



PLAYER - PARENT HANDBOOK



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT:
BEING A PLAYER
BEING A PLAYER PARENT
BEING A TEAM PARENT LIAISON
BEING A CHAPERONE

Welcome to the Downstate Juniors Volleyball Club!

Mission and Philosophy

Downstate Juniors VBC (“Downstate”) is a Juniors volleyball club for athletes ages four (4) to eighteen (18). Our coaches are driven to put athletes first while developing every player to their peak ability. We believe, when you work hard and focus on fundamentals, combined with competitive, team-oriented play, individual skills improve and winning follows.

A fundamental approach to the game and the establishment of a **strong work ethic** are attributes which have made Downstate a successful club experience for so many players over the years. Downstate has a tradition of **emphasis on fundamentals and sportsmanship**. More importantly, Downstate creates long lasting friendships as a result of being built through years of hard work and competition.

Downstate is dedicated to improving every athlete's volleyball skills, both mentally and physically. In addition, our goal is to help create responsible, goal oriented, **student athletes** committed to academic success. We are proud to say that many of our players go on to play college volleyball and many attend rigorous academic programs at Division I, II, and III. Downstate’s goal is to provide the tools the junior athlete can use to become a better all-around volleyball player, teammate, leader, and young adult.

We look forward to your involvement with the Downstate Juniors VBC!

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OUR PLAYER MOTTO

Believe in always doing your best.

Believe in and listen to your coach.

Believe in having fun while working hard.

Believe in eating nutritious food, not junk.

Believe in, support, and respect your teammates.

Believe in yourself and maintain a positive attitude.

Believe there is always another chance, shake it off and move on.

Believe that the coaches and parents believe in you.

Believe **YOU** can make a difference!

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Programs

Downstate Juniors VBC offers several programs designed to meet the different individual goals of each player. The success of each team is measured not only by a winning season but also by the growth of each player. While we hope each team will have ample experiences winning matches, we also hope each team will learn from their losses. A team's cohesiveness on and off the court, coupled with a positive attitude and good sportsmanship, is as important to winning as are good technique and aggressive playing. We hope each team will form friendships, have fun while playing, and will encourage each other during competition.

Regardless of program (National – Aspire, Youth Teams or Rec League), only rostered athletes are permitted at the Downstate locations, without a parent present. Athletes' sibling(s) are not permitted at any Downstate site, without a parent/guardian, during Downstate events, i.e., practices/tournaments.

National Teams

General Information

The National program is designed for players 18 & younger who have experience and/or are highly committed to playing on a competitive team. Each National team is generally limited to twelve (12) players.¹ Players must try-out for a position on a National team.

National Tournaments

The National teams are competitive with the ultimate goal of earning a bid to compete in a National tournament. If a National team does not win a bid, it will register for another end of year tournament with either USAA, AAU, or JVA.

Players on all National teams commit to the entire extended season when they accept a position on the team.

Athlete's playing time during competition is based on various things including attitude, skill, and attendance and not always in that order; due to the determining factors that may vary between

¹ The number of players at each age level is determined at the beginning of the season based on various mitigating circumstances.

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tournaments, play time is not guaranteed. Some players will play more than others. Players should use practice as the time and place to improve their individual skills, strength, and strategic understanding of volleyball.

Chemistry amongst players off the court creates chemistry and trust on the court. Working on the relationship between athletes allows for friendships and respect to grow amongst teammates. This translates to athletes working hard and playing for each other during competition. To help this process along, Downstate focuses on “Downstate Time”. During tournaments, Downstate time is team time. We encourage parents and families to join along at dinners and events; however, the team should be spending time together socializing and harnessing that off the court chemistry. At dinners, the team will eat together while parents can enjoy each other’s company at a separate table. Team camp areas should also be reserved for the athletes, not parents. We request parents’ assistance in this venture. Developing independent, well-rounded athletes is a goal we are committed to at Downstate and cannot do without the help of our entire Downstate family.

National teams spend A LOT of time together throughout the season. This means parents will spend A LOT of time together as well. Often times, there are opportunities for parents to socialize amongst themselves, really creating a sense of community that makes the trips much more enjoyable. Parents should consider working with their Team Parent to coordinate social events with parents on the team. Additionally, sitting together during tournament matches creates a strong presence showing unity and support for our club.

Time Commitment

The core season for National teams runs for approximately 6½ months from mid-November through the Memorial Day weekend. National teams which have earned a bid in a nationally ranked tournament, or at Regionals, will play an extended season through early July; however, most Downstate Directors will attempt to register any National team which does not earn a bid, into another end of year tournament². There are two to three practices per week with occasional positional practices throughout the season. Each team will be scheduled for approximately ten (10) tournaments during the season (based on availability). This includes several day tournaments on Saturday’s or Sunday’s, and several multi-day overnight tournaments. Tournaments are nearly always scheduled on holiday weekends, in addition to other weekends. Teams that travel to National Qualifiers, or other large national events, might miss a day or two of school, for travel.

Fees

Club membership fees include coaching, practice facilities, travel costs, and some administrative items. Uniform items distributed as part of the fees may include practice shirts, competition uniforms, spandex, socks, warmups, and backpacks³. Travel costs include tournament fees, coaches’ hotel rooms, a small coaches stipend, (parking, meals, tolls), and if required, airfare and

² The top National teams ages 15-17 will generally be entered into an end of year tournament after Memorial Day during the summer; all National team players should commit to an extended season into early July.

³ Downstate will require all players to purchase a uniform kit as all players must have a uniform in order to compete.

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team car rental.⁴ Players are responsible for their own transportation and meals during tournaments, as these are not provided by the club. Fees vary by location, program, and specific age group. Check our website for specific program costs.

Fees do not include additional costs for teams that earn a place in the Nationals tournament (teams planning on attending a National competition frequently engage in fundraising activities to cover the cost of attendance) and/or related costs for multi-day tournament and travel such as meals while there or souvenirs. Fundraising options for athletes and teams are available and always an option.

Downstate requires complete season fees paid in four-six (4-6) payments usually by February of the season.

Regional Teams

General Information

The Regional Team program is designed for players ages 10 through 18 years old who are interested in playing at a high level but with a limited and localized travel schedule. Practices are twice per. The team is normally between 10-12 players⁵. While players are still expected at practices and tournaments, this program is geared for athletes who want a less stringent travel experience and competition, and still need flexibility. The Regional teams are competitive; however, due to the limited travel, they allow the athlete some flexibility in the schedule.

Regional Tournaments

Competition includes approximately seven (7) tournaments based on tournament availability; two (2) of these are overnight tournaments within driving distance while the remainder are held at local play sites. Athlete's playing time during competition is based on various things including attitude, skill, and attendance and not always in that order; due to the determining factors that may vary between tournaments, play time is not guaranteed. However, Regional team players will generally play every tournament and often most matches. Some players will play more than others. Players should use practices as the time and place to improve their individual skills, strength, and strategic understanding of volleyball.

Chemistry amongst players off the court creates chemistry and trust on the court. Working on the relationship between athletes allows for friendships and respect to grow amongst teammates. This translates to athletes working hard and playing for each other during competition. To help this process along, Downstate focuses on "Downstate Time". During tournaments, Downstate time is team time. We encourage parents and families to join along at dinners and events; however, the team should be spending time together socializing and harnessing that off the court chemistry. At dinners, the team will eat together while parents can enjoy each other's company at a separate table. Team camp areas should also be reserved for the athletes, not parents. We request parents' assistance in this venture. Developing independent, well-rounded athletes is a

⁴ Downstate parents will be responsible for procuring their child's tournament hotel room. Downstate will most likely require parents secure a room within the club's room blocks if mandated by the tournament. Coaches' salary for the weekend as well as the stipend will be included in the fees. Additionally, Downstate will not be requiring the fee of a chaperone's hotel room be passed along as part of the fees.

⁵ The number of players at each age level is determined at the beginning of the season based on various mitigating circumstances.

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goal we are committed to at Downstate and cannot do without the help of our entire Downstate family.

Regional teams spend a good amount of time together throughout the season. This means parents will spend A LOT of time together as well. Often times, there are opportunities for parents to socialize amongst themselves, really creating a sense of community that makes the trips much more enjoyable. Parents should consider working with their Team Parent to coordinate social events with parents on the team. Additionally, sitting together during tournament matches creates a strong presence showing unity and support for our club.

Time Commitment

The season for Regional teams run for approximately five (5) months from mid-November through the end of April or the first weekend in May. Regional teams will have two weekly team practices on weeknights and/or Sunday.

Fees

In addition to all coaching, practice facilities, and tournament fees, each player will receive necessary apparel including practice t-shirts and equipment and all necessary uniform pieces⁶. Players are responsible for their own transportation and meals during tournaments, as these are not provided by the club. Fees vary by location, program, and specific age group. Check our website for specific program costs.

Aspire Teams

General Information

The Aspire program is designed for players ages 10 through 18 years old who are interested in playing beyond the school season but with limited travel and time commitments. Each Aspire team will be limited to between 12 and 15 players⁷. Players must try out for a spot on an Aspire team. The Aspire teams are competitive in our region; however, the focus of training is on skill improvement with a slight emphasis on competitive results. All players will have some opportunity to play in each tournament; however, some players will play more than others. Practices are emphasized, as the goal of the program is to ensure players have the opportunity to improve their individual skills, strength and strategic understanding of volleyball.

Aspire Tournaments

Competition includes between three (3) and five (5) local tournaments based on tournament availability. These are within driving distance and within the GEVA region. The goal of Aspire teams to allow experience playing during matches.

Chemistry amongst players off the court creates chemistry and trust on the court. Working on the relationship between athletes allows for friendships and respect to grow amongst teammates. This translates to athletes working hard and playing for each other during competition. To help this process along, Downstate focuses on “Downstate Time”. During tournaments, Downstate

⁶ Downstate will require all players to purchase a uniform kit as all players must have a uniform in order to compete.

⁷ The number of players at each age level is determined at the beginning of the season based on various mitigating circumstances.

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time is team time. We encourage parents and families to join along at dinners and events; however, the team should be spending time together socializing and harnessing that off the court chemistry. At dinners, the team will eat together while parents can enjoy each other's company at a separate table. Team camp areas should also be reserved for the athletes, not parents. We request parents' assistance in this venture. Developing independent, well-rounded athletes is a goal we are committed to at Downstate and cannot do without the help of our entire Downstate family.

Parents should consider working with their Team Parent to coordinate social events with parents on the team. Additionally, sitting together during tournament matches creates a strong presence showing unity and support for our club.

Time Commitment

The season for Aspire teams runs for approximately 5 months from mid-November through the end of April or the first weekend in May. Aspire teams will have two (2) weekly team practices on weeknights and/or Sunday. They will participate in five (5) local, single day tournaments, on Saturday or Sunday, during the season. Aspire teams do not participate in overnight tournaments.⁸

Fees

In addition to all coaching, practice facilities, and tournament fees, each player will receive necessary apparel including practice t-shirts and equipment and all necessary uniform pieces which are not included in the season's cost.⁹ Players are responsible for their own transportation and meals during tournaments, as these are not provided by the club. Fees vary by location, program and specific age group. Check our website for specific program costs.

Volley Stars

General Information

The Volley Stars program is designed for players in grades sixth – eighth (6th-8th) as a fun and creative approach to learning the game of volleyball. Players will have the opportunity to develop their individual skills in an environment with minimal pressure that promotes fun, fitness, sportsmanship, and an enjoyment of the game.

Time Commitment

Volley Stars season runs for twenty (20) sessions from November through May. There are two fun-filled practices per week. Players may attend one or both!

Fees

Fees vary from season to season. Please refer to our website: www.downstatevolleyball.com for specific pricing.

⁸ Downstate reserves the right to determine additional tournament opportunities and pose those to the respective teams. Although this is unlikely in the Aspire program, the option for additional tournament opportunities is available for additional costs and time commitment.

⁹ Downstate will require all players to purchase a uniform kit as all players must have a uniform in order to compete.

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Who Should Join?

Players ages twelve – fourteen (12-14) years old. Skill level ranges from limited to no experience. The program is targeted towards those looking to play volleyball to have fun, begin to learn the basics of the game, practice each week without the commitment of playing on a team. Players are grouped on skill level where possible. The Volley Stars practices are skill training sessions only. Those players who want to compete in 6v6 matches should look to join our Travel, Regional, or Aspire programs where available.

Volley Bees

General Information

The Volley Bees program is designed for players in grades two-five (2-5), as a fun and creative approach to learning the game of volleyball. Players will have the opportunity to develop their individual skills in an environment with minimal pressure that promotes fun, fitness, sportsmanship, and an enjoyment of the game.

Time Commitment

Volley Bees season runs for approximately twenty (20) sessions from November through May. There are two fun-filled practices per week. Players may attend one or both!

Fees

Volley Bees is free to siblings of Downstate club team members and is available at an extremely low cost for others – see our website www.downstatevolleyball.com for details!

Who Should Join?

Players ages six – eleven (6-11) years old with limited or no experience playing volleyball who want to have fun and learn the basics of the game.

Rec League Divisions

Rookies (Grades K-2) & (Grades 3-4)

Our Rookies division is designed to introduce the game of volleyball to young athletes ages four-ten (4-10). Our coaches are volunteers, often parents. The primary focus of the Rookies division is to have fun, while participating in a challenging and active environment. These young athletes will be learning the game of volleyball while mastering body mechanics and motor control. This group will meet for one (1) hour per week. The time will be spent as an instructional clinic and eventually as the season progresses will include modified games.

Minors (Grades 5-6)

Our Minors division is designed to introduce the game of volleyball to later elementary and early middle school age children. Our coaches are volunteers, often parents. The primary focus is to have fun, while participating in a challenging and active environment. Each team will practice 1 hour per week and compete in games, 1 day per week.

Majors (Grades 7-8)

Our Majors division program is designed to introduce the game of volleyball to middle school age children. Our coaches are volunteers, often parents. The primary focus is to have fun, while

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participating in a challenging and active environment. Each team will practice 1 hour per week and compete in games, 1 day per week.

National, Regional, and Aspire College Recruiting

Downstate provides college recruiting services by guiding players through the process. Downstate holds several information sessions during the season, designed to provide high school players and their parents with all the rules and options involved in the college recruiting process. The coaching staff works with players to help enable interested players and parents in collegiate play. We have a recruiting coordinator as well as two assistants for our main location; our North location also has an assistant recruiting coordinator who reports up the chain.¹⁰

Downstate utilizes a recruiting platform named SportsRecruits.¹¹ Players can create profiles for themselves displaying videos and accolades, both educational and athletic. College coaches utilize this platform to view players' footage and communicate with the athletes.

Throughout the course of the season, Downstate recruiting coordinators are working with athletes, their families, and the college coaches to facilitate a college career for Downstate players.

More information and workshops are available throughout the season and by contacting the recruiting coordinators. [Downstate coaches and staff](#)

Staff

Directors

Dan Altro



Co-Director and Head Coach Daniel Altro, “Dan” as he is most commonly known in the volleyball world, has been running and/or coaching Downstate Juniors since 1993.

Dan started his coaching career in the summer of 1984 coaching track and field for the Westchester PAL. Volleyball entered Dan’s life at Bill Schroh’s 4th of July backyard family BBQ and also at “Running” camp during the summer of 1983 where he played pickup volleyball with his Ossining High School Cross Country teammates and other campers. In December 1985, Dan joined the **United States Navy**. While stationed at NAS in Pensacola, FL in 1986, he fell into a group of volleyballers and started playing real volleyball, both indoor and on the beach. While in the Navy, Dan also participated on various Navy teams competing and coaching in the United States and throughout Europe. During the fall of 1992, Dan returned to New York and in the winter of 1993 met Arthur Prusan, then Director of **Downstate Juniors**, and the rest is History!

¹⁰ Each season the Downstate Board evaluates these positions and decides if changes/adjustments to the program are necessary and if so, makes those adjustments to the best of its ability.

¹¹ Downstate evaluates the platform used for recruiting on an annual basis to ensure the best available option is being utilized.

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Under coach Dan's guidance, Downstate has produced numerous NCAA Division I and II scholarship athletes. Several of his former players have gone on to achieve all-American status in college. In addition to these honors, several of his players have played professionally in Europe and Puerto Rico.

Dan was the Head Coach at the NCAA Division II **Dominican College**. In his previous Division II coaching experience, he coached at **Pace University**, where he rebuilt their program and returned Pace to a force in the Northeast Region, capping his time there with a return to NCAA playoffs. Prior to Pace, he was head coach at **St. Thomas Aquinas College** for two seasons. Dan also acted as the Associate head coach for **Western Connecticut State University** where through his recruiting efforts, the Colonials achieved one ECAC and three NCAA postseason playoff runs. Coach Dan has also served as the head coach at **New York City Technical College**, **Carmel High School**, **Haldane High School** (3rd place NY State Championships), **Byram Hills High School**, and as the Assistant coach at **Woodham High School, FL**. Dan has also coached **Track and Field and Cross Country** at the High School level.

Dan has remained active with **USA Volleyball** and the **New York State Empire Games** where he has been a coach and/or a player since 1994. Dan currently resides in Ossining, NY where he returned after proudly serving his country in the United States Navy. Dan can be reached at dan@downstatevolleyball.com, or 914-645-8427.

Joel Stanford



Coach Joel Stanford joined Downstate Juniors as co-director in 2005 and has been instrumental in leading the club to the next level of growth in the region. Following his collegiate soccer career at the **University of North Texas**, Joel became a four-time Men's Regional Champion in the **Lone Star Region** of USA Volleyball. Joel began coaching volleyball in the North Texas region where he won a Junior National Championship, in 2005. In 2004, Joel was varsity assistant volleyball coach for the **Texas TAPPS 6A** State Champions and head coach of the **Skyline Juniors 14 National team**, which won the gold medal at the **2005 Junior Olympic Girl's Championship**, in the 14 American Division. In 2007, as head coach, Joel led the **Haldane High School's** varsity volleyball team to the New York Class D State Championship title. Joel was also the head coach of Div. II, Concordia College. From 2006 to 2012 he was the Garden Empire Volleyball Association's (GEVA) Junior Competition Director. His Downstate teams have won the GEVA open regional championship 7 times.

Joel is the proud father of three children. His daughter is a graduate of the **US Air Force Academy**, where she was a starting setter for 3 years. She is a cyber security expert on active duty in the US Air Force. One son recently graduated from Boston University and his youngest son is in college.

Currently, Joel sits on the GEVA board. Joel can be contacted at joel@downstatevolleyball.com or 214-616-3668.

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Joe Felipe

Joe has been coaching volleyball for 20+ years. He began his coaching career as an assistant coach at **Hartwick College** in the Fall of 1999. After graduating from college, he immediately found a job teaching and began coaching at the high school level. Joe coached at **Walter Panas High School** volleyball program. In the past 14 seasons the team has gone on to win eight league titles, four sectional championships, and four times finished in the top four teams in NYS, including two NYS Championships in 2016/2017. Joe began coaching at Downstate Juniors in 2007. He has coached in both the Aspire and National programs. Over the last seven seasons, his national level teams have won two regional championships and five bids to the AAU national tournament. Joe has a passion for volleyball, specifically, youth development and continues to pursue avenues to help develop volleyball in our area.

Joe can be reached at joe@downstatevolleyball.com.

Matt Cochenour



Matt was introduced to volleyball at a young age and would go on to play both beach and indoor while serving his country in the **United States Army**. After the Army, he coached in Italy and Germany. While working overseas, he worked with and was mentored by **US National Coach John Kessel**. Matt returned to the States and met Dan Altro. He first came to Downstate Juniors in the 2013 season and has been with us ever since. He has coached various age groups and multiple teams each season. He was the Head Coach at **Briarcliff High School** in 2017 where he led the team to Section Finals. In the summer of 2018, he accepted the Assistant Coach position at **Manhattan College**. In addition, Matt is extremely involved in **USA Volleyball** working with the **High-Performance Team**. He is CAP I, Beach CAP I, Art of

Coaching (AOC), and Gold Medal Square certified.

Matt can be reached at matt@downstatevolleyball.com.

Coaching Staff

Staff Selection

Downstate's staff features an outstanding and impressive group of professionals that are dedicated to teaching the sport of volleyball. They include former professional and national team players, head and assistant college coaches as well as former and current collegiate players. Downstate Directors select and assign head coaches according to whom they feel will do the best job meeting the Downstate program goals and standards. All Downstate coaches have successfully passed USA Volleyball IMPACT training and many head coaches are CAP (Coaching Accreditation Program) certified. All coaches must pass a background check prior to beginning in a coaching position.

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Coaches Responsibilities

Information Communication

Coaches are responsible for enforcing all Downstate rules and making sure their respective teams understand those rules.

Downstate coaches communicate with their teams via LeagueApps¹². Downstate requires all athletes sign up for LeagueApps prior to the season beginning. All changes to scheduling, tournament and practice information, team events, and club related updates and information are communicated by either the Directors or a team's respective coach.

Personal Conduct

We expect our coaches to maintain high standards of professional and moral conduct and sportsmanship. Downstate coaches are required to be good role models for players which is a credit to the club and the sport of volleyball.

Game Conduct

Coaches must refrain from any conduct which may incite unsportsmanlike behavior of players, parents, and other spectators. At all times, coaches must respect game officials, opposing players and coaches, and spectators. Any instances of unwelcomed behavior or misconduct by coaches, players and/or parents are addressed by Downstate Directors and handled accordingly.

Supervision

Coaches are responsible for the overall supervision of their respective team as well as any Downstate team/player. Any issues of misconduct by any Downstate player, parent or coach, if observed by another coach, will be reported to the Downstate Board. If determined the attitudes, actions or conduct are contrary to Downstate rules, regulations or philosophy, the Directors will convene, review, discuss and take the appropriate action according to their discretion.¹³

Player Information

PLAYER COMMITMENT

Downstate Juniors VBC is dedicated to improving the volleyball skills of each athlete. This goal cannot be met unless each team member fulfills their obligation to attend all practices and tournaments on a consistent basis.

¹² Downstate reviews the terms of our communication platform on an annual basis to determine if the cost and effectiveness are of the best value for our club members. As additional options become available, the Board reviews those platforms to determine whether a switch is required and/or best for the club.

¹³ Any concerns of misconduct by any staff or Downstate player/parent, are handled by the Directors and/or respective coach (when necessary) on a case-by-case basis and at the complete discretion of the board according to our incident reporting Standard Operating Procedure.

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ATTENDANCE AND CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENCE

National/Regional players are permitted four missed practices without any consequences. Athletes on teams 16's-18's are allowed two additional missed practices for college visits, only.¹⁴

Should an athlete be aware of the potential to miss a practice(s) or tournament in advance of the season, they must disclose that information at the Meet & Greet or prior to the season begin date. Any missed team event (practices or competition), in excess of the allotted amount, may result in reduced playing time at the next tournament. The player will be required to sit the very first match of the tournament as a consequence of missing the team event.¹⁵

Tournament Consequences:

- National Team players must sit one tournament day for every tournament day missed.
- Regional Team players may be subject to the same consequence as National teams and are expected to provide the potential conflicts in the beginning of the season. Should a player on a Regional Team, disclose the potential for substantial conflict, the Directors reserve the right to consider, moving the athlete to an Aspire team.
- Aspire Team members that miss a tournament have just missed one of their five (5) opportunities for competition – that is sufficient consequence.

This is a matter decided by the Club Directors and one in which the team head coach is responsible for implementing. Players will not be penalized for practices missed in the rare case where a significant scheduling change is made with less than 48 hours' notice to the team. **Please make sure that you clearly understand the policy for your team.**

Attending practice is a crucial part of an athlete's growth and instrumental in building a strong team. Even in instances where there is no mandatory penalty for a missed practice, absences could potentially put athletes at a disadvantage and could therefore potentially impact an athlete's playing time.

This policy is not punitive. Players earn tournament play time by attending practices and working hard. It stands to reason that the players who will best be able to play are those most prepared. Downstate understands family and school obligations as well as illness, are a part of life and sometimes conflict with plans. In the event of these conflicts, personal choices must be made and should be discussed between the coach, player, parent and sometimes, possibly a Director.

Downstate encourages athletes to attend practices in the event they are able to, even if they are unable to physically participate. Much of the instruction can be listened to and observed so the player does not fall behind. This is specifically true when teams are learning/reviewing systems such as defensive and offensive, offensive plays, serving zones, and general player growth. Since so much of how Downstate operates is incumbent upon disciplined athletes on and off the court, athletes can continue to learn volleyball as well as general team concepts.

¹⁴ Athletes are strongly encouraged to work around their Downstate schedules to arrange college visits; however, in the event a miss is unavoidable, a note/email from the college coach advising of the completed visit, is required to be provided to their Downstate coach.

¹⁵ Downstate Board reviews the attendance policy each season. The Board maintains the right to review situations as they come up and determine actions.

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Exceptions:

School events: Practices missed for school activities are not held against the player in the event the coach is advised of the future absence with advance notice.

Unexpected family events: Downstate understands not all events can be planned in advance. In the event of a death in the family, should the wake/funeral take place during a Downstate event, the athlete will not be penalized for missing those respective days.

Additional conflicts, presented to the Board prior to the season, will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Otherwise, all other misses outside the listed exceptions, are subject to the stated Attendance policy.¹⁶

Playing Time

Playing time is based on Attendance, Attitude and Skill, and not necessarily in that order.

- **Attendance:** at practices and tournaments. Players are expected to attend all practices and tournaments, arriving on time and ready to participate.
- **Attitude:** Players are expected to serve as a positive influence on the team and support their teammates.
 - Listens to coach's instructions and show a willingness to learn;
 - Work hard during every practice and competition;
 - Work as a team member, always prepared to play and maintain a positive outlook when they make a mistake.
- **Skill level:** According to position. Some players are utilized in either front/back row positions. Others will play all six rotations. This is a part of the game, not necessarily a statement about the player's ability.

It is the intention of Downstate coaches to attempt to allow for playing time for all players; however, this does not always equate to "equal" playing time. The coach's primary responsibility is the overall success of the team. Players are not guaranteed playing time, though players on Aspire teams will generally receive significant time on the court. Playing time is at the discretion of the team's coach. Players (and not parents¹⁷) should direct their questions regarding their playing time directly with the coach. We encourage this at Downstate to build initiative, leadership, and accountability skills within our student-athletes.

Practice Rules

- **SCHEDULE.** The team practice schedule is set at the beginning of the season. On occasion, it is

¹⁶ Directors reserve the right to address attendance issues on a case by case basis.

¹⁷ Parents are not permitted to discuss their child's playing time with coaches. The Downstate Directors will support the coach's declination to discuss this matter with any parent who approaches them. Parents are encouraged to discuss with their children how to have tough conversations with their respective coach.

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necessary to make a change or an emergency cancellation. The schedule and updates are posted on the club website, <http://www.downstatevolleyball.com>. All players are individually responsible for frequently checking the social media sites to identify any changes in schedule. Coaches will most likely utilize text messages via the agreed upon communication platform for the season in order to communicate schedule changes. It is the responsibility of the player to communicate this information to their parent(s)/guardian(s).

- **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE.** Players are responsible for arriving at least 15 minutes prior to the start of practice and be ready on the court when practice is scheduled to begin.
- **PLAYER ATTIRE.** Players must wear matching practice shirts, spandex shorts and volleyball shoes at all practices. Team captains will generally decide which shirt is to be worn at any specific practice and communicate that to the team.
- **JEWELRY.** In recent years, USAV, and following suit – GEVA, changed its view on players wearing jewelry during competition. This was previously not permitted however, currently, there is no rule prohibiting the athletes from wearing jewelry. Downstate always maintained this rule despite the change by USAV. This year Downstate will no longer maintain this as a club rule. It will however, be left up to the coach at each level and every team. Parents, players, and coaches, should be aware of the potential injuries jewelry can cause during play. It was always a safety concern, and although those concerns still remain, Downstate has left this decision first up to the coach, and then to the player/parent. The Board intends to remind coaches to share the potential for injury by jewelry, and cautions against certain types of earrings and necklaces, which may leave the athlete more susceptible to same.
- **HOUSEKEEPING.** Players’ bags are to be neatly stacked in the respective camp areas. At the DAC, bags are to be placed on shelves located in the upstairs viewing area. At all other sites, bags are to be zipped closed, neatly stacked where appropriate. Water bottles are to be placed in the plastic crates provided (one per team), to be kept sidelined by the court.
- **ILLNESS & INJURY.** Players who are ill and contagious should not attend practice. In these instances, a doctor’s note is required to prevent Downstate coaches from counting the missed practice against the player. Additionally, a doctor’s note is required when a player was contagious before the athlete can return to practice/tournaments. Players who are injured and/or not contagious should attend practice (even if their physical participation is limited) and remain on the sidelines, help the coach, and present at all team huddles. There is still much to be gained from watching practice and listening to the coach’s instructions.¹⁸

Tournaments

General Rules

DOWNSTATE RULES IN EFFECT: This statement will become valid when a team’s coach meets with the entire team at a tournament and the event officially begins. Once the initial

¹⁸ Due to the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, Downstate Board advises any and all illnesses are permitted as an excusable absence. In the event the player does not feel well before practice/competition, the player is expected to stay home to ensure the safety of other players, families and others with whom the player may come in contact.

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tournament meeting takes place, Downstate Rules go into effect and must be followed by all athletes and parents. Below are the Downstate Tournament Rules.¹⁹

- **NEAT AND TIDY AREAS:** The team is responsible for cleaning up their bench area, scoring table, and camping area after each match, work assignment, *and* at the end of the day as appropriate. Do not leave any garbage behind. There are always garbage receptacles somewhere nearby. At the end of each day, Downstate players are required to completely clear the area in which they finish (albeit a bench or the scoring table) No matter where we play, we want to be invited back.
- **FOOD:** Pack **your own lunch**, snacks & water. Most venues do not have food concessions, and if they do it is usually expensive and unhealthy. Downstate supports healthy eating habits during and outside volleyball tournaments. This rule is enforced by coaches, **ESPECIALLY** during the playing time hours. If the purchase of food is required, Downstate strongly encourages a healthy choice such as sandwiches.

DO NOT bring candy, soda, cookies or other sugary foods. They drain your energy.

- **DOWNSTATE GEAR:** Bags are to be zipped and stacked neatly at the selected camp area and kept neatly out of the way of participants and spectators. Camping areas are to be kept clean with garbage and clear of clutter.
 - Players are required to pack **ALL** playing jerseys, knee pads, and volleyball shoes and any other volleyball apparel and equipment. During the day tournaments, players may be required to change their jersey for various reasons and need to have all on hand to be able to do so.
 - Players will wear spandex, socks, team jersey (specified by the team's captain(s)), and whatever outerwear as dictated by weather.
 - You must dress in your Downstate team warm-up to arrive and leave the venue. The amount of warm up attire required will be weather permitting however, whatever the decision is, **EVERY** player must look the same upon entering and exiting the tournament site.
 - In between competition, coaches may enforce warm up attire be worn if the venue is especially cold. This rule must be adhered to by the entire team. Whatever the decision for apparel is between matches, the entire team must look the same. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- **PLAYER BEHAVIOR:** Players must behave appropriately and treat people with courtesy and respect **at all times.** This includes fellow Downstate athletes and coaches, chaperones, drivers, officials, opponents, waiters, guides, tournament staff, etc. Be sure to use pleasantries such as 'please' and 'thank you' in public places. People will observe your behavior and form opinions about Downstate and our volleyball program. Set a good example!

¹⁹ The Board of Directors reserves the right to add/remove/adjust any of the rules below as deemed necessary for the betterment of the club. At the end of every season, the Board reviews and re-assess the club rules. Any changes deemed necessary will be reviewed, discussed and if changed, reflected in the Handbook.

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- **FOLLOW INSTRUCTION:** Players must follow all instructions given by your directors, coaches, and chaperones. Remember, these people are on the trip to ensure you have a good and safe tournament.
- **CHAPERONES²⁰:** Remember that the parent chaperones are an extension of the coach. Players are expected to treat all parents and adults at the tournament with respect. Players are required to follow the instruction of the assigned chaperone for that respective tournament. If you feel a chaperone is being unfair, you should inform the coach. The coach will then discuss the issue with the player, chaperone, and a Director, if necessary. (See below for more Chaperone details in [Parent Information](#).)
- **GROUPS OF THREE (3):** Players may only leave the team area with the permission of the coach and/or an official tournament chaperone and in groups of three or more players. Parents and chaperones DO NOT count as one of the three. **Once you arrive at the tournament and join your team, Downstate Rules are in effect. You may not go anywhere alone with any parent, even your own, until the tournament is over, and the team is dismissed. This is a safety requirement, and no exceptions will be accepted. Strict consequences will be enforced for violators of this rule. All Downstate coaches are instructed by the Directors to enforce this rule regardless of the Downstate athlete and the team in which they play. If a player is observed out of a group of three, the coach who witnesses this infraction, is expected to reprimand the athlete and alert the respective coach. PARENTS ARE REQUIRED to follow and support this rule like every other rule in this handbook. Despite your desire to pull your child from her teammates; it is a consistency factor that needs enforcing to ensure they player understands the severity and reasons behind the rule.**
- **CELL PHONES:** Players are not permitted to use their phones during Downstate time at tournaments. All cell phones will remain with the chaperone(s) during the day while the team is at the play site (whether the team is working or not). Chaperones will return those phones to the players after the team has exited the facility, together as a team. During travel tournaments, this rule extends to team meals.
- **ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE:** Check in with the chaperone upon arrival and before leaving the tournament site. Players may not change who they are traveling home with unless your parent has spoken directly with the coach.
- **FINAL WORK ASSIGNMENT:** Teams are generally required the first match after losing in the play-off rounds. **ALL players on the team must stay until the work assignment is complete** and the coach dismisses the team. Staying together until dismissal is part of the team experience and commitment regardless of the desire to get on the road.
- **USE OF ALCOHOL:** Players are forbidden to possess or use alcoholic beverages. All Downstate athletes are under the legal drinking age and therefore prohibited from consuming alcohol during or outside of the Downstate volleyball season.
- **USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS:** Players are forbidden to possess or use illegal drugs. Illegal drug use is not permitted regardless of the current state law; this is a Downstate rule and expected to be followed by all participants in the club. Players should advise their coach if they require

²⁰ Chaperones are assigned per tournament day. Chaperones will mostly likely differ between tournaments.

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prescription medication, especially in a situation the player’s parent is not traveling with the team or able to be reached. (See below [Injury, Illness and Medication](#).)

- **USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS:** Players are forbidden to possess or use any tobacco products including vaping products of any kind.
- **WEAPONS:** Players are forbidden to possess or use firearms or weapons of any kind.

Injury, Illness, and Medication

- Each Downstate team will have a fully equipped first aid bag (“med kit”) and medical release form for each player. The med kit is to be brought to each tournament and is to be kept at or near the game bench area. In the event a parent/guardian is not in attendance, Downstate and its representatives reserve the right to seek emergency care for any injured or ill player, including and up to, ambulance assistance or hospital care, as deemed necessary under the circumstances at the time.
- Players taking medication are responsible for doing so when traveling, however, **parents MUST inform the coach and the designated chaperone as to what medication the player is taking and how it is to be administered.** Medication should be brought in its original labeled container.
- Sharing of medication amongst players and differing families is strictly prohibited unless otherwise authorized by player’s parent/guardian.
- Players who require the use of inhalers MUST have it with them at all times, even if they don’t expect to need it.
- Players who are ill or feel they may be “coming down with something” and possibly contagious should not attend team activities.²¹
- Players who are injured and ambulatory are expected to attend tournaments and support their team. Injury alone does not denote the lack of participation and team involvement in activities. If the player is able to walk (even with the use of equipment such as crutches) they are expected to attend practice and tournaments and engage in all team activities. Downstate encourages injured athletes to take on a managerial role, aiding the coaches and chaperones where necessary, as well as cheering on their teammates during competition.

Day Tournaments

- **ALWAYS STAY IN GROUPS OF THREE (3).** This is especially important during overnight tournaments where the competition usually takes place in large convention centers and the dwelling in hotels occupied by many other non-Downstate individuals. However, the rule is still extended to day tournaments.

²¹ Due to the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, Downstate Board advises any and all illnesses are permitted an excusable absence. In the event the player does not feel well, the player is expected to stay home to ensure the safety of other players, families and others with whom the player may come in contact.

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- There will be a day Chaperone responsible for ensuring the players are fed, have water, and generally safe within the venue for the day. (See [Chaperoning](#) duties for some other general guidelines.)
- These tournaments usually consist of a pool play (three matches of play and approximately two working matches) and one-two (1-2) rounds of playoffs. These will take all day and will require the travel of each individual player to the respective site.

Travel Tournaments

- **ALWAYS STAY IN GROUPS OF THREE (3).** This is especially important during overnight tournaments where the competition usually takes place in large convention centers and the dwelling in hotels occupied by many other non-Downstate individuals.

What to bring:

- **BATHING SUIT:** Hotels often have a pool and if decided upon by the team and time allows for it, the team may endeavor to utilize this amenity.
- Toiletries and hygiene products.
- **UNIFORM:** All uniform pieces, including practice shirts, sweat suit pieces, and sweatshirts for layering purposes. All uniform pieces should be labeled with the players name in permanent ink. Mark sneakers, knee pads, and shorts inside and socks on the soles. These items will get mixed up and possibly laundered together, so they should have names to be returned to the rightful owner.
- **CLOTHING:** Appropriate casual clothes for each day, to be worn when the team is not competing.
- **TEAM DINNER APPAREL:** Teams should also attempt to plan one team dinner per overnight tournament weekend. This dinner will be a sit-down event where players have the opportunity to dress up. Therefore, players are encouraged to plan for at least one outfit, slightly more than casual, for this meal.²²
- **SCHOOL WORK:** There is ample downtime during away tournaments. Coaches will mandate some of this time for homework and studying. These quiet study hours are built into hotel time and is required for all to participate.²³
- **DOWNSTATE BAG:** Utilize your Downstate player bag for travel between hotel and play site. Pack the remainder of your items in a separate bag.
- **FOOTWEAR:** There is often a substantial amount of walking whether from the hotel to the play site or solely within the convention centers. Bring comfortable shoes. All teams **MUST** dress appropriately according to the weather and commuting conditions however, footwear worn while traveling to the competition site, must be something other than designated Downstate volleyball sneakers.

MONEY BUDGET:²⁴

²² All apparel worn during Downstate events is expected to be appropriate.

²³ This was previously done in players' rooms however, due to the way Downstate has chosen to travel to away tournaments, players will be staying in their parents' room. Therefore, it is requested the parents support and encourage this time take place according to the team's schedule and coaches assigned times. This can often take place in a public area such as a reserved room in the hotel or in one of the hotel rooms selected as a team.

²⁴ Money budget is a suggestion based on past experiences. Due to the various ways to send money between parents/guardians and athletes, as well as, between parents and chaperones, the requirement for cash is less necessary with the exception of team meals whereby cash may be suggested to encourage a team building activity at the time of bill pay.

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- Money for meals. At a minimum, \$10 for each breakfast. If breakfast money has been collected and decided on eating in a hotel room, this can be adjusted. However, depending on pool wave, the location of the hotel, and team decision, there may be an opportunity for a team breakfast; \$15 for each lunch, and \$25-\$35 for each dinner.
- Some girls may wish to add “incidental” money. There are often vendors at these events selling T-shirts, sweatshirts and various volleyball related items. It can be expensive. Players should be mindful of their spending money balance as to not deplete their funds for food. Athletes are also encouraged to plan for a team activity (example: movie).
- Coaches (especially of younger teams) may require cash be used for team meals. It is a **Downstate tradition** to encourage the athletes to learn how to split a bill and calculate the tip for service. This will be left up to the coach’s discretion and should be communicated with the team, prior to the tournament so the family can prepare.
 - In this case: Downstate teams will utilize one check. Chaperones and parents are encouraged to support this as teachable lessons. Coaches may opt to select this option for their team and make it the mandatory standard for all tournaments. Despite the option, the players are responsible for working out the payment, regardless of how long it may take. Parents, chaperones, and coaches are expected to allow this process to take place. This is an important learning experience.

What NOT to bring:

- Video gaming systems or other expensive/or heavy electronics.
- Candy, cookies, sugary junk food, soda, etc.
- More luggage than you can carry yourself.

How Meals Work

An important part of the National Team experience is learning how to manage one’s own spending money over several days, which includes meals. Players should plan on spending the suggested amounts (See section “[What to Bring](#)”). This includes tax and tip. Please remember that the away playing venues are often in major cities which tend to be more expensive.

Captains are responsible for deciding (in conjunction with input from their teammates, coaches and chaperones) on where the team will have meals. Chaperones are responsible for providing logistical assistance in ordering food or making reservations.

- In the event teams opt to place orders for delivery/pickup, it is the teams’ responsibility to obtain each player’s order (include your coaches’ and chaperones’ orders) and provide that list to the parent placing the order.
- If the team orders food to be brought in such as pizza, or platters, the bill (**including delivery charge, tax and tip**) will be equally divided among all the players, chaperones, and any parents joining the team.
- If the team chooses a food option where orders can be placed individually, each player can pay for their own meal unless otherwise instructed by the coach.
- If the team goes to a sit-down restaurant, they have two options: (players will have their own checks, separate from any parents (and chaperones) who join the team for the dining experience):
 - The team may split the bill (**including tax and tip**) equally among all the players **OR**;

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- Each player computes her own portion of the total bill **PLUS a minimum of 20% for tax and tip** (unless the tip is included) and the team captains collect the money. It is then the captain’s responsibility to ensure each player has paid enough and the bill includes a sufficient tip.²⁵

BREAKFAST: In some cases, there may not be any suitable breakfast options available at the hotel. In that case, chaperones will collect a designated amount of money from each player in advance and pre-purchase suitable breakfast foods (bagels, muffins, cereal, fruits, and/or bottled juices) which can be eaten in the chaperones room.²⁶ (See [Chaperoning](#) Section)

SNACKS: Athletes are encouraged to bring snacks to tournaments such as water, fruit juices, whole fruits and non-sugary snacks.

Hotel Rules²⁷

Rules and policies will be strictly enforced. Players who do not observe these rules should not participate in the National Team program. Coaches and chaperones (and parents) are expected to enforce these rules and policies for all players, whether or not a player is on their daughter’s team.

- There are other guests in the hotel. Slowly and consciously, close doors, careful not to slam them shut. Keep loud talking to a minimum, especially in the halls. Stay in rooms when possible and be mindful that although your team may play AM wave and therefore up early, other teams and guests may be sleeping (you would want that same respect if you were sleeping).
- Hotels are a public place and you are expected to dress appropriately in all public areas, including the halls. Do not venture to other floors, lobby and other hotel areas in pajamas or bare feet.
- Players will be given four (4) times on a daily basis²⁸:
 1. **Curfew**- the time players must be in their rooms;
 2. **Lights Out** - when players must cease talking and go to sleep. It is determined by the coach based on various factors most importantly, the next day’s start time but also includes, work/play time, distance of venue from hotel, and meals/activities;

²⁵ See sub-header “[Money Budget](#)” for explanation on this team meal Downstate tradition. It is up to the coach on how to run this portion of their team however, the Directors support and even encourage this practice, at least one time throughout the Downstate season, especially at the younger age groups, 16 & Under.

²⁶ Downstate remains committed to team time inclusive of meals; however, breakfast is left to the discretion of the coach at each tournament. In some instances, it may be acceptable for athletes to eat breakfast in their rooms and/or for parents to be responsible for this meal, separate from the team, and prior to Downstate time beginning for the day.

²⁷ Downstate has elected to travel as was done during the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, parents are required to obtain a room for their child to stay during for the duration of overnight tournaments. All rules should be followed where applicable, in this section.

²⁸ Despite athletes rooming with their parents as opposed to traveling together as a club team, these times are still required to be observed, respected, and followed. Downstate requests the support and implementation of these times accordingly. All meeting times are expected to be met, despite the rooming situation for travel tournaments. Lack of timely attendance will be treated similarly to that if an athlete were rooming with their teammates.

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3. **Breakfast** – the time the players are expected in the designated hotel room or at the previously agreed upon breakfast location *and*;
 4. **Departure Time** – the time the team physically departs from the hotel. If a travel other than walking is required to the venue/activity/restaurant, it may take time to organize that and therefore, the players may receive the time they are expected to gather in the lobby as well as the actual departure time.²⁹
- Chaperones are given the times by coach and/or captain so they may prepare for the next day.
 - Use garbage receptacles and keep your room and belongings neat and organized. Housekeeping is not expected to pick up after you. Remember we are guests in the hotel and want to be invited back again. Reuse towels where you can and be respectful of the furniture and rooms' amenities.
 - **Male coaches, fathers, male siblings, and/or any other males are not permitted in the girls' rooms without an adult female present the entire visit. This includes coaches for team/player meetings. All male family members are encouraged to request their daughter meet them in lobby areas (in a group of at least three (3)), hand anything their daughter needs to the chaperone, or wait until they see their daughter at the competition site should they need to speak, see or give them anything. This is for the family members' safety as well as the other players on the team. It is merely a respect factor and we ask for cooperation to be consistent across the board.**
 - While in your room, observe the following:
 - Lock your door at all times.
 - If someone is at the door, look and ask who it is BEFORE opening the door.
 - Conversations and laughter should be kept at a minimal decibel as to not disturb other guests.
 - No deliveries are permitted to the athlete's room. Any food deliveries should be coordinated with the chaperone(s) and will be delivered to the lobby area and procured accordingly.
 - No room service or use of phone for calls to anyone outside of the hotel (room to room permitted).
 - Be aware of emergency information (closest stairwell in case of fire, fire extinguishers, etc.).
 - Keep your chaperones', coaches' and captains' room numbers by the hotel phone.
 - If you damage any hotel property, your entire room is responsible for payment.
 - Keep all valuables in your suitcase or in the room's safe.
 - **BEHAVIOR INFRACTION:** Inappropriate behavior is considered a severe infraction of the rules and will result in immediate communication between the coach, player(s)' parents and possibly club Directors. The club also reserves the right to release the player(s) from the tournament and consider expulsion from Downstate depending on the severity of the infraction.

²⁹ In some instances, and at the discretion of the Directors/coaches, the athletes may be given a time to arrive at the facility on their own with their parents.

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Player Sportsmanship

Downstate promotes sportsmanship above all else. All players who choose to play with Downstate are asked to bring their good sporting behavior to the court and promote and abide by the Downstate sportsmanship policies. Failure to act appropriately can result in loss of playing time during the tournament. If the behavior is egregious, **Downstate reserves the right to release the player from the tournament, team, and/or club.**

As players continue their careers, they will undoubtedly come across opponents, multiple times, especially within GEVA and the surrounding regions. Rivalries develop between Downstate and other clubs. This is valuable and acceptable competition as it is important to be prideful in your team and want to win. However, we are a respectable club and intend to keep that reputation. Play tough against your opponents but do it with respect.

- **Good sportsmanship** includes:
 - Treating all opponents with fairness, courtesy and respect.
 - Not retaliating or reacting in a negative way to any situation or player regardless of the circumstance. Retaliation will be handled the same as instigating the conflict.
 - Enthusiastically sharing in the responsibilities of the team, on and off the court.
 - Following the coach’s directions without argument.
 - Offering encouragement and support to your teammates, on and off the court.
 - Giving feedback to the coach and teammates in a constructive way.
 - Receiving feedback with an open mind.
 - Respecting the other team’s efforts. If an opponent out-performs you, accept it, learn from it, offer no excuses, and move on. Just as important is if you and your team out-perform an opponent, enjoy the victory, but do not gloat, belittle, or minimize the opponent's effort.
 - During a match, your team may be losing, keep pushing and fight the urge to play ‘through the motions.’
 - During a match when you are winning, respect the game and your opponent by continuing to seriously and with purpose, play each point.
- The following **poor sportsmanship** behaviors are **not permissible**:
 - Challenging the game officials by arguing calls. Only the floor captain may approach the R1 and should do so primarily at the Head Coach’s direction and **ONLY** with respect.
 - Swearing at another player, coach, official or in general.
 - Intentionally pushing, shoving or making physical contact with another player on or off the court.
 - Aggressively kicking, throwing, or bouncing the ball at the end of a point.
 - Making comments to instigate an altercation with another player.
 - Pouting or making excuses when you make a mistake. Learn from it and be ready to continue to play.

Downstate does not tolerate players who cannot follow the sportsmanship guidelines. These players will be swiftly suspended or ejected from the club so **THINK BEFORE YOU ACT!**

Team Captains

Each team will have at least one (1) captain. Coaches decide how many and how they choose to appoint captains within their team. Team captains play a very important role on the team. In

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addition to their play, they take on numerous responsibilities, including, but not limited to:

- Attending regular captains' meetings, at the DAC, which may be on nights when their team does not practice;
- Relaying important information to the team, chaperones, and parents.
- Organizing team bonding activities.
- Organizing tournament meals, activities, and enforcing times.
- Making final selection on jersey and practice gear each day.
- Tracking work teams to ensure all players are equally (or as close to equal as possible) assigned to work.
- Delegating team responsibilities such as the carrying of balls/med kits to each tournament, collecting money, etc.
- Acting as a positive influence on the team both on and off the court, offering encouragement and support to ALL team members equally.
- Leading, both on and off the court!

Captains are responsible for their team, but it is a group effort. All players must commit to being a unit and taking responsibility when delegated by the captain (either via the coach's request or their own). It is important all team members understand the leader(s) is there to ensure things get done. Captains should be trusted by their teammates and work towards a collaborative approach asking input from their peers. When decisions need to be made, the captain should feel comfortable making it and Downstate encourages players to appreciate and respect the position. Captains should respect the position as well, understand it's great responsibility, and be **humble** above all.

Captains are sometimes held accountable for the missteps of their team. It is the captain's responsibility to ensure the team functions properly and within the rules and guidelines outlined in this handbook.

Athletes are discouraged from accepting a position such as team captain unless they are sure they can devote the extra time and energy to do the job well.

Practice Facilities

The **Downstate Athletic Center** in Peekskill, NY, is the primary practice location for Downstate Juniors VBC National Teams. Gold's Gym in Lagrange, NY is the home of Downstate Juniors, North. Somers Sports Arena is our home for Downstate Juniors East. Season 2023 will unveil our new four court facility at this location. We are proud of our facilities and partners who allow us to utilize their court space. As a club, we expect all players and visitors comply with the following rules:

- **Parents are responsible for the behavior and conduct of all minors accompanying them to practice locations.** It is imperative spectators respect and comply with all rules and regulations of the facility.
- Only plastic water bottles and sport bottles are permitted in the courts area. They are required to be maintained in the water bottle crates provided for each team.
- No food is allowed in the court area.
- No chewing gum is permitted on playing surfaces. Additionally, spitting gum out on the floors of the DAC or any other practice or tournament floor is strictly prohibited.

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- **NO SMOKING** is allowed in or in the immediate surrounding outside areas of the DAC.
- **NO PETS** are allowed in the facility.³⁰
- Trash/recyclables shall be placed in the respective containers within the facility.
- **NO ONE** is permitted on court surfaces except participants/facilitators of the sport (players, coaches, officials, and facility staff. There is a viewing area above the courts which can be accessed via the staircase in the lobby area.
 - No outside chairs are allowed in the DAC facility. Spectator chairs and seating is provided upstairs in the viewing area and is the only spectator seating available.³¹
- Footwear for all participants must be NON-MARKING rubber soled sports shoes; shoes must be kept off of the walls.
- No foul, abusive, racial or derogatory language or inappropriate physical behavior will be tolerated. Any participant or spectator exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be ordered to leave the facility.
- Possession or use of any type of weapon is strictly prohibited with the exception of federal, state, or local law enforcement officers, when on duty or applicable.
- Downstate assumes no liability for any injuries or accidents which may occur to spectators or participants. This rule applies to all participants in any program or activity sanctioned by Downstate Juniors VBC. Any incident taking place during Downstate sanctioned activity, may require the completion of an incident report and/or alerting a Downstate Director.
- Conduct within the facility should be in the spirit of good sportsmanship in the stands as well as on the court. Players or parents caught exhibiting poor sportsmanship will be asked to leave the facility immediately. Downstate reserves the right to excuse any player or spectator, permanently, from the facility.
- Absolutely **NO ALCOHOL** use is allowed in our facilities. Players or fans suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance will be removed immediately.
- Downstate is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. The lost and found is located upstairs and is frequently cleared and donated. Lost water bottles, socks, and other frequently discarded items will not be saved.
- Any person causing damage to the property of the DAC, or any of our other rented facilities, shall be held accountable to reimburse Downstate, in full, for all repair or replacement expenses arising from such conduct.
- Any person injured during a Downstate sanctioned activity must file a report with a Director or coach prior to leaving the facility.

Parent Information

General Responsibilities

Parents, guardians, or persons responsible for a Downstate Juniors VBC participant must abide by and uphold all Downstate rules and procedures cited within this handbook. They will respect the

³⁰ Exceptions are made for service animals based on the production of proper paperwork and necessity.

³¹ Occasionally, the DAC will allow for spectators on the court. If that is the case, specified areas will be marked and must be adhered to, strictly.

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decisions of coaches and officials made during the course of performing their duties and assume full responsibility the player they registered does the same. If the parent/guardian fails to do so, they and/or the player may be removed and barred from Downstate practices, games and events.

Dues Payments

Fees are due according to the schedule outlined in the contract parents sign when committing their child to play on a team at the commencement of the season. All payments are done through the previously agreed upon platform. Any family which may need special arrangements, should contact Joel Stanford and be prepared to disclose certain, applicable, financial information.³²

Downstate Juniors VBC, Inc. was formed under Section 402 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law of the State of New York and is a 501(c)(3). Dues are assessed based on the total expenses for the club on an annual budget. The club cannot operate and meet obligations if **any** club member defaults on the payment of dues. **If a club member is delinquent in their dues, they will not be allowed to participate in practices and/or tournaments until payments are current.** A player who becomes injured or resigns during the course of the season, is still responsible and obligated to pay all club dues regardless of playing status. All fees paid to Downstate are non-refundable. Registrants shall not be permitted to pay pro-rated fees. **A fee shall be charged for any check that is returned unpaid or for any late payment.³³ That fee must be paid in full as a condition of the player attending practice and tournaments.**

Transportation

Parents are responsible for arranging transportation to all practices and non-flying tournaments. Our primary practice facility is the DAC in Peekskill, NY however, we also utilize various facilities in the surrounding area, North, East and West.

Most **single day tournaments** are within the **GEVA** region. GEVA is the local region of USA Volleyball (USAV) the national governing body of volleyball. GEVA is responsible for the promotion and growth of volleyball in New Jersey, Long Island, and the Greater Metropolitan Area of New York City (including Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Putnam, and Orange Counties). GEVA's junior tournaments are held on weekend days at various venues throughout the region and usually last all day.

Playing venues may be as far as three hours away and players are generally required to arrive between 7:00 and 8:00am with play taking place until early evening hours.³⁴ Players who have a senior driver's license may drive themselves to practices and single day tournaments, **with parental approval.** Players are not permitted to drive themselves to away tournaments, regardless of their driver's license status.

Travel tournaments generally include one, two, or three night(s) stay with two - three days of competition. National teams can expect to go to tournaments in cities such as Washington, DC,

³² Scholarships are made available on a case-by-case basis. Please complete the necessary paperwork on our website if you believe you should be considered for financial aid from Downstate Juniors.

³³ This fee is determined by the third-party vendor Downstate utilizes to process payments and therefore is subject to change. The fee will be posted on the payment platform.

³⁴ Times/schedules are subject to variation depending upon the team's assigned pool play schedule.

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Denver, CO, Las Vegas, NV, Boston, MA, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA. Parents are responsible for arranging transportation, unless the team is flying. Any National team participating in a tournament more than a four-six (4-6) hour drive from the DAC will usually travel as a team by bus or airplane.

Car Pooling

Downstate recognizes that parents may have other conflicting obligations which make it difficult on occasion to drive their child to practice. **Parents frequently make car-pooling arrangements for their player.** It is recommended that players carpool with other members of their own team to tournaments. Teams play on different days, in different places, and will have different schedules. When at a tournament, players may not change who they are traveling home with unless they speak directly with the team chaperone. Please remember to offer to contribute to the driver's cost if your child is traveling with another family.

To assist you with making arrangements, please contact your Team Liaison or the Club Parent.

Practices

Parents are welcome to attend team practices. An ample number of chairs are available for comfortable seating upstairs at the DAC; Seating may not be as available at some of the satellite locations we use. Spectators are **NOT** permitted, under any circumstances, inside the court area. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the practice rules listed under the [Players Information](#) section of this handbook.

Tournaments

Parents are encouraged to attend as many tournaments as possible. Spectator seating is often not provided at the playing venues. It is recommended that you bring a folding chair for your comfort. Please note that coolers are generally not permitted in the venues.

HOTELS: Many overnight tournaments are Stay to Play tournaments. This means, in order to participate in the tournament, each team/club must reserve a certain number/percentage of hotel rooms, in the specified hotel(s). Failure to do so will result in the team or club being dropped from the tournament. Therefore, Downstate reserves the required number of rooms for the players, coaches, and chaperones, first.

New Travel Policy

Downstate has changed the way it requires players travel with respect to hotel room stays. Parents are required to ensure their child has a reserved hotel room, in the assigned hotel, for each tournament. Players can stay with their parents/family or another family (if previously agreed upon by the athlete's parents). Despite which option is selected per player, every Downstate athlete **must stay in the designated hotel(s) for each tournament, or they DO NOT play.** Parents who fail to reserve a room for their child within the club block of rooms, must provide the club with proof their child is either on a rooming list with another teammate or a reservation in their name for which their child will also stay. Any player determined to be staying in a hotel other than that of the designated tournament location, will be in violation of Downstate rule and prohibited from playing in that tournament. Downstate board also reserves the right to review the situation and mitigating circumstances in order to determine any additional action against the player and/or parent.

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Downstate makes an effort to reserve a block of rooms for parents who wish to attend the tournament, at a reduced rate, at the same hotels in which the teams stay when traveling to a multi-day tournament. Parents planning to attend, are encouraged to make reservations directly with the hotel as soon as possible because local hotels fill up quickly. Should a room at the Downstate hotel be unavailable, do not be concerned; because during these tournaments, parents rarely see their children outside of when they are playing volleyball and curfew hours. Parents are welcome to join their child's team for meals if logistics allow, however, the players sit together at their own table(s). **Players are NOT permitted to leave the team and go with her parents.** The players will spend all down time with their teammates including, in between matches, during all meals until the coach dismisses them back to their parents.

GROUPS OF THREE (3): While at tournaments, players may only leave the team or team area with the permission of the coach or chaperone and **MUST** be in groups of three (3) or more players. Parents DO NOT count as one of the three.

END OF TOURNAMENT: ALL players on the team must stay until the team is completely finished with all play and work assignments and dismissed by the coach. Please be aware that teams making playoffs may have to work following their last match (unless the team wins the entire bracket). ALL players must stay until that responsibility is completed! It is not fair to those who are on the work team for that match to allow others to leave before them.

Note: An exception to the rule regarding players' time away from the team may occur if the player needs to visit a college near a tournament site. The player, with notice to the coach, may be permitted to leave the team after play to visit a school's campus.

**Chaperoning*

Chaperone tournament selection will be made at the initial team meeting where the club meets as a whole.³⁵ For overnight tournaments, two chaperones will be needed to ensure the logistics are taken care of; day tournaments will require only one.

Overall Chaperone rules and responsibilities include:

- Chaperones must be at least 25 years of age.
- Each parent **must** chaperone at least one tournament during the season, potentially more depending on the program and schedule.
- Consuming excessive alcoholic beverages is discouraged while chaperoning.
- Chaperones reinforce the coach's instructions and provide logistical support for all meals, activities, and provide general supervision at the hotel and competition site(s).
- Chaperone's need to be familiar with and enforce the club rules for player behavior and conduct located in this handbook.

Specifically, Chaperones are asked to help with the following:

- Collecting athletes' phones for the duration of play.
- Communicating with the coach and/or captain on the team's schedule.
- Organizing the meals schedule based on the team's matches (work and play).

³⁵ *2022: This season's Meet & Greet will take place on September 11, 2022.

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- Ensuring all athletes have lunch prior to the time set aside to eat.
- Communicating with the other parents on the team’s play schedule.
- Downstate tournaments are Downstate team time; ensure the team is together. Parents are encouraged to socialize amongst themselves, allowing the athletes time with their peers.
- Chaperones can work with other parents on potential social activities during off matches.
- Work with the team to ensure the camp site is neat, organized, and clean. Bags should be lined up and closed. The area should appear tidy.
- Coordinate with the other parents to sit together during game time. Showing a united force is important for the players during match to hear all cheering.

Day Tournaments

A parent chaperone is requested for each day tournament to ensure the team has one person to handle the logistics of the day such as eating together, keeping their area clean, etc.

Overnight Tournaments

Downstate travel has changed with respect only to the rooming set-up. Players’ rooms will be the responsibility of the parent; however, during the tournament, the team will be expected to stay together until curfew hours. This means, a chaperone(s) may be required to ensure the logistics of the weekend are handled. That said, due to the different way Downstate intends to travel, the chaperones during these tournaments may differ each day providing that is solidified in advance of the tournament weekend.

Overnight tournaments duties of Chaperones differ slightly as they are requested to help with the above as well as:

- Organizing team dinners and activities. Chaperones should work with the team captains and coach to determine what the team wants to do, then help coordinate same.
- Ensuring the team remains together and/or the athletes are accounted for during the day. The team must remain in a group of three if not together as a whole.
- If necessary, organize dinners to be delivered/picked up after a late pool play for the team.

Talking to the Coach

Parents are encouraged to discuss the following with their child’s coach:

- Ways to help their child improve skillset.
- Concerns about their child’s behavior.
- Coach’s expectations for their child and their team.
- Team rules and requirements.
- The college recruiting process.

Parents should **NOT** discuss the following with their child’s coach:

- Playing time.
- Strategies used by the coach during tournaments.
- Other players on the team or club in a negative manner.

Players are encouraged to discuss all of the above with their coach directly. This is the best way for the athlete to gain an understanding of what needs to be done to achieve personal goals. It may

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be very difficult to accept your child is not playing as much as you hoped however, coaches are professionals. They make judgments and decisions based on what they believe to be in the best interest of the team. The coach must take into account ALL members of the team.

Downstate coaches confer with the Directors regularly and are always welcome to look for guidance from other experienced coaches. They take professional development courses where available, necessary and required and are eager to grow. The Directors request the support of the Downstate athlete parents in the coaches' decisions and growth process as well as the Directors overseeing of each of the teams within the club.

Parent Sportsmanship

The majority of today's youth sports parents are a supportive and caring group. We encourage and require this consistency in nature during all practices, tournaments, and events. Downstate does not tolerate disruptive or negative attitude from parents during any events. Parents must remember, the excitement that comes from watching a loved one play can sometimes be overwhelming.

The following are **Do's** and **Don'ts** to keep in mind as athlete parents:

- **DO** help make life easier for your coach, the players, and yourself, by giving support to your child and the team. Offer encouraging words after losses and cheer during good and bad points during matches. Enthusiasm makes the season more enjoyable for all.
- **DO NOT** give orders or direction to the players (even your own). It is up to the coach and the players to make decisions. Do not compete with the coach. Your direction may be different than what the coach wants, and this does not help the team and may frustrate your child. Trust your child's coach is working with the knowledge or under the tutelage of an experienced mentor. Every team is different and therefore requires different approaches.
- **DO NOT** publicly question the referee's calls. Try to enjoy watching your child play. Refrain from attempting to alter the game from the sideline by yelling at the referees or work team. The referees are not biased against your team however, they can sometimes make unintentional mistakes.
- **DO** make it a point to learn the rules of volleyball as this will make tournaments and practices more enjoyable to watch and make it easier for your player to discuss them with you. Downstate usually plans to offer meetings to learn about referee calls so you can understand the quick pace of the game. Understanding skillsets and the calls that lead to points during matches can help decrease the frustration against referees.³⁶
- **DO NOT** complain to other parents or players, including your own, about the coach. This undermines team morale. If you are frustrated by the coach's decision, take the time to think about how or why the coach may have done what they did. Attempt to see their perspective. If you still don't understand, reach out to the coach and ask, innocently and respectfully.
- **DO** accept the authority of the Downstate coach assigned to the team and acknowledge that it is the coach's prerogative to choose the type of play, create the lineup, and determine playing time. Coaches spend time discussing game time decisions with their peers and the leadership of the club. Trust in the process and the past years' outcomes. All coaches take an interest in their peers' teams and the successes therein.

³⁶ These trainings may be held virtually as well as in person before competition begins.

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- **DO NOT** ridicule or yell at your or any other player, after making a mistake. Everybody makes mistakes and players will learn by those mistakes. Leave it to the coach to correct the errors at the appropriate time which is normally between matches or during practices.
- **DO** try your best to be completely honest about your player's athletic capability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship, and actual skill level.
- **DO NOT** compare your child with that of other team members. Each player is different, and every teammate brings something to the team. We value each player and as coaches, we look to build leaders in every player.
- **DO** encourage your player to enjoy the thrills of competition, taking a risk, working hard, improving their skills and attitude, taking the physical lumps, and coming back for more.
- **DO** point out a good play your child made and **DO** ask open-ended questions. Examples of open-ended questions that might apply: "What did you learn from the game?", "What was the best play you made and how did it feel?" "How do you think you did, recovering after your errors?"
- **DO** remember that smoking and/or drinking of alcoholic beverages by parents are prohibited at ALL practices.
- **DO** sit back, relax, have fun, and cherish this time with your child!

Parent Liaison

Each team needs one parent volunteer to take on the role of Team Parent Liaison. Only one parent will be deemed Team Parent. The Club Parent coordinates all the Team Parents and is the contact person for all questions. Club Parents gather information and disseminate to the teams' liaisons who ultimately disperse to their respective teams. The Club Parent is also the individual team liaison to verbalize any team issues or concerns once relayed from the Team Parent.

These positions are of great help to the coaches and parents. It helps keep the parents involved with the team and fosters greater understanding of the Downstate organization. It helps to assure communications between the coaching staff and parents and usually translates into a better season for all the players. Downstate views these jobs as very important roles. Liaisons act as a go between parents and the club.

Some of the Team Parent responsibilities are listed below. Liaisons should remember to delegate tasks. The team's coach has the authority to request changes, additions, or exclude duties as needed:

- Assist coach with distributing information.
- Responsible for communicating with team members and parents to inform them of schedule changes, particularly during tournaments.
- Designate team chaperones for tournaments based on volunteers.
- Assist with tournament activities (collecting money, food plans, player travel plans).
- Assist the coach in any administrative activities that he or she requests.

Being a Team Parent has many rewards. Please consider volunteering.

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Communications

Website

The single best source for current information regarding Downstate Juniors VBC is the website, www.downstatevolleyball.com. Information about practice and tournament schedules is posted there as soon as it becomes available and updated as necessary.

Additionally, Downstate has Twitter (@DownstateVBC) and Instagram (downstatejuniors) accounts for fast information updates.

TeamSnap

Directors and coaches will frequently send messages through the previously agreed upon communication platform, TeamSnap.

Email addresses for each player and parent are collected during the tryout and team commitment registrations processes for their respective team. If you need to make a change, please send an email requesting the change to info@downstatevolleyball.com.

It is very important email addresses are accurate for both parents and athletes. Communication is regularly sent regarding practices, schedules, tournaments, hotel rooms, new rules, and general club updates and it is the responsibility of each family, to ensure their emails are checked and they have reviewed such information.

Fundraising

Downstate Juniors is open to running one (1) fund raising event per season to support a charitable organization. Participation is strictly voluntary, but highly encouraged as a way for players to give back. Downstate generally does not otherwise sponsor fundraising events.

National Teams which plan to play at a National event, often run their own fundraising events to help offset the cost. In this case, planning and execution is the responsibility of the team players and parents.

Any potential fundraising ideas which intend to use the Downstate name, will need to be approved by the Board. A fundraising request form is located on our website, under the Resources Page. The requesting party(ies) should complete the form outlining the fundraising idea and the Board will review the information at the next Directors' Meeting following the submission.

Specifically, the use of the Downstate logo: Prior to any team, player/family, or coach using the Downstate logo for any team/personal means, they must request authorization by the Downstate Board.

The Downstate Directors are open to running club wide fundraiser events only if a fundraising committee, comprised of Downstate parents and possibly coaches, is created. Downstate, as a club, takes a tremendous amount of time from the Directors and they cannot agree to take on additional responsibilities.

Any proceeds raised during club wide fundraisers events, will go to the overall Downstate fund.

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This will be used to either disperse evenly amongst the teams, and/or towards the Downstate scholarship fund(s). For information on the board of fundraisers, please contact Downstate Board Member, Melissa Baccari (Melissa@downstatevolleyball.com).³⁷

Sporfie Fundraising Campaign

Sporfie is the service Downstate uses to live stream its practices and tournaments. Advertisement opportunities are available to be sold by athletes/families to offset the cost of their Downstate fee. Sporfie offers resources to help guide athletes towards a successful fundraising campaign. Athletes can obtain sponsors to advertise with Downstate for a cost of \$300. The business' logo will display on a rolling basis on our Sporfie live stream.

Conclusion

Downstate is committed to the successful creation of responsible and motivated student-athletes. Our goal is to create a safe, competitive, and fun environment for our players while they and their families harvest long-lasting, meaningful relationships and memories.

End

³⁷ Any committee created within the club, will report directly to one or all of the Downstate Board members. No decisions will be made without the approval of the Board unless otherwise noted.



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