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PA GIRLS HS WRESTLING: INFORMATIONAL PACKET FOR FORMED TEAMS

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CONGRATULATIONS! We are excited that your school is committed to providing opportunities for girls to wrestle by forming an official girls' team. By doing that, you have helped move Pennsylvania closer to recognizing girls wrestling as an official sport through sanctioning. You have also paved the way for girls to have an official state tournament and created an opportunity for thousands of girls and future generations of girls to experience the sport of wrestling. THANK YOU! We can't wait to see your girls on the mat and for both the girls and your school to reap all of the incredible benefits that a girls wrestling program brings.

As a newly formed team, you may have questions about the next steps. This document is meant to help guide you and your program on those next steps.

If you have any additional questions after reading this document, you can find more information at www.sanctionpa.com or you can contact us at sanctionpa@gmail.com / 610-657-5821.

*Please note that this document is a follow-up to our **Informational Packet for Forming a Team**, which includes significant background information and an FAQ section. We recommend checking it out and downloading/printing it as an additional reference tool.

NEXT STEPS AFTER TEAM FORMATION

Once a girls team is officially formed, there are several things that a school will want to do to help get the new team up and running.

- Notify the PA Girls HS Wrestling Task Force that you have formed a team. We want to track these numbers accurately for the PIAA. Email us at sanctionpa@gmail.com
- Determine your logistical structure for coaching/practices (same/different practices, same/different/additional coaches)
- Identify/hire coaches, if necessary
- Determine Booster Club structure
- Review competition schedule possibilities
- Recruit
- Start practicing
- Compete!

The following sections outline additional information in these areas, including determining the program's logistical structure, determining the Booster Club structure, sources of coaches, competition opportunities, recruiting strategies and ideas to build program numbers, as well as additional information that may be useful including a review of rules, weight classes, and using the weight management system for female athletes.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE: PRACTICES AND COACHES

You likely considered the topics of practice logistics and a coaching staff when developing your proposal to add a girls wrestling program. As you know, schools have several options in regards to how they approach both practices and the make-up of their coaching staff.

Practices

For practices, boys' and girls' teams can...

- a) practice at the same time in a combined practice format,
- b) practice at the same time in a parallel practice format (both teams practicing but being led through different practice content, perhaps using separate mats or opposite sides of the room),
- c) overlap for part of practice and practice separately for part of practice, or
- d) practice at different times.

There are pros and cons of each option. Schools are encouraged to consider what would work best for their particular situation. Many factors for consideration exist and examples include program numbers (if a high school is starting with 50 girls on the girls' team and 50 boys on the boys' team, it is unlikely that both teams would fit in the room to be able to practice at the same time), coordination of time in the room with other activities and programs, and the chosen coaching structure (if the girls and boys program are sharing coaches, it would be much more likely that a school will want to have practices at the same time, whether combined or parallel). The PIAA does not mandate one option or another so schools should consider their particular situation and what would be most effective for them.

Coaches

Like practices, schools have options when it comes to establishing a coaching staff. A school can...

- a) use their current boys' coaching staff for the girls' team and make no additions to the staff,
- b) use their current boys' coaching staff and make (an) addition(s) to the staff through paid or unpaid positions, or
- c) bring in a new coaching staff.

Like practices, there are pros and cons to each coaching structure option and ultimately a school will want to examine factors such as their budget and current coaching resources when making a decision in this area. A new coaching staff may bring the most resources that are fully dedicated to developing a girls' team, but a full new coaching staff also brings additional costs to the district and some programs may already have a staff of paid and volunteer coaches that is large enough to support a girls' program.



Males Coaching Females

Some coaches and administrators have asked if male coaches can coach female wrestlers. Male wrestling coaches are permitted to coach female wrestlers. In fact, the majority of girls' teams are coached by male coaches. There are already hundreds of coaches right here in PA that have started coaching females, such as Jordan Kutler at Easton Area HS, Dan Heckert at North Allegheny HS, and Biff Walizer at Central Mountain, in addition to thousands of other male high school wrestling coaches across the country. While there are more similarities than differences when coaching girls and boys, we have developed **Tips for Coaching Girls** to help guide new coaches.

As the resource mentioned above states, some 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, NWCA, 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. These types of regulations apply to ALL coaching situations – males coaching males, males coaching females, females coaching males, and females coaching females.

With all of that said, we are certainly not discounting the value of having a female coach on staff. Wrestlers, coaches, and others may feel more comfortable having a female coach in the room. Also, like any coach, a female coach can bring value to the room and have a positive impact on a program.

Sources of Female Coaches

- Parent of a current wrestler on the boys or girls team
- Family member of a wrestling coach
- Person in the area that has wrestled and graduated
- Coaches of other sports in the school
- Person in the school or community with wrestling knowledge
- Person in the school or community with a combat sport background (e.g., jiu jitsu)
- Athlete at a local college or **Regional Training Center**
- SanctionPA has also been working to build a database of individuals interested in coaching. This database has been built by disseminating a survey to women that were previous PA USA Wrestling members and to PA wrestling groups. To find out if there may be an interested individual from your area in our database, email sanctionpa@gmail.com.

****** As you consider bringing additional staff into the room, whether men or women, it is important to remember that someone without an extensive wrestling background could still be an asset to have in the room. Be open to the various roles that a person can play and unique ways that different individuals can contribute based on their skill set. Not every coach needs to also be a workout partner or able to demonstrate technique. As we know from boys wrestling, sometimes coaches start out without much wrestling background but they are people of good character who are able to connect with kids, motivate them, lead by example, and learn more about the sport over time. Someone that can make a positive impact on team culture is a great person to have in the room, whether they have extensive knowledge of wrestling or not. For those individuals that do have a wrestling background, make sure you allow them to take on coaching roles that include showing technique, running practices, etc. And for those coaches that don't have that background, help them develop as coaches just as you would for any other coach.

BOOSTER CLUB

Another item to consider once a girls wrestling team is formed is the structure of Booster Club support. Booster Clubs can look very different in different districts. Some schools have school-wide, or All-Sports Boosters, while others have individual Booster Clubs for each sport. First, familiarize yourself with your school's booster structure. If your school has Booster Clubs for each sport, a decision will need to be made regarding whether the girls' team starts a new Booster Club or has a joint Booster Club with the boys.

In most cases, it will be easier to work within the existing wrestling Booster program. Girls that have been wrestling have already been helping to raise funds for the current Booster Club, parents of female wrestlers may already be actively involved, and some families may have both boys and girls wrestling. Thus, maintaining one Booster may be easier from that standpoint and may optimize resources for both boys' and girls' teams. However, a separate Booster with a new name, by-laws, officers, and fundraising, can be established. This is likely to become more of a consideration when a girls' team gains complete separation from the boys' team in terms of coaching staff, practices, and competitions. A Booster Club can also start off as a joint Booster Club that supports the girls and boys and later separate if determined appropriate.

CO-OPTING

Cooperative Sponsorship of Sport Agreements exist in many PIAA schools for various sports. Once you form a girls' team, it is possible to co-opt with other schools. With that said, we encourage schools to consider this option carefully as it is likely not the best option for most schools.

Cooperative sponsorship may be most appropriate to consider for small schools in order to get a girls' team started. From a Title IX perspective, schools could co-opt in order to get a girls wrestling program started, but the school would eventually move to establishing its own program in order to show progress in satisfying one of the prongs and to fully and effectively satisfy the athletic interests of the "historically underrepresented gender" - girls. For those schools that are not currently co-opting in boys wrestling or other sports, co-opting may not be the best option.

If co-opting is done, although approval is not necessary prior to girls wrestling being approved by PIAA, it would make sense to follow the requirements of Article III, Section 10 of the PIAA By-Laws. That way when adoption occurs, the teams may continue to participate as comprised.

If you think co-opting may be the best option for your school, please contact us. We are happy to further discuss what would make this a feasible option.

COMPETITIONS

This section addresses the most commonly asked questions regarding competitions when schools form a girls' team, including where the girls can compete and what the requirements are for competition points.

Competition Points

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. Before sanctioning, the PIAA will want to see that schools are accessing competitions to reach these points. We recommend that you look at 11 competition points as a goal to provide competitive opportunities for your wrestlers. If you cannot reach these points during your first year of implementation, that is okay. There will be a greater number of opportunities to earn points each year as more teams form, thereby making achieving 11 competition points easier over time.

Competition Options

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 or the newly published NFHS girls' 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.
- 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.



Competition List

Duals

To assist schools in identifying other programs in Pennsylvania that have a girls' team, and therefore schools that you can schedule a dual against, please see our [Formed Team List](#).

PA girls' team may also hold duals against out of state teams. For those teams potentially interested in competing against NJ teams or scheduling a "Feature Match-Up," they have provided a list of potential opponents. Please see [NJ's Dual Meet Team List](#).

Tournaments

To assist schools in finding tournaments for their girls' team, a list of competitions has been compiled and can be found in our [Tournament List](#).

The competitions listed all reflect opportunities for girls to wrestle against girls. This is a preliminary list based on Task Force contacts and discussions with tournament directors. This list may be adjusted throughout the year. We also expect this list to develop from season to season.

Schools are welcome to try and attend a few of the events listed or none at all - it is really up to each school and what works best for your program. You will see that most of the events listed are JV tournaments and Open tournaments. Currently, the thought is that as more schools add girls wrestling, some of the open events will turn into varsity events. When that occurs, those tournaments will count for girls' team competition points and help them in reaching 11 official varsity competition points.

For open tournaments, keep in mind that because you have formed an official girls' team, the girls CAN represent the school, be coached by their school coaches, 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 or their participation will be counted as competition points for their boys' team.)



Schedule Design

As mentioned above, there are many options when it comes to competing and designing a schedule. So which option is best? The answer is, it depends.

For schools that might not have a completely separate staff, who are trying to coordinate with the boys' team, or may have fewer financial resources to allocate, we would recommend first looking over the school's current boys' schedule to see if any events they attend or schools they wrestle have a girls' division/girls' team. This would enable the girls' team to compete at the same tournament or against the same school in a dual as the boys. The girls could wrestle their dual before, after, or during the boys' dual. By using the boys' schedule as a starting place and trying to maintain a similar schedule, this method reduces additional transportation costs and various logistical hurdles. As time goes on and more schools add girls wrestling, more local boys' tournaments will be adding girls' divisions and more schools will have a girls' team you can wrestle in a dual, which makes this schedule structure even easier to follow.

For schools that have additional coaches for the girls' team or perhaps greater financial resources at their disposal, they may want to begin their planning by looking at the list of formed teams in order to begin arranging duals and looking at the list of girls-only tournaments to see what opportunities may be desirable to attend.

For all schools, while we realize that tournaments will be the easiest way for girls to get matches, we would also highly encourage you to consider duals with other formed girls' teams whenever possible, even if the girls wrestle a different team than the boys are wrestling in their dual. We recommend incorporating duals when possible because they are a great way to highlight your team, highlight girls wrestling in general, create excitement, provide an opportunity for parents to see their children compete, and they tend to generate more fans and even more future participants than tournaments and events that are off-site. Plus, once most schools have girls' teams, a majority of their schedule could be comprised of duals just as boys' schedules are now. Remember, you do not need to have a full line-up of girls across weight classes to hold a dual! Until girls wrestling is sanctioned, you have latitude on the weight classes you set and your team will earn the same number of competition points whether you have one girl on your team competing in the dual or 13.



RULES

We recommend that all PIAA rules are followed for the girls' team even though they are not yet under PIAA jurisdiction. We recommend that because if there is any chance that a girl will enter a PIAA-sanctioned event during the season, and she does not comply with PIAA regulations (e.g., she is failing all classes but is allowed to compete), she is not technically allowed to be competing at PIAA events. Further, once girls wrestling is sanctioned, all PIAA rules will likely become required. It is best practice to begin following those rules now.

Overall, the rules for boys and girls high school wrestling in PA are the same. There is not a separate rulebook for the girls. With NFHS' updated uniform, hair, and weigh-in rules for the 2020-2021 season, the only additional criteria for girls is in regards to the definition of a legal uniform.

Uniform

The uniform rule states that ALL wrestlers (male or female) wearing a one-piece singlet shall wear a suitable undergarment which completely covers the buttocks and groin area. We recommend that all wrestlers wear compression shorts underneath their singlets/shorts when competing.

Female wrestlers must also wear an undergarment that completely covers their breasts and minimizes the risk of exposure. A sports bra can satisfy this requirement if she is wearing a girls-cut singlet and can minimize exposure without also wearing a compression shirt. If wearing a boys-cut singlet, we recommend that girls wear a tight-fitting compression shirt. Ultimately, the risk of exposure must be minimized to honor the rule as well as the dignity of our female athletes. How that is best achieved (sports bra only, additional compression shirt) will depend on the fit of a singlet and each individual girl.

Singlet Vendors

If you are looking for a place to get girls-cut (also known as high cut) singlets, the following is a list of some companies that sell them. Note that this list is not exhaustive and most major singlet companies now carry girls-cut singlets.

Custom and non-customized:

Rudis
Suplay
5KounT
Adidas
Worldwide
Sport Supply

Customized only:

MyHouse
Compound
JB3 Sports

Non-customized only:

Wrestling Mart

Hair

The NFHS rules for 2020-2021 removed the hair length requirement and a hair covering is now not mandatory. Because there is no longer a hair length rule, girls (and boys) may wear their hair down and are not required to wear a hair cover. With that said, although girls can wear their hair down, most girls will likely prefer to secure their hair with a rubber band so it does not come out during practice or competition. It also still stands true that girls (or boys) cannot wear anything hard or abrasive in their hair, including beads, bobby pins, clips, pins, barrettes, etc. If a hair cover is used, it must be of a solid material, non-abrasive and must be attached to the ear guards.

Weigh-Ins

The weigh-in rules now require that a legal uniform (see above for what constitutes a uniform) be worn during weigh-ins and that no additional weight allowance be granted. Also, shoes and headgears are prohibited at weigh-ins. With the implementation of this rule for the 2020-2021 season, girls and boys were able to weigh-in at the same time because each competitor was outfitted in their uniform and therefore appropriately covered. This rule will continue to be in place moving forward and, when competing at an event where boys are also weighing in, separate weigh-in times for girls and boys is not required.

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



WEIGHT CLASSES

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 some girls' tournaments may use PIAA weight classes, some may 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. The NFHS recently put forth new weight classes for boys and new weight classes for girls, effective for the 2023-2024 season. The girls' weight classes are listed below. Upon PIAA sanctioning, it is likely that the PIAA will adopt one of the NFHS' sets of weight classes for girls. Note that these weight class options all start at a lower weight than the boys. As you are recruiting girls and building team numbers, keep this in mind and don't shy away from including girls that are smaller than the current PIAA weight classes.

NFHS Girls' Weight Class Options:

12 Weight Classes – 100, 107, 114, 120, 126, 132, 138, 145, 152, 165, 185, 235

13 Weight Classes – 100, 106, 112, 118, 124, 130, 136, 142, 148, 155, 170, 190, 235

14 Weight Classes – 100, 105, 110, 115, 120, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 155, 170, 190, 235

TRACKWRESTLING AND OPC WEIGHT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

If you have an official girls' team and will be competing in any interscholastic events during the season as a girls' team, you will need to register your team into the NWCA/TrackWrestling OPC system under the girls-only season. If they will also be competing for the boys' team, they should be listed there as well. In addition to registering your team, you will want to have your girls go through the weight management process. **As an official girls' team, it is highly recommended that you use the OPC system** and that you follow the weight management rules as closely as possible because once girls wrestling becomes sanctioned it will become a requirement. This is also a requirement to compete in any PIAA or NJSIAA event. This includes creating and entering weights into the OPC system following interscholastic competitions.

Entering competition results: If girls at your school are dual-rostered on the boys' team (see Roster section for more information on this), then make sure you enter competition results into the appropriate area depending on whether they were representing the boys' team or the girls' team for a given competition. For example, for a JV Tournament, the girls' weights would get counted and entered in the boys' OPC area if they are representing the boys' team or in their girls' OPC area if they are representing the girls' team. For Open Tournaments, the girls' weights would NOT be entered in the OPC whether they are on the girls' or boys' team.

***To get your team registered into the Track system, please email Pat Tocci at ptocci@nwca.cc. There will be no charge for the girls' teams.**

Nutrition and Weight Management for Female Athletes

As a coach, the health and safety of all athletes is paramount. For coaches that work with female athletes, it is important to keep in mind that, as nutritionist Erin Sparrold says, “Women are not small men.” In other words, female athletes may have different needs, including nutritional needs, compared to male athletes, and it’s important for coaches to be aware of these female-specific health issues.

One critical phenomenon for coaches to be aware of is the Female Athlete Triad. This refers to the combination of insufficient caloric intake, amenorrhea (missing periods), and loss of bone density. Girls are building bone mass in their teenage years and so these years are critical for later bone health. Girls that do not appropriately build bone mass when they’re younger are at greater risk for osteoporosis later in life. Girls are more likely to not build bone mass appropriately when they’re not eating a sufficient amount of food. While this can occur as part of a diagnosed eating disorder, eating insufficiently can also very easily happen without intention when a girl is engaged in repetitive strenuous exercise that burns a lot of calories. When girls do not eat enough compared to how much energy they’re outputting, they can experience amenorrhea where they stop getting their period or miss periods. Once a girl begins menstruating, she should NOT be missing periods, and this can be a sign of the Female Athlete Triad. Any girl experiencing amenorrhea should be referred to a doctor. Up to 80% of female high school athletes show signs of the Female Athlete Triad, so it is an unfortunately common condition. You can help prevent that by educating your team on lifelong healthy eating habits, ensuring the girls participate in weight certifications and hydration testing so they only competes at approved weights, by not encouraging large weight cuts, and by sharing (or having an Athletic Trainer share) information to wrestlers and parents on the Female Athlete Triad.

Other resources for wrestlers, parents, and coaches on this topic include Erin Sparrold’s webinar on the NWCA website and the book *Roar: How to Match Your Food and Fitness to Your Unique Female Physiology for Optimum Performance, Great Health, and a Strong, Lean Body for Life*.

Note: There is a similar condition in male athletes, referred to as the Male Athlete Triad, which occurs when male athletes do not consume enough calories relative to how much energy they’re outputting. When this imbalance is maintained over time, boys can experience bone stress injuries, low energy availability, reduced production of sex hormones, and low readings of testosterone.

ROSTER

When a school forms a girls' team, what will happen in almost all cases is that girls will be listed on the girls' roster and boys will be listed on the boys' roster. (Please see the Track and OPC section for additional information on how to input a new girls' team roster.)

The information below addresses alternative scenarios for the small number of schools that might not want to only roster girls on the girls' team.

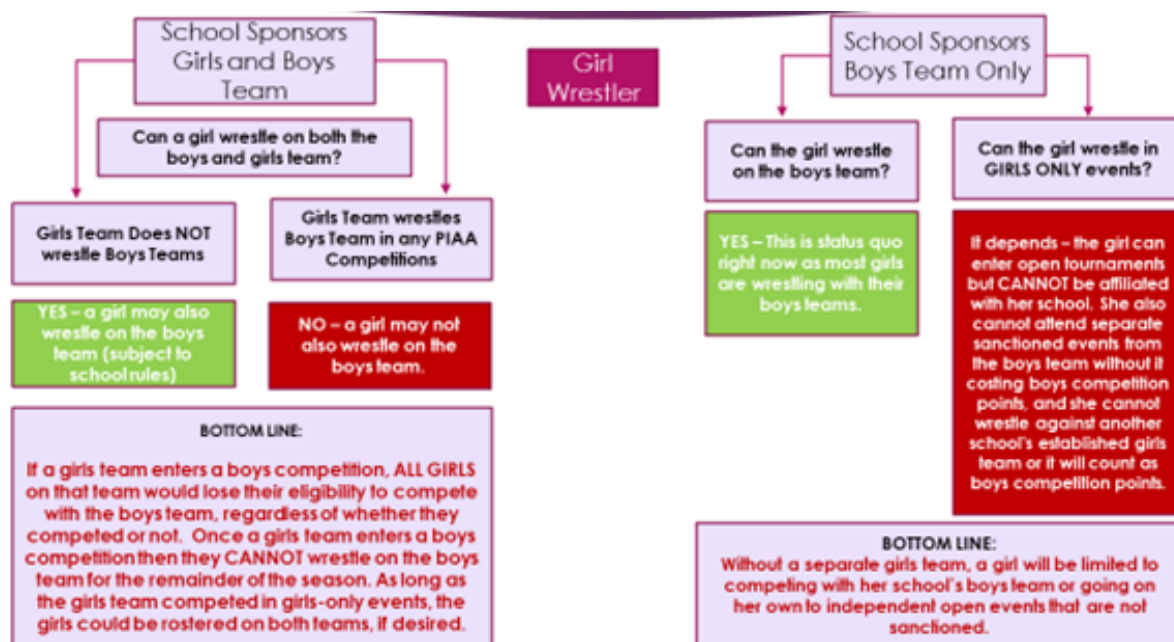
Until girls wrestling is sanctioned, a girl could potentially be rostered on both the boys' and girls' team in the same season as long as certain criteria are followed. Specifically, a girl CAN wrestle for both the boys' and girls' team IF the girls' team does not enter any PIAA boys' competitions (this includes varsity or JV tournaments as well as dual meets against a boys' team). If a girls' team enters a boys' competition, all of the girls on the team would lose their eligibility to compete with the boys' team for that season. In other words, if the wrestlers on the girls' team want to also be able to wrestle for the boys' team, then in order to adhere to PIAA eligibility guidelines, the girls' team can only enter girls-only competitions. As soon as the girls' team enters a boys' competition, they lose their ability to also compete as a member of the boys' team that season.

For teams wanting to utilize girls on their boys' team in addition to their girls' team, you **MUST** ensure that your girls' team is competing in girls-only events. JV tournaments with pooling are **NOT** girls-only events. In these cases, if you still want your girls to attend JV tournaments and also have the ability to wrestle on the boys' and girls' team, then they must enter boys' events, such as JV tournaments, as members of the boys' team.

Here is an example scenario:

- School A has a boys' team and a girls' team. They have rostered their girls on both teams because they want their girls to be able to also compete as members of the boys' team. To keep eligibility for both teams, the girls attend girls-only competitions as the girls' team, enter a few duals as members of their boys' team in their boys' line up, and also enter JV and varsity tournaments as members of their boys' team. If the girls attend a JV or varsity tournament, they would want to enter the event as part of the boys' team - if they were to enter the event as the girls' team, all girls on that team would **NOT** be able to compete with the boys' team for the remainder of the season.
- School B has a boys' team and a girls' team. The coach does **NOT** plan on having any of their girls wrestle on the boys' team. In this scenario, they can enter the girls' team into boys' JV events, varsity events, etc., as members of the girls' team and also enter them in girls-only competitions because they are not worried about dual eligibility on the boys' team.

Please see the flowchart below for a visual representation of these guidelines.



Overall, our view on rostering is that, unless also being rostered on the boys' team brings significant advantage for your particular school situation, the easiest recommendation would be to simply maintain a separation between the girls' team roster and the boys' team roster. If this is done, the girls' team can compete in girls-only events as well as mixed events with no repercussions and without the need to navigate dual eligibility.

Once girls wrestling is sanctioned, a girl will only be allowed to be rostered on one team. She would not be permitted to compete on both the boys' and girls' team in the same season. A girl could change team membership between seasons. Given this, the expectation is that nearly every girl in PA will be rostered solely on their school's girls' team once sanctioning occurs.

For those girls wanting to be rostered on the boys' team once sanctioning occurs, this decision is possible per Article XVI Section 4 Item A in the PIAA by-laws and would be based on whether a girl would be better served by being rostered solely on their school's boys' team. There is a provision that would allow this based on a school-by-school decision. If a school has both a boys' and girls' team, a girl could compete solely on the boys' team if it is determined that the girls' team would not adequately meet the needs of the female athlete. In other words, if the girl is competing at such a high level that she cannot obtain sufficient competition against girls and can be highly competitive with the boys. This determination would require the signature of the school's Principal. We recommend that if this is being considered for any female athlete, that this is discussed with her, her parents/guardians, coach, Athletic Director, and Principal. We envision this option being considered in a very small number of cases for girls with outstanding wrestling accomplishments.

RECRUITING

Although there is no minimum number of girls required to start a team, and although most girls' competitions will be individual tournament-based versus dual meet-based, it is important for teams to work towards building their numbers over time. The best way to do this is through utilizing active recruiting strategies within the school.

Active Recruiting

One of the most important things to remember when recruiting female athletes is that active recruiting is more effective than passive recruiting. In other words, team numbers will grow at a more rapid pace if a coach engages in activities that try to bring in new athletes, versus hoping that athletes are naturally interested in wrestling and come out for the team. Go out and use strategies to find female athletes. Don't wait for them to come to you.

Recruiting Strategies

There are many methods to use when actively recruiting girls to your program. Here are a few that we have gathered, with many of these coming from current girls wrestling coaches who have successfully grown their programs.

- Consider 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, including current athletes of other sports, girls that have never done a sport, and girls that are currently in other combat sports (e.g., Jiu Jitsu). Provide a pre-season or post-season meeting date or an introductory practice date for the girls and put this in the announcement! (See the next section for more information on practices.)
- 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 to all students about wrestling and joining the team. Mention it's for both boys and girls. If it's not feasible to send a physical flyer home, post that message on the wrestling team's social media platforms and see if the school's athletics account and main school account will also post your message.
- Recruit the athletes that were cut from other winter sports at the school. If your school has tryouts for other winter sports, talk to those coaches, attend cut day, and invite those girls to try wrestling.
- Talk to fall and spring sports teams about wrestling. During each fall and spring girls sport, attend one practice in each girls' sport to tell the team about girls wrestling. Emphasize how wrestling can make them a better athlete for their other sport. These are fantastic girls to get on your team because they are already coming with basic physical conditioning.

- Invite any girls that are managers to join the team. These girls have already expressed an interest in the sport just by volunteering to be a manager and many coaches have found that these individuals will wrestle when given the opportunity
- Have your current wrestlers recruit girls to the team. One of the best ways to build program numbers is to have current wrestlers use their social circles to invite girls to come try wrestling. Current wrestlers are often your best recruiters. Encourage your team to embrace girls wrestling and to actively recruit girls to the team.
- Recruit the future. Talk to the middle school and youth coaches to develop an intentional plan to grow the number of girls at all levels. Building solid feeder programs is key to the long-term growth of a high school program. You can get involved by facilitating opportunities such as a K-12 girls' practice one night a week to help connect girls at all levels. For additional ideas on growing girls' numbers at the youth level, see the last section of our [Recruiting Packet](#).
- 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. The winning wrestler could get a physical award at the end of the season or something else that is incentivizing such as a new gear bag. Highly motivated coaches could even make this a monthly recognition.
- Hold a "Try It Night" where you invite girls to come try wrestling. This type of practice/event should be set up like an introductory practice with fun activities/games (e.g., cowboy/brahma bull, sumo), general physical challenges (e.g., balance exercises), or basic moves (e.g., arm drag, inside ties and push drill). Provide the girls with some general information about the sport (make it simple, explain rules in less than a minute), show a short clip of wrestling, and consider sending them home with a flyer with more information. Above all, make it fun and positive!
- Hold a "Bring Your Sister" or "Bring Your Friend" to practice day¹. Set up a day where you task each current wrestler with bringing at least one girl with them to practice (you can even then ask each girl to bring a friend as well). Like an introductory practice, make this event/practice fun! You want people to leave having had a good time.
- Have your team attend a game/sporting event of a fall or spring sport girls' team at the school. This will not only build respect for other athletes and sports, but can also set up an opportunity for the other team to then attend a wrestling match, thereby increasing wrestling's visibility for females in the school.
- Talk to the school about the possibility of having the physical education teachers do a unit on wrestling. Even a lesson for one class period would be helpful! If you have current female wrestlers, some of them may even want to volunteer to attend one of the classes.
- Recruit in pairs when possible.² This helps ensure girls have a workout partner on the team. More than having a workout partner, having a friend to attend practices with them, especially as they are first getting used to the sport, can help make practices and the entire experience more comfortable and enjoyable.
- Post flyers in the community. In addition to targeting efforts within the school, considering putting up flyers that appeal to parents or potential wrestlers in the community at strategic locations, such as local gyms or MMA facilities.
- Establish a point person at the school who you can direct girls to if they have any questions. If one of your coaches works in the building, this would be the ideal person.

¹Lori Ayres, Chairperson, Women's Council, USAWNJ

²Joan Fulp and Andrea Yamamoto, Co-Chairs, USAW HS Development Committee

Key Messages when Recruiting

- When putting out school messages, announcements, etc., remember to emphasize that wrestling is truly for everyBODY. One of the most incredible things about our sport is that people of all sizes, backgrounds, abilities, etc. can participate in it and benefit from it. Emphasize that and remember to clearly state what that means for people who don't have a background in wrestling – for example, provide the actual lowest and highest weight classes so prospective athletes understand that they can have a place in this sport.
- Wrestling can help current athletes of other sports become better athletes. Talk to fall and spring sports teams to get the message out. One way to do this is to attend one practice during each fall and spring girls' sport. These are fantastic girls to get on your team because they are already coming with basic physical conditioning.
- Prior experience in sports is not needed to try wrestling. Girls can also start wrestling at any age. It's never too late. Research shows that most girls that start wrestling in high school were actually not previously active in another sport, so don't overlook the large population of non-athletes in the school by only focusing on current athletes – encourage them all to give wrestling a shot!
- Other combat sports are a great feeder for wrestling. If you know of or hear of any girls that have a background in Jiu jitsu, karate, etc., encourage them to try wrestling. Similarly, when putting out any announcements about a girls' team, mention the value of these experiences.
- Right now there are enormous opportunities on the college level for female wrestlers. There are over 80 women's college programs across the country, with 6 in PA. Share this with athletes and parents! The existence of roster slots and scholarships is a huge draw. Wrestling also ranks 2nd among sports for producing first-generation college students. Wrestling can help students get to college – let them know this.
- Wrestling builds character. Ask any women or men that have wrestled and they'll tell you that because of wrestling their self-confidence, self-worth, and work ethic increased. This is another great selling point of our sport.
- Wrestling creates friendships for life. For many people, this may be the greatest impact that wrestling has had on their life. By joining wrestling, athletes will gain a family and join a community that is not only incredibly welcoming but also incredibly close and tight-knit.

2 Joan Fulp and Andrea Yamamoto, Co-Chairs, USAW HS Development Committee

**For customizable
recruiting flyers and
other recruiting
resources, see
www.sanctionpa.com**

General Practice Tips and Strategies

Once you have successfully recruited girls to join the team, there are several practice considerations specific to recruitment and retention that are important for coaches to keep in mind.

- Make extra effort to provide positive feedback, check-in with wrestlers, and make them feel welcome. Even though girls wrestling is experiencing tremendous growth, girls are still often underrepresented in the wrestling room and they will notice that when they walk in. It takes courage to walk into a place where you are not the majority or you are not sure if you're truly wanted. Because of this, it's important to put in a little more time and intentional effort in making girls feel comfortable and welcome. You may feel like you are putting more effort into creating a welcoming atmosphere for the girls and that's okay – they are more likely to feel like an outsider and extra encouragement can help break down that wall. This is especially important in the first practice a girl attends – if she doesn't feel like the coach was excited that she was there, she may not feel that she belongs and she's much less likely to return. This cannot be emphasized enough! Welcome her, get to know her, and take an interest in her progress. Point out something she did well, ask her about herself (e.g., grade, sport history), provide encouragement, and express your hope that she'll be at the next practice. You can also have her partner with a wrestler that you know will be very supportive and welcoming.
- Pair partners by experience. For safety reasons, as well as their comfort and enjoyment, be sure partners are paired appropriately.
- Remember that wrestlers (new and veteran) can be your best recruiters. Let wrestlers know that they're welcome to bring their friends, cousins, siblings, etc. This is often the best way to grow the room.
- 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 on social media (e.g., FloWrestling), 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 strategy applies to all new wrestlers.



- Offer K-12 girls' practices. Growing youth numbers is an important focus, even for a high school coach. While much of the growth of girls' numbers on the youth level will be done through intentional recruitment by the youth coaches, high school coaches can still play a role. One way you can do this is by offering a K-12 practice for girls one night a week. Whether you run it, its run by the youth coaches, or some combination, this can serve multiple purposes, including getting girls across all levels of the program together, giving younger girls role models and older girls experience in coaching and mentoring, providing a lens for the younger girls to see where they can go in this sport, providing an opportunity for wrestlers to learn from different coaches and for coaches to meet wrestlers across the program, and creating connection, comradery, energy, and excitement around the school's girls' program. To implement this, we recommend choosing one night a week where the girls are given the day off from the high school team's practice and then have them attend the K-12 practice instead.
- To increase retention of new wrestlers, consider reducing the number of required practices for girls (or any beginner wrestlers) during the season. Reducing practice requirements 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 an activity like band, working to support their family, travel club team with another sport, etc.).
- If a coach was interested in this model, there are many different structures you can use, from establishing the days of the week that all the beginners need to be there to requiring a certain number of days but giving them flexibility to select their days to trying to coordinate so the entire team has at least one day in common each week. While many coaches likely want to maintain standard requirements and expectations across their entire team, and that is certainly okay, we have found that starting a sport in high school is often difficult if a young adult needs to commit 6 days a week and maybe even quit things they know they enjoy for something they are not yet sure they enjoy. Once an individual experiences wrestling and becomes hooked, then they may naturally want to clear their schedule of other activities, whereas they may be hesitant or unable to do so before ever trying wrestling.



Tips on Holding a Try It Night or Introductory Event/Practice

- Include current wrestlers
 - If you can have some current wrestlers helping out, that is always great – the current wrestlers enjoy teaching and the new wrestlers like having peers around. It also increases the number of eyes in the room for you, which is really helpful during these new practices where everyone is learning things for the first time.
- Be positive, make it fun
 - For these introductory practices, it's especially important to be positive and make it as fun as possible. You want to introduce the sport while building self-confidence and making it accessible and enjoyable. Encourage EVERYONE. Find ways to incorporate fun – have partners rock, paper, scissors to see who goes first, or have them do best flex or best tough face, etc.; Tell some stories that will get a laugh; Do a group picture at the end; Have them all shake hands with each other and the coaches at the end; Have them break for transitions on 1-2-3 clap – it is not exciting to us but they will feel like they're a part of something by beginning to get into these routines
- Engage and inform parents
 - If parents will be in the room for these events, take advantage of that! Introduce yourself or, better yet, plan to have a coach talk to all of the parents for a few minutes during the event. Provide information, take questions, etc. consider having a handout on wrestling, a flyer about upcoming practices, or verbally share this information. Whatever you do, make sure you get attendees/parents connected before they leave – invite them to your team Band/other app, give them a list of upcoming practices, etc. In other words, do something that shows investment on your part, shows how strong and welcoming the wrestling community is, and helps set the stage for attendance at future practices.
- Remember your goal...
 - Your overall goal for the first practice is to have as many people come back for the second practice as possible. To do that, your goal should be that EVERY SINGLE WRESTLER leaves with a smile on their face. Aim to give at least one direct compliment to every wrestler during their first practice. EVERY wrestler should leave feeling like they were successful and that they had fun. If someone thinks they're not able to do something or it's not enjoyable, then it's very likely they'll never come back. Praise effort. The extreme hard work and dedication of wrestling will happen later, once they have bought in and are intrinsically motivated. You do not need to create gladiator-level intensity or Olympic champions on day one. When in doubt, go with what's most likely to get people smiling.
- The wrestlers (new and veteran) can be your best recruiters
 - As you consider holding more practices, tell the wrestlers that they're welcome to bring their friends, cousins, siblings, etc. This is often the best way to grow the room.

**For a sample practice plan specifically designed for new wrestlers that you can implement at a pre/post-season practice, Try-It event, or introductory practice, click [here](#). If you would like highly detailed practice plans that include time markers and a partial coach script, email sanctionpa@gmail.com.

Tips on Utilizing Pre and Post-Season Practices

In addition to introductory events/practices, you'll also want to begin getting girls connected to actual pre and post-season practices. If you were already going to hold some pre-season practices, consider trying to recruit girls to these practices. To start, hold a pre-season meeting for girls where you explain wrestling, its benefits and opportunities, and provide some information on pre-season practices as well as the season itself. Your goal for this meeting is to excite potential athletes – make the information brief and clear and the message positive. Likewise, if you were already going to hold some post-season practices, consider trying to recruit girls to these practices. Even if you held one in the fall, word likely got out on your girls' team as the season went on, so consider holding another initial meeting about girls wrestling before post-season practices start and describe post-season practices at that meeting. This will give a chance for new girls that were not a part of the regular season to start wrestling. Then once the practices start, use those practices to introduce the girls to the sport and catch them up on some basic technique before the season. If they continue, then they'll at least have a basic understanding of how the sport works and will better be able to keep up with workouts.

Once you schedule pre-season or post-season practices, it's important to try and give the girls the best chance possible of wanting to come back. View our Practice Tips and Strategies on the next page.



ANNUAL CHECKLIST FOR COACHES OF GIRLS' TEAMS

The following checklist is meant to serve as a guide that walks you through things to keep in mind during a season of coaching a girls' team. Much of this information is in an abbreviated form – additional information that expands on these ideas appears throughout this Informational Packet. Please reference back to the larger sections as needed.

Within 30 days after team forms

- ☐ Print, review Informational Packet for Formed Teams (this packet)
- ☐ Review **competition opportunities**
- ☐ Talk with your staff, decide on structure of program
- ☐ Determine if there are any additional/new uniform or gear needs
- ☐ Meet with your program coaches, including middle school and youth programs, to develop an intentional system of recruiting and retaining girls

September/October

- ☐ Attend SanctionPA's girls' teams call
- ☐ Put out school announcements for the girls' team. Have an after-school meeting for girls who are interested. Include a video/flyer/information/benefits/season outlook, etc. If you are holding pre-season practices, mention that
- ☐ Contact fall sports teams and ask to speak to them for a few minutes about wrestling
- ☐ Hold a Try It Night, Bring Your Friend or Sister to Practice Night, etc.
- ☐ Finalize schedule
- ☐ Identify any potential new volunteers that would assist with the girls' program

November

- ☐ Begin practicing. Remember you have flexibility with the timing and format of practices (with the boys, same time but separate, different time, or a combination)
- ☐ Hold a parent meeting. This can be combined for the boys' and girls' teams or can be held separately. It is important for parents of girls and boys to understand the structure for both programs
- ☐ Ensure girls have completed required program paperwork, including physicals
- ☐ Have all girls complete weight certifications and make sure they are all entered into the OPC in the girls' season section

December

- ☐ Start competing

March

- ☐ Girls' team attends Regional tournament
- ☐ Girls' team attends Girls' States
- ☐ Before States, inform girls of off-season opportunities, whether the school is holding them or if there are local clubs. Explain that off-season opportunities are freestyle. Provide girls with link to PAUSA Wrestling events (www.usapawf.com)
- ☐ As the program plans their end of season banquet, make sure to include awards specific to the girls' team
- ☐ As scholarship opportunities are announced (e.g., coaches' association, etc.), make sure to nominate eligible girls in addition to boys

Spring

- ☐ Recruit. This is a great time of year to get new wrestlers involved – it gives them a few months to build basic skills before entering the regular season. Put out school announcements for the girls' team. Have an after-school meeting for girls that are interested. Contact spring sports teams and ask to speak to them for a few minutes about wrestling. Schedule a girl-specific clinic/camp. If you are holding off-season practices, mention that
- ☐ Talk to youth and middle school coaches – consider coordinating K-12 girls' practices one night a week or utilizing other strategies to start building up the program at all levels. For more specific recommendations for growing girls' numbers at the youth level, you can pass on our **Recruiting Packet** which includes specific ideas for youth coaches

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 or please contact us at sanctionpa@gmail.com, 610-657-5821

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you and your girls on the mat!

