



Family Handbook

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Pittsford Jr. Panthers Youth Cheer Mission Statement

Pittsford Jr. Panthers Youth Cheer (PYC) is committed to providing a safe and fun environment for our local K-7 athletes to cheer. The program's mission is to foster life-skills and build character by teaching athletes the fundamentals of cheerleading and sportsmanship. Our mission is to train young athletes in all aspects of cheerleading which includes: motions, stunting, tumbling, jumps, dance, and school spirit. We strive to achieve our mission through committed volunteers, parents, and athletes. Members must be dedicated to:

- Having consistent attendance
- Striving for continual skill improvement
- Showing focus and attention
- Using active listening
- Sharing a positive attitude towards self and others

Our Philosophy

We believe there is more to youth cheer than teaching skills and routines. By instilling the values of responsibility, commitment, hard work, and integrity, we aim to see our athletes develop into strong, confident leaders. We strive to ensure our athletes feel safe and happy while involved in our program. No experience is required to join our program and there are no tryouts to make a team. All that is required is enthusiasm, spirit, a positive attitude, and regular attendance.

Volunteer Driven

Pittsford Youth Cheer is a volunteer organization with dedicated people working hard to ensure all participants have a fun and fulfilling experience. Many of our volunteers work full-time and have other commitments, but recognize the benefit of helping ensure that PYC continues to support and teach our athletes. Your involvement will help your child gain a sense of community, learn good sportsmanship, and experience the satisfaction of being successful as a team. Since your child is a member of the Pittsford Youth Cheer organization, so is your family. Family involvement is very important and enhances each child's experience. Volunteering is expected and is what makes our organization great.

The following volunteer opportunities are always in need:

- Coaches
- Team Parents
- Website and Social Media Management
- Fundraising
- Apparel and Uniforms
- Special Events
- Team Photographers
- Spirit Leaders

Cheerleader Rights & Responsibilities

| Cheerleader Rights | Cheerleader Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| All cheerleaders have the right to a safe environment while participating in cheer-related activities. This right is primary and critical for all cheerleaders and coaching staff. | Cheerleaders are responsible for behaving in such a manner that does not pose a disruption or danger (potential or actual) to themselves or others. |
| Cheerleaders and their families have the right to plan and organize their day-to-day schedule in a way that honors their individual health and well-being and the schedules of the members of their family. | Cheerleaders and their families are responsible for planning their schedules in a way that supports and upholds their commitment to the team. This includes being punctual and prepared for scheduled events. Planned absences from team events should be avoided whenever possible. |
| Cheerleaders have the right to express their feelings in a respectful manner. | Cheerleaders are responsible for expressing their feelings, emotions, and opinions in a manner that does not violate our Code of Conduct, or pose a significant disruption or danger (potential or actual) to themselves or others. |
| Cheerleaders have the right to be treated respectfully by coaches, teammates, and all members of the organization. | Cheerleaders are responsible for treating others – including teammates, staff, parents, and community members – and their personal belongings in a respectful and appropriate manner. Cheerleaders are responsible for not engaging in conduct that threatens injury to themselves, other persons, and/or property. |
| Cheerleaders have the right to participate in activities and sports of their choosing. | Cheerleaders are accountable to their team, as outlined in this handbook. When other sports or activities interfere with the ability to uphold commitments and requirements of the team, it is the responsibility of the cheerleader to discuss with their coach, as soon as possible so they may plan accordingly. |
| Cheerleaders have the right to conduct themselves in a way that upholds their moral and ethical beliefs. | Cheerleaders are responsible for behaving in a way that does not damage the reputation of Pittsford Youth Cheer. Exemplary behavior is the responsibility of the cheerleader when in the community and at all functions where members are recognized as representatives of Pittsford Youth Cheer. |

Registration and Paperwork

We are thrilled you are interested in registering your child for Pittsford Youth Cheer! In order to register your child, you will need to complete several steps:

- Establish a family account on Demosphere and create an athlete profile
- Complete the online registration
- Pay your fees (either in entirety or through installments)
- Upload the following documents:
 - Birth Certificate
 - Infinite Campus screenshot of student's school enrollment indicating current grade
 - Photo of Athlete
 - Physical dated after 8/1/2024*
- Submit digital RYFC contract, Family Handbook agreement, Concussion Protocol agreement

For registration, you may upload the most current physical for your child. However, proper documentation must be submitted to the President(s) prior to August practice. Your athlete will not be allowed to practice until paperwork has been submitted per RYFC regulations.

Costs

The all-inclusive cost for the 2025 season is \$350. There will be a few additional items to purchase independent from the program cost. You may choose to pay in full at the point of registration, or register with an installment plan. Payments and installment plans are managed through the Demosphere platform.

- Installment Option 1: \$200 at registration + \$150 (5/31)
- Installment Option 2: \$200 at registration + \$75 (4/30) + \$75 (5/31)
- Installment Option 3: \$200 at registration + \$50 (3/31) + \$50 (4/30) + \$50 (5/31)

We are proud to offer scholarships to families in financial need, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to participate in the Pittsford Jr. Panthers Cheerleading program, regardless of their financial situation. Please email cheer@pittsfordfootballandcheer.com to request a scholarship application.

Registration Cost Includes:

- Uniform (to be returned at end of season)
- Pom Poms (to be returned at end of season)
- Uniform Bow
- Warm-Up Jacket for **NEW** athletes in 2025
- Team Shirt
- 1 Family-Member Spirit Shirt
- Team Events
- End-of-Season Banquet
- Spirit Gifts at Competitions

A separate check for **\$250** is required as a **security deposit** during August uniform distribution. This check must be postdated for November 15, 2025. **It will be destroyed upon the return of your athlete's uniform and pom set in November (as long as the items are returned in good condition).**

Separate Family Costs (not included in registration fee):

- White Cheer Shoes
- White No-Show Socks
- Navy Blue Cheer Briefs
- Navy Blue Leggings

Recommendations for above items will be provided prior to the start of the season.

There will be optional apparel items for purchase leading up to the fall season. Additional items are not required, but are available to show additional spirit and team support.

Refund Policy:

We understand that a family may decide to withdraw from Pittsford Youth Cheer after registering for a team. Please send an email to PYC stating your child will be withdrawing. The date of the received email will determine the amount to be reimbursed (see guidelines below).

To be transparent and consistent, we will strictly adhere to the following refund timeline for athletes withdrawing from the Program:

- Prior to June 1- Full Refund
- Prior to August 1- Returning Athlete \$200 Refund/New Athlete \$150 refund
- After August 15- No Refund

Refunds are dependent on the above dates for various reasons. Prior to June 1, uniform orders have not been placed and competition fees have not been submitted. However, after June 1, we place orders for uniforms, team apparel, and register for competitions (per athlete fee). **In 2025, only new athletes to the program will receive a warm-up jacket (returning athletes will use their jackets from 2024).** Expenses and fees are factored into the refund policy noted above. After August 15, no refunds will be issued as all season events, apparel orders, team expenses, and fees have been accounted for based on the size of each team.

Team Placement

Team placement is determined by grade-level, consistent with Pittsford Central Schools and RYFC rules and regulations. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Places cannot be reserved on a team until all fees are paid in full. Should a roster reach maximum capacity, a waitlist will be maintained. Additional teams will only be formed if we have additional qualified coaches and adequate practice space. In the event your athlete does not get placed from the waitlist, you will receive a full refund.

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Flag Team | Grades K & 1 | Head Coach: Caitlynn Moulton |
| C Team | Grades 2 & 3 | Head Coach: Brandy Bloom |
| B Team | Grades 4 & 5 | Head Coach: Ashley Higgins |
| A Team | Grades 6 & 7 | Head Coach: Amelina Valerio |

Uniforms and Apparel

Uniform fittings occur in early June. This is a mandatory, scheduled event. Coaches and team volunteers will assist athletes in trying on uniform sizes and selecting the best fit. An adult must accompany each athlete and approve the sizes that are recommended. Athletes will receive uniforms and team apparel in August. Uniforms should not be worn unless designated by a coach.

Uniforms and pom sets are Program property and must be returned at the end of the season. It is your responsibility to keep track of your assigned pieces. If a uniform and/or pom set is not returned, the security check will be deposited to cover the replacement cost of the missing items.

It is your responsibility to care for your uniform. Washing instructions include:

- Hand or machine wash on cold
- Gentle cycle only
- Turn pieces inside out
- Air dry

Concussion Education, Prevention, and Management Protocol

While we hope to avoid injuries during the cheer season, we recognize that they may occur. As our program evolves, we want our families to have access to the best available resources for managing sports related injuries. With this safety initiative, we are looking at ways to reduce risk/injuries, educate our coaches to optimize concussion awareness, and offer concussion education/resources to our families via our website. Our goal is to offer a well-balanced and proactive approach to keep our athletes as safe as possible by:

1. Reducing risks and injuries with safe stunting technique and spotting
2. Following safe skill progressions based on athlete readiness
3. Providing a multi-faceted concussion education program for coaches
4. Offering concussion education and resources to our families via our website
5. Investing in *ImPACT* computerized baseline testing tool
6. Implementing explicit **removal from play** and **return to play** guidelines for our athletes to ensure their safety

Concussion Education and Resources for Coaches

All Pittsford Jr. Panthers Cheer coaches complete yearly training requirements to improve concussion awareness and best management practices. As an organization, we follow the guidelines and protocols established by NYSPHSAA and Pittsford Central School District. Training will occur annually and will consist of:

- National Alliance for Youth Sports: Concussion Module
- CDC *Heads Up* module for youth sports coaches
- Best practices and resources readily available from CDC and ImPACT
- Annual In-person training and education from TBI specialist

ImPACT Baseline Testing for Athletes

Concussions can be difficult to diagnose because they don't show up in imaging results, like CT scans or MRI tests. Baseline assessments change how concussions are identified and managed. By assessing student-athletes before the season begins, concussions can be more accurately identified and concussion recovery can be monitored on an individualized basis.

As an organization, we have decided to invest in a formal baseline testing program and will provide testing to our athletes, free of charge using the ImPACT program. ImPACT is a computerized concussion assessment tool that is used pre-season to capture athletes' neurological function in key areas before being exposed to potential injury during the season (often referred to as baseline testing). ImPACT assessments can be conducted remotely (at an athlete's home with the use of a computer) and include an analysis of reaction time, memory, processing speed, and player symptoms. Test findings are securely stored in a HIPPA compliant web portal. Information can then be used for comparison purposes if/when the athlete sustains a head injury during the season (referred to as post injury testing). Athletes will repeat testing if they suffer a concussion during the season (again completed remotely within the privacy of the athlete's home). Athletes and their families will then be able to share their test data (baseline and post injury) with their specific medical provider to assist with concussion management and recovery care.

Many national sports programs (e.g. NHL/AHL, NFL, and MLB) and an increasing number of youth sports programs are using baseline testing to make choices about return to play (RTP) and to assist with symptom management following a concussion. Having this information allows for an individualized approach to supporting an athlete's individual concussion recovery and our program believes that this type of testing is a valuable tool in optimizing safety. Please note that this is an optional service for our athletes rather than a program requirement. Additional information about ImPACT can be found by visiting: www.impacttest.com or by watching this brief video: https://youtu.be/yu_6JeuWCrc.

Concussion Protocol Guidelines: Our concussion procedures are consistent with Pittsford Central Schools and NYS PHAA and our outlined below:

I. Immediate Removal from Play

If an athlete has or is believed to have sustained any degree of force to the head, they will be **removed from play immediately, even if no immediate symptoms are observed**. The athlete will remain out for the remainder of play on the day of the injury. If an athlete shows signs of a concussion (e.g., headache, dizziness, confusion, nausea), they will be **removed from play until authorized to return by a licensed physician**. "Play" includes practices, game day cheer, competitions, and all cheer related activities. Coaches will communicate with the athlete's parent/guardian and monitor for signs and symptoms of a concussion.

In severe cases (loss of consciousness, repeated vomiting, seizure activity, increasing sleepiness, and worsening symptoms), emergency care may be required. 911 should be called and the athlete should be further evaluated and treated.

An athlete with concussion symptoms will not be allowed to resume cheer-related activities until they have been symptom free for 24 hours and have been evaluated by and received written authorization from a licensed physician. Such authorization will be kept in the athlete's file with the Program. Coaches are required to follow directives from the athlete's physician in regards to returning to play.

II. Return to Play Procedures

Returning on Same Day of Injury

An athlete who exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion will not be permitted to return to play on the day of the injury. When in doubt, coaches will always err on the side of safety and hold the athlete out. If no symptoms are observed or reported, but a jolt or force to the head occurs, athletes will be removed from play for the remainder of the practice.

Returning to Play After a Concussion

An athlete must have written clearance from a licensed physician to return to play following a concussion. Clearance from an Emergency Room or Urgent Care physician will not be accepted for returning to play. Athletes must be asymptomatic at rest and with progressive exertion before being cleared to RTP. Unless otherwise prescribed by a licensed physician, our athletes will follow a **gradual re-entrance into cheer-related functions after authorization from a licensed physician. For cheer this will entail the following progression of activities:**

- Light aerobic exercise (sideline cheers, motions, walk-throughs of routine)
- Cheer-specific functions (jumps, tumbling, routine participation without stunting)
- Gradual entrance into stunting positions with coach supervision and spotting
- Full entrance into cheer-specific activities

*Progression of the above activities should be monitored and approved by your medical provider.

NOTE: If an athlete experiences post-concussion symptoms during any phase of returning to play, the athlete should drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and resume the progression after 24 hours.

III. Step by Step Guide to Navigating Concussion During the 2024-25 Season:

What to do if I suspect my athlete has sustained a concussion during the season?

1. Ensure that your child completes pre-season baseline testing (a specific link will be sent via email before the season starts to access ImpACT). Once your child completes the online assessment, they will be provided with a passport ID number for use during the 2024-25 season. Data will be stored within ImpACT and only released to a designated medical provider. Please note that baseline testing data will not be visible to parents/athletes.
2. If your child experiences a concussion during the season, communicate with your child's coach about the event and obtain information about the specific details of the injury and symptoms. The athlete will be removed from play temporarily and will follow the posted concussion protocol guidelines (identified

above). We require that you formally notify the cheer program in writing by sending an email to: cheer@pittsfordfootballandcheer.com so that the concussion protocol can be initiated.

3. Contact your child's medical provider to ascertain medical advice and determine what type of tx or appt is needed. Prior to the medical appt, have your child complete post injury ImpACT testing (second assessment) so that the data can be shared with your medical provider at time of the appt (once notified by a parent of probable concussion, we will send a second link to provide access to post injury testing which can be done remotely within the home). Note that if your child chose not to complete baseline testing; they will not be eligible for post injury ImpACT testing and should instead just see their medical provider for treatment guidance.
4. Complete/sign a release form so ImpACT data can be sent directly to your medical provider (release can be found on our website).
5. At the time of your medical appt, let your medical provider know that your sports program follows a concussion protocol and that your athlete has completed ImpACT testing data as part of the Pittsford Panthers Jr Cheer Program. We will send your athlete's baseline and post injury test data to your provider to assist with management. We will also provide educational information/contact resources about ImpACT to your provider if they require additional information.
6. Follow the medical advice of your provider and utilize the return to play progression model to gradually increase your child's activity.
7. Submit a note from your medical provider to the program when your child is cleared to return to play. Clearance letters should be sent via email to cheer@pittsfordfootballandcheer.com.

*Please note that Pittsford Panthers Jr Youth Cheer will not provide medical care or direct concussion care in any way. As an organization, we will manage the administration/access to ImpACT for athletes who chose to use the service and will ensure that the data is submitted responsibly to designated medical providers. To assist parents, we have identified several local providers (if a referral is needed) and have also provided educational information on our website to assist parents in knowing what to expect related to concussion recovery. Ultimately, parents and athletes should work with their trusted medical provider for specific concussion management.

Practice Information

Practice attendance is mandatory. Practices are designed to teach game and competition material. It is imperative that athletes attend every single practice. We strongly rely on parental support to have our athletes prepared and punctual for practice. When possible, arriving 10 minutes early is best.

Cheerleaders must arrive at practice on time and prepared:

- No gum
- No jewelry—including earrings, necklaces, bracelets
- Full water bottle (spill-proof only)
- Bathroom needs met

- Hair pulled back
- Cheer shoes securely tied (outside practice permits regular sneakers with **exception of flyers**)
- Appropriate practice attire (sweatshirts and sweatpants if needed)
- Fueled with snack or meal beforehand (no food at practice)

Practice Expectations:

- Participate in warmups and conditioning to the best of your ability
- Give your best effort the entire time
- Listen and talk respectfully to coaches
- Avoid excessive talking and socializing
- Remain active during practice
- Have a positive, open attitude and mindset
- Be encouraging and respectful to all teammates and coaches

Once practice begins, parents must remain outside of the practice area. It is our experience that children are easily distracted when parents and siblings are visible, which can become a safety issue. Parents may observe the last 10-15 minutes of practice at the coach's discretion.

Summer Practices

Summer practices begin the first full week of August. We typically practice outdoors at the Barker Road Middle School fields. The weather can vary, which means athletes need to come prepared and dressed in layers. There is a porta-potty available for athletes to use, but frequent bathroom breaks take time away from practice. Please ensure your athlete uses the bathroom prior to starting practice. During the first two weeks of practice, we require a designated adult to sign each athlete out of practice.

In August, expect to practice (official times and days will be communicated in July):

Mondays: 6 - 7:30pm (C Team), 6 - 8:00pm (A/B Teams)

Tuesdays: 6 - 7:30pm (Flag/C Teams), 6 - 8:00pm (A/B Teams)

Wednesdays: 6 - 7:30pm (Flag/C Teams), 6 - 8:00pm (A/B Teams)

Thursdays: 6 - 7:30pm (Flag/C Teams), 6 - 8:00pm (A/B Teams)

Practice days and times are not official until the District approves our facilities requests, which may not happen until July.

Fall Practices

Fall practices start when the school year officially begins. Once we receive District confirmation for indoor practices, we will send out a finalized schedule. We typically practice at Mendon Center Elementary School and Barker Road Middle School. There will be times when a practice location/time may shift due to gym space availability. Please note that we are at the discretion and availability of the District Athletic Department for practice space.

In September and October, expect to practice **ONE** of the following day/time combinations:

- Mondays & Wednesdays: 5:30-7:30 OR 6:00-8:00
- Tuesdays & Thursdays: 5:30-7:30 OR 6:00-8:00

- **ALL TEAMS:** Saturday mornings (unless a football game or competition is scheduled)

Tumbling

We encourage our athletes to enroll in a tumbling class during the cheer season. We recommend looking at the following locations for tumbling classes:

- RGA – Rochester Gymnastics Academy (Penfield)
- Bright Raven Gymnastics or Bright Raven East (Gates and Victor)
- Challenge Athletics (Fairport)

If you have questions about your athlete's tumbling level, please ask your child's coach.

Football Games

All teams will cheer at a **minimum of 4 football games** before transitioning to the competition portion of the season. We cheer in all weather! Our season starts with high temperatures and usually ends in cooler weather. Games are only canceled if there is a threat of lightning or other severe weather situations. Games will continue in rainy weather.

Each team will have a designated report time for games, typically 45-60 minutes prior to the game's start time. Teams use this time to stretch, warm-up tumbling and stunts, and review performance components for the game.

Upon arrival at the field, athletes should be ready to fully participate with the team. They should arrive in the communicated attire (typically uniform or leggings with windbreaker jacket). Coaches will communicate apparel requirements with plenty of notice. Hair should be neat and secured in a ponytail with our cheer bow.

During game time, we expect our athletes to stay in formation with appropriate stance and behavior. Games are not an opportunity to socialize with teammates. Cheerleaders must be aware of the game and attentive to their coach so they are prepared to perform and lead the crowd.

Family members are not permitted to stand or sit inside the track area, unless a coach or a Board member explicitly asks for your presence during the game. Any adults inside the track area must wear an official League pass.

Game Schedule

We will not have the football game schedule until it is approved and distributed by RYFC. Historically, we have received the season schedule 1-2 weeks prior to the first game. Please be patient with us, as we will share the information as soon as we receive it. Our mock calendar serves only as a guideline until definitive dates and times are available.

Games are generally played on Sundays. In past seasons, the teams started kick-off at the following times:

- Flag: 9:00 am

- C Team: 10:30 am
- B Team: 12:30 pm
- A Team: 2:30 pm

Family Spirit and Crowd Participation

During football games, our cheerleaders rely on their family members to cheer and get loud! This means inviting friends and family to come and support us. We highly encourage families to dress in Pittsford Panthers gear, make signs, bring cow bells, and share their voices! We encourage you to learn the cheers and participate in crowd callbacks! We want the cheerleaders to feel comfortable and confident performing in front of a crowd, before entering competition season.

Competitions

Once we know the competitions for the season, we will not receive a performance schedule until a week or so before the event. We will communicate the report times, performance times, and award times as soon as the information is available to us. In the meantime, please reserve the entire noted day on the calendar for competition. Tentatively, we anticipate having a competition every weekend in October and possibly the first weekend of November.

Competition Dress Code and Expectations

Athletes will report in full uniform, including hair and bow, by their team's specified arrival time. Athletes are representing themselves and PYC, so respectful and appropriate behavior should be displayed at all times. No jewelry is permitted during competition. This includes new piercings or clear studs. Athletes can wear light eyeshadow, natural-looking mascara, and a natural lip product.

It is critical for athletes to report on time. We ask families to arrive 20 – 30 minutes **prior to arrival time**, to allow time for parking and finding reporting locations. Teams cannot check-in until the entire team is accounted for and present. We recognize competition days can be long and we are happy to assist with carpool coordination. Always reach out to the coach if there is an issue with arriving on-time for competition.

Hair & Bow

- **Hair** – Competition hair should be a tight, professional, clean look. Hair should be fully pulled back into a high ponytail with fly-aways sprayed down. Athletes with short hair will need to wear a high, half ponytail.
- **Bow** – Cheer bows need to sit on top of the head. The bow should sit upright and facing forward, not laying down flat on the head. Families and athletes can ask a coach for help, if needed.

Spectator Fees

All competitions establish an admission fee for entrance. This charge comes from the event producer and usually ranges from \$6 - \$8 per person (often cash only). Children 5 and under are often free. The exact admission fees are communicated to families with the competition times.

Parking

Depending on location, parking can be limited and you may be required to park a distance from the entrance of the building. Designated spectator entrances will be communicated with families prior to the event. Please plan accordingly so your athlete arrives with time to spare.

Family Spirit & Involvement

Competitions are incredibly important to our cheerleaders and coaches. Teams dedicate around 50 hours of practice before stepping onto the mat for their first competition. When we are cheering at football games, we are supporting the football players. At competitions, our cheerleaders are the stars of the show!

Competition routines are only two and a half minutes long, so it is easy to arrive, watch your athlete perform, and leave after awards. However, we strongly encourage all families to arrive when the doors open for each division and fill our section with spirit, enthusiasm, and pride. Wear your Pittsford Panthers shirts, make signs, bring noise makers (no horns), and get ready to join in the fun! There are opportunities for our teams to win specialty awards like "Best Fans" and "Best Crowd Participation." Our cheerleaders perform better and enjoy themselves more when we are actively cheering them on and participating in the crowd-response portion of their routine.

We understand that attending a competition takes up a large portion of your day, but we ask you to think of it like this: if your child were playing another sport and waiting on the sidelines to be put into the game, you would be there. As a cheer family and community, let's show our pride and support.

Communication

Consistent communication is key to a successful season! We will utilize two forms of regular communication: the youth cheer email (cheer@pittsfordfootballandcheer.com) and the Demosphere mobile-app.

Emails

Please check your email daily to ensure proper communication. Weekly emails are sent to families with a summary of the week and reminders for the upcoming week. It is essential to carefully review the email and update calendars, as schedules sometimes change. It is critical to provide updated email and contact information during registration and prior to the start of the official season.

Demosphere Mobile App

Each family will need **at least one** adult member to manage the Demosphere Mobile App. Please ensure notifications are on and check regularly for updates. We will communicate last-minute information about practices, games, and competitions. This is also an easy way for you to directly communicate with other parents for carpooling or other needs. All scheduled dates and times will be reflected on the Demosphere Mobile App.

Facebook

Please join our Facebook pages. We display photos of the team, and help connect team families:

- Pittsford Panthers A Team Football & Cheer Families
- Pittsford Panthers B Team Football & Cheer Families
- Pittsford Panthers C Team Football & Cheer Families
- Pittsford Panthers Flag Team Football & Cheer Families

Instagram

Please follow our Instagram handle [@pittsfordyouthcheer](https://www.instagram.com/pittsfordyouthcheer). We share photos and fun videos!

Website

Please visit our website at www.pittsfordyouthcheer.com to find information about registration, FAQ's, practice schedules, competition dates, sponsorship opportunities, and other important information.

Team Events and Obligations

Football Squares Fundraiser: After a successful fundraiser during our 2024 season, we will run our Buffalo Bills Home Game Squares Fundraiser again in 2025. This season, we will shift to home games only (9 games total). We ask that each family sells **4 tickets** to support our fundraising efforts. This is your only fundraising obligation, so we are looking to improve our participation level from 2024!

Season Kick-Off Night: This fun event usually takes place at the last practice before the first football game. The youth football and cheer programs join together to celebrate and kick-off the football season! Date and details will follow in August.

Picture Day: Individual and sibling photos are taken early in the season, historically in September. Picture day is typically conducted on a Monday. Date and details will be released in the fall.

Youth Night with Varsity Cheer: Youth night is an opportunity for our youth cheerleaders to cheer during the first half of a Varsity football game with the Varsity cheerleaders. It is a special night under the lights! Date and details will be released in the fall.

Spirit Night: At some point in September, team volunteers will organize a Team Dinner/Spirit Night. Dates and details will be shared as soon as possible.

End of Season Banquet: We will celebrate the end of our season on November 1, 2025 with a wonderful banquet. The cost for athletes is already included in the team registration cost. More information will be shared in the fall.

Conduct and Discipline

Our program has a clear disciplinary process for all incidents and concerns. Inherent in our process is an acknowledgement of cheerleader rights and responsibilities, as referenced in this handbook.

Cheerleaders are learning the skills to build their character, their athleticism, and themselves as individuals. This is occurring at all times and it is expected that they may make a misstep now and again. These missteps may require a coach to have a conversation with the cheerleader and may require behavioral action from the cheerleader.

| Example of Routine Discipline | Example of Possible Intervention Solutions |
|--|---|
| Disruption to the practice environment, inappropriate language, being ill-prepared, or other actions deemed similar in weight or consequence | Verbal warnings, meetings after or during practice, call to parents, or other actions deemed appropriate by the coach(es) |

Level 1

A cheerleader engages in continued behaviors/actions of concern, or has engaged in an activity of more serious concern. This level will initiate a meeting between the cheerleader, parents and coach.

| Example of Level 1 Concerns | Example of Possible Intervention Solutions |
|---|---|
| Repeated warnings and interactions from the routine discipline level equally more than three instances | The cheerleader will sit out from the next game or competition. Parents will be notified. |
| Behavior that infringes on the rights of others to feel safe while at cheer events. | The cheerleader may temporarily lose privileges from all cheer activities. Parents will be notified and a meeting between the cheerleader and the coaches will happen with a behavior plan put in place. If the cheerleader was removed from participation, a behavior plan must be put into place before allowing the cheerleader to resume participation. |

Level 2

A cheerleader continues to engage in behaviors/actions of concern, or has engaged in an activity of more serious concern. This level will initiate a meeting between the parents, the coaches and the board.

| Example of Level 2 Concerns | Example of Possible Intervention Solutions |
|--|---|
| Repeated warnings and interactions from the routine discipline level equally more than six instances | Behavior contract with cheerleader, family, and coaches, and possible privilege loss of competing. |
| Behavior that infringes on the rights of others to feel safe while at cheer activities, with failure to uphold the behavior agreement plan put in place previously | The cheerleader will temporarily lose privileges from all activities. A Board member will call parents and notify them of the situation. A meeting between the cheerleader, coaches, and the Board will be scheduled. The consequences will be determined during this meeting, which may include being removed from the team and being unable to re-join for a full year. |

Critical Level

Certain actions and behaviors may require immediate action on behalf of the coaches and Pittsford Youth Cheer President(s). These actions typically put other cheerleaders and coaches in danger (potential or actual) or are particularly malicious. Cheerleaders engaging in **any action at this level** are not subject to progress through previous levels of the disciplinary process. In these instances, an immediate intervention is deemed necessary and action will be taken by the Board.

Bullying Policy

We expect all athletes to be kind, considerate, and compassionate to others. As a cheer community, we strictly follow a **zero tolerance** bullying policy. Any reported bullying incidents will be taken seriously and investigated with due diligence. Bullying is an action that is repeatedly and intentionally directed toward another person. These actions may:

- Cause physical or emotional harm to another person
- Damage property
- Cause reasonable fear of harm for another person
- Create a hostile environment for another person
- Disrupt the training process
- Create “sides” within the team and disrupt team unity

Athlete-Concern Action Steps:

- Talk to a trusted adult at home
- Talk to a coach, the President, Board member, or another trusted adult from PYC
- Write a letter or an email to the coach, President, Board member, or another trusted adult

Coach and/or Parent-Concern Action Steps:

- Complete the designated reporting form available on the PYC website
- Record known facts and information immediately until you are able to speak to a Board member
- Contact the coach, as soon as possible, to communicate and discuss your concerns
- Contact the President or any Board member for support if an incident is not resolved or reoccurs

Consequences for Bullying Policy Violations:

Bullying will inevitably result in dismissal from the Pittsford Youth Cheer program. There will be minimal warnings.

- 1st Violation: A warning will be issued to both the cheerleader and the family.
- 2nd Violation: The cheerleader will not participate in a game/competition immediately following the incident.
- 3rd Violation: The cheerleader will be dismissed from PYC, effective immediately.

Grievances and Concerns

We encourage proper and respectful communication during all proceedings, practices, games, competitions, gatherings, and meetings which involve our cheerleaders, coaches, parents, and families. Uncooperative, destructive, insulting, or abusive language towards others will not be tolerated and may result in immediate dismissal from PYC for the remainder of the season.

If you have a grievance, please discuss it with all parties in the following order and manner:

1. After a 24-hour cooling off period, notify the coach that you would like to discuss what happened and schedule a time to talk it through.
2. If further communication and support is needed, communicate your concerns to the Board and/or any of its individual members.

Attendance Policy

Youth cheerleading is an intense multi-month commitment (August-early November). Attendance is crucial to the success of our teams, regardless of their age. The teams learn and refine Game Day and competition material at every practice. It is essential athletes attend all scheduled practices or they may jeopardize their ability to perform with their team. Cheer is a team sport and teams cannot make progress with absent members. **Please understand the commitment your child is making to this sport and to their team as a whole.**

While it does not happen often, practices may be changed, extended, shortened, or added at any time during the season. Parents need to check daily for updates via email and the Demosphere Mobile App.

General Absences

We have a specified number of scheduled and unscheduled absences allowed each season. If an athlete needs to miss a practice, an email communication must be provided **1 week (at minimum) in advance**. Any correspondence provided less than 1 week in advance will be considered an unscheduled absence. Families should avoid scheduled absences the week prior to a competition. **All known, scheduled absences must be provided at the start of the season.** If an athlete exceeds the maximum absences allowed (without a medical note or indication of a family emergency), the individual is subject to removal from the team.

Maximum scheduled absences = 3

Maximum unscheduled absences = 2

5 absences are allowed from August 12 through October 26 (estimated end of the season).

Arriving late or leaving early from practice will count as half an absence. There are no absences allowed in October without prior notice. During the month of October, we are more limited with our practice time throughout the week since competitions often take away from our Saturday practices.

Athletes cannot be absent from a competition. If you plan a vacation and will miss a competition, your athlete will not have a role in the competition routine and will serve as an alternate for the competition portion of the season. It is imperative to disclose this information at the beginning of the season for the benefit of the entire team.

Sickness / Illness

Please contact the coach if your athlete will miss practice due to illness. We reserve the right to ask for information regarding symptoms and/or diagnosis if an athlete cannot come to practice. A medical note is required if an athlete cannot come to practice for an extended period of time.

The only excused absences without a medical note are the following:

- Persistent fever greater than 100.4 degrees
- Vomiting more than 2 times within a 24-hour time frame
- Uncontrolled and persistent diarrhea
- Contagious viruses including Strep, Flu, or COVID-19
- Strep diagnosis without two consecutive antibiotic doses administered

We do our best to accommodate children recovering from illness while creating the best success for their team. If you have concerns regarding your child's ability to participate in practice, please contact the coach. An athlete missing practice, due to an illness, does not count towards absence thresholds.

Short/Long Term Injury

If an athlete suffers a short or long-term injury, the coach should be notified immediately. A medical note should be provided and an athlete must be fully cleared with a medical note to return to regular activities.

Vacations / Time Off

We realize families plan vacations throughout the year, especially during the summer. Please provide **all known, planned family events during the registration process**. Please remember each athlete has a limited number of scheduled absences permitted before their role in team routines is impacted.

There will be no practices on the following dates:

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|--|
| *Tuesday, September 2, 2025: First Week of School* |
|--|

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|---|
| *Thursday, September 4, 2025: First Week of School* |
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Parent and/or Guardian Expectations

- Parents/guardians are expected to support the coaches in following this handbook and understand guidelines are established for the success of the Program.
- Parents/guardians are expected to only share photographs of youth cheer athletes when permission is given from their parents/guardians. Always consult with the head coach or a Board member if you have questions about sharing photographs.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for making sure their child arrives at practices, games, competitions, and other activities at the designated times and is picked up at the completion of the activity.

- Parents/guardians agree to notify the coach **as far in advance as possible or as soon as they know** about absences or tardies to any team event.
- Parents/guardians agree to carefully check emails and Demosphere Mobile App for updates and important announcements.
- Parents/guardians understand the importance of addressing concerns directly with the coach and not discussing it with other parents or athletes. *See Grievances under Communication.*
- Parents/guardians understand decisions regarding the team and each individual cheerleader are made in the best interest of the team and PYC.
- Parents/guardians understand if they create, provoke, or amplify conflict amongst the team, other families, coaches, or Board, and it cannot be rectified, the issue will be taken to the Athletic Director. This only occurs if the issue has been addressed with the President or a Board member first.

Off-Season Cheer Opportunities: Open to All Participants

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Winter Tumbling and Jumps | January and February (Thursdays) |
| Winter Clinic #1 | February 1, 2025 |
| Winter Clinic #2 | March 15, 2025 |
| Spring Clinic #1 | April 26, 2025 |
| Friendship Clinic | May 31, 2025 (joint with Brighton Jr. Bruins Youth Cheer) |
| Spring Tumbling and Stunts | May and June (Thursdays) |
| Youth Cheer Summer Camp | Week of July 7, 2025 (AM, PM, and Full Day options available) |

Handbook Acknowledgment Form



I have read the Pittsford Jr. Panthers Cheerleading Family Handbook, and I understand what is expected of my child, as well as myself (as a parent/family member). I agree to follow all policies in this handbook and understand that any violation of this handbook will result in consequences.

Athlete Name: _____ Athlete's Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Fall 2025 Season

Concussion Protocol Acknowledgment Form



I have read the Pittsford Jr. Panthers Cheerleading Family Handbook:
Concussion Education, Prevention, and Management Protocol. I agree to follow all policies
in this handbook and understand that any violation of this handbook will result in
consequences.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____