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Administrative Letter A076

Stunting of Cheerleaders

Administrative Letter #76 Stunting of Cheerleaders - Approved 05-11-2006; Updated 08-27-13

DATE: Reviewed and Updated August 2013 – Craig Hammer

REGARDING: Stunting of Cheerleaders

Recent events have caused considerable concern about the risks involved with the current trend of stunting in cheerleading routines and competition. This concern is evident in a March 7, 2006 directive from the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators, which reads as follows:

> *March 7 2006 – Effective immediately, AACCA is issuing a recommendation to all conference commissioners and tournament managers to immediately prohibit basket tosses and 2 ½ high pyramids for the remainder of the basketball season, including tournament play.*

Steven Hewlett from Risk Management and Bruce Garner from the Utah Attorney General's Office have both expressed concerns about the risk of cheerleader stunting. Bruce Garner reported that two cheerleaders in northern Utah have received substantial settlements because of injuries sustained in cheer stunting routines. As a result of the litigation, Wasatch School District has banned any cheerleading stunt maneuvers. Other districts are considering taking similar action. I am convinced that it would be prudent for Washington County School District (WCSD) to follow suit in banning the practice of high risk stunting maneuvers. For the purpose of this letter, high risk stunting is defined as "Basket Tosses" and "2 ½ high Pyramids." There is a great deal of inherent risk and exposure to liability if these practices are allowed.

It is important to note that parents cannot sign the rights of their children away. Even if a parent signs a form indicating they will not sue if their child is injured, an insurance company still retains the right as does the student. Insurance companies will look for negligence in safety, supervision, and common sense. If we allow high risk stunting to continue we are placing ourselves and our coaches and advisors in a very libelous position. The same risk exists if we allow cheerleaders to compete in state & national competitions where they engage in high risk stunting.

The Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA) has addressed the issue of whether or not cheerleading is a sport that enjoys their sponsorship. In their March meeting, the executive board of that organization voted to not recognize cheerleading as a sport. The result of the vote clearly sends a

message that they do not support competition for cheerleaders. If we allow our cheerleaders to participate in competitions we will be doing so at our own risk. The UHSAA will assume no responsibility or liability for injuries incurred at a cheer competition.

In light of the above information and after consultation with Utah State Office of Risk Management, Utah High School Activities Association and the Region Nine Board of Managers, it has been determined that cheerleaders in the WCSD will no longer be allowed to participate in high risk stunting activities. Such activities will not be allowed during practices, at games or during any competition.

In a meeting with cheer coaches and advisors, athletic directors and high school principals it was determined that to further protect our cheerleaders we would require the following:

- All cheer activities would follow the safety guidelines set forth by the state and the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators.
- All cheer coaches would maintain state certification by attending the required training on an annual basis.
- No cheerleader will be allowed to participate in any (low risk) stunting activity unless they attend the required safety workshop each year.
- Cheerleaders must also complete required training in accordance with the progressive skills chart adopted by the Washington County School District before they can be involved in any stunting or tumbling.
- Cheer coaches will provide continual supervision whenever any stunting is practiced or performed.