

Virginia High School League



Officials Association Guide

2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

Officials associations are an extremely important part of the VHSL's officials program. VHSL relies heavily on local associations for many things including the recruitment, training and registration of officials. VHSL schools depend on associations to provide competent officials for each and every contest. In order for an association to be effective, there must be exceptional organization and leadership. This guidebook is intended to assist associations in their work, and to provide a framework for building and maintaining a positive and productive relationship with League schools and League staff.

2. VHSL RECOGNIZED ASSOCIATIONS

VHSL recognized associations in good standing with the League are (1) listed annually in the VHSL Directory; (2) listed on the VHSL website; (3) may participate in officials' awards and recognition programs; (4) may provide officials to District, Conference and Region tournaments; and (5) will receive consideration for State tournament assignments. To be a VHSL recognized association in good standing, the following criteria must be met:

- A. The association must be approved by the district(s), conference(s) and region(s) in which it works. This approval is for contract period.
- B. The association must provide officiating services at the varsity level to a minimum of six VHSL schools.
- C. The association must maintain a minimum membership of 20 active officials whose classifications are either "approved" or "certified."
- D. The association must provide to the League office a list of its current members. This is an annual requirement.
- E. The association must provide to the VHSL a copy of its Constitution and Bylaws and any amendments as they are made.
- F. The association must provide to the VHSL a list of its officers with contact information. The assigner and local rules interpreter should be included in this list. This is an annual requirement.
- G. The association must hold a minimum of six local meetings per year at which rules and mechanics are discussed. This is an annual requirement.
- H. The association must provide to the VHSL a copy of its meeting schedule and proposed agendas. This is an annual requirement.
- I. The association must provide a minimum of 10 hours of training for all new/beginning officials. The association must also provide a copy of its training curriculum to the VHSL office.
- J. The association must submit all requested reports/forms to the League office by the announced deadline dates.
- K. The association must provide an assignment committee and/or grievance committee to review game assignments and to hear possible grievances by members.
- L. The association must accept any transfer official from either in-state or out-of-state associations without requiring an excessive waiting period. A one year probationary period is the maximum permitted. This maximum does not apply to new/beginning officials.
- M. The association must periodically review policies, fees and membership requirements.
- N. The association must meet periodically with member schools to review contracts, conditions and fees.
- O. The association must not require members to join national organizations of officials (IAABO, USFHA, USSF, NASO, etc.) as a condition for officiating VHSL member school contests, nor require as a precondition of voting membership in the local association the taking of any examination other than the examination of the VHSL/NFHS.
- P. The association must not deny membership to properly registered VHSL officials who are in good standing with the League without stating in writing its reasons to the Executive Director of the League or his/her designee.
- Q. The association must not have any rule or regulation which is in conflict with the rules and regulations of the VHSL.
- R. The association must not assign officials to games in which the official has a real or perceived conflict of interest.
- S. The association must not discriminate in any way in either its membership or assignment policies.

The VHSL Executive Director or his/her designee may waive any of the above requirements if doing so would be in the best interests of member schools.

3. CONTRACTS

It is strongly recommended that associations and schools sign contracts for officiating services, and that the contracts be for a minimum of two years. A contract protects both the schools and the association, putting in writing the expectations of both parties.

4. ASSIGNMENTS

The League staff does not assign officials for regular season contests. Officiating assignments for regular season contests should be made through a local association. When possible, all schools within a VHSL district are encouraged to use the same local association in a given sport. When it is necessary for a district to contract with multiple officials associations, each association must be approved by that district's District Council.

Officials for Conference, Region and State tournament contests must be on the list of VHSL "Certified" officials. A Certified official is one who is duly registered with the VHSL, attained a score of 85% or higher on the required rules exam, met the annual rules clinic requirement, and is in good standing with his/her local association.

5. ASSIGNERS

Assigners have a very difficult and important job. They must weigh the best interests of the clients (schools) with the best interests of the association's membership (officials). A good assigner will assign in a way that helps to develop new talent. It is, therefore, critical that the assigner have in-depth knowledge of the abilities of each official within his/her organization, and that he/she is able to identify individuals with the potential to be among the association's best.

6. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The integrity of contest officials must be without question. Officials who have conflicts of interest at a school(s) should identify those issues prior to being assigned. Officials who have conflicts of interest must not be assigned to games involving that school(s). Following are some examples of conflict of interest that must be avoided:

- A. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving a school at which the official is currently, or was recently (within the last 10 years), employed.
- B. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving a school from which he/she graduated (within the last 10 years) or remains active in alumni or booster club activities.
- C. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving a school in which his/her child/children is currently, or was previously (within the last 5 years), enrolled.
- D. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving students he/she works with on a regular basis in an AAU, club, recreation or travel league or similar setting.
- E. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving a coach with whom the official socializes on a regular basis.
- F. An official should not be assigned to a contest involving a school for which he/she provides coaching or other assistance (e.g., providing choreography assistance in cheerleading, or running a camp/clinic for athletes at that school).

In some sports where the number of officials is small, particularly in field hockey, gymnastics, track and field and swim and dive, it may be necessary to consider degrees of conflict when making assignments. For guidance, contact the Director of Officials at the VHSL office.

Prior to each contest, the officials' names shall be provided to the schools and shall be printed clearly in each team's scorebook or other official record of the contest.

7. GENERAL REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. An individual must be 18 years of age or a high school graduate to register to officiate contests in the interscholastic program.
- B. A rising high school junior or senior who is at least 16 years of age may register with an association but may only officiate contests below the high school level.
- C. An official shall not officiate until all registration procedures and annual requirements have been completed. An official who works a VHSL varsity or junior varsity contest without having completed all required procedures may be suspended for the remainder of that officiating season.
- D. An official who is inactive due to illness, job requirements or other similar reasons may retain his/her classification by registering with the League office (through the local association) and passing the required exam. The maximum time he/she retains this privilege is one year.

8. REGISTRATION PROCEDURES – RETURNING OFFICIALS

Registration Period – July 1-31

A returning official is someone who was registered with the VHSL as an official in one or more sports during the previous school year. The registration period for all returning officials in all sports is July 1 – July 31 each year.

- A. The VHSL office will supply each association with a list of officials registered during the previous year.
- B. The association will review the list and will provide to the VHSL office any roster changes for the coming year, including address changes and changes of status (inactive, moved, deceased, etc.). The association may also request VHSL ID's for and may add to the list any new officials that have already declared their intent to officiate.
- C. The association will submit payment to the VHSL for each individual listed on its revised roster and each new VHSL ID requested.
- D. Registration fees are established annually by the VHSL Executive Committee. Current registration fees are as follows:¹
 - Single (first) sport - \$40.00
 - Additional sports - \$25.00 each
- E. Associations that provide officials for winter and/or spring sports must find out from its officials whether or not they are registered in another sport.
- F. Returning officials who fail to register during the month of July may register during the "new officials' registration period" for his/her sport(s), but are subject to a registration late fee of \$25.00 per sport.
- G. Officials cannot work VHSL interscholastic contests until all registration requirements have been met.
- H. Refunds will not be issued for individuals who attempt the exam or the rules clinic.

¹ In September of 2014, the VHSL's Executive Committee approved a \$5.00 registration fee increase for 2015-16. In 2015-16, registration fees will be \$45.00 for the first sport, and \$30.00 for each additional sport.

- I. If a refund is authorized by the VHSL's Director of Officials, VHSL will retain a \$15.00 processing fee per official per sport.
- J. Returning officials will not be permitted to register for the current year once the late/new officials' registration period ends.²

9. REGISTRATION PROCEDURES – NEW OFFICIALS

Fall Sports Registration Period for NEW Officials – August 15-31

Winter Sports Registration Period for NEW Officials – November 15-30

Spring Sports Registration Period for NEW Officials – March 1-15

A new official is someone who was not registered with the VHSL as an official in any sport during the previous school year. The registration periods for new fall, winter or spring officials are shown above. These are also "late" registration time frames for returning officials (by season). Officials who are registering for the first time in a given sport may also register during the July registration window without penalty.

- A. The individual must complete the VHSL Official's Application Form (on the VHSL website).
- B. Using the form provided on the VHSL website, the association must request a VHSL ID for each new official.
- C. Along with the VHSL ID request form, the association must submit payment for the number of VHSL ID's requested. The request will not be processed without payment.
- D. Registration fees are established annually by the VHSL Executive Committee. Current registration fees are as follows:³
 - Single (first) sport - \$40.00
 - Additional sports - \$25.00 each
- E. New officials will not be permitted to register after the deadlines shown above.
- F. New officials may not work VHSL interscholastic contests until properly registered with all fees paid.
- G. Refunds will not be issued for individuals who attempt the exam or the rules clinic.
- H. If a refund is authorized by the VHSL's Director of Officials, VHSL will retain a \$15.00 processing fee per official per sport.

10. TRANSFER OFFICIALS – CATEGORY A

A Category A transfer official is an individual who has in the past 12 months been an official in good standing with another NFHS-member state association, and who is registering with the VHSL for the first time; or who is returning to VHSL officiating after a break in service of at least one year but no more than five years. The League will honor officiating records submitted by the sending state high school association. Records from local officials associations are not acceptable unless verified by the sending state association. Category A transfer officials shall be afforded the opportunity to be evaluated without requiring an excessive waiting period. A one-year probationary period is the maximum permitted. This maximum does not apply to new or beginning officials. Associations may register Category A transfer officials in July, or during the new officials' registration period for the applicable sport. After the new officials' registration period has ended, late fees will apply. Category A transfer officials will not be permitted to register for the current year once the mid-point of the applicable sport's season has been reached.

² Category A transfer officials may register until the mid-point of the applicable season has been reached.

³ In September of 2014, the VHSL's Executive Committee approved a \$5.00 registration fee increase for 2015-16. In 2015-16, registration fees will be \$45.00 for the first sport, and \$30.00 for each additional sport.

11. TRANSFER OFFICIALS – CATEGORY B

A Category B transfer official is an individual who is transferring between VHSL recognized associations without a break in service. Category B transfer officials must register during the July registration window or pay applicable late fees. Category B transfer officials shall be afforded the opportunity to be evaluated without requiring an excessive waiting period. A one-year probationary period is the maximum permitted. This maximum does not apply to new or beginning officials.

12. DUAL MEMBERSHIP

Officials in Virginia are classified as independent contractors. As such, they may work contests for multiple associations, though the complexity of making dual membership work is something each individual official should consider carefully. An official who chooses to work for more than one association must declare a “primary” association. The official’s primary association is responsible for his/her registration. Associations must not discriminate against officials who are dual members.

13. CLASSIFICATION OF OFFICIALS

- A. **Certified** – A Certified official may officiate regular season varsity and sub-varsity contests and, if selected, District, Conference, Region and State Tournament contests. To be a Certified official, one must:
 - 1) Be registered and in good standing with the VHSL;
 - 2) Score a minimum of 85% on the annual VHSL-required rules exam;
 - 3) Meet the annual state rules clinic requirement; and
 - 4) Be in good standing with his/her local association.

- B. **Approved** – An Approved official may officiate regular season varsity and sub-varsity contests, but is not eligible for post-season play. To be an Approved official, one must:
 - 1) Be registered and in good standing with the VHSL;
 - 2) Score a minimum of 75% on the annual VHSL-required rules exam;
 - 3) Meet the annual state rules clinic requirement; and
 - 4) Be in good standing with his/her local association.

- C. **Registered** – A Registered official may officiate sub-varsity contests only. To be a Registered official, one must:
 - 1) Be registered and in good standing with the VHSL;
 - 2) Score a minimum of 70% on the annual VHSL-required rules exam;
 - 3) Not have failed to meet the annual state rules clinic requirement in two consecutive years; and
 - 4) Be in good standing with his/her local association.

- D. **Unapproved** – An Unapproved official is an individual who has not met one or more registration requirements. Unapproved officials may not work ANY VHSL interscholastic contests.

14. TRAINING

VHSL relies heavily on local associations to provide proper training for both new and experienced officials. VHSL requires that local associations provide a minimum of 10 hours of training for new officials. This training should include classroom sessions as well as game/scrimmage/practice experience. The VHSL also requires that associations hold a minimum of six meetings per year for the purpose of discussing rules, mechanics, position, philosophy, situations, and other pertinent topics. A good meeting will likely last an hour or more. It is suggested that associations don't hold all six meetings during the season, but that they be spread out throughout the year.

Each association must send a copy of its training plan for new officials as well as its proposed meeting schedule and agendas to the League office. Providing the proposed meeting schedule and agendas is an annual requirement.

15. DISCIPLINE OF ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

Each association should include within its Bylaws statements detailing standards of conduct and actions for which members may be disciplined. Some examples might include unethical conduct, failure to pay local association membership dues, failure to comply with VHSL or local association regulations, and conduct detrimental to the local association or VHSL. Associations should ensure that members are afforded due process in any disciplinary proceedings.

16. VHSL SPORTSMANSHIP RULE

The VHSL Sportsmanship Rule (27-11-1 in the VHSL Handbook) is as follows:

27-11-1 SPORTSMANSHIP RULE – Member schools are required to conduct all their relations with other schools in a spirit of good sportsmanship. Acts which are prima facie evidence of failure to abide by this rule are those which are noted below and others of a similar nature which transgress the usually accepted code for good sportsmanship. All incidents of conduct relating to either athletic or academic activities that are violations of the Sportsmanship Rule must be reported to the Virginia High School League.

Noted examples of violations of the VHSL's Sportsmanship Rule include, but are not limited to (1) failure to provide for proper control of spectators; (2) failure of any team or competitor to stay in a contest until the normal end when the failure to do so is related to dissatisfaction with the officiating; (3) harassment of contest officials by a coach or a coach's ejection from a contest; failure of a school to use every means at its disposal to impress upon its "school community" the values of sportsmanship and the importance of observing rules governing same; and the ejection of a player and/or coach from a contest, scrimmage, jamboree or Benefit Game.

17. REPORTING EJECTIONS

All ejections and sportsmanship incidents must be reported to the League office and to the participating schools using the VHSL-provided form(s). Schools and associations have 48 hours to complete this process. There are two components to the process, (1) the officials' report to the association commissioner or other designee; and (2) the association's report to the League office and to the participating schools.

A. OFFICIALS – If, during the course of the contest, it becomes necessary to eject a player(s) or coach(es), the following procedures should be observed.

- 1) Using the approved on-field/on-court mechanics for the sport, indicate that the player or coach is ejected.
- 2) Communicate to both head coaches the number of the player and that he/she has been ejected. Do not say such things as, “#25 is done for the night” or “#25 needs to leave.” Tell the coach that “#25 has been ejected from this contest.” Also tell the coaches WHY the player has been ejected – e.g., for fighting; for a flagrant foul; for a second technical foul; or for two “cautions,” etc.
- 3) Have the official scorekeeper record the ejection in the official score book, noting the name, and/or number of the person ejected as well as the time on the clock (or point in the competition) when the ejection occurred and the reason for that ejection (e.g., #25 White, Ejected 3:53 4th Q – Fighting; or Green Head Coach Ejected, 3Q 1:21- Flagrant technical foul). Make sure this information is recorded in each team’s scorebook.
- 4) As soon as the official gets home after the game (or before, if possible), the official should send an email (or call) his/her assigner or other designated individual and provide a narrative describing the circumstances that resulted in the ejection. The assigner needs to know who (name or number), when and why the person was ejected.

It is important to remember that it is not within the prescribed duties of a contest official to set aside any rules. Players or team personnel who violate the rules by leaving the bench during a fight or when a fight may occur MUST be ejected and the ejection(s) recorded as prescribed above. Also be aware that officials cannot “undo” an ejection. Officials can’t “make deals” with coaches or AD’s after the fact. ALL ejections must be reported to your commissioner or other designated individual.

B. COMMISSIONERS/ASSIGNERS – Once the report from the game official(s) has been received, the following procedures should be observed.

- 1) Complete the Commissioner’s Ejection Report Form (<http://www.vhsl.org/doc/upload/adm-comm-eject.doc>) providing all requested information in as much detail as possible. Don’t just say, “Two technical fouls” as the reason for an ejection. Be concise, but specific.
- 2) **SAVE** the form on your personal computer using the following naming convention:

“yyyymmdd-schoolname-player/coach-nameofejectedperson”

Example: 20140414-kingsfork-player-jones

or

20140115-patrickhenry-coach-smith

- 3) Email a copy of the saved form to Tom Dolan (tdolan@vhsl.org) and Teresa May (tmay@vhsl.org) at the VHSL office. **Include as cc’s on the email the athletic directors and/or principals from each of the schools involved in the contest.** This should be done as soon as possible but no later than two business days following the ejection.
- 4) Assuming the ejection will not be appealed, your job is finished with the emailing of the report. There is no need for you to call the school to get “their side of the story.” You are responsible for reporting the ejection as reported to you by your official(s).

Commissioners/Assigners do not have the authority to “make a deal” with a coach, principal or AD regarding the ejection. There have been reported instances of officials and/or commissioners telling AD’s that a player will not have to serve the one-game suspension (a VHSL penalty) if the player is counseled. Associations do not have the authority to do this. All ejections MUST be reported, even if it is believed that the ejection was improper. There is an appeal process in place, and that process must be observed, even when an error has been made.

C. APPEAL PROCESS

- 1) The appeal process must be initiated by the principals of the schools involved in the contest. In most cases, this will be the principal of the school the ejected individual attends. It is his/her job to contact the principal of the other school. It is not in the Commissioner's or Assigner's job description to initiate an appeal.
- 2) If the two principals agree that an appeal is warranted, and only if they agree, the commissioner/assigner will be contacted for input. There is one exception – if the commissioner/assigner was a member of the crew working the game, the League's Director of Officials will act in his/her place. Unless there is unanimity (2 principals and commissioner/assigner), the appeal is denied.
- 3) Final authority on any appeal rests with the VHSL office, specifically, Tom Dolan (tdolan@vhsl.org). Unless there is compelling video evidence of an error on the part of an official, the local decision to approve or deny the appeal will be upheld.

18. REPORTING SPORTSMANSHIP "INCIDENTS"

Sportsmanship "incidents" are situations that can occur during the contest, but that often occur following a contest and can involve players, coaches, spectators or school administrators. Examples of incidents that must be reported are as follows:

- A. Any incident involving a spectator, before, during or after the contest.
- B. Incidents involving damage to school or personal property.
- C. Physical or verbal altercations or other unsportsmanlike conduct between players, coaches, spectators or officials.
- D. Verbal abuse by players, coaches, or spectators directed toward opposing teams, coaches, or officials.
- E. Public criticism of officials by coaches in news media or social media.
- F. Coaches, players or school administrators entering the officials' dressing area or standing immediately outside that area at any time for the purpose of criticizing, threatening or berating game officials.

Sportsmanship incidents must be reported by the school and by the assigning association. A "Sportsmanship Incident Report Form" is located at <http://www.vhsl.org/doc/upload/adm-sportsmanship-incident.docx>. See Section 17 for reporting specifics.

19. STATE TOURNAMENT ASSIGNMENTS

State tournament assignments are made by League staff and are based on input from recognized associations, qualified observers, and knowledgeable League staff. Recognized associations in good standing with the League will be asked to provide recommendations for state assignments. Recommendations received after the designated deadline will not be considered. Recommended officials are not guaranteed state assignments. Recognized associations are not guaranteed state assignments. League staff will make every effort to assign only the most qualified and/or proven officials to state games. Officials who work state finals are given a VHSL Certificate of Excellence.

20. OFFICIALS RECOGNITION

VHSL Years of Service Certificates – Years of Service certificates are available in 5-year increments. Associations may request such certificates at any time using the VHSL-provided form(s).

VHSL Certificate of Excellence – Officials who work state finals are given a VHSL Certificate of Excellence.

NFOA State Active Official of the Year (by sport) – Candidates must be members of the NFHS Officials Association (NFOA) and must exemplify the highest standards of ethical conduct, moral character and carry the endorsement of their respective state high school association. They shall have made a recent significant contribution to high school officiating in Virginia.

Virginia High School Hall of Fame – The Virginia High School Hall of Fame recognizes those who have contributed in outstanding ways to athletic and activities programs serving Virginia's youth. Sponsored jointly by the Virginia High School League (VHSL) and the Virginia High School Coaches Association (VHSCA), the hall is dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of outstanding achievements by students and adults in sports and activities within Virginia's public high schools. Athletes are eligible for consideration 10 years after completion of their high school careers and are judged primarily for their achievements in interscholastic sports. Coaches are eligible after 15 years of experience or upon retirement and are judged on the merits of their achievements at the high school level. **Contributors are professionals who have rendered significant services in some other capacity such as administration, academic activities, officiating, media or sports medicine.** Nominations are due October 31 of each year for consideration for the following year. Athletes and coaches are screened by a committee from the VHSCA and contributors by a committee from the VHSL. Final selections are made by a joint committee.

NFOA National Contributor – Each state may nominate one CONTRIBUTOR to compete for this honor with nominees from other states. Nominees must exemplify the highest standards of sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and moral character, and carry the endorsement of their respective state high school association. The nominee need not be a member of the NFHS Officials Association. Some typical categories for this recognition are athletic administrators, writers, official's association leaders, etc. All candidates will be judged on their significant and/or long-term contribution to interscholastic officiating.

NFOA Sectional/National Active Official – Each state association may nominate one active official for this honor to compete with nominees from other states within NFHS Section 2. Nominees must exemplify the highest standards of ethical conduct, moral character and carry the endorsement of their respective state high school association. The nominee may or may not also be a state level award recipient. All candidates will be judged on their significant and/or long-term contribution to interscholastic officiating. Candidates must be members of the NFHS Officials Association (NFOA).

NFHS Citation Award (Official) – This is the highest honor awarded by the NFHS Officials Association and goes to a person deemed to have contributed to the association at the highest level. Only one citation may be awarded each year. Each state may nominate one Citation nominee. NFHS Citations are presented to individuals who have made significant contributions to the NFHS and/or other national organizations that have had an impact on high school activities. This nominee need not be an NFHS Officials Association member. Among the factors that may be considered are the following: 1) a longstanding and distinguished record of promoting officiating at the local and state level; 2) recognition among their colleagues for excellence; 3) approval from the state association executive officer. The NFHS Citation award recipient is honored at the Awards Luncheon at the NFHS Summer Meeting each year.

21. CLINIC AND EXAM REQUIREMENT & REPORTS

- A. **Exam Requirement** – All officials must take and pass a sport-specific exam each school year. Exams are taken through the NFHS website at exams.nfhs.org. The NFHS sends weekly exam reports to the VHSL. The exam scores are imported by VHSL staff and officials' records are updated. Officials will have 3 weeks to complete the exam. The exam will remain available for 3 additional weeks (weeks 4, 5 and 6). Officials who wait until the 4th week to complete the exam will be assessed a \$50.00 late fee. Officials who delay until the 5th week will be assessed a \$75.00 late fee. And, officials who wait until the 6th week to complete the exam will be assessed a \$100.00 late fee. Officials who do not meet the exam requirement within the 6-week period of time will be ineligible to work VHSL contests during that season. If late fees are assessed, the exam requirement remains incomplete until the appropriate fee has been received in the VHSL office.
- B. **On-Line Rules Clinic Requirement** – Officials who wish to work varsity contests must also meet an annual rules clinic requirement. VHSL provides sport-specific rules clinics either online or in person. Officials will have 3 weeks to complete an on-line clinic. An on-line clinic will remain available for 3 additional weeks (weeks 4, 5 and 6). Officials who wait until the 4th week to complete the on-line clinic will be assessed a \$50.00 late fee. Officials who delay until the 5th week will be assessed a \$75.00 late fee. And, officials who wait until the 6th week to complete the on-line clinic will be assessed a \$100.00 late fee. Officials who do not meet the on-line clinic requirement within the 6-week period of time will be ineligible to work VHSL varsity contests during that season. If late fees are assessed, the exam requirement remains incomplete until the appropriate fee has been received in the VHSL office.
- C. **In-person Rules Clinic Requirement** – When rules clinics in a particular sport are scheduled to be delivered in-person, the clinic schedule will be published on the VHSL website as soon as it is available. Typically, there will be 5 to 10 opportunities to attend a clinic. VHSL will attempt to schedule at least one of the clinics so that it is considered "local" for surrounding associations. Officials must attend one of the clinics. Officials who do not meet the clinic requirement in years that an in-person schedule is offered is ineligible to work VHSL contests at the varsity level.
- D. **Reports to Associations** – Associations receive a bi-weekly (every two weeks) report showing each official's exam score and registration status. A final report will be provided one week after the exam and clinic windows close.

22. COMPLIANCE WITH STATE LAW

As required by § 22.1-296.1(C) of The Code of Virginia, individuals must certify to their local association that they have never been convicted of a felony or any offense involving the sexual molestation or physical or sexual abuse or rape of a child. This is an annual requirement and a condition of registration with VHSL. A sample form can be found on the VHSL website at <http://www.vhsl.org/doc/upload/adm-felony-conviction-form.pdf>. Officials who can't or won't sign such a statement may not register with VHSL. Records must be maintained at the local association level. Local associations may have to provide documentation to schools under contract verifying that any official assigned to work games has a signed statement on file.

23. "SCRATCH" LIST

VHSL regulations (VHSL Handbook 27-6-2(2)) permit that prior to the start of the season, a principal may request that certain officials be eliminated (scratched) from working contests involving his/her school. Scratches must be

requested in writing and must be made by procedures agreed upon by the local officials association and the school, district or region involved.

24. PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH VHSL RULES & REQUIREMENTS

It is extremely important that associations abide by League rules and requirements. Failure to do so may result in penalties including but not limited to written sanction, probation, monetary fines, and/or a change in status from recognized to non-recognized. Associations placed on probation are ineligible for state tournament assignments and may also be prohibited from working any post-season contests. Associations that are non-recognized are ineligible for any post-season contests.

25. OFFICIALS' UNIFORM & EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

It is important that all officials dress professionally and in the required uniform. Coaches, players and fans will begin judging officials the moment they arrive at the game site. A professional appearance goes a long way in establishing credibility and respect. Uniforms should be clean and wrinkle-free. Shoes should be shined. The VHSL official's emblem and U.S. Flag are the only allowable markings on the uniform shirt unless a variance has been permitted in writing by VHSL's Director of Officiating. The VHSL official's emblem must be worn on the left chest (above the pocket if there is one), and a U.S. Flag patch must be worn on the left sleeve. The top border of the flag patch should be approximately 6 ½" down from the shoulder seam. All uniforms must be VHSL approved.

- A. Baseball – Gray slacks with a black leather belt, black socks, a navy or powder blue pullover shirt, and a navy hat/cap (fitted caps are preferred). The navy shirt has red and white trim at the collar and cuffs. The powder blue shirt has black cuffs and collar with powder blue and white accent striping. Markings other than the VHSL official's emblem and U.S. Flag are not permitted unless authorized by the VHSL's Director of Officials. A navy blue sweater (bases only), blazer, windbreaker, or windshirt worn over the appropriate shirt is permitted. The plate umpire should wear shoes designed for safety that include hard toes. The plate umpire also needs a ball and strike indicator, a small plate brush, ball bag, lineup cards and a pen or pencil, a chest protector, a sturdy mask with a throat protector, and shin guards. Base umpires should wear the conventional oxford type baseball shoes or black oxfords with golf type cleats or ripple soles. Primarily black shoes designed for umpiring should be worn by all umpires.
- B. Basketball – VHSL approved black and white striped (2 ¼") short-sleeved shirt, black pants (beltless pants are preferred), black belt with small buckle (if worn), black socks, predominantly black shoes, black lanyard or "Smitty," and black "Fox-40-type" whistle. Pants may be flat front or pleated. A black or navy jacket may be worn during pre-game warm-ups.
- C. Competitive Cheer – Business attire or other VHSL approved uniform. VHSL officials' emblem shall be worn on the left chest or on a lanyard worn around the neck.
- D. Field Hockey – VHSL approved shirt; black kilt, shorts or slacks (shorts or kilt should be at least to mid-thigh), white or black low-cut socks or black knee-length socks, predominantly black shoes with black laces, and black whistle.
- E. Football – VHSL approved black and white striped (2 ¼") shirt with black knit cuffs and Byron collar, all white tapered knickers with a short overlap (no more than 4") below the knee, one-piece stockings with a modified northwestern stripe, black football shoes with black laces (shoes should be shined before each game), black baseball-style cap with white piping (referee shall wear a solid, white baseball-style cap), and a black leather belt with a plain buckle. Officials may wear full-length, lined black pants with a single 1 ¼

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inch white stripe down each leg. When these black pants are worn, the game officials must wear black socks. All officials in a crew must wear the same style uniform.

- F. Gymnastics – Business attire or other VHSL approved uniform. VHSL officials’ emblem shall be worn on the left chest or on a lanyard worn around the neck.
- G. Boys Lacrosse – Black baseball-style cap with white piping, VHSL approved black-and-white 1 inch (VHSL custom 2 ¼” stripe preferred) vertically striped long or short-sleeved shirt with Byron collar (any visible undergarments should be black), black or white shorts (minimum 6-inch inseam) or full-length solid black pants, a black belt with small buckle, black stirrup socks with white over-the-calf crew socks on top, knee-length one-piece white with 4-inch black-top socks or short black socks that cover the ankle, and solid black shoes with black laces. A jacket, if worn, shall be black-and-white 1” vertically striped. Gloves, if worn, shall be solid black. Officials must also have a whistle, penalty marker, scorecard and pencil, coin, tape measure, and 20-second timing device. The penalty marker shall be a light yellow gold flag (15 inches square) weighted with sand or beans.
- H. Girls Lacrosse – VHSL approved black and white striped short- or long-sleeved shirt (VHSL custom 2 ¼” striped shirt preferred) with traditional black collar and black cuffs (V-neck shirt is permitted if both officials wear them), black kilt or shorts/pants (shorts/kilt should be at least to mid-thigh), predominantly black shoes with black laces, and white or black low-cut socks or solid black knee socks. If an undershirt is worn, it should be solid black. Hats, visors or ear bands and other cold weather gear should be solid black. Jackets, if worn, shall be black and white striped all-weather jackets, or solid black. Each official must have a black, Fox 40 type whistle and a backup; yellow flag approximately 14” square, weighted or un-weighted; green, yellow and red cards; pencil to record warnings; and a coin for flipping. If a lanyard is used, it should be black.
- I. Soccer – VHSL approved shirt, black shorts (a minimum 6” inseam is recommended) or long trousers, predominantly black shoes and black socks with white stripes. A cap, if worn, must be solid black. Officials must also have a whistle (and a backup), yellow and red cards, a stop watch, a flipping coin, and a pencil and scorecard.
- J. Softball – VHSL approved powder blue, pullover style shirt with black and white striping on the collar and cuffs, heather gray slacks, black belt with a small buckle, black socks, black shoes, and a navy blue fitted cap. If an undershirt is worn under the powder blue shirt, it shall be white and short sleeved. If a long-sleeved undershirt or turtle-neck is worn, it shall not be exposed. Navy blue pullover style jacket or knit sweater may be worn. The plate umpire must have a mask with a throat protector, an inside-style chest protector, leg guards, shoes with a hard shell or steel reinforced toe and tongue, ball and strike indicator, ball bag, and plate brush. Base umpire(s) should have a ball and strike indicator.
- K. Swim & Dive – White polo or jacket, or VHSL approved white polo with Navy shoulder accents (preferred), navy slacks/shorts, and white shoes. The white polo with Navy accents will be required in 2016-17.
- L. Track – Required in 2017 – Tan/khaki slacks or shorts (minimum 8” inseam recommended), VHSL track official’s shirt (white performance polo with black accents at the shoulder), and appropriate shoes. A black or navy windbreaker/windshirt may be worn during inclement weather. A tan/khaki VHSL cap is optional.
- M. Volleyball – VHSL approved white short or long sleeved performance polo shirt with black shoulder accents (VHSL custom shirt), black slacks, black belt with small buckle (if worn), black socks, and black shoes. A long sleeved white sweater may be worn over the white polo shirt if conditions warrant. The first referee must also have a black or white lanyard, a black or white whistle, a set of yellow and red

cards, a coin and a watch. In addition to the equipment needed by the first referee, the second referee must also have a lineup “card” and a pen/pencil.

- N. Wrestling – VHSL approved gray short-sleeved shirt with black pinstripes, or an event provided shirt common to all referees at that event, full-length black trousers, black belt with small buckle (if trousers have belt loops), black socks and black wrestling/gym shoes without colored highlights. The referee shall also have a colored disk, a black lanyard and black whistle, red and green armbands (red armband on the left wrist; green armband on the right wrist), and a kit to complete a random draw.

26. FORMING A NEW ASSOCIATION

Occasionally, the League office receives inquiries from individuals who wish to form a new officials association. The organization must submit an application that includes the following documents.

- A. A Statement of Purpose describing the mission of the proposed organization and explaining why a local officials association should be established in the area.
- B. A copy of the proposed association’s Constitution and Bylaws.
- C. A list of officers.
- D. Names of Assigner(s), Head of Training, and local rules interpreter.
- E. A list of potential members (minimum of 20 required).
- F. Proposed dates, place, time and agenda for meetings (minimum of 6 required).
- G. An outline of proposed curriculum for new officials.
- H. A letter of support from the District Council(s) of the VHSL District in which potential schools (customers) reside.
- I. A \$100.00 processing fee (non-refundable)

Once all of the required information has been submitted, the new association will have two years to establish itself and meet the requirements specified in section 2 of this Officials Association Guidebook. After two years, if the association has failed to meet the requirements in section 2, but a new association is still desirable, the process would begin again with the submission of new documents and the processing fee.

27. BEST PRACTICES

Financial checks and balances – Officiating is a business. It is critical that associations implement solid business practices. For example, billing and collections should not be done by the same person. Checks should require two signatures. No individual should authorize his/her own reimbursement. Checks should bear the name of the association, not an individual. Personal and association income and expenses should not be intermingled. An independent financial audit of the association should be performed on a regularly scheduled basis. All applicable IRS regulations must be followed and required forms, including 1099’s, filed.

Officiating is a business – Consider establishing a legal corporation or company. Establishing your association as a legal entity can be very beneficial and, depending on the type of business established, can help to limit the association’s liability exposure. For additional information on this topic go to www.virginia.gov/business.

Select/Elect the Right People – The importance of leadership within an association cannot be understated. The best associations are those that have solid leadership. Understandably, most officials just want to work their games (“good” games, of course) and have little interest in participating in the management of the association, and yet without “buy-in” and participation by the association’s membership, the association, in time, will fall short

of expectations and will fail to meet its responsibilities. It takes time, effort and sacrifice to be an effective board member.

The Board – Successful associations have, at a minimum, a President, a Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Having some number of voting “members-at-large” also helps with making the association’s member officials feel like they are represented when the board must take action. History has shown that a board that is not representative of its membership will eventually fail.

All positions within the organization are important, but perhaps none are more critical than those of Assigner and Treasurer. Each of these positions requires a very specific skill set, and great care should be taken when selecting individuals to fill them.

The Assigner – The association’s assigner can be a very powerful and influential person. The assigner must have better-than-average organizational skills, especially as the number of games to be assigned increases. The assigner must keep detailed and accurate records. The assigner must be able to communicate effectively with all stakeholders – officials, administrators, board members and the League staff. The assigner must be honest, have unquestionable integrity and must meet the highest standards of character and ethical behavior. Thought should be given to hiring/electing an assigner who is not a working official. This removes any real or perceived conflict of interest within the assigning process. A non-working assigner is able to observe and evaluate other officials. This is of great value when putting teams of officials together. A non-working assigner also helps with “crisis management” – those times when officials are running late or fail to show up for a game that may or may not have been on the assigner’s schedule. A non-working assigner is available to “put out fires” on game night. The assigner has the very difficult task of balancing the needs of the schools (quality officiating) with the needs of the association and its member officials (opportunities for growth and development).

The Treasurer – Nothing can wreak more havoc on an organization than financial issues. Collection and disbursement of funds, payroll, management of assets, and federal and state tax requirements all typically fall within the purview of the Treasurer. Many of the same skills and character qualities that are needed in an assigner are also “must haves” for a treasurer.

Meetings – Nothing is worse than having a meeting simply for the sake of having a meeting. People are busy. Lives are full. There are many demands on everybody’s time. Good meetings require planning and must keep people engaged. There are always important things to talk about – rules, mechanics, situations that have come up, points of emphasis, problem areas, philosophies and any number of other topics – but you have to plan. Change things up. Bring in a guest speaker – a coach, or a top official from another association. Have a coaches’ round table. Use video. Keep things interesting.

Training – The VHSL relies heavily on associations to provide adequate training for individual officials. Training requires resources and, once again, it requires a plan. Most associations with effective training plans combine classroom with on-court or on-field instruction. Training must also be on-going. When officials stop learning, they stop getting better. Borrow ideas from other groups. Incorporate video. Utilize individuals within your association who have a talent for teaching and a passion for learning. Encourage your officials to go to camps and to share what they learn with others. Find out what other associations are doing.

Mentoring – Studies and experience have shown that the first three years of an official’s career are crucial when it comes to his/her retention in the profession. If personal recruitment is the most effective way to get someone interested in officiating, it follows that personal attention during the official’s “formative” years will go a long way in keeping a recruit engaged.

Evaluating officials – The fair and regular evaluation of officials can be a difficult challenge for associations, yet without some type of process in place, associations can become stagnant and the membership disenfranchised. Paid evaluators can be expensive. Peer evaluations can sometimes be suspect. Finding people who are good evaluators is not always easy. Evaluations by coaches can help identify officials who are popular, but offer little useable feedback relative to the actual art of officiating. One thing is certain – the “good ole boy” system of evaluating and assigning does nothing to improve the association’s level of officiating.

Working cooperatively with schools – Officials and officials’ associations provide a service. Nothing will turn off a room full of Athletic Directors more quickly than a meeting with officials who essentially tell the AD’s how things are going to work. This is how associations lose contracts/schools to competitors. Cooperative communication is essential if the goals of education-based athletics are to be met.

Assigning policies – Discrimination of any kind should not be tolerated within an association. Assignments must be based on ability and availability. Good assigners know that the more officials capable of working the “big” game (whatever that means), the stronger their association. This is not to say that all officials are equal in ability – they are not. Nor do people have the same kind of availability. Family, work and other obligations may limit an official’s availability. Having said that, officials who want to “move up” need to find ways to be available more often. You can’t get better if you don’t work! Good assigners also know that, in most cases, school administrators do not want to see the same officials over and over and over again during the same season. Some associations have more flexibility than others when it comes to varying assignments. But, even in small associations with limited numbers of schools, officials should rarely, if ever, see the same team more than once in a 10 to 14-day period of time.

Professionalism – The very best and most successful associations stress the importance of professionalism. Professionalism spans many categories – the way the association conducts business; conduct at meetings; dress to and from contests; treatment of coaches, players, administrators and even facilities. Professionalism on the part of game officials is equal in importance to sportsmanship on the part of players, coaches and team followers. In a word, professionalism and sportsmanship are nothing more than respect.

Constitution and Bylaws – An organization’s constitution and bylaws define the organization and its operating procedures. Bylaws outline the workings of the organization. Common bylaw topics include how directors are elected, the role of each director, accounting and financial procedures, standards of conduct, and dissolution clauses. The constitution should contain fundamental, comprehensive organizational information. An association’s constitution reveals information about the organization such as the name, purpose, qualifications for membership, officers and elections, meetings, what constitutes a quorum, and policies and procedures. An organization’s constitution and bylaws are not easy documents to create. The process can be time consuming and requires thoughtful consideration and attention to detail. Borrow ideas from other reputable associations. There are several web resources that would assist an organization in formulating its constitution and bylaws. One example is http://csi.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/L03creating_a_constitution_and_bylaws.pdf. Other resources can be found using one of the online search engines (e.g., Google, Ask.com, Yahoo).

28. OFFICIAL'S CODE OF ETHICS

Official's Code of Ethics (as provided by the NFHS) – Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

- Officials shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.
- Officials shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.
- Officials shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
- Officials shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
- Officials shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
- Officials shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that student-athletes, coaches and the public hold for the profession.
- Officials shall, while enforcing the rules of play, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to student-athletes. Where appropriate, they shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous.
- Officials shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.
- Officials shall maintain an ethical approach while participating in forums, chat rooms and all forms of social media.

29. APPENDIX A - FORMS

Following is a list of forms that associations will need in order to conduct business with the League. Forms are posted under “Officials’ Forms and Documents” on the VHSL website. Each of the forms is listed and linked below.

[List of VHSL Varsity Contracts](#) – Due July 31

[Officials Association Information Form](#) – Due July 31

Officials Association Fee Survey (by sport) – Due May 31 in odd-numbered years

[Baseball](#)

[Basketball](#)

Cheer

[Field Hockey](#)

[Football](#)

[Gymnastics](#)

[Lacrosse](#)

[Soccer](#)

[Softball](#)

[Volleyball](#)

[Wrestling](#)

[Ejection Report Form](#)

[VHSL ID Request Form](#)

State Tournament Recommendation Form

[VHSL State Event Pass Request Form](#)

[Years of Service Certificate Request Form](#)

[Felony Form](#)

Sample Independent Contractor Agreement

VHSL Official’s Application Form

