

SECTION 1: STUDENT REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

1.1 COMBINED RULES AND REGULATIONS

Included in these rules and regulations for the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, Inc., are the Regulations Governing Athletes in the Public Schools of North Carolina adopted by the State Board of Education. The rules and regulations listed herein are the minimum state standards for eligibility to participate in a number of areas, including but not limited to scholastic requirements, medical examinations, the felony policy, etc.

- 1.1.1 A Local Education Agency (LEA) may have policies in any of these areas or others that are more restrictive than the state requirement, but the LEA may not have a policy for eligibility that is less restrictive.
- 1.1.2 It is mandatory that all member schools which participate in athletics conform to the regulations contained herein. Authority is delegated to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to see that all schools, if they participate in any interscholastic sports program, conform to the regulations adopted by the State Board of Education as a minimum of requirements.
 - (a) The North Carolina High School Athletic Association, Inc. (NCHSAA) is not an agent of the State Board of Education. However, there is a close working relationship, as the organization serves in a supervisory capacity in the realm of athletics.
 - (b) Member schools are required to comply with all NCHSAA rules and regulations, as well as those established by the State Board of Education. Any question regarding a NCHSAA member school shall be reviewed and acted upon by the conference or Association before the matter shall be referred to the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).
- 1.1.3 Women shall not participate on a men's interscholastic athletic team where the school has a women's team in the same sport or where a school sends an entry to the women's state playoffs in the same sport.
 - (a) In cases where women are permitted on a men's team, the school forfeits all participation in the women's playoffs in the same sport.
 - (b) Men's rules will be used where women play on men's teams.
 - (c) Under no condition shall men participate on women's teams in any sport.
 - (d) A student's gender is determined by the gender noted on his or her certificate of birth.
- 1.1.4 Schools may sponsor teams in other sports not listed in the Handbook (e.g., gymnastics, weightlifting, women's field hockey, men's volleyball, etc.); however, all students, regardless of the sport, must be certified as eligible prior to dressing or participating in any interscholastic contest.
 - (a) Even though such sports are not sanctioned by the NCHSAA, member schools should work, wherever possible, to adhere to the ideals and guidelines established by the NCHSAA for their member schools in sports, which they sanction.
 - (b) The need to promote sportsmanship, to protect instructional time, or the physiological needs of maturing teens should not disappear simply because it is not a sport sanctioned by the NCHSAA.
- 1.1.5 For reclassification to additional championships, the number of schools offering teams in a sport must meet the requirement for two years before a championship will be implemented.

1.2 ELIGIBILITY

- 1.2.1 **Initial Entry:** A student may participate in athletics at any member school upon initial entry into ninth grade provided they meet applicable NCHSAA and Local Education Agency (LEA) eligibility requirements. Initial entry is defined as the first day of classes that a student is in attendance and counted present or, if sooner, the first day a student practices or otherwise takes part as a member or potential member of a member school's athletic team prior to the start of the academic year (e.g., if a student participates in preseason football workouts prior to the beginning of the ninth grade academic year, this will be deemed the student's initial entry at this member school).
 - (a) Upon initial entry into ninth grade, transfer and boundary criteria shall apply as follows:
 - (1) The student must live within the member school's boundary as established by the (LEA);
or
 - (2) If the student's member school does not have a boundary established by an LEA (e.g., charter school, non-boarding parochial school, etc.), then the boundary for the member school shall be considered to be:
 - (i) The entire county in which the member school is located; and
 - (ii) Any addresses within a 25-mile radius of the member school as measured by an NCHSAA designated computer program; or
 - (3) There will be no boundary limitation if the student is a member of a parochial church affiliated with a non-boarding parochial member school and submits an authorized pastor verification form.

- 1.2.2 **Master Eligibility Sheets:** All students must be eligible prior to dressing or participating in any interscholastic contest, whether or not the NCHSAA sponsors a championship in that sport.
- (a) Only those students listed on the master eligibility sheet(s) are covered by catastrophic insurance.
 - (b) No student shall be listed on the sheet unless and until documents substantiating eligibility are on file with the school. Such documents shall be available for inspection until the student's eligibility has ended.
 - (c) The master eligibility sheet should be used for each sport and shall list all players, varsity and junior varsity, participating in that sport. A copy should be on file at the school prior to the first regular season contest including Endowment games.
 - (d) Eligibility sheets are no longer required to be filed with the NCHSAA but must be made available upon request. It is required that eligibility sheets be shared among conference schools in each sport.
 - (e) Ineligible players are NOT allowed to participate in practice or skill development, in-season or out-of-season workouts, but this does not apply to summer workouts or weight training.
 - (f) When completing Master Eligibility Sheets, if a student's parent(s) or legal custodian(s) does not live within the LEA, please make all required entries and enter one of the following eligibility criteria on the second page:
 - (1) Any student proposed for a contest is eligible at the school to which the local board of education assigns him within the unit of residence of a parent or legal custodian within this state, subject to the Transfer Policy. (see 1.2.10).
 - (2) When two boards of education within North Carolina by mutual agreement assign a student to a different school, and the NCHSAA has granted a waiver pursuant to the Transfer Policy. (see 1.2.10)
 - (3) Absent a transfer referenced above, a student is eligible at his or her assigned school if he or she has attended school within that administrative unit the previous two semesters, provided it meets LEA policy.
 - (4) Legal documents signed by a judge (ward of court) or social service (orphanage/foster home) are required to be submitted along with eligibility forms pertaining to students in these circumstances.
 - (5) Foreign exchange students (see 1.2.9.i).
 - (6) The NCHSAA has approved a Transfer Waiver Request and/or a Hardship Request to waive the residency requirement on the student's behalf.
 - (g) It shall be the responsibility of the principal, and/or his or her designee, to see that no ineligible player participates. Schools should use the eligibility checklist developed by the NCHSAA and it is recommended that the eligibility power point presentation be made available for athletes, guidance counselors, other administrators and parents, especially at the preseason meeting.
- 1.2.3 **Age of Player:** No student may be approved for any athletic contest if his or her 19th birthday comes on or before August 31, 2016; (i.e., the student's date of birth was on or before August 31, 1997).
- (a) The principal shall have on file evidence of the legal birth date of each athlete.
 - (b) Evidence of legal birth date must be established by a copy of the birth certificate or from one of the following: a record from the State Bureau of Vital Statistics, Raleigh; a record from the county register of deeds office; an infant baptismal record; a recording from the attending doctor's registry or cash book if specific; a news item at the time of birth from the local newspaper; or an official register sheet from the first grade.
 - (c) A birth date as shown on a passport is acceptable verification of a foreign student's age.
 - (d) An eighth grade student who is overage for middle school competition shall be eligible for high school participation.
- 1.2.4 **Attendance:** A student-athlete must meet the LEA attendance policy during the previous semester at an approved high school.
- (a) A student must, at the time of any game in which he or she participates, be a regularly enrolled member of the school's student body, according to local policy. If there is no local policy, "regularly enrolled" is defined as enrolled for at least one half of the "minimum load."
 - (b) It is recommended the student be in school the day of the contest.
 - (c) At the end of each semester, any participant who has failed to meet the LEA attendance policy of that semester is immediately ineligible.
- 1.2.5 **Scholastic Requirements:** A student must have passed a minimum load of work during the preceding semester to be eligible at any time during the present semester. The semester is normally considered half of the academic year. All students must also meet local promotion standards, set by the LEA and/or the local school.

- (a) A minimum load is defined as five courses in the traditional school schedule and three courses for schools on the “block” format. If the school is on an A/B form of block scheduling, a student must pass six of eight courses during what would traditionally be defined as a semester. Any student, including seniors, must pass that minimum load, even if they need fewer for graduation.
- (1) Traditional: pass five (minimum load)
 - (2) Block: pass three (minimum load, 90-minute classes)
 - (3) A/B: pass six
 - (4) Hybrid Formats:
 - (i) 3 block, 2 traditional – (“skinnies” is the parlance many systems use), most common hybrids use four block as the basis (two skinnies equal a block); must pass equivalent of three blocks. Could fail both “skinnies” but passing three blocks would meet minimum requirements.
 - (ii) 2 block, 3 traditional – use seven traditional as the basis (block equals two); must pass equivalent of five traditional classes. Could fail one block only and be eligible (minimum requirement) but not more.
 - (iii) 2 blocks and 4 traditional (“skinnies”) – Use eight as the basis like an A/B format; (block equals two); must pass equivalent of six A/B classes. Could fail one block only and be eligible (minimum requirement) but not more.
 - (iv) 1 block, 5 traditional – use seven as the basis (block equals two); must pass equivalent of five traditional classes. Could fail one block only and be eligible (minimum requirement but not more.)
 - (5) Local units may be more restrictive, but not less restrictive.
 - (6) Office assistance, teacher assistance or laboratory assistance may not be used toward academic eligibility.
 - (7) Audited courses may not be used toward academic eligibility.
 - (8) No work previously passed by a student may be submitted as part of a minimum load.
 - (9) Summer school work used to make up part of the minimum load must be applied to the most recent semester. Credit for summer work is a determination of the local unit.
- (b) A student, upon first entering grade nine, is academically eligible for competition on high school teams. This also applies to attendance.
- (c) A student not academically eligible at the beginning of the semester is not eligible at any time during the semester.
- (1) Exception: a student who receives an incomplete which causes him or her to fail to meet minimum scholastic requirements or is awaiting a final grade due to any state-mandated testing is ineligible until the course is satisfactorily completed, and eligibility is restored immediately.
- (d) A student academically eligible at the beginning of a semester remains academically eligible throughout the semester.
- (e) Alternative or extended day school students who meet all other eligibility requirements may participate in athletics for the school to which they would normally be assigned if local policy allows it, provided the alternative/extended day school has no athletic program.
- (1) The alternative schools referenced here are those operated by the school system itself.
 - (2) The principal of the school at which the students play shall be responsible for certifying their eligibility and shall have on file all records, including current attendance data, necessary to verify eligibility.
 - (3) Each such student shall be identified on the eligibility list, which shall be accompanied by a letter from the principal stating that these designated students meet all eligibility requirements.
 - (4) The principal and coach shall have the same authority in player selection and application of team rules and regulations with alternative school students as with those enrolled in the regular school program.
- (f) At the end of the first semester, a superintendent or principal has eight days (excluding Saturday and Sunday) to check grades of students, removing such player immediately upon knowledge of ineligibility and no later than the completion of the eight-day period and restore eligibility to any debarred player after he or she has qualified at the end of a semester.
- (1) Any student who has his or her eligibility restored may participate the day following the completion of the semester of the ineligibility.
 - (2) The purpose of the eight-day period is to allow schools ample time to check grades. A player should be removed before the eight-day period is up if the school has knowledge and has verified that the student is ineligible.

- 1.2.6 **Eight Semester Rule:** No student may be eligible to participate at the high school level for a period lasting longer than eight consecutive semesters, beginning with the student's first entry into ninth grade or an over-aged seventh or eighth grade student's participation on a high school team, whichever occurs first.
- (a) For students who skip the ninth grade and advance directly to the 10th from the eighth, the year prior to entering the 10th grade is considered the year of first entry into ninth grade for athletics.
 - (b) Playing as a member of a private or other non-member school team shall be deemed the same as playing as a member of an NCHSAA member school team. Enforcement of this rule is to begin with entry into the 9th grade.
 - (c) The principal shall have evidence of the date of each player's entry into the ninth grade. The North Carolina cumulative record is sufficient.
- 1.2.7 **Maximum Number of Seasons:** No student may be approved for a high school contest if he or she has taken part in contests during four separate seasons in that sport (one season per year, whether the sport is played in North Carolina or not).
- (a) Playing as a member of a private or other non-member school team shall be deemed the same as playing as a member of an NCHSAA member school team. Enforcement of this rule is to begin with entry into ninth grade.
 - (b) A student shall not participate in school athletic contests after graduation from high school; however, this does not apply to spring sports playoffs.
- 1.2.8 **Medical Examination:** In order to be eligible for practice or participation in interscholastic athletic contests, a player must receive a medical examination once every 395 days by a physician licensed to practice medicine, nurse practitioner or physician assistant and be cleared to play. The mandatory NCHSAA pre-participation form may be found on the NCHSAA website.
- (a) To participate in summer workouts, a player must have an up-to-date physical on file.
 - (b) Students absent from athletic practice for five (5) or more days due to illness or injury shall receive a medical release by either a physician licensed to practice medicine or his/her designee (nurse practitioner, physician's assistant or licensed athletic trainer) before readmittance to practice or contests.
 - (1) Students with potential head injuries must receive a medical release by a physician licensed to practice medicine before readmittance to practice or contests (see 2.3.6).
 - (c) It is recommended that players be covered by adequate medical and accident insurance, and that medical aid be immediately available at all times.
 - (d) Schools should have medical release forms on site at athletic events in the event medical treatment is required.
- 1.2.9 **Residence:** A student is eligible to participate at the school to which he or she is assigned by the local board of education, within the administrative unit of residence. "Residence" as used for athletic eligibility purposes is defined as the equivalent of the term "domicile" as applied by the courts of North Carolina.
- (a) It is the obligation of the school to know the residence status of each athlete and to require compliance with these requirements.
 - (b) Except as otherwise provided, the residence of any student shall be deemed to be:
 - (1) That of his or her parents (if he/she lives with both parents).
 - (2) That of the sole parent (if he/she lives with only one parent).
 - (3) That of the parent with whom he/she spends the majority of nights during the school calendar year (if he/she has two parents who do not live together).
 - (4) That of the legal custodian if his/her custody has been awarded to a non-parent by a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - (c) In the event the parents are separated or divorced, the residence of the student shall be that of the parent or other adult to whom primary physical custody has been awarded by a court of competent jurisdiction.
 - (d) If no custody order has been entered, the residence shall be deemed to be that of the parent with whom the student spends the majority of nights during the school calendar year.
 - (e) Any change in residence must be bona fide. Determination of what constitutes a bona fide change of residence depends upon the facts of each case. In order for a change of residence to be considered bona fide at least the following facts must exist:
 - (1) The original residence must be abandoned as a residence; that is sold, rented or disposed of as a residence, and must not be used as residence by any member of the family.
 - (2) The entire family must make the change and take with them the household goods and furniture appropriate to the circumstances.
 - (3) The change must be made with the intent that it is permanent.

- (f) No non-parental guardianship will be recognized where a student has a living parent unless:
 - (1) There has been a determination of abandonment of the student by such parent(s) or a determination that the student is a dependent juvenile as defined in G.S. 7B-101(9) or comparable statute by a court of competent jurisdiction,
 - (2) The student has been judicially declared a ward of the court, has been identified as an orphan or placed in a foster home by the Division of Social Services (or a comparable agency if out of state) and custody (not guardianship) has been determined by the court or social service agency.
 - (3) A student whose custody has been established by court order or social services agency decision is eligible for participation at the school to which he or she is assigned by the Board of Education of the local unit where his or her custodian resides.
- (g) The residence of a student who is emancipated shall continue to be his or her residence as of the time of emancipation, unless an exception is granted under the procedures established by the Hardship Rule.
- (h) A student who resides out of state but attends a member high school could be eligible if:
 - (1) The student attends a member non-boarding parochial school or is a member of a parochial church and submits an authorized pastor verification form.
 - (2) The out-of-state student is attending a member school as an employee benefit because a parent is working at the school, the school must request a hardship waiver of the residence rule with appropriate documentation as a result of the employee status.
- (i) The residence of a student who is in an organized and recognized foreign exchange program shall be considered to be the place to which he or she is assigned by that program, and is eligible to participate at the school to which he or she is assigned by the LEA.
 - (1) Foreign students who are not part of an organized and recognized foreign exchange program must present extenuating circumstances through the procedure established in the Hardship Rule.
 - (2) A foreign exchange student is eligible only during the first year of residence in the United States.
 - (3) With the exception of this residence rule, foreign exchange students are subject to all other eligibility requirements, including but not limited to, the prohibition on participation after graduation or eligibility for graduation from high school.
- (j) In no case will any exception be made to the following principles:
 - (1) No student may participate at a second school in the same sport during the same sport season, except in the event of a bona fide change in residence of the parent(s) or legal custodian.
 - (2) Change of schools must be contemporaneous with the change in residence.
 - (3) Documents purporting to establish guardianship or custody issued by a notary public, an attorney, a clerk of court, or any entity other than a court of record with competent jurisdiction will not be accepted. Note: The acceptance of a document from a court of competent jurisdiction does not automatically render a student eligible.

1.2.10 Transfer Policy: After initial entry into the ninth grade, and absent a bona fide move as provided in the Residence section of this Handbook, including Rules 1.2.9.e & j.2:

- (a) A student transferring from one member school to another member school within the same LEA must sit out 365 days for athletic participation. The LEA may create criteria for immediate athletic eligibility for transfers within the LEA.
- (b) A student transferring from one member school in one LEA to another member school in a different LEA must sit out 365 days for athletic participation. Exceptions for immediate athletic eligibility for transfers from one LEA to a different LEA will be heard by a special NCHSAA transfer committee.
- (c) If a member school is not part of a defined LEA (e.g., charter school, non-boarding parochial school, etc.), then the member school itself will be considered its own LEA for purposes of this policy (i.e., exceptions involving these member schools will fall under subsection (b) above).
- (d) If a student transfers from a NCHSAA member school to a NCHSAA non-member school (including a transfer to a DPI-approved home school) and then attempts to transfer to any NCHSAA member school within a 365-day period, such initial transfer will be disregarded for purposes of this transfer rule and the subsequent transfer will be treated as if it were an NCHSAA member school to NCHSAA member school transfer and evaluated by the NCHSAA as provided in section (b) above.

- 1.2.11 **Felony Policy:** Any student who is subject to the NCHSAA eight semester rule who (1) is convicted of a crime classified as a felony under North Carolina or federal law; or (2) is adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, is not eligible to participate in the North Carolina High School Athletic Association sports program.
- (a) Such ineligibility shall be immediate and shall prohibit participation in the NCHSAA sports program from the date of conviction or adjudication of delinquency through the end of the student's high school career.
 - (b) Appellate or other post-conviction review of the conviction or adjudication of delinquency does not affect the student's immediate ineligibility.
 - (c) "Convicted" and "conviction," for the purpose of this policy, includes the entry of:
 - (1) A plea of guilty; or
 - (2) A plea of no contest, nolo contendere, or the equivalent; or
 - (3) A verdict or finding of guilty by a jury, judge, magistrate, or other duly constituted, established, and recognized adjudicating body, tribunal, or official, either civilian or military.
 - (4) A person is "convicted" or "adjudicated delinquent" for the purposes of this policy, in North Carolina state courts, the courts of the United States, another state, the armed services of the United States, or another country.
- 1.2.12 **Dressing for Game or Practicing:** A player shall not dress for a game or scrimmage when he or she is not eligible to participate in the game.
- (a) Dressing and being in the designated team area shall be interpreted as participating in the game.
 - (1) Exception: Football, Eight Quarter Rule. Athletes who are disqualified or ejected during a contest will remain in the team area for supervision. (Reference 2.4.3.i).
 - (b) Ineligible players are not allowed to participate in practice, either in season or during out-of-season workouts, but this does not apply to summer workouts.
- 1.2.13 **Uniforms:** School uniforms may not be used for any outside organization competition or by athletes performing "unattached" during the academic school calendar, inclusive of weekends, holidays, workdays, etc.
- (a) During the summer, outside the dead periods, school uniforms may be worn for school-related activities.
- 1.2.14 **Amateur Rule:** Money or awards having utilitarian value (Example: golf balls, clubs, tennis balls, racket, etc.) may not be given to students for participation in athletics except as noted in the following paragraphs.
- (a) A student may receive merchandise, etc., if it does not exceed \$20 value per season.
 - (b) Students may not accept items by virtue of being on a "free list" or "loan list." Enforcement of this rule by the NCHSAA begins with a student's entry in the ninth grade, so to participate as a member of a high school tennis team, for example, an athlete may not receive racquets, warm-ups, etc., by virtue of being on a free list or loan list.
 - (c) A player may accept a gift provided it meets each of these conditions: is available to every member of the team, is totally consumable and nontransferable (e.g., meals, trips, etc.) or is labeled in a permanent manner (i.e., monogrammed, engraved, etc.) and is approved by the local principal and superintendent.
 - (d) A student may accept a medal, trophy, ribbon, pin, high school letter, sweater, jacket, blazer or blanket. Sweaters, jackets, blazers, and blankets must carry the high school letter or other appropriate school emblem. None of the approved awards shall be accepted from an individual or non-school organization unless the giving of such an award has been approved by the principal and superintendent of the school the athlete attends.
 - (e) Acceptance of money or a forbidden award will cause an athlete to lose athletic eligibility in that particular sport for a period of time to be determined by the Board of Directors.
 - (f) A member school which has any connection with the presentation of a forbidden award, including but not limited to assisting in the selection of the person to receive the award, permitting the award to be given at a school function, or holding the award for a student until he or she has graduated, shall be subject to penalty.
 - (g) Accepting a nominal, standard fee or salary for instructing, supervising, or officiating in an organized youth sports program or recreation, playground, or camp activities shall not jeopardize amateur status. An "organized youth sports program" includes both school and non-school programs.
 - (h) A student is entitled to receive "essential expenses" for any particular game or games, in which he or she participates as a player, which includes meals, lodging and transportation for each particular game. Any remuneration beyond these essential expenses shall debar a student from future contests.
 - (i) No student shall be eligible for any contest if he or she competes under a false name.

1.2.15 **All-Star, Bowl and Benefit Games:**

- (a) No student shall be permitted to participate in an all-star or bowl game unless he or she has completed high school eligibility in that sport;
- (b) Any student who fails to comply with the preceding requirements loses athletic eligibility for a period of time to be determined by the Board of Directors.
- (c) An all-star/bowl game is defined as any contest where admission is charged, either directly or indirectly, and one or both teams is composed of players selected from two or more regularly constituted teams. This regulation does not apply to summer baseball and softball.
- (d) Other information regarding this topic may be found on the NCHSAA website.
- (e) Teams authorized to participate in benefit/fund-raisers (student/faculty game, etc.) must be composed exclusively of players from the same high school. An existing team may not play an outside team in a benefit game, and may not be coached by their coaching staff. A benefit game played during the sports season must count as an official contest.

1.2.16 **Professionals/Colleges:** No student who has signed a professional contract will be eligible for high school competition in that sport.

- (a) No student who has played on a college team is eligible to play on a high school team.
- (b) A regularly enrolled high school student who is taking courses for advance credit (e.g. community college course, college courses) will be eligible for high school competition.

1.3 RECRUITING/UNDUE INFLUENCE

1.3.1 No student shall be subjected to undue influence by an individual or group of individuals to induce or cause him to transfer from one school to another for athletic purposes.

1.3.2 If allegations of recruiting are made against a school, the burden of proof in substantiated form must be borne by the accusing party.

1.3.3 Allegations of recruiting that are substantiated will be processed as infractions under the penalty code.

1.3.4 For the purposes of this rule, "undue influence" consists of actions taken for the purpose and intent of soliciting or encouraging the enrollment of a student-athlete in a school, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Initiating or arranging communication or contact of any sort (letters, email, phone, etc.) with a prospective student-athlete or member of his or her family
- (b) Visiting or entertaining a prospective student-athlete or member of his or her family
- (c) Providing transportation or arranging for same for a prospective student-athlete or member of his or her family to visit a school or meet with anyone associated with a school
- (d) Providing verbal or written material, slide, film or tape presentations to a prospective student-athlete or member of his or her family which states or implies that a school's athletic program is superior to that of any other school with the purpose or intent of soliciting or encouraging the enrollment of the student in that school, or that it would be advantageous for any prospective student-athlete to participate in athletics at that member school as opposed to any other school
- (e) To use non-school athletic teams as a vehicle to solicit or encourage a prospective student-athlete or a member of his or her family to enroll the student-athlete at a different school.

1.3.5 The above applies to any individual who coaches at an NCHSAA member school, head or assistant, paid or non-paid, faculty or non-faculty, parent volunteer, etc., as well as any other person formally or informally associated with a school's athletic program.

1.4 HARDSHIP RULES

1.4.1 The following addition to the athletic code has been approved by the State Board of Education: except for the eligibility rule in regard to age, the Board of Directors shall have the authority to set aside the effect of any eligibility rule, when in the opinion of the Board, the rule fails to accomplish the purpose for which it is intended and when the rule works an undue hardship upon the student.

1.4.2 The purpose of the hardship rule is to provide due process, and the Board of Directors has established the following procedure for filing requests for exemption.

- (a) Requests for exemption must be made prior to any participation by the student under circumstances that would constitute ineligibility. Requests will go initially to the Commissioner for action by the staff. The appropriate form is on the NCHSAA website and must be filled out in its entirety for consideration. The school, as the NCHSAA member, must apply for any hardship.

- (b) A school wishing to appeal the decision may appeal to the Hardship Committee. Requests to the Hardship Committee are acted upon twice during each school year. The first meeting for the consideration of exceptions is during the winter meeting of the Board of Directors and the second meeting is during the Board of Director's spring meeting. The school is assessed the actual cost of the appeal. If a school wishes to appeal a previous decision at one of the two regular Hardship Committee meetings, it should notify the Commissioner no later than ten (10) days prior to those meeting dates.
- (c) If a school wishes to appeal the decision made but does not wish to wait until a regular meeting of the Hardship Committee, it may submit the appeal information to the Committee for decision by:
 - (1) Mail ballot: or
 - (2) Conference telephone call, with the school paying for the actual cost of the conference call. In both (1) and (2), the school waives its right to further appeal. The decision of the Hardship Committee will be final, and the school will be assessed the actual cost of the appeal.
- (d) Each application for consideration must be made in writing by the school principal, with the approval of the superintendent, and should contain all of the facts pertaining to the case, including sufficient data to make it possible to reach a decision without further investigation. All correspondence and documents pertinent to the case must be submitted for review, including a copy of the student's cumulative folder, which shows all scholastic and attendance data since first entry in the ninth grade. In cases involving medical questions, the request for exception must be accompanied by the statement(s) of one or more qualified medical expert(s) explain the medical aspect of the case.
- (e) A personal appearance of the principal and/or superintendent may be requested.
- (f) Ignorance of the rule on the part of school personnel, the student and/or his parents shall not be considered sufficient cause for setting aside the effects of a rule.
- (g) It is to be understood that ordinary cases of ineligibility shall not be considered under the hardship category and that the conditions which cause the student to fail to meet the eligibility requirement must have been beyond the control of the school, the student and/or his parents. Injury, illness, or accident which cause the student to fail to meet one of the basic requirements is a possible cause for hardship consideration. The appropriate time for hardship application is when the hardship situation is discovered, not after he or she has completed eight consecutive semesters.
- (h) Inability to participate due to illness, injury or other medical causes shall not be considered a hardship. Requests for exception may be considered in those cases where the ineligibility exists because the student was unable to attend, or was prohibited from attending, school due to medical treatment.
- (i) Procedures governing exception requests:
 - (1) The Hardship Committee, after hearing the case, will, if requested, advise the school of the recommendation it plans to make to the full Board of Directors in regard to the Hardship request;
 - (2) The school shall have the right to appear before the full Board to appeal the Hardship Committee's ruling. The hearing shall be de novo with members of the Hardship Committee ineligible to vote; and
 - (3) It is the responsibility of the school submitting the Hardship request to have translated any documents that might be in a language other than English, and to forward both the original document and the translation for hardship consideration.