

U.S. ALL STAR FEDERATION



CLUB CHEER & DANCE TEAMS

The Parent's Role

SUPPORTING YOUR ALL STAR ATHLETE

Disclaimer - This document has been created as suggestions via the USASF Mentoring Leadership Program as part of the USASF Enrichment Program, designed to enhance the All Star experience.

THE PARENT ROLE AT HOME

The role you play at home is a more important job than any program owner or coach has! You are molding your daughter or son into the person he or she will become in All Star and in society. You are the expert on your daughter or son and here are a few tips to continue to be their best support at home:

Ask About Your Athlete's Goals. Some athletes want to cheer in college or dance professionally. Once you know this, you can help create a plan to get them there. This may mean extra classes, private lessons or developing a plan with your child's program owner or coach. If your child is involved in cheer and dance primarily for enjoyment, you may want to facilitate in ways to incorporate "fun" aspects. Ideas involve camps, encouraging team friendships and attending open gyms or optional master classes. It is important to be cognizant of your child's goals as they are not always synonymous with yours.

Be Aware. Adolescents deal with so much today. Be aware of your athlete's mood, behavior changes and social media presence. All of these can show signs of poor body image, abuse or mental illness. Your program owner has access to resources provided by the USASF that cover athlete protection, nutrition and injury and illness prevention. Be sure to ask them for these helpful tools.

Be a Cheerleader at Home! The more supportive you are of your athlete, the more he or she will share with you. Encourage your athlete in all aspects of life and help him or her problem solve. Know that your program appreciates that you share your daughter or son with them. They could not create great athletes without your help in making them great people.

THE PARENT ROLE AT THE TRAINING FACILITY

The key to your role at the gym/studio is KNOWLEDGE! The most common disconnect between parents and coach- es/program owners stems from not understanding how or why things are done. Your role in your program is to:

Ask Questions! If you don't know why your athlete is being asked to do a certain drill, or why he or she has a certain position in the routine, or even why they are being asked to wear a certain outfit, just ask. A direct and honest line of communication between parent and coach/ program owner is so important. You can even encourage your athlete to ask questions that he or she has. This serves a dual purpose as you and your athlete are then getting an answer as well as learning how to communicate with persons of authority. If you or your athlete asks these questions it will ease tensions and create a better support system for him/her; where coach, program owner, and parent are all on a united front.

Trust. The coaches and program owners have a lot of experience in the field of cheer or dance, so sometimes it is best to trust their decisions and methods. Being a parent in the industry is a tedious job because it is all about knowing when to trust and when to question. That is something that only you know, and it could be different from parent to parent.

Stay Positive. Cheer & dance takes a lot of hard work! When your athlete comes to see you in the middle or after a practice, congratulate her, praise him, and show your interest in his or her progress. Your child most likely looks to you for approval more than to anyone else. There are so many corrections being done by the coaches (the experts), continue to be your athlete's cheerleader!

Understand and Follow the Guidelines Set Forth by the Program. Most programs have a Code of Conduct. If all parents follow this code, the program runs smoothly and your child will be able to benefit fully from it. Again, if you don't understand a guideline, just ask!

- It is important to know that the USASF has a code of conduct and all members are expected to adhere to that code at all USASF Sanctioned Events. Be sure to ask your program director for a copy of the Professional Responsibility Code.

THE PARENT ROLE AT EVENTS

As a parent you have the BEST and most IMPORTANT role at competition! You are there to support your athlete. The coaches coach, the staff makes sure the event is running smoothly and the athlete needs to focus on his or her performance. You are in charge of enjoying being a mom or a dad! Keep these things in the back of your mind on competition day:

- Did your child eat a balanced meal before and after competing?
- Do you know where your child is when he or she is not with his/her team?
- Safety is our number one concern, and although a cheer or dance competition strives to ensure a safe environment, knowing who is overseeing your athlete's whereabouts throughout the day is your responsibility. Ask your program owner to provide you with their protocol for competition day safety.
- Encourage your athlete before he/she performs. Use words like "Believe," "Love" and "Have Fun" in your pre- competition speech. Try to refrain from referencing specific skills, fears, or the routine. Your athlete needs a reminder of your unconditional love and support.
- Show your love and pride after he or she performs and after the awards ceremony. Regardless of performance or results, try to focus on the way your athlete makes you feel when he or she performs. Use words like "proud," "beautiful," and "fun," and recognize your athlete's hard work in preparation for this day, not just her hard work on the competition stage.

Remember that NO ONE rivals the intensity and passion with which you love your child. So he or she needs your unconditional love and support all day! You get to spend all day celebrating the gift that is your athlete! The coach is the one that should provide the technical overview of the performance. What they need most from you is a hug!

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF ATHLETES

- 1 Remember that when you are at an event, as exciting and as emotional as it can be, the coaches and the program owners are at work. Approaching the program owner or the coach while they are working is not always the ideal time or place to get the answers to any question you have.
- 2 Consider utilizing the 24 Rule. Wait 24 hours prior to approaching or asking the program owner or coach any specific questions about their performance. Waiting 24 hours allows the emotions to settle down and provides a better opportunity for an open dialogue. Most program owners and coaches are more than willing to answer any questions, so be sure it is presented in a manner in which they can provide you the most informative answers.
- 3 Respect boundaries when communicating. The program you selected is a business, therefore, communicate utilizing standard business methods. The program owners will define for you the best form of communication, so respect their protocol. Texting and social media may be convenient, but they are not a standard method for effective communication.
- 4 When in doubt about any decisions regarding the program or your child, refrain from talking to other parents in a negative manner. These kinds of conversations can often be detrimental to the athlete, the team and the program. Be a team player and an example to your child. Bring all questions or concerns to the attention of the program owner or director.
- 5 Keep all conversations about other children and other programs to yourself. You never know who is sitting behind you at an event. Sportsmanship and common courtesy teach children vital lessons in respect and integrity.