



# South Range Little Raiders Youth Cheerleading Parent Handbook

*Bantam (K-2) | JV (3-4) | Varsity (5-6)*

## 1. Welcome to SRLR Youth Cheerleading!

Welcome to the South Range Little Raiders Youth Cheerleading Program! Our mission is to **foster teamwork, confidence, and school spirit** while teaching the fundamentals of cheerleading. We are excited to have your family join us for an incredible season of growth, friendship, and fun.

This handbook provides **important guidelines and expectations** to ensure a successful season. Please review it carefully and reach out with any questions.

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## 2. Squad Breakdown & Goals

Each squad is designed to meet the developmental needs of its athletes while preparing them for future cheerleading opportunities.

### Bantam (K-2) – Introduction to Cheer

- ✓ Focuses on **basic motions, chants, jumps, and crowd engagement**
- ✓ Emphasizes **fun, skill-building, and confidence**
- ✓ Introduces **sideline cheer etiquette and teamwork**

### JV (3-4) – Skill Development & Game Leadership

- ✓ Expands on **cheer techniques, sharp motions, and beginner stunting**
- ✓ Focuses on **choreographed halftime routines**
- ✓ Encourages leadership and **increased game-day responsibility**

## Varsity (5-6) – Advanced Skills & Leadership

- ✓ Strengthens **stunting, tumbling, and performance techniques**
- ✓ Develops **leadership skills** through mentorship and game-day leadership
- ✓ Prepares athletes for **middle school and competitive cheer** opportunities

Each squad is **coached by dedicated volunteers**, and their contact information is provided below.

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## 3. Program Leadership

### Cheer Director – Brittany Kominak (330-719-5557)

The Cheer Director oversees the entire youth cheerleading program, ensuring alignment with the organization's mission, coordinating with coaches, and managing program-wide decisions, policies, and events.

### Associate Cheer Director – Ashley Mariano (330-623-4547)

The Associate Director supports the Cheer Director, assists with team logistics, communication, and event planning, and serves as an additional point of contact for coaches, parents, and cheerleaders.

For any questions or concerns, please reach out to the **Cheer Director or Associate Director** for guidance.

Each squad has a **Head Coach** and **Assistant Coaches** to support practices and game-day activities.

### Bantam (K-2) Coaches

- **Head Coach:** Sarah Merkel (330-831-3231)
- **Assistant Coaches:** Tara Kovacich (330-921-8149); Tara Vigarino (330-398-8933), Stacey Rzonza (330-423-2299); Kim Beatty (330-301-9579)



## JV (3-4) Coaches

- **Head Coach:** Melanie Heffinger (440-773-6333)
- **Assistant Coaches:** Janice Ward (330-853-9304), Nicole Witmer (330-234-1280)

## Varsity (5-6) Coaches

- **Head Coach:** Diane Croston (330-844-0515)
  - **Assistant Coaches:** Diana Hatszegi (330-565-0910), Ashley Mariano (330-623-4547)
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# 4. Attendance & Commitment

## Practice Expectations

Throughout our season, we hold 3 practices a week. We understand that many of our athletes participate in multiple activities, and we encourage them to explore their interests! While we do not penalize cheerleaders for missing practice due to another sport or activity that enhances their skills, we do ask for open and timely communication from parents regarding absences.

- If involved in another sport, cheerleaders should aim to attend at least two practices per week.
- Coaches will use discretion regarding attendance to ensure team readiness.
- Practices leading up to competition day will be *extremely important* to attend.
- Frequent unexcused absences or failure to communicate in advance may impact game participation. If an absence is due to illness or a family situation, please notify the head coach as soon as possible—**communication is key!**

## Game Day Expectations

- Cheerleaders must arrive **in full uniform** and be **ready to perform** at the designated time.
- All cheerleaders are expected to stay **throughout the entire game**.
- **Enthusiasm, positive energy, and focus** are required at all times.
- Each squad is encouraged to stay and support the next game, again, to show sportsmanship and commitment to each other.

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## 5. Weather Policy & Cancellations

Weather-related decisions will be made by the **Cheer Director and Coaches** and communicated as soon as possible.

- **Practice & Game Cancellations:** If conditions are unsafe (lightning, severe storms, extreme heat/cold), practice or games may be canceled. Updates will be sent via GameChanger.
- **Practicing in Various Conditions:** *We may continue practice in light rain, colder temperatures, or warm conditions, so athletes should always be prepared.*
- **Proper Attire:** Cheerleaders should **dress appropriately for the weather**, including:
  - ✓ Layers for **cold weather** (gloves, sweatshirts, leggings under shorts)
  - ✓ Light, breathable clothing and **water bottles for heat**
  - ✓ **Rain gear** or extra dry clothes for drizzly conditions

Athletes are expected to **push through safe weather conditions** to build resilience while ensuring their safety.

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## 6. Uniform Rental Program

This season, SRLR has **purchased cheer uniforms**, allowing families to rent them for the season rather than buying new ones each year, lowering registration fees while ensuring excellence in outfitting our athletes.

### Rental Guidelines

- Each cheerleader will **pay a uniform rental fee**, which covers a portion of the uniform's cost, *that is included in your season registration fee cost.*
- Uniforms must be **kept clean and in excellent condition** throughout the season.
- Families are responsible for **washing and properly caring for** the uniform.
- **Uniforms must be returned** at the end of the season in good condition to ensure their continued use for future squads.

Any **lost or damaged uniforms** will result in a replacement fee.

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## 7. Parent Commitment & Volunteer Expectations

Our program **relies on parent involvement** to create a successful season. By registering your child, you are also **committing to supporting the team**.

### How Parents Can Help

- **Game Day Support:** Assist with set-up, tear-down, and hydration/snack coordination.
- **Fundraising & Events:** Participate in fundraising efforts to *keep costs low for families*.
- **Team Spirit & Encouragement:** Cheer on the team *positively and respectfully* from the stands.

**Remember:** Your involvement **sets the example** for our young athletes!

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## 8. Big Sister/Little Sister Program

The Big Sister/Little Sister program is designed to foster **mentorship and team bonding** by pairing older cheerleaders (Varsity or JV) with younger cheerleaders (Bantam or JV). It promotes a supportive team environment. Big Sisters act as role models, offering guidance, encouragement, and support to Little Sisters throughout the season.

### Program Benefits

- ✓ Encourages **team unity** and cross-squad friendships
- ✓ Builds **leadership skills** in older athletes
- ✓ Helps younger cheerleaders feel **welcomed and supported**
- ✓ Creates a **positive, family-like atmosphere** in the program

Activities may include **small gifts or notes of encouragement**, extra practice help, and fun bonding events throughout the season.

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## 9. Presentation & Representation

Cheerleaders are **leaders in their school and community**. Their actions **on and off the field** reflect our program.

### School Spirit & Community Involvement

- Cheerleaders should wear provided **spirit shirts and spirit bows every Friday to school**. They are expected to demonstrate **respect, kindness, and sportsmanship** in all settings.

### Game Day Expectations

- **Energy and enthusiasm** should remain high throughout the game.
- Negative behavior, **disrespect**, or disengagement will not be tolerated.

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## 10. Fundraising & Program Costs

Our goal is to **keep costs as low as possible** for families. Fundraising is essential to help cover **uniforms, equipment, and program expenses**.

- Families are **expected to participate** in fundraising activities.
- Additional opportunities may be offered to **offset individual costs**.

Details on specific fundraisers will be provided throughout the season.

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## 11. Safety & Injury Prevention

All coaches and volunteers completed background checks, Concussion Certification, and offered CPR/AED training.

- Coaches follow **proper stunt progression** to ensure safety.

- Any injuries must be **reported immediately** to the coaching staff.
  - Cheerleaders are expected to **follow safety guidelines** at all times.
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## 12. Communication & Parent-Coach Expectations

- Team updates will be shared via GameChanger, Little Raiders Facebook and Instagram accounts.
  - Parents should **address concerns respectfully**, and outside of practice/game times.
  - Last-minute updates (e.g., weather cancellations) will be sent via GameChanger.
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## 13. Cheer Competition Participation

Our primary focus is **sideline cheer**, but we participate annually in a cheer competition.

### Competition Requirements

- Participation requires *extra commitment and mandatory attendance* at all practices.
- Additional fees may apply, but *fundraising opportunities will be available*.
- Athletes must demonstrate *strong sportsmanship, discipline, and teamwork*.

### Why Competition?

- ✓ **Enhances skills** in stunting, tumbling, and performance
  - ✓ **Builds confidence and teamwork**
  - ✓ **Prepares athletes for future cheer opportunities**
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### Final Notes

We are thrilled to have you as part of the **SRLR Youth Cheer Family!** This season will be filled with **fun, learning, and team spirit**. We appreciate your **support, commitment, and enthusiasm** in making this a great experience for all athletes!



**2025 Season**

If you have any questions, please reach out to your squad's coach.

**Go Raiders!** 🎉📣