



ARCHDIOCESE OF  
CINCINNATI

# Policy on Catholic Sports

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

EFFECTIVE

August 1, 2026



January 20, 2026  
Feast of St. Sebastian

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Catholic sports have a proud and storied history throughout the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. I am pleased to support that legacy as the tenth Archbishop of Cincinnati.

This new Policy on Catholic Sports sets a standard expectation for Catholic Leagues, programs, coaches, players, parents, and spectators to participate in sports in a way that upholds the dignity of the human person, cultivates a healthy competitive spirit, and, most importantly, keeps our young people safe. It replaces all current and past policies regarding Catholic sports within the archdiocese to reflect the current needs of our local church.

Thank you for your dedication to the holistic growth and virtuous development of our young people. Please join me in praying for the wellbeing and success of all our teams and athletes.

In Christ,

*+ Robert G. Casey*

Most Reverend Robert G. Casey  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

## **1000.00 Introduction**

### **1000.01 Purpose of Policy on Catholic Sports**

The purpose of the Policy on Catholic Sports (hereafter “Policy”) is to provide policy and guidance for Catholic sports serving children and youth in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. All policies set forth in this document shall be integrated into local charters, policies, and other governing documents by August 1, 2026.

This Policy shall be reviewed and updated by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati on July 1, 2028 and every three years thereafter.

### **1000.02 Applicable Parties**

The phrase “Applicable Parties” in this Policy refers to Catholic parishes, Catholic elementary schools, Catholic middle/junior high schools, Catholic athletic organizations/booster clubs, and Catholic Sports Leagues.

### **1000.03 Parish & Catholic School Programs**

The phrase “Parish and Catholic School Programs” (hereafter, “Programs”) in this Policy refers to athletic organizations, booster clubs, and other individuals/parties acting on behalf of a parish or Catholic school regarding sports.

### **1000.04 Catholic Sports Leagues**

The phrase “Catholic Sports Leagues” (hereafter, “Leagues”) in this Policy refers to those Leagues that identify as Catholic in name and/or virtue, whose membership is made up of predominately Catholic Programs, or seek to affiliate with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati through other means.

### **1000.05 Sporting Activities**

The phrase “Sporting Activities” in this Policy refers to parent and player meetings, open gyms/fields, try-outs, practices, scrimmages, warm-ups, cool-downs, games/meets, tournaments, and organizational meetings.

### **1000.06 Sporting Facilities**

The phrase “Sporting Facilities” (hereafter, “Facilities”) in this Policy refers to gymnasiums, tracks, stadiums, sports fields (soccer, football, baseball, etc.), and pools.

**1001.00 Catholic Sports Leagues**

1001.01 Governance

Leagues shall establish a system of governance that ensures accountability to the members of the League.

1001.02 Finances

Leagues shall maintain well-organized and transparent systems of bookkeeping and accounting. This shall include an annual written financial report presented to the members of the League no later than August 1 of each calendar year.

1001.03 League Rules

Leagues shall set forth rules that govern all aspects of the League in consultation with members of the League. These rules shall include all relevant aspects of this Policy.

1001.04 Membership

Leagues shall set forth clear requirements and protocols for membership. The decision to admit, refuse to admit, or change the status of any member should be made in consultation with members of the League.

These requirements and protocols shall include distinctively Catholic requirements and protocols that apply to all Programs, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, as a condition of membership (for example, standing respectfully during prayer before games).

1001.05 Game Officials

Leagues shall be responsible for the hiring, assigning, and payment of game officials.

Game officials shall be responsible for player safety and the rules of the game. Game officials should not be responsible for the behavior of parents or other spectators.

Game officials are not required to receive Safe Parish training or a background check.

## **1002.00      Levels of Play**

### **1002.01      Catholic Leagues & Programs**

Leagues and Programs shall offer one recreational level of play for all sports administered. Leagues may create multiple divisions, if necessary because of the number of teams, to be based on equal distribution of talent and competitiveness. Leagues may also consider the geographic location of Programs while creating divisions.

Programs shall roster players at the recreational level such that teams have an equal distribution of talent and competitiveness. Playing time at the recreational level shall be roughly equal each game.

Leagues and Programs may additionally offer a competitive level of play. Leagues may create multiple divisions, if necessary because of the number of teams, to be based on competitive distribution of talent. Leagues may also consider the geographic location of programs when creating divisions.

Programs may roster players at the competitive level such that teams have a varying distribution of talent and competitiveness. Playing time at the competitive level may vary, but each player should receive adequate playing time to feel like a full member of the team.

### **1002.02      Recruiting**

Recruiting for competitive advantage at all levels of play shall be prohibited.

### **1002.03      Communication**

Leagues shall clearly communicate to Programs the level of play for each division before registration.

Programs shall clearly communicate to parents the level of play for each team before registration.

**1003.00      Scheduling**

1003.01      Sundays

Sporting Activities shall not begin before 1:00pm on Sundays.

1003.02      Holy Days of Obligation

Sporting Activities shall not take place on non-Sunday holy days of obligation.

1003.03      Triduum & Easter Sunday

Sporting Activities shall not take place during the Triduum or Easter Sunday.

1003.05      Religious Education & Sacramental Preparation

- a. Sporting Activities shall not take place during religious education for teams who have at least one (1) player enrolled at the sponsoring or affiliated parish.
- b. Sporting Activities shall not take place during sacramental preparation for teams who have at least one (1) player enrolled at the sponsoring or affiliated parish.
- c. Religious education and sacramental preparation shall take precedence over Sporting Activities when a conflict occurs. Programs shall collaborate with parish staff to prevent conflicts.

1003.06      Non-Catholic Leagues, Tournaments, Etc.

Programs shall not participate in any Sporting Activities that conflict with sections 1003.01 – 1003.05 of this Policy, regardless of the sponsoring organization.

## **1004.00 Parish & Catholic School Programs**

### **1004.01 Governance**

Programs shall establish a system of governance that ensures accountability to the Pastor or his delegate, or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school. Programs or his delegate shall have regularly scheduled reviews with the Pastor or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school.

### **1004.02 Finances**

Programs shall maintain well-organized and transparent systems of bookkeeping and accounting in accordance with the policies of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. This shall include an annual written financial report presented to the Pastor or his delegate, or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school no later than August 1 of each calendar year.

### **1004.03 Rules & Codes of Conduct**

Leagues and Programs shall set forth rules and codes of conduct that set expectations on the ethics, language, and behavior of their players, parents, coaches, and spectators in accordance with Catholic teaching.

### **1004.04 Facility Managers**

Programs shall designate at least one Facility Manager to be present during all competitions at their Facility. Facility Managers shall be responsible for maintaining the competition schedule at their Facility, the availability of medical supplies at their Facility during competitions, and the behavior of players, coaches, parents, and other spectators.

Facility Managers may eject persons from their Facility when violations of League and/or Program codes of conduct occur. Facility Managers shall notify the League and the Program of the ejected person immediately after the ejection. Leagues and Programs may implement further consequences for the ejected person.

Facility Managers shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age. Facility Managers should be certified in first aid and CPR/AED through the Red Cross or other certifying organizations.

## **1005.00      Player Eligibility**

### **1005.01      Religious Education**

- a. Players shall be enrolled in and regularly attend a Catholic school or a parish religious education program to participate in Sporting Activities.
- b. Players shall not have more than three (3) unexcused absences from religious education or Catholic school either in the current school year, or in the case of summer/early fall sports, two (2) unexcused absences in the previous semester of the same calendar year.
- c. Players who receive religious education at home or have other other legitimate reasons for not participating in religious education may be exempt from 1005.01a with written approval from the Pastor or his delegate, or from the principal of a non-parish Catholic school.

### **1005.02      Parish Programs**

A player's parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be a registered member of and in good standing with the sponsoring parish.

When the parish of membership does not offer a particular sport, but another parish within the Family of Parishes does, the membership of the original parish shall qualify the player.

### **1005.03      Catholic School Programs**

A player shall attend the sponsoring Catholic school, or his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be a registered member of and in good standing with the affiliated parish. Preference should not be given to Catholic school players over parish players regarding rostering and playing time.

### **1005.04      Program Membership**

A player shall only participate in one Program each school year, unless there is a change in primary address or, in the case of Catholic school programs, if a change in Catholic school enrollment occurs.

Changes and/or exceptions to Program membership may be granted special permission by the Pastor or his delegate, or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school, of both Programs. Special permission requests shall be submitted and granted/denied in writing.



#### 1005.05 Combining Teams

Programs who do not have enough players to form a particular team may:

- a. Combine teams with neighboring Programs. Programs should first seek to combine teams within the same Family of Parishes and, if not possible, only then geographically adjacent Programs, or
- b. If there is no possibility of combined teams, request that a player(s) be individually rostered with a neighboring Program, or
- c. If permissible by League rules, form a coed team and register that team in a boy's division.

Players rostered on a combined team or with a neighboring Program because of lack of participation in the Program of membership are not in violation of 1005.04 and shall revert to their Program of membership at the end of the particular sport season.

#### 1005.06 Unaffiliated Players

A player who does not attend a Catholic school and whose parent(s) or guardian(s) are not registered members of a parish may only participate by special permission of the Pastor or his delegate, or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school. Special permission requests shall be submitted and granted/denied in writing.

**1006.00 Coaching Requirements**

1006.01 Age Requirements

- a. Head coach (all grades) – shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age at the beginning of the particular sport season.
- b. Assistant coach (elementary & middle school) – shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age at the beginning of the particular sport season.
- c. Assistant coach (high school) – shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age at the beginning of the particular sport season.

1006.02 Student Coaches

Students may be permitted to assist in coaching but shall be treated as a minor for all purposes related to the Decree on Child Protection and risk management.



## **1007.00 Risk Management**

### **1007.01 Decree on Child Protection**

Applicable Parties shall be in full compliance with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Decree on Child Protection. Violations of the Decree on Child Protection shall be reported directly to the Archdiocese through [EthicsPoint](#).

If child abuse or neglect is suspected, a report shall be made to the respective county child protective services and to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. The Chancellor's Office and/or Safe Environment Office shall be informed when such a report is made.

### **1007.02 Concussion & Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

Applicable Parties shall be in full compliance with Ohio Revised Code certification and processes regarding [concussions](#) and [sudden cardiac arrest](#). All sporting facilities should have a first aid kit, a bodily fluid clean-up kit, and an AED available.

### **1007.03 Inclement Weather**

- a. Thunder and/or Lighting: All Applicable Parties shall follow [OHSAA Guidelines](#).
- b. Heat: All Applicable Parties shall exercise prudence in extreme heat, including, but not limited to reducing physical activity, additional hydration breaks, and canceling/rescheduling Sporting Activities. Leagues and Programs should use the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature to determine heat risk.
- c. Cold: All Applicable Parties shall exercise prudence in extreme cold, including, but not limited to adjusting uniform requirements, moving Sporting Activities indoors, and canceling/rescheduling Sporting Activities.

### **1007.04 Sporting Facilities**

Facility Managers and coaches shall inspect the Sporting Facility before Sporting Activities to ensure a safe environment. This inspection should include checking for damage to the gymnasium equipment, seating, signage, floor/field/track, etc. Coaches who deem the Sporting Facility unsafe should not require their players to participate in Sporting Activities and shall submit their concern to the Facility Manager and League.

**1008.00      Enforcement**

1008.01      Parishes and Catholic Schools

Parishes and Catholic schools shall be the main agents of enforcement of this Policy. Final decisions regarding Programs shall be made by the Pastor or his delegate, or the principal of a non-parish Catholic school.

1008.02      Catholic Leagues

Catholic Leagues shall be indirect agents of enforcement of this Policy. Leagues are primarily responsible for registering teams into levels of play and divisions, scheduling games, and managing game officials.

1008.02      Archdiocese of Cincinnati

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati shall primarily serve as a consultant to parishes, Catholic schools, and Leagues. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati will only be an agent of enforcement in instances of egregious violations of this Policy; when requested by a parish, Catholic school, or League; or regarding the Decree on Child Protection.

**1009.00      Nondiscrimination Policy**

- a. No preference should be given regarding scheduling, playing time, or rostering players based on ethnicity, nationality, sex, and/or race.
- b. Access to sex-specific sports (designated for males or females) shall be based solely on one's biological sex. More information regarding Gender Confusion and Gender Dysphoria can be found in Youth Religious Education Policies for parishes section 2004.03, which is applicable to Catholic sports.



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