in accordance with the MPSSAA regulations.

b. Schools choosing to enter competitions sponsored by MPSSCC have the responsibility for reading and adhering to the rules and regulations stated in Section 1 of this publication as well as those appearing within this cheerleading bulletin.

c. Out of Season participation is defined in MPSSAA Bylaw .04E(2) as follows:
   i. A coach may not coach a team representing the coach's school beyond the sports season as defined in MPSSAA Regulation .03.
   ii. Local school systems may sponsor a camp that meets the criteria as outlined in the MPSSAA handbook and by their respective County handbook.
   iii. Any paid or volunteer coach at a member school may coach a non-school team provided the team has no direct affiliation with the school. When coaching non-school teams, including returning school players on non-school teams, the following criteria shall be observed:
   iv. The non-school team may not use a name directly connected with the school;
   v. The non-school team may not use school uniforms, equipment or funds;
   vi. The non-school team may not use school facilities except as allowed by local school system guidelines;
   vii. The non-school team must meet local school system standards of a non-school team; and
   viii. The number of returning school players on the non-school team is limited according to the following timeframe.
      1. **Timeframe.** From the start of the fall sports season as defined in Regulation .03, to the last state championship game of the spring season, the outside team's roster does not exceed 80% of the

returning players of what would constitute a starting lineup in that sport OR a modified version thereof. i.e., 7-on-7 football, 3-on3 basketball, indoor soccer, indoor lacrosse, etc.

SPORT	STARTING LINEUP	LIMIT
Cheerleading	25	20

d. Eligibility rules for all participants are defined in MPSSAA Bylaw .02, found in the current MPSSAA Handbook.
e. General regulations for all state tournaments are contained in MPSSAA Bylaw .07, found in both the current handbook and in Section 1 of this publication.
f. Playing rules for regular season, Region, and State Final tournaments:
    i. National Federation rules will be used.
    ii. Fall Season Competitions: The number of competitive events permitted outside of county, Region, and State Final competitions are four educationally sponsored events per season. Up to four invitational competitions, one county, one Region, and one State Final competition is equal to up to seven total competitions per season. All competitions must be sponsored by a non-profit educational organization and must be sanctioned by the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee. Teams may participate in invitationals until the start of the Region Competitions (i.e. even after their County Championship event).
    iii. Winter Season Competitions: The number of competitive events permitted outside of county, Region, and State Final competitions are four events per season. Up to four invitational competitions, one county, one Region, and one State Final competition is equal to up to seven total competitions per season. Invitationals may be non-sanctioned as long as the team has permission from their County to attend. Teams may participate in invitationals until March 1st.
    iv. An invitational competition may NOT conflict with participation in a county championship.
    v. In the fall, the top 50% teams from each region of each of the 4 classifications will advance to the Region Championships. The top 50% teams from each classification (East and West combined) will advance to the State Final Competition.
    vi. In the winter, the top 50% teams from each region of each of the 4 classifications will advance to the Region Championships. The top 50% teams from each classification (East and West combined) will advance to the State Final Competition.
    vii. If a qualifying team does not attend the Region or State Final competition, the next highest scoring team will be given the opportunity to advance.
    viii. MPSSAA guidelines state that competitions shall not determine a national championship; shall not be preliminary to a college or professional game; shall be sponsored by an educational institution/non-profit company; all travel shall comply with MPSSAA Bylaw .09H4; all awards shall comply with MPSSAA Bylaw .08 (Awards and Recognition).
    ix. There can be no paid consultants for choreography. All consultants must follow the respective county policies.

g. Competition Rules and Regulations (not following these rules could result in an unsportsmanlike conduct deduction on the competition scoresheet).
    i. Athletes must stay in full uniform (shoes, shell zippered, arms in sleeves, skirt or full team identical warm-ups) at all times. This includes during warm-ups, the competition, and awards ceremonies.
    ii. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that all electronic devices are put away from the start time of the competition until the conclusion of the awards ceremony.
    iii. All athletes must stay with their team from the start of the competition until the conclusion of the awards ceremony. Visiting friends, parents, etc., is not permitted. The team is encouraged to bring easy clean-up snacks and water with them.
    iv. All teams are expected to adhere to the warm-up time schedule. If you are late to your warm-up time, more time will not be added. The coach is expected to know when his/her team is to be at warm-ups. All teams will be given the same amount of time for warm-up. All teams MUST leave the mat within 30 seconds once time has expired.
    v. Performance of the routine or any part of the routine or routine warm-up is only permitted in designated areas at designated times. You may, however, stretch at any time.
    vi. All teams should be in their designated areas no later than 10 minutes before the competition starts.
    vii. Sportsmanship is expected at all times. Any team exhibiting poor sportsmanship at any time during the competition could have their final score adjusted to reflect an unsportsmanlike deduction.
    viii. All teams are expected to leave their area clean and debris free. Please be respectful of the hosting facility.
    ix. Coaches are expected to adhere to the NFHS Coaches Code of Ethics located in the NFHS Spirit Rulebook.

IX. Region and State Final Tournaments

a. Tournament Organization
    i. The state play-off tournaments will be divided into 4 classifications.
    ii. Each classification will also be divided into 2 regions: East and West.
    iii. A Region Champion will be awarded in each of the eight aforementioned divisions. A State Champion will be awarded for each of the four classifications.
    iv. All MPSSCC participating county reps will submit their county competition score breakdowns to the Region Directors and State Director no more than 24 hours after their county competition has been decided.
    v. In the fall, the top 50% teams from each region will advance to Regions in their respective classifications. This will result in 8 separate Region competitions. (1A East, 1A West, 2A East, 2A West, 3A East, 3A West, 4A East, and 4A West).
    vi. In the winter, the top 50% teams from each region will advance to the Region competition in their respective classifications. This will result in 8 separate Region competitions. (1A East, 1A West, 2A East, 2A West, 3A East, 3A West, 4A East, and 4A West).

vii. In the fall, the top 50% ranking teams from each classification (East and West combined) will move onto the State Final Competition.
viii. In the winter, the top 50% ranking teams from each classification (East and West combined) will move onto the State Final Competition.
ix. Every school that qualifies to advance is automatically placed in their appropriate classification and region for advancement unless the MPSSC state director receives written notification to the contrary. Request for withdrawal shall be by letter, signed by the school athletic director and principal within 72-hours of the event.
x. If a qualifying team does not attend their Region and/or State Final competition, the next highest scoring team will be given the opportunity to advance.

b. The judge coordinator is responsible for the assignment of officials. The State Cheerleading Director and/or Region Directors is/are responsible for the notification of schools as to the tournament bracket, date, and start times.
c. The competition must be held on regulation mats. They are to be 42' X 42' and must be set up according to the guidelines set forth by the committee.
d. There should be a clearly defined spectator area. Spectators may not stand in or around the judging area.
e. Provisions should be made for adequate supervision and crowd control.
f. A judge's table and chairs should be provided and must be secure from fans, spectators, cheerleaders, and coaches.
g. The MPSSCC will provide a professional sound system/announcer for Region and State Final events.
h. In case of inclement weather, teams shall be prepared to participate on the next available date.
i. The Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading Committee will pay officials and required workers from the gate receipts at Region and State Final Competitions.
j. State Committee Members are required to work the Region and State Final events unless they are a current contracted coach whose team is participating in the tournament. If the committee member cannot attend or is coaching, they will provide a worker in their place.
    i. These workers will be paid $100 for each competition they work.
k. Proceeds from the gate at Region and State Final Competitions shall stay with the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee.
l. A fundraising group will be procured to help set-up and break down mats before and after the tournament competitions. They will be paid $250 per event (Region and State Final).
m. Tournament apparel will be on sale and provided by the committee at both Region and State Final events. Proceeds from apparel sales shall stay with the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading Committee.
n. Order of performance will be assigned ahead of time via a random number generator by the Region Directors.
    i. County competition scores will determine a team's seed for the random generator.

ii. If a team advancing to the Region or State Competition has a school related event that would need to be considered for scheduling placement, a request must be submitted to the State Directors 5 days prior to the event.
iii. Teams with the top ½ of scores will be randomly chosen to participate in the final ½ of the tournament; teams with the bottom ½ of scores will be randomly chosen to participate in the first ½ of the tournament.
iv. All tournament scores will be sorted to determine the final tournament standings.
    1. For example: There are 8 advancing teams in the 1A East Region. The county scores will be sorted / seeded by the Region Directors in descending order. The lowest scoring 4 teams will be randomly selected to compete in the 1-4 spots in the 1A East Region competition. The top 4 teams will be randomly selected to compete in the 5-8 spots in the 1A East Region competition.
    2. The same sorting technique will be applied to the State Final tournament.

o. The host school will have a designated warm-up area separate from the competition area.
    i. Individual athletes will be given a 30-45 minute open tumbling warm-up on the main floor before the competition begins. Individuals can warm-up standing and running tumbling at this time until the floor closes.
    ii. Teams will then be given a 6-minute warm-up on a full floor before they compete. MPSSCC will not provide a stereo system for warmups. Each team should bring their own.
p. The number of cheerleaders permitted to participate in their Region and State Final competition is up to twenty-five (25).
q. The number of alternates at the region and state final competitions are limited to 5 more than the number of participants competing on the floor. (Example: 9 athletes on the floor plus 5 alternates means 14 athletes can enter with the team.)
    i. A total of thirty (30) members of the official cheer party (in uniform and listed on the registration form) will be admitted free. Only contracted cheerleading coaches on a list sent by the County Athletic Supervisor will be allowed to enter with the team. Coaches should keep their teams together and make spectators aware of the awards ceremony, which will follow the competition. Spectators, including coaches' children (of any age), non-working committee members, and JV teams, should remain off of the performance surface until the conclusion of the ceremony.
r. Admission to tournaments:
    i. Individuals seven years of age and older will be charged an admission of $8.00 for the Region tournaments.
    ii. Individuals seven years of age and older will be charged an admission of $10.00 for the State Final tournament.
    iii. All Region and State Final tournaments will use an online ticketing system. The ticket purchase link will be sent out prior to the event and spectators will be notified when they will be able to start purchasing tickets. Please note that no screenshots of purchased tickets will be permitted upon entry.
s. Awards:

i. The Region Champions in each division will receive a team plaque. There will be eight (8) Region Champions awarded: 1A East, 1A West, 2A East, 2A West, 3A East, 3A West, 4A East, and 4A West.
ii. The State Final Champion, 2nd place, and 3rd place teams in each classification will each receive a team trophy and ~~25~~ individual awards. There will be four (4) State Champions awarded: 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A.

t. Officials:
i. Maryland Judges Association certified officials will be assigned for each competition. One head judge, three category judges, and up to three safety judges will be used for all tournament competitions.
ii. The judge's assigner will be paid a $500 stipend per season.
iii. All judges listed above will be paid as follows:

Number of Teams	Payment
0-9	$80
10-16	$100
17+	$120
Double panel required - $100 each judge; if not double panel is available, pay for 23+ is $120. Double panel safety judges should receive $120.	
If a judge is performing two judging duties they get $50 more than their assigned amount.	
Pay per division if you are clearing the gym (each division treated like a new competition)	
MPSSCC sponsored events (Region/States/Showcase) - $200	

iv. Reviewing videos by judges is NOT an option and may NOT be used to determine scoring. All judges' scores are final.

u. Method of Tie Breaking for Title – use these methods for 1st place only. If there is a tie for 2nd, the next place awarded will be 4th; if there is a tie for 3rd the next place awarded will be 5th. If there is a tie for the last advancing place, both teams will advance.
i. For example, if there are 8 teams advancing from 1A East Region and there is a tie for 8th, both teams will advance making the total number of teams 9.
1. Add all of the deductions, team with the fewest total deductions earning the higher place.
2. Add all of the degree of difficulty points. Higher points win.
3. Send the decision back to the judges.
4. Coin toss.

v. Stopping the Routine
i. If an injury is suspected, the safety judge, head judge, or competition director can stop the routine.
ii. If the routine is stopped for any other reason, a deduction may be given.
iii. If there are music issues, the team should continue with counts.
1. After the routine, if it is deemed to be an issue on the coach's end, the scores will stand, and the routine will not be redone for a score.
2. After the routine, if it is deemed to be a technical issue, the competition directors will discuss with the head judge whether the lack of music affected their scores. If the team can re-perform, the deductions will stick for the performance before the music issue.

The team could accrue additional deductions after the initial stopping point of the music, during their re-performance.

iv. If the routine needs to be stopped and the team is allowed to re-perform, the team must perform the entire routine full-out – no marking of routine elements – from the very beginning, but it will only be judged from the moment it was stopped. Any deductions accrued during the initial performance before the routine stop time will be taken. Any new deductions during the second performance before the routine stop time will not be taken.