

# 2021

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# PA GIRLS HS WRESTLING: INFORMATIONAL PACKET FOR FORMING A TEAM

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Current Landscape of Girls HS Wrestling</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Why Should You Add Girls Wrestling</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Forming a Girls Wrestling Team</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Media Coverage</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Forming a HS Girls Wrestling Team in PA: FAQ</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>Girls HS Wrestling Competition Point Sources</b>	<b>Page 21</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>Page 23</b>



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## Introduction

Pennsylvania has one of the richest wrestling histories of any state in the country. PA girls wrestling is also becoming a part of that history. Currently, girls' participation in wrestling is exploding in PA and across the country. Nationally, girls wrestling has seen over 25 years of consecutive growth. In Pennsylvania, participation increased over 30% from the 2019-2020 season to the 2020-2021 season and increased over 200% from just several years ago.

With the growth of girls wrestling across PA, the goal is for more and more schools to add girls' teams and join the tide in being a part of one of the fastest growing high school sports in the country.

This Packet was designed to help schools form teams and provides background on girls wrestling, frequently asked questions, and why adding girls wrestling is a win-win for schools, communities, and students.

As you explore adding a girls wrestling team, additional resources to help your school, including template proposals, can be found on our website ([www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com)), and we welcome you to also reach out to us any time with questions ([sanctionpa@gmail.com](mailto:sanctionpa@gmail.com)).

**We are excited for the continued growth of girls wrestling in Pennsylvania and we hope that you will consider the case for girls wrestling and adding a team!**

### ***What is SanctionPA?***

SanctionPA is an initiative to establish girls wrestling as an official PIAA sport. SanctionPA is supported by parents, wrestlers, coaches, ADs, principals, community members, and state organizations, including PA USA Wrestling, Pennsylvania Wrestling Coaches Association, and the PA Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, along with national organizations and governing bodies.

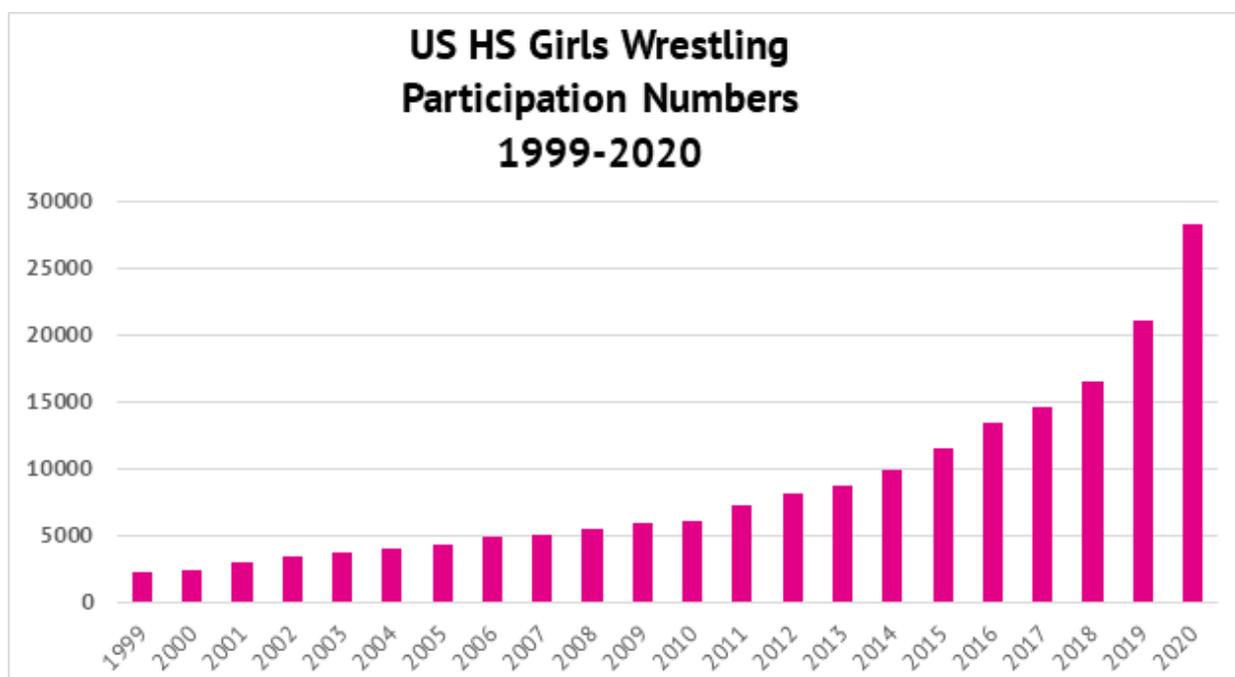
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# Current Landscape of Girls High School Wrestling

## Current Landscape of Girls High School Wrestling across the United States

Girls wrestling is the fastest growing high school sport in the country. While many other sports have seen a decline in participation over the past couple decades, girls wrestling has gone against that trend. The number of girls participating in wrestling has increased for 29 consecutive years and has shown no signs of slowing down. During the 2020-2021 season, over 32,000 girls participated in high school wrestling in the US.

Currently, there are 29 state high school associations that have sanctioned girls wrestling and hold a state championship for girls, with that number having doubled within the past 3 years. All states that have sanctioned girls wrestling have done so in folkstyle, which is the same style as boys' high school wrestling.



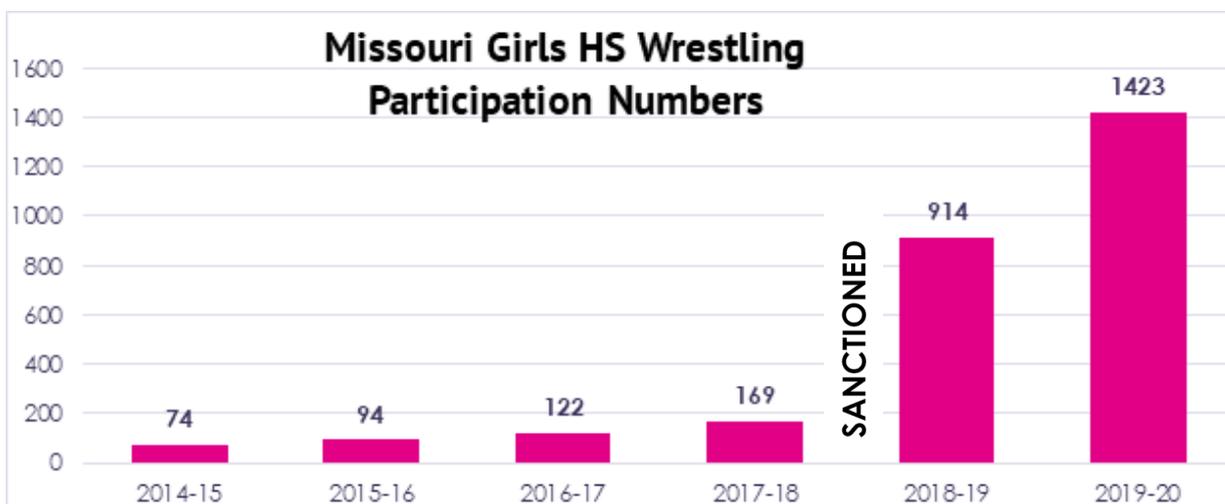
In addition to the meteoric growth on the high school level, colleges continue to add women's programs at an accelerated pace each year. There are now over 85 varsity college women's wrestling programs. Additionally, women's wrestling has been granted Emerging Sport Status by the NCAA for Divisions I, II, and III. At the Olympic level, women's wrestling has been in the Olympics since 2004 and at the World Championships since 1989.

## Current Landscape of Girls High School Wrestling across Pennsylvania

Mirroring the national statistics, Pennsylvania high school wrestling has experienced a 200% growth increase of girls on high school boys' teams in the past several years. The PA numbers in that time have grown from 102 to over 300 (2020-2021), with the girls representing over 130 PIAA-member schools. All 12 PIAA district areas have girls wrestling within their area. Additionally, USA Wrestling membership cards show there are even more girls wrestling in PA, some of whom have opted NOT to participate on PIAA teams due to lack of inclusion.

In addition to steady growth on the HS level, there are even more girls coming up through elementary and middle school programs in PA. For example, at last year's Pennsylvania Junior Wrestling (PJW) qualifying events, there was an increase of over 25% from the previous year as 279 girls participated. Additionally, PIAA Junior High schools saw a 33% increase from 2018-2019 to the 2019-2020 season. There were over 280 girls on PIAA junior high teams. Those numbers do not even represent the full number of girls wrestling in youth programs, as we do not have a method to officially tally those participants. There are multiple elementary programs across the state that have reported having over 25 girls in their program.

When girls wrestling is officially sanctioned in PA, the numbers of girls participating are expected to increase at an even faster rate. This trend has been highlighted in other states that have sanctioned. For example, in Missouri, participation grew over 400% following sanctioning and other states' growth hasn't been far behind.



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## How will Girls Wrestling Become an Official Sanctioned Sport in PA?

For girls wrestling to become sanctioned in PA, the PIAA requires that 100-member schools form official girls' teams and compete in 11 competition points. To form an official team, a district's School Board needs to vote to approve a team. There is NO minimum number of girls required to start a team and teams can be formed without having students identified for it. Schools can maintain the same coaches that they have for the boys' team and the same facilities and practice times can be used. Girls are also allowed to be dual-rostered on the girls' and boys' team until girls wrestling is sanctioned.



## Why Should You Add Girls Wrestling?

There are many reasons why girls should be provided the opportunity to wrestle and why Pennsylvania high schools are the perfect place to do this.

### Increases Winter Sport Options and Assists in Title IX Compliance

Adding wrestling increases winter sports options for girls by 25%. With 6000 less participation opportunities for girls during the winter months, wrestling gives another opportunity for girls to participate in sports during the winter season. Currently, the only other winter sport options available to girls include bowling, indoor track, swimming, and basketball. With approximately 500 boys' teams, it provides a built-in system to quickly add a girls' team and increase participation.

Further, adding girls wrestling can assist schools in complying with Title IX. A school's compliance cannot be negatively impacted by adding girls wrestling and a boys' team would not need to be dropped if girls wrestling was added. For any questions related to Title IX, we suggest reaching out to Peg Pennepacker at [pegpenpacker@gmail.com](mailto:pegpenpacker@gmail.com). Peg is a CAA, ATIXA Advisory Board Member, NIAAA National Faculty, and High School Title IX Consulting Services member.

## Addresses Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Girls wrestling has the potential to bring a diverse population of students into your athletic department and also to address equity and inclusion issues. Girls wrestling provides the opportunity for girls of all physical sizes and backgrounds to compete. It also, by definition, extends a participation opportunity to the historically underrepresented sex. Wrestling also provides a unique opportunity to attract new students to a sport. Many girls who wrestle are students who were not previously participating in another sport. Further, data from states that have sanctioned girls wrestling (TX, CA) have shown that Title I schools make up the majority of the top girls' teams in those states and girls wrestling overall has a disproportionate number of participants from underserved populations. While data from the college level is not yet available, men's wrestling ranks 2nd among all sports in creating 1st generation college students and expectations are that women's wrestling will show a similar trend.



## Cost Effective

Girls wrestling is highly cost effective for a high school to add. In fact, it may be the most cost effective addition that any school can make. The expenditures for wrestling are minimal, especially when a boys' team is already in existence.

With their girls' team, schools can use the same practice space, same mats, same coaches, and even attend some of the same events as the boys' team. While a school can create a new coaching staff or hold practices at a different time, the staff can also be the same as the boys' team, thereby eliminating any additional coaching stipend expenditures. The teams that have already formed in PA reflect diversity in their approach and show the various options that are possible. At Easton Area HS in Easton, PA, a new coaching staff was created and practices held separately. At other schools, like North Allegheny HS outside of Pittsburgh, PA, an assistant coaching position was added and practices are partially overlapped with the boys' team. At Gettysburg HS in Gettysburg, PA and Central Mountain HS near Lock Haven, PA, no additional coaching position was added and the boys' and girls' teams practice at the same time.

Possible additional expenditures can include singlets for the girls and travel to competitions, although there are ways to minimize travel costs (e.g., coordinate with the boys' schedule when possible), thereby significantly limiting additional travel costs.

## **Provides Access to Post-Secondary Opportunities**

At the collegiate level, there are now over 85 varsity college women's wrestling programs across the US, 6 of which are located in Pennsylvania (East Stroudsburg, Gannon University, Lakawanna Junior College, Lock Haven University, Delaware Valley University, Alvernia University).



Further, women's wrestling received NCAA Emerging Sport Status approval from NCAA Division I, II, and III and there are currently many schools looking to fill rosters and offer scholarships. While data from the college level is not yet available, men's wrestling ranks 2nd among all sports in creating 1st generation college students and expectations are that women's wrestling will show a similar trend. Overall, participating in girls wrestling can help provide a pathway to college for many girls that might not have otherwise attended, and a school can potentially increase their rate of post-secondary student matriculation by officially adding a girls program.

## **Allows Girls to Wrestle Girls, Decreases Safety and Liability Concerns in a Combat Sport**

Without an official girls' team, any girls participating in wrestling in PA will be participating as a member of the boys' team. While those girls can attend Open Tournaments, they cannot attend other events specifically held for girls without impacting the boys' teams' competition points. Girls wrestling provides more opportunities for girls to wrestle girls, which can significantly increase participation numbers. Schools have been amazed to see what happens with participation numbers when they provide an official team for girls to compete on and girls know they don't have to compete against boys. Further, having girls wrestle other girls supports the ideals of fair play and helps decrease safety and liability concerns by not requiring a girl to face a boy in a combat sport just because they want to participate.

## **Sustainability of Boys Wrestling**

Adding girls wrestling helps support the long-term sustainability of boys wrestling. The growth of boys wrestling has accelerated as girls wrestling has grown. By starting a girls' program, there will be more community awareness and student-awareness of the wrestling programs, which can increase numbers on both the boys and girls' teams.



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## **Provides a Pathway for Younger Girls to Continue in the Sport**

Looking at the number of girls coming up through the elementary and middle school system is another reason to support girls wrestling at the scholastic level - so that these girls will have teams to wrestle on and an official sport to be a part of. Similarly, having a sanctioned sport at the high school level will be a bridge to better enable Pennsylvania to support larger numbers of participants at the collegiate and international levels.

## **Self-Improvement**

Participating in wrestling brings girls the same character benefits that boys have received, including increased confidence, work ethic, self-reliance, commitment, and resiliency.

## **Additional Reasons to Add a Program**

- Brings new donors, volunteers, community supports to the school, Athletic Department, and boys wrestling program
- Expands fan base for the boys wrestling program as well as other school sports
- Creates immediate positive response and local, state, and even national media attention to school
- Increases perception of school as an inclusive campus that leads by example
- Provides a place in the history books for the School Board, Athletic Director, Superintendent, Principal, boys wrestling program coaching staff, and supporting staff
- Increases number of individual State Champions and make a team State Championship title possible

## **Coaches' thoughts on why they promote adding a program:**

- We got into coaching to make a difference and positively impact student-athletes. We can do even more of that by supporting girls.
- If we love this sport, we need to support girls wrestling to help sustain and grow the whole sport.
- This is the chance for coaches across the state to create a legacy. No one can ever take away your accomplishment of being the person that started girls wrestling at your school.
- Put your school in a position to be set up for success so that when sanctioning happens, your school is ready to compete and not playing catch up.

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# Forming a Girls Wrestling Team

## How Do I Start an Official Girls High School Wrestling Program?

Adding a girls wrestling program is easy, especially if a boys program is already in existence.

1. Propose the formation of the team to the school board – this is usually done by a coach or the AD
  - a. This packet can be used to provide stakeholders with information they may be interested in when considering a proposal
  - b. Template proposals that are fill-able, as well as the actual proposals that other schools used, can be found at [www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com)
2. Get the girls' team approved by the school board as an official team
3. Start recruiting, practicing, and competing!
  - a. Recruit girls to the team. \*Note that there is NO minimum number of girls required to start a team and teams CAN be proposed before having girls identified for the team
  - b. The rules for girls wrestling are the same as boys wrestling, and like other individual sports at your school, the same coach can coach both boys and girls wrestling programs or you can have separate coaches
  - c. Practices can be held with the boys' team
  - d. Identify competitions for the girls to compete in (Please see ideas for competitions on the last page of this packet)

## Resources Available to Start a Program

The Pennsylvania Girls Wrestling Task Force and SanctionPA have developed extensive resources to support schools in forming a team. Resources include:

- Webinars for parents, coaches, and ADs
- Proposal presentation templates
- Proposals from other schools that have formed teams
- Tips for Coaching Girls
- Recruiting Strategies Packet
- Customizable Recruiting Flyers

## Additional support provided by the Pennsylvania Girls Wrestling Task Force and SanctionPA includes:

- Task Force members available for questions any time and can also act as a liaison between schools and the PIAA to ensure any questions are answered
- Informational Packet for Formed Teams that new teams can reference as a guide to walk them through their first season with a girls' team
- Regular calls held with all other official girls' teams in PA
- Girls-only tournament schedule developed for each season
- Coaches and ADs of formed teams are available to talk to other schools
- Regular communication from the Task Force with updates from across the state as well from the PIAA

# Media Coverage

The media attention on girls wrestling across the country has been active and supremely positive. In PA specifically, schools that have added girls wrestling have received positive local, state, and even national attention. Below are just some examples of the articles and social media posts that have been published.

## Parkland vs. Easton Girls Match 20-second Video Clip

- Received more than 8k views on Facebook
- Received more than 4k views and 1k likes on Instagram

Parkland girls wrestling: From curious hallway strangers to a band of sisters in singlets

Trio of female wrestlers make history at North Allegheny

As McCaskey makes Pennsylvania girls' wrestling history, it's now a matter of when, not if, other programs follow

'It's empowering': Pennsylvania's girls' wrestling movement takes down another first in Gettysburg

109

THE MORNING CALL

### WRESTLING

used from **SPORTS I**

"I've had college women's wrestling championships since sophomore assistant coach Zumas said. "We're to enter our fifth Olympic. Many states sanction girls wrestling. Pennsylvania, in some sense, trailblazing in the sport."

"dozen Parkland girls, are either oblivious to the of girls wrestling in Pennsylvania or don't care. as having too much fun. sy tasted their first wrestling action earlier this at a JV tournament at town High School. A



PHOTO BY ALONDA REYES FOR THE MORNING CALL. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALONDA REYES FOR THE MORNING CALL. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALONDA REYES FOR THE MORNING CALL. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALONDA REYES FOR THE MORNING CALL.

"I stick it out through high school. Kruczek believes the PIAA can change that."



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# Forming a HS Girls Wrestling Team in PA: FAQ

## Cost

### 1. What are the cost ramifications of adding girls wrestling?

The cost ramifications for girls wrestling can be extremely minimal if you have an existing boys' team. For example:

- If you already have a boys' team, you already have a mat and practice space, so there is no additional cost in these areas just because a girls' team is created.
- If you already have a boys' team, you already have coaches that could also function as the girls coaches. While a school can create a new coaching staff, the staff can also be the same as the boys' team, thereby eliminating any additional coaching stipend expenditures.
- Singlets for the girls – If you already have had girls wrestling for your boys' team, this won't even be an additional cost to what the school is currently paying because you are already outfitting them. As more girls join, they will need singlets, so this will be a very minimal additional cost. (Note: while girls-cut singlets are ideal, teams have also utilized boys-cut singlets and girls wear those with a compression shirt underneath.
- Travel for competition and events – there are ways to minimize additional travel costs specifically for the girls' team (e.g., follow boys schedule), therefore significantly limiting any additional cost for travel. Please see the Competition Point Sources section (last section of this document) for more information.

## Coaching

### 2. Can the coaching staff of the boys' team also coach the girls' team?

Yes! You can also have a totally different coaching staff or a mixed coaching staff – for example, the same head coach for both teams but different assistants. Of the schools that have already formed girls' team, there has been at least one school that has chosen each option (totally new staff, exact same staff, addition of one assistant, addition of volunteer). Each school can choose the format that works best for them.

### 3. Can male coaches coach female athletes?

Yes! There are thousands of male wrestling coaches across the country who are coaching female wrestlers. In fact, the majority of girls' teams are coached by male coaches. While having a female coach on staff can certainly be positive, not having a female head or assistant coach should not be a limiting factor in the creation of a team.

Some male coaches may question whether liability increases when coaching females. The fact is, all coaches, in any sport, must engage professionally with athletes at all times. Guidance from USA Wrestling, the PIAA, and other governing bodies tells coaches not to drive athletes alone, not to room with athletes, not to be in spaces (e.g., the wrestling room) alone with athletes, etc. Your school may also have additional policies regarding coach behavior.

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These types of regulations apply to ALL coaching situations – males coaching males, males coaching females, females coaching males, and females coaching females. There are already hundreds of coaches right here in PA that have started coaching females, such as Chris Haines at Gettysburg, Jon Trengue at Parkland High School, and Biff Walizer at Central Mountain. Other coaches on the national scene include Terry Steiner who coaches the US Women’s team, and Valentin Kalika who was Helen Maroulis’ personal coach. These examples are in addition to thousands of male high school wrestling coaches that are coaching females across the country.

#### **4. What if I’ve never coached girls before? Do I need to coach them a different way?**

The goal of every coach is to positively impact the lives of the student-athletes they work with and to motivate them to reach their highest potential. When coaching girls, these same goals apply. While there are more similarities than differences when coaching girls compared to coaching boys, some coaches may still have questions – here is a sheet of helpful [Tips for Coaching Girls](#).

#### **5. Will having a girls’ team create a lot of additional work for the existing coaches?**

If you choose to use the same coaches for the girls and boys’ team, the coaches will have some additional responsibilities through leading the girls’ team, but these responsibilities and the corresponding time investment may be more minimal than you might expect. (Also, if the girls are already on your boys’ team, you’re already putting in some of that time investment.) For example, boys and girls practices can be held at the same time and in the same space – in other words, you can have joint practices everyday. Regarding equipment, you will need to order additional singlets for the girls, but you would have needed to do that anyway if they were members of your boys’ team. For competitions, once an official girls’ team is formed, you’ll need to get the girls’ team to reach 11 competition points but one way to do that is to take the girls to some of the tournaments the boys go to and/or have the girls wrestle an opponent’s girls’ team the same evening that the boys wrestle the opponent’s boys’ team in a dual. That way the girls and boys would travel to duals together and the coaching staff would already be present. While these are just some examples of how to manage time, there are many others. If it would help to speak to a current girls’ team coach who balances both responsibilities, please email [sanctionpa@gmail.com](mailto:sanctionpa@gmail.com) and we will put you in touch with a coach.

## **Practices**

#### **6. Can the boys’ and girls’ team practice together?**

Yes. There is no PIAA policy to prevent the boys and girls’ teams from practicing together. The PIAA does require that teams practicing together are at the same level (i.e., both high school teams), which the boys and girls’ teams would be. Joint practices across boys and girls’ teams does not happen in every sport but is common in certain sports, including track and field, cross country, swimming, etc. For wrestling, joint practices will likely make the most sense and be the easiest to implement for most schools, and that is fully acceptable with current rules.

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## 7. What impact would this have on the boys' team? Would they be negatively impacted?

Not only is there a lack of evidence that adding a girls' team would have a negative impact on the boys' team, there is actually evidence that adding a girls' team would positively impact the existing boys' team. Adding girls' teams can help protect the sustainability of boys programs in several ways. First, by increasing the number of students associated with the program, those additional wrestlers will recruit more wrestlers – boys and girls. Further, adding a girls' team can grow the school's wrestling fan base, expand its supporters, and bring additional volunteers, booster club members, community partners, and even donors to both the girls and boys program. Some people have questioned whether booster club and related funds would be split and therefore lessen what the boys receive. In reality, new booster club volunteers would become involved and more fundraising potential would exist.

## Procedure (e.g., Weight Certifications, Weigh-ins, Rules)

### 8. What do girls wear when they wrestle?

Like boys, girls wear singlets when they wrestle. Many teams have initially issued girls boys-cut singlets, but there are also girls-cut singlets that could be purchased. No matter which type of singlet is used, rules require “all contestants wearing a one-piece singlet shall wear a suitable undergarment that completely covers the buttocks and groin area. Female wrestlers wearing a one-piece singlet shall wear a form-fitted compression undergarment that completely covers their breasts.” This means that compression shorts under the singlet are advised and a sports bra, at a minimum, would be required. Many girls also choose to wear a compression shirt under their singlet. (Note that the rule about suitable undergarments also applies to boys. For boys, black compression briefs/shorts are one solution.)

### 9. What do girls have to do with their hair when they wrestle?

The NFHS recently updated the hair rule and have eliminated the hair length requirements. Girls and boys with longer hair are no longer required to wear a hair cap.

### 10. Are weigh-ins or weight certifications different for girls?

Girls follow the same weight certification procedures as the boys. Weigh-ins are also conducted the same way as the boys and with NFHS' new weigh-in rules (singlet required), girls and boys can now weigh-in at the same time.

### 11. What are the weight classes for girls?

Until girls wrestling is sanctioned, the weight classes that girls wrestle in will be based on the event they're entering. For example, if your girls' team is entering a PIAA sanctioned tournament with boys during the regular season, then obviously the girls will follow the current boys' weight classes. If entering an open tournament, then, like boys, the girls will follow the weight classes that the tournament director is using. While girls' tournaments may use PIAA weight classes, they can also use a Madison grouping or set their own weight classes, which do not need to follow PIAA weight classes. If you are competing against another girls' team in a dual meet, you have some latitude in the weight classes you use. You are allowed to set your own weight classes or even use a Madison system. You can also have multiple matches at one weight (e.g., there are 6 105-pound girls so you have 3 matches at 105 pounds).

Once girls wrestling is sanctioned, the girls will have their own established weight classes.

For additional rules information, check out SanctionPA's [Rules Interpretation for Girls Wrestling](#).

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## Competitions

### 12. What style do girls compete in?

Like boys, girls wrestle folkstyle in high school.

### 13. Do we need to have a full roster to compete?

No! Teams can be formed without having any girls identified for the team and, once formed, teams can compete even if they only have one girl on the roster. That girl will earn competition points the same way a full team would. Further, duals do not need to adhere to PIAA weight classes and teams do not need to have full line-ups. For example, you are allowed to set your own weight classes or even use a Madison system. You can also have multiple matches at one weight (e.g., there are 6 105-pound girls so you have 3 matches at 105 pounds).

### 14. Where can girls compete?

Girls teams have many options when it comes to competition opportunities. Like boys, girls can wrestle in duals, compete in PIAA-sanctioned events, compete in NFHS-sanctioned events, compete in JV tournaments, and compete in Open tournaments. Some of these ideas can include having your girls' team coordinate with the boys' schedule. For example, having the girls' team wrestle another schools' girls' team the same evening of the boys dual and/or entering some of the same tournaments that the boys are entering. This method really limits or even eliminates additional transportation costs and various logistical hurdles. It is also possible to have girls attend PIAA sanctioned tournaments, whether girls-only or not, anywhere in the state. Girls' teams could also attend NFHS sanctioned tournaments in any other state. Any combination of the above ideas also works!

**The PA Girls HS Wrestling Task Force is planning on creating a list of available competitions each year until sanctioning is achieved.** For the 2020-2021 season, which was the first season with official girls' teams, there were several competitions available that were arranged between the formed programs. Competition opportunities for the 2021-2022 season are currently being developed and will be released shortly at [www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com).

For more information and expanded ideas on competition opportunities, please see the Competition Point Sources section (last section of this document).

### 15. Can a girls' team enter a PIAA event against boys' teams and have that count as competition points?

Yes. Even once your girls' team is formed, the girls can still wrestle against boys' teams – for example, they could schedule a dual or enter tournaments with boys' teams. They don't just have to wrestle other girls' teams.

### 16. Can we go out-of-state to NFHS sanctioned tournaments and have that count as competition points?

Yes. Surrounding states hold many NFHS girls events, including New Jersey, Ohio, and New York.

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**17. I have girls on my roster, can I send them to a NFHS-sanctioned event in another state without it impacting my boys varsity competition points?**

Girls can compete in these events but if the girl(s) are on your boys roster, then the competition points for competing in these events will count towards your boys' team. Once you have a girls' team, then the points would count towards your girls' team.

**18. Can we wrestle the boys' team at our school in a dual meet and have that count as competition points?**

Yes.

**19. Do JV tournaments count as competition points? Could we go to those?**

JV tournaments would not count as varsity competition points for the girls' team. 11 varsity competition points are needed. Girls can still attend JV tournaments and they can be a great way to get matches in.

**20. Can we wrestle against a girls' team right before/after/during a boys varsity dual and have it count as competition points?**

Yes! This might be one of the easiest ways to get competition points. Have your girls' team wrestle the other school's girls' team right before, after, or during the boys' team dual. This keeps scheduling easy, logistics easy (boys and girls coaching staff can be the same and will already be there), and transportation easy (girls and boys go on the same bus).

**21. Can the girls on my roster enter an open event during the season and not have it count against the team competition points?**

YES, you can send your girls to any open event that is run in the state without it impacting your school's competition points. However, the girls must be competing independently of their school. They would need to represent their club or hometown. In addition, anyone can coach as long as they are not serving in an official capacity as school coach at that event. In other words, they need to be serving as a private citizen and not as a coach of the high school.

**22. Can we host a girls' division as part of a PIAA sanctioned event?**

Yes, you can host a girls-only division, HOWEVER, in the absence of a girls-only team, any schools that participate in this event would have to use boys varsity competition points to do so. Once a team has a girls-only team, then the points would not count against the boys' team. In addition, this would eliminate any 'open' wrestlers from competing in your event.

Example: If there are six schools competing in an event, Schools A, B, and C all have separate girls' teams while teams D, E, and F still have a boys' team only, competition points for schools A, B and C would be applied to the girls' team while competition points for teams D, E and F would be applied to the boys' team.

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**23. Do we earn competition points even if we do not roster a full girls' team? For example, can our girls' team wrestle a dual against another team and still get the competition points if we do not have a full line-up and therefore several forfeits?**

Absolutely. This is the same for boys' teams. Even boys' teams that enter events/duals and have forfeits still earn competition points.

**24. For the PIAA to sanction girls wrestling, girls' teams need to reach 11 competition points. Do we need to do this right away?**

Until girls wrestling is officially sanctioned, you will not be required to hit 11 competition points, so concerns about initially reaching 11 should not be a deterrent to forming a team. We do recommend thinking about and planning ways to get to 11 as soon as you can, since that will likely be the requirement once sanctioning occurs. Ways to reach 11 competition points are listed in the last section of this document (Competition Point Sources).

**25. Our school has an official girls' team but can a girl still wrestle with the boys' team?**

Yes, if the school has both a boys and girls' team, a girl could be rostered on both teams and compete with both teams as long as the girls' team only competed in girls-only events. Once sanctioning occurs, a girl could only be rostered on one team (she would not be permitted to compete on both the boys and girls' team in the same season.) Highly skilled girls could remain on the boys roster if that was the best decision for that individual girl.

**26. If PIAA sanctioned a State Championship for girls and my school only has a boys' team, can the girl on my team declare which post-season event she would enter?**

In the future, if there is a PIAA sanctioned Girls State Championship, if a school only has a boys' team on which girls are competing, then the girls can declare to either enter the girls or boys post-season. This is a precedent that is already set in a sport like golf.

## **Recruiting**

**27. What girls will wrestle?**

Like boys wrestling, girls wrestling also provides the opportunity for girls of all physical sizes and backgrounds to compete. Girls that are fall and spring sport athletes may join wrestling to help them become better athletes for their other sports (much like we tout to football players). Additionally, girls wrestling provides a unique opportunity to attract new students to a sport. Data exists to suggest that girls who wrestle may be girls who were not previously active in another school sport. Coaches can also promote participation from girls that are cut from other winter sports, girls that were previously wrestling managers, girls with a combat sport background (e.g., jiu jitsu), etc. Further, once girls have the opportunity to compete against other girls, they are more likely to come out for the sport. Just like for boys wrestling, there is a place for everyone in this sport.

**Ready to start a  
program?  
Check out page 10  
for the steps to take!**

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## 28. Will it be hard to recruit girls to wrestle?

The data and trends show that if you create a girls program, it is easier to attract girls to the sport. You will also be able to attract new girls to your sport who might never have participated in sports before. With just a little bit of recruiting and opening up the opportunity, you can get girls out for your team. For more information in this area, please see the following question as well as SanctionPA's [Recruiting Strategies](#).

## 29. Do you have specific ideas on how to recruit girls?

We have developed extensive recruiting resources, including a list of strategies and ideas that were gathered from coaches across the state, and customizable recruiting flyers. All resources can be found at [www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com). A sampling of some of these ideas include:

- Announcements on the school news station, daily morning announcements, or the equivalent at your school. Use this approach more than once! Emphasize the benefits of the sport and that any girl can do it.
- Once you have girls on your team, get the school TV station, local TV stations, and media to provide coverage. This can help a lot with momentum.
- If your school will permit it, send a wrestling flyer home or make a social media post about wrestling and joining the team.
- Recruit the athletes that were cut from other winter sports at the school.
- Talk to fall and spring sports teams about wrestling.
- Invite any girls that are managers to join the team.
- Have your current wrestlers recruit girls to the team
- Create an “Ambassador of the Month” or “Ambassador of the Season” award. If you highly value building numbers across your program, then one way to show it is by using an award/ reward system that recognizes the current wrestler that recruits the greatest number of new wrestlers.
- Hold a “Try-It Night” where you invite girls to come try wrestling
- Hold a “Bring Your Sister” or “Bring Your Friend” to practice day
- Talk to the school about the possibility of having the physical education teachers do a unit on wrestling.
- Recruit in pairs when possible – this helps ensure a practice partner and it will also help you grow your team twice as fast
- Establish a point person at the school who you can point girls to if they have any questions.

Key points for recruiting wrestlers:

- Wrestling is for everyBODY
- Cast a wide net – wrestling is often the first sport that many girls try, so be sure to target non-athletes as well as fall and spring sport athletes and girls cut from other winter sports
- Actively recruiting wrestling athletes secures more participants than passive recruiting

Once you have some girls at your practices, it's important to try and give them the best chance possible of wanting to come back. You can do this by implementing a few strategies:

- Pay attention to them. If the girls aren't wanted there by the coaches, they will feel that. Welcome them, get to know them, and take an interest in their progress, just as you would for the boys.

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- Consider reducing the number of required practices for girls during the season (or any beginner wrestlers, whether girls or boys). This gives beginners a chance to ease into the sport and not suddenly be thrust into a 6-days a week practice schedule that burns them out. It also respects other possible extracurricular obligations that they may have developed, which long-time wrestlers may not have during season (e.g., participation in band, travel club team with another sport, work, etc.).
  - Try to pair girls with other beginner girls during the first couple weeks so they are not forced to try and wrestle someone else with vastly greater experience than them.
  - Share information with the girls and their parents to help them begin to connect with the sport. We all agree this is the best sport in the world and remembering to help new wrestlers connect to this culture is really helpful in building a bigger sense of community and ties to wrestling. For example, encourage them to follow various wrestlers (including female wrestlers, which gives them great role models) or outlets (e.g., FloWrestling, Transition Wrestling) on social media, tell them about any great college matches coming up on TV, or even schedule a night to meet as a team at a local college match. Do whatever you can to connect them to this sport – you'll have a greater chance of getting them hooked. This goes for your guys as well.

## Sanctioning

**30. PIAA policy states that for a sport to be considered for sanctioning, the sport must demonstrate they have a minimum of 100 teams. What does this mean?**

This means that there needs to be at least 100 schools that have had their School Board vote to approve a girls HS wrestling team and those schools would need to compete in a minimum of 50% of the number of allowable competition points. The current number of varsity competition points for wrestling is 22, so girls' teams would need to reach at least 11 competition points. Ideas for how to achieve 11 competition points can be found in the last section of this document, Competition Point Sources.

**31. Currently, in Pennsylvania there are girls wrestling on over 100 boys' teams - does that count as meeting the 100 team threshold?**

Unfortunately, no. While we are excited that there are over 100 schools with girls on the roster, the girls at each of those schools are not on a separate girls' team.

**32. Until girls wrestling is sanctioned, can we have 100 schools designate one girl for their girls' team and keep the rest of their girls on the boys' team so they can continue to compete together?**

While you could technically do this, girls wrestling will likely have a much easier time getting sanctioned if there are girls competing for that team. Also, there is no real reason to avoid placing the girls on a girls' team. Once you form the girls' team, the girls can still be jointly rostered and compete on the boys' team until sanctioning is achieved. While most schools will not go the route of dual rostering, there are some schools, especially schools where the girls have been competing on boys' varsity, where having the ability for a girl to compete on both teams will be important.

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**33. Does Pennsylvania have an option to accelerate sanctioning through a concept of “Emerging Sport Status”?**

The PIAA does not have a provision called “Emerging Sport Status.” The current policy to be sanctioned is to meet the threshold set by the PIAA. If you have heard the term “Emerging Sport Status” before, it was likely in reference to women’s wrestling at the NCAA level. In 2020, women’s wrestling was granted Emerging Sport Status at the NCAA level.

**34. Can the PIAA Wrestling Steering Committee make a change to the current PIAA policy regarding sanctioning requirements and/or how competition points are calculated?**

The PIAA Steering Committee could make recommendations to the Board of Directors. For changes to occur, it would require a vote by the full Board.

**35. Could the Wrestling Steering Committee give approval to allow girls-only competitions without it impacting the boys’ points as the sport work towards the 100 team threshold?**

The steering committee could make a recommendation to allow boys’ teams to have separate competition points for the girls and boys but it would require a board action to be put in place.

**36. What documentation would be needed by the PIAA to prove a school formed a girls’ team? Is there something the Board/AD would need to issue?**

There is not an official form, etc. that a school needs to fill out to signify that a girls’ team has been formed. However, we recommend that as soon as a school district forms a girls’ team, that they issue a dated letter stating the formation of the girls’ team and submit it to their PIAA District point person as well as to the SanctionPA at [SanctionPA@gmail.com](mailto:SanctionPA@gmail.com). This will ensure that the number of established teams is known and can easily be communicated to the PIAA. Once competitions are planned, submitting a competition schedule that includes enough events to reach 11 competition points would also be helpful.

**37. Once we have 100 schools competing in at least 11 competition points, what are the next steps?**

Once this threshold is met, a District committee or the Steering Committee can make a recommendation to the full board for the sport to be added.

**How do we get more information?**

**If your questions are not answered within this document, please contact SanctionPA at [sanctionPA@gmail.com](mailto:sanctionPA@gmail.com) or 610-657-5821.**

# GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

## COMPETITION POINT SOURCES

Because boys wrestling has a maximum of 22 competition points a season and a minimum of 11, it is likely that girls wrestling, once sanctioned, will be given the same parameters. In order to hit the PIAA threshold of 11 varsity competition points for a newly formed girls' team, there are several ways that schools can design their schedule. The following are some examples. **\*PLEASE NOTE that until girls wrestling is officially sanctioned, you will not be required to hit 11 competition points, so concerns about initially reaching 11 should not be a deterrent to forming a team,** but we do highly recommend thinking about and planning ways to get to 11 as soon as you can, since that will likely be the requirement once sanctioning occurs.

Girls teams have many options when it comes to competition opportunities. Like boys, girls can wrestle in duals, compete in PIAA-sanctioned events, compete in NFHS-sanctioned events, compete in JV tournaments, and compete in Open tournaments. Each of these options is described below and includes a comment on competition points and rules or logistics to consider.

- **School's girls' team can wrestle another school's girls' teams in a dual-meet format**
  - **Rules:** Until girls wrestling is sanctioned, duals do not need to adhere to PIAA weight classes and teams do not need to have full line-ups. For example, you are allowed to set your own weight classes or even use a Madison system. You can also have multiple matches at one weight (e.g., there are 6 105-pound girls so you have 3 matches at 105 pounds). All other typical PIAA rules for competition should be followed.
  - **Logistics:** To streamline scheduling, a school might want to consider holding a girls' dual right before or after the scheduled boys varsity dual with the same team. Or, the girls and boys could also wrestle on separate mats in the same gym simultaneously. This keeps scheduling easy, logistics easy (both the boys and girls coaching staff can be the same and will already be there), and transportation easy (girls and boys use the same bus).
  - **Competition points:** Each dual is one competition point. A team would need 11 duals to reach 11 competition points.
- **School's girls' team can enter PIAA-sanctioned tournaments anywhere in the state**
  - **Rules:** The girls would follow the weight classes put out by the tournament and all PIAA rules.
  - **Logistics:** Some of these tournaments may have a separate girls' division which the girls' team could enter and some don't – if there is not a separate girls' division, you may enter your girls in the main division if your school is agreeable to girls wrestling boys. Your girls' team can schedule separate PIAA tournaments to attend than the boys' team or they can enter the same tournaments. Trying to enter some of the same tournaments that the boys team travels to can make logistics and transportation relatively seamless. As time goes on, it is our hope that all tournaments add a girls' division, which will significantly help schools logistically.
  - **Competition points:** Assuming one-day tournaments with at least 9 schools competing if bracketed or at least 6 schools competing if it's a round robin, then a girls' team would earn 3 competition points.

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- **School's girls' team can enter NFHS-sanctioned tournaments in other states**
    - **Rules:** The girls would follow the weight classes put out by the tournament and all NFHS rules.
    - **Logistics:** Some of these tournaments may have a separate girls' division which the girls' team could enter and some don't – if there is not a separate girls' division, you may enter your girls in the main division if your school is agreeable to girls wrestling boys. Your girls' team can attend NFHS tournaments that your boys' team is also going to or they can schedule NFHS tournaments to attend even if the boys' team isn't going.
    - **Competition points:** Assuming one-day tournaments with at least 9 schools competing if bracketed or at least 6 schools competing if it's a round robin, then a girls' team would earn 3 competition points.
  - **School's girls' team can enter JV tournaments**
    - **Rules:** The girls would follow the weight classes put out by the tournament and all PIAA rules.
    - **Logistics:** Some of these tournaments may have a separate "pool" which the girls' team could enter and some don't – if there is not a separate girls' pool, you may enter your girls in the main division if your school is agreeable to girls wrestling boys. Trying to enter some of the same tournaments that the boys' team travels to can make logistics and transportation relatively seamless.
    - **Competition points:** Assuming one-day tournaments with at least 9 schools competing if bracketed or at least 6 schools competing if it's a round robin, then a girls' team would earn 3 competition points. Note that eventually each girls team will need at least 11 varsity competition points. For now, JV tournaments with pooling can still be a great option to get experience and matches.
  - **School's girls' team can enter Open tournaments**
    - **Rules:** If your school has an official girls' team, the girls CAN represent the school by wearing their school singlet, be coached by their school coaches, have their entry fees paid for by the school, and have the competition not count towards the boys' team competition points. For those schools that attend open tournaments but have not yet formed a girls' team, those girls CANNOT represent their school, have coaches there as official coaches, or have their entry fees paid for by the school, or their participation will be counted as competition points for their boys' team. Regarding weight classes at open tournaments, the girls would follow the weight classes and rules put out by the tournament.
    - **Logistics:** Typically, official boys' teams do not attend open tournaments because it would count as competition points and they already have a full dual meet and PIAA tournament schedule. Because girls wrestling is not yet sanctioned and as opportunities for girls continue to grow, open tournaments can be a great way to get matches. Attendance at these events and transportation to/from these events would likely be additional and separate from the boys' team and therefore would need to be scheduled with that in mind.
    - **Competition points:** For officially formed girls' teams, open tournaments do not accumulate competition points. However, as more schools add girls wrestling, then our goal is for some of the open events to turn into varsity events. When that happens, these events would count as competition points just as other sanctioned tournaments do.

**A list of competition opportunities for girls has been created by the Task Force and can be found at [www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com)**

# CONTACT

If you have any additional questions after reading this document or if we can assist your school in any way, more information is available at [www.sanctionpa.com](http://www.sanctionpa.com) or please contact us at [sanctionpa@gmail.com](mailto:sanctionpa@gmail.com), 610-657-5821

Thank you and we look forward to working with you and your school!

