



Hallstrom's Rockford F.I.R.E. Handbook for Athletic Directors, Coaches, & Assistant Coaches

Hallstrom Home School Workshops sincerely thanks you for using your God-given gifts to serve, lead, and guide our young athletes in a Christ-honoring way. This handbook outlines Hallstrom and F.I.R.E.'s background, policies, and procedures for all Rockford F.I.R.E. athletic directors (A.D.s), coaches, and assistant coaches.

F.I.R.E. Athletics Philosophy and Objectives

Mission Statement: Our athletic program strives to develop homeschool athletes spiritually and physically, while boosting confidence and emphasizing integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. We seek to honor God through athletic competition by promoting character development, good sportsmanship, and a commitment to pursuing excellence. We believe sports provide an opportunity for athletes to grow in faith, discipline, and discipleship.

Core Values: Our core values are **Faith**, **Integrity**, **Respect**, and **Excellence**.

Faith - We view each game or match as an opportunity for worship and witness. We expect exemplification of Christ through conduct and speech at all times.

Integrity - We expect all participants to compete with integrity by playing by the rules, showing respect for opponents, coaches, and officials. We expect all F.I.R.E. participants to play through adversity, even when there is disagreement with a call or a decision.

Respect - We expect all members of F.I.R.E. to commit to making each practice and game, and be on time. Absences and tardiness are to be communicated in advance and are not to be a common occurrence. We expect our athletes to be coachable, open to correction, eager to learn, and focused on improvement.

Excellence - We expect our athletes to pursue their best, not only in their physical performance, but also in their character, working to honor God in everything they do.

F.I.R.E. Vision: We aim to use sports as a platform for teaching biblical principles of teamwork, perseverance, and grace, while empowering our athletes to become leaders who represent Christ in every aspect of their lives.

About F.I.R.E. Athletics

In 1993, Lois Dixon, together with a group of like-minded individuals, established Hallstrom Homeschool Workshops (Hallstrom) to support local homeschooling families by offering upper-level classes for those seeking additional academic assistance. Over the years, Hallstrom has continued to grow as more families choose home education for their children.

Building on the foundation of Hallstrom Homeschool Workshops, Rockford F.I.R.E. was launched to give eligible local homeschool students the opportunity to participate in athletics, including girls' volleyball, boys' basketball, and girls' basketball.

Procedures and Policies

First and foremost, we want to affirm and encourage each one of you. We are deeply grateful for God's continued faithfulness and consider it a true blessing to serve alongside such dedicated individuals. Your commitment to this program and the generous sharing of your gifts are sincerely appreciated. We hold each of you in high regard and truly value your partnership.

Parent Volunteers/Helpers:

Some programs may choose to include parent volunteers or helpers. Please note that these individuals should not be referred to as coaches under any circumstances. Athletes should show proper respect by addressing volunteers using a formal title (Mr., Mrs., or Ms.) followed by their last name. While parent volunteers may assist and support practices or games at the coach's discretion, they should not run practices or assume coaching responsibilities during games, matches, or tournaments.

Application Process:

All prospective athletic directors, coaches, and assistant coaches must complete an online application available at hallstromhomeschool.org. Qualified applicants will be invited to participate in an interview, typically conducted by the F.I.R.E. Program Director, the program's A.D., and/or a fellow coach, unless alternative arrangements are made. All individuals serving in these roles must also complete a background check and the DCFS-mandated reporter training.

End-of-Season Planning:

If any A.D., coach, or assistant coach plans to step down at the conclusion of the season, we kindly ask that this be communicated as early as possible. Providing advance notice helps support the program's continuity and overall health.

Athletic Directors:

- Are expected to seek to honor God in their decisions and actions, while abstaining from biblically immoral practices.
- Must undergo a background check every four years and retake the DCFS mandated reporter training every three years.
- Are responsible for securing a home gym or gyms for practices and games, creating game and practice schedules, planning program parent and player informational meeting in collaboration with coaches and assistant coaches at the start of the season, booking officials, projecting and managing the program budget, paying program expenses on time, organizing or delegating volunteer needs, and managing all communications within the program.
- All program expenses must be paid in full and settled by the end of the season, and if applicable, before paying any coaches, assistant coaches, or A.D.s.
- At A.D. discretion, athletic fees for coaches, assistant coaches, and A.D.s child(ren) may be waived in full or partially (for that specific program) if the program can support doing so.
- At A.D. discretion, (typically at the end of the season) A.D.s, coaches, and assistant coaches may be given a stipend and/or a gift on behalf of the program as a gesture of appreciation and to help offset some of the additional expenses incurred throughout the season. The monetary value has varied over the years and is dependent on the program's financial ability and needs. Please consult with the F.I.R.E. program director before finalizing and issuing stipends and/or gifts.
- At A.D. discretion, some travel expenses are reimbursable, including housing and/or gas for tournaments that require extensive travel and overnight stays. Historically, F.I.R.E. has been able to help offset some or all of the expenses for A.D.s, coaches, and at times assistant coaches out of appreciation for their commitment to be available for these events, which often requires missing work, etc.
- Are expected to work closely with coaches to ensure that all program needs are included or considered in the forming of the budget if at all possible. Program needs may include equipment, uniforms, and other necessary items to run the program effectively.
- Are expected to work with coaches when scheduling practices, games, matches, and tournaments to ensure there are no conflicts and all perspectives are being considered and respected.
- Are expected to avoid scheduling games, matches, camps, or practices on the same day as the Hallstrom Family Picnic, Christmas Program, or Spring Program. It may be helpful to avoid other co-ops special event days if there is a lot of representation within your program.
- Are expected to monitor weather conditions, in the event of inclement weather, to determine if conditions will be safe for families traveling to and from the event and if the venue will remain open for use. It is also encouraged that communication be made with the other team, if applicable, to determine if there are any safety concerns.
- Coaches should not be left alone with a player(s) at a team practice or a game. If the A.D. or another coach is not present, please arrange for a parent volunteer/helper to be present. This policy intends to provide a layer of protection for all parties involved.

- Are expected, when applicable, to work with coaches to devise a plan to disperse uniforms and collect them at the end of the season, as the uniforms are property of the program and are provided to athletes on loan for the season.
- Must ensure that waivers are collected for all players for each new season. New waivers are to be collected for any events, including camps, etc., outside of the regular season practices, games, and tournaments. Athletes who do not turn in a signed waiver are not permitted to participate until the signed waiver is collected.
- Must provide a first aid kit to coaches for each division. Kits must be collected at the end of the season for restocking and use for the following season or event.
- May be required to organize and take a concussion and/or first aid course at the expense of the program.
- Are expected to organize F.I.R.E. spirit wear purchase opportunities early in the season. A.D.'s may use the vendor of their choice and organize the sales however they choose. This is a fundraising opportunity, so A.D.'s may price items as they see fit. Please note, F.I.R.E. logos are not to be shared or used by anyone outside of F.I.R.E. leadership. Please provide the Hallstrom Board A.D. with spirit wear ordering information, so he/she can advertise sales among the Hallstrom community.
- Are expected to notify the F.I.R.E. Program Director and Hallstrom Treasurer of any tryouts, fundraisers, camps, or events of any kind outside of regular session practices and games.
- May request a COI by contacting the Hallstrom treasurer and/or the F.I.R.E. Program Director
- Must work closely with the bookkeeper to provide all receipt documentation within a timeframe determined by the bookkeeper.
- Must keep open lines of communication with the Program Director on any financial matters. All collected sports fees must be reported to the Program Director to ensure payments are correctly documented and applied.
- Must ensure that referee W-9s are collected or are already on file. Newly completed W-9s are to be given to the Program Director or other designated party for tax purposes.
- Must add the F.I.R.E. Program Director as an administrator on their program's Team Reach account or any other accounts used by the program.
- Are encouraged to use the official Hallstrom F.I.R.E. social media accounts to promote their events and highlight player/team achievements. A.D.s may also designate trusted parents to have access to the official accounts to post pictures, upcoming events, highlights, etc. Access can be granted by the F.I.R.E. Program Director.
- Are not permitted to create any F.I.R.E. social media accounts.
- Are expected to keep lines of communication open with the F.I.R.E. Program Director and may request adding announcements to the website or Hallstrom weekly announcements by going through the F.I.R.E. Program Director.
- Are to work with the F.I.R.E. Program Director to add any sign ups/registrations pertaining to the program to the Hallstrom website.

Coaches:

- Coaches and assistant coaches are expected to seek to honor God in their decisions and actions, while abstaining from biblically immoral practices.
- Coaches and assistant coaches must undergo a background check every four years and retake the DCFS mandated reporter training every three years.
- Are expected to conduct practices and be present at games, matches, and tournaments.
- Are expected to collaborate with the program A.D. to host a parent and athlete informational meeting at the start of each season.
- Coaches should not be left alone at a practice or a game. If the A.D. or another coach is not present, please arrange for a parent volunteer/helper to be present. This policy intends to protect all involved parties.
- Must bring the program provided first aid kit, for their designated division, to all home and away practices, games, matches, and tournaments.
- May be required to take a concussion and/or first aid course at the expense of the program.
- Are not permitted to create any F.I.R.E. social media accounts but may be granted administrative access to the official F.I.R.E. social media accounts upon request.
- Are not to share or use F.I.R.E. logos without permission.
- Are expected to keep lines of communication open with the program A.D. and the F.I.R.E. Program Director.

Athletic Directors, Coaches, and Assistant Coaches:

If a concern of greater misconduct is brought forth against an A.D., coach, an assistant coach, they will be respectfully asked to recuse themselves from the situation while the Hallstrom Board evaluates the concern(s) brought forth and determines what course of action(s) will be taken in response to the concern(s) brought forward. These steps are not intended to work against our program leaders, but are intended to provide an objective approach for all parties involved. The accused party may continue with fulfilling the obligations of their role during this time without interruption unless otherwise determined by the board of directors.

Any program leader who has an interaction with an official or during a game that results in a technical or ejection, must communicate what happened by completing an [Incident Report](#). F.I.R.E. encourages and expects their leadership to lead by example by exemplifying to our athletes how to play through adversity, even when disagreements arise with officials.

The Hallstrom Board reserves the right to dismiss any coach, assistant coach, or A.D. at any time to maintain high Biblical standards and adherence to policies; though, this is a last resort and requires a board vote. This policy is consistent with Hallstrom's policy regarding its board members, directors, teachers, families, students, and athletes and is not directed at F.I.R.E. leadership specifically.

Athlete Eligibility

All athletes must agree to the Hallstrom Statement of Faith and F.I.R.E. Code of Conduct.

All athletes must be home-schooled for at least 51% of their current education.

Once an athlete has been listed as a ninth grader, the athlete will be limited to the next four consecutive seasons of participation. A tenth-grade student has three more seasons of participation. An eleventh-grade student has two more seasons of participation. A twelfth-grade student has one season to participate.

Any student reaching the age of 19 before August 1, shall not be eligible for participation in Rockford F.I.R.E. sports.

Once an athlete has graduated or gone through a graduation ceremony, he/she will no longer qualify for a Rockford F.I.R.E. sports team regardless of his/her age.

Any athlete who is under disciplinary action and transfers from a public, private, or another home school program/co-op must wait one year before he/she is eligible to participate in Rockford F.I.R.E. sports.

Sports physicals are required by all athletes, and per Illinois policy, are only good for 395 days. Athletes' sports physicals must be submitted to the program A.D. before the player can begin practicing with their team. Athletic directors must ensure that all physicals are collected, up to date, and that all players are cleared to play by their physicians/healthcare providers.

Academically speaking, to be eligible for play, athletes:

- must have a 70% or higher grade in all academic classes.
- must have a 75% or higher attendance record for academic classes.

Athletes will be placed on academic probation if their grades and/or attendance do not meet the above criteria. A.D.s will work alongside parents and Hallstrom (if applicable) to monitor athlete eligibility and update the appropriate coaches if players are placed on academic probation.

It is expected that all parents of athletes of the F.I.R.E. programs understand that they are vital to the running of the program and volunteer work is required of every athlete's family.

Athlete Registration Process

Hallstrom's F.I.R.E. programs are open to all eligible local homeschoolers, regardless of whether they take classes at Hallstrom. We represent a diverse background of local Christian homeschoolers and coaches.

All interested athletes must begin the application process by completing an application at hallstromhomeschool.org. After careful review of the application, assuming F.I.R.E. is a good mutual fit, the applicant will be contacted for an interview. Sports-only interviews are typically conducted by the F.I.R.E. Program Director, the program A.D., and/or the program coach(es) during a specified time. Not all interested families are guaranteed an opportunity to play for F.I.R.E., as many factors are considered before offering an opportunity to join the program. These factors may include whether the applicant agrees with our Statement of Faith and Code of Conduct, availability, and whether the family is willing to contribute to the running of the program.

It is recommended that any planned tryouts be implemented before interviews are conducted to respect the time of all involved parties. Any players trying out for a team must complete a waiver. Waivers can be provided by the F.I.R.E. Program Director. If a program chooses to collect a fee for a tryout, approval is required by the F.I.R.E. Program Director and Hallstrom Treasurer. The only accepted forms of payment for these specific fees are cash or check. The Hallstrom treasurer requests that the deposit be made all at once and that you communicate the amount collected at the time of deposit to ensure it is coded properly.

All athletes pay a registration fee. Students who take classes at Hallstrom have their registration fee included in their family's semester registration fees. Sports-only students pay their registration fee at the start of the season and only pay it once a school year for their entire family. The registration fee covers overhead expenses, including, but not limited to, administrative fees and insurance. Registration fees are separate from and in addition to athletic fees, which go directly to the program to cover all related expenses to running the program.

Registration Process:

Tryouts (If Implemented)
Invitation to Play (Pending Application and Interview Approval if New to Hallstrom/F.I.R.E.)
Application Submission (If New to Hallstrom/F.I.R.E.)
Family Interview (If New to Hallstrom/F.I.R.E)
Pay Sports-Only Registration Fee (If Applicable)

Athlete Expectations

Players are expected to conduct themselves in a Christ-honoring way at all times; therefore, F.I.R.E. will not permit or tolerate:

- Foul language or similar substitutes.
- Derogatory behavior or obscene gestures.
- Bullying on or off the court.
- Disrespect directed towards a coach, an assistant coach, an A.D., another player, or an official.
- An uncoachable spirit and unwillingness to receive instruction from the coaches, leaders, and/or athletic director.
- Excessive absences or tardiness, especially unexcused absences, at practices and games (unless due to extenuating circumstances and communication with leadership has been consistent).
- Damage incurred to property at a F.I.R.E. hosted event or any event hosted by another hosting team/organization, where F.I.R.E. has been invited to play; any intentional destruction or defacing of property is grounds for immediate dismissal and the player will be responsible for any financial expenses incurred because of their actions.
- Possession of any type of weapon (including pocket knives and toys resembling weapons), tobacco/smoking items (including vape paraphernalia), alcohol, or drugs; these offenses are all possible grounds for immediate dismissal.
- The use of Hallstrom or the Rockford F.I.R.E.'s logos without consent from the Hallstrom Board of Directors.
- Creation of a Hallstrom, Rockford, F.I.R.E., or affiliated social media account. Doing so may be grounds for immediate dismissal.
- Clothing attire that is offensive or lacks modesty. Each program may implement, in collaboration with the F.I.R.E. Program director, their own best practices when it comes to modesty rules and expectations.
- Public displays of affection or pairing off during Hallstrom or F.I.R.E. hosted events.

Players and parents will be asked to sign a F.I.R.E. Athlete Expectations document annually.

Athletic directors and coaches are encouraged to develop their own "Best Practices" tailored to their programs, as long as they align with existing F.I.R.E. and Hallstrom policies. All official "Best Practices" documents or guidelines must be submitted to the F.I.R.E. Program Director for review and approval before implementation to ensure consistency and alignment with organizational policies.

Athlete Disciplinary Procedures

Hallstrom stands behind our F.I.R.E. coaches and athletic directors, and we are committed to working alongside you to address disciplinary matters and uphold our policies. Your insights are valued and play a vital role in the resolution process.

In an effort to increase support and streamline communication, we have created a way for A.D.s, coaches, and assistant coaches to report concerns regarding an athlete's conduct or behavior. We have created a [F.I.R.E. Incident Form](#), which can be found on the hallstromhomeschool.org website under the Rockford F.I.R.E. Athletics tab. If you ever feel there is an urgent or time-sensitive concern that you would like immediate support on, please send a group text to both the F.I.R.E. Program Director and the Hallstrom Director of Safety and Discipline.

We support and encourage our A.D.s and coaches to address minor disciplinary issues/infractions. It's important to maintain open lines of communication with an athlete's parents when behavioral concerns emerge. Since behavior often reflects a heart issue, our position is to foster genuine repentance, and help guide the athlete toward positive change. In most cases, minor infractions can be resolved quickly and effectively. If necessary, and at the discretion of the coach and/or A.D., consequences for minor behavioral infractions may include a reduction in playtime during a game or match, running laps, etc.

Please keep the lines of communication open with the Hallstrom Board using the [F.I.R.E. Incident Form](#), so we can better support you if a problem persists or is becoming a trend. There are times when a meeting is helpful to address the issue. These meetings typically include the athlete, their parent(s), coach(es), the program A.D., and a representative from the Hallstrom Board. The purpose of the meeting is to promote repentance, correct the behavior, and foster reconciliation. In some cases, a citation may be issued. If this occurs, both the athlete and a parent must sign the citation before the athlete is allowed to return to play or, if applicable, resume participation in Hallstrom classes. Depending on the nature of the offense, the athlete may also be required to sit out a game. During this time, they are expected to attend the game in uniform and support their team from the bench. For away games involving significant travel, the coach may choose to excuse the athlete from attending.

Greater misconduct of an athlete occurring at Hallstrom, a F.I.R.E. event or elsewhere, has the potential to result in suspension or dismissal of a student and his/her family from F.I.R.E. sports and Hallstrom if applicable. This includes but is not limited to: the use of tobacco products, illegal drugs or alcohol, and posting or sending inappropriate information over the internet or via any social media, habitual disrespect at Hallstrom and/or F.I.R.E. sports, possession of a weapon (including pocket knives and toys resembling weapons), or conduct that conflicts with Hallstrom's Statement of Faith or Code of Conduct.

Athletes are expected to show good sportsmanship by respecting opponents and officials. If an athlete has an interaction with an official that results in a technical, coaches may refer to the

disciplinary steps outlined, and/or bench the player for a portion of or entirety of the remainder of a game.

While coaches, assistant coaches, and athletic directors do not directly have the authority to issue citations, suspend players, or remove them from the team, their observations and input are valued and taken into account during the decision-making process.

Thank you again for your dedication to the F.I.R.E. program! If you have any questions or concerns about this handbook or anything that was not covered, please don't hesitate to contact the F.I.R.E. program director. We respect and value your input as we seek to serve the F.I.R.E. community to the best of our ability.