

Lightning Elite All-Stars

2026-27

ALL STAR HANDBOOK



#tealtakeover

FINANCIAL POLICIES

1. All athletes/parents are to sign the Lightning All Stars Waiver Form at the beginning of each season. Once a waiver form has been signed, it is valid for all/any programs within Lightning All-stars for the season indicated.
2. Contact information must be updated before any athlete participates in any program.
3. Separate Waiver Forms from competition organizations are also required. All forms need to be completed and returned to Lightning All-Stars as requested.
4. All accounts must be in good standing in order for athletes to participate.
5. Monthly payments for the Competitive Cheer program will be taken between the 1st & 3rd of each month. If payments are declined, they will be tried again 3 days later. If it is declined again, a \$50 fee will be accrued.
6. If payment is not received by the 2nd practice of the month, your athlete will be removed from participation.
7. NSF checks will sustain a surcharge of \$20, plus the amount of the original check.
8. If more than 2 checks are returned to then any following payments must be submitted in the form a certified check or CC.

I understand that if I commit to becoming a member, I am responsible for all cost and fees associated with that program/class for the entire term. I understand, if my child quits and/or is released from the program at any time throughout the term, I am still financially responsible for all fees deemed necessary and appropriate by Lightning All-Stars Cheerleading Inc. Early withdraw from our program will entail a \$500 early withdraw fee. In addition, addl fees will be due per the on-line registration agreement if the withdraw occurs after choreography or after Aug 1st(which ever comes first) per our on-line agreement.



GYM FACILITY GUIDELINES

For the safety and fairness of all participants, only coaches and athletes are allowed on the gym floor.

We will not allow parents, friends, grandparents, etc. on the floor at any time without specific invitation by a coach or owner. If you need something, please let our front desk know and they will alert a coach. Please help us in this effort to provide the best service to the athletes.

Participants are not permitted to compete, fill in for, train, or participate with any other All Star Cheerleading or Dance team while currently enrolled in our program. For more information go to www.usasf.net.

Each athlete is required to provide a copy of their birth certificate in order to be eligible to compete at USASF events.

Each athlete will be required to have a USASF member ID and pay membership dues. This is charged to your account at the beginning of Comp season, and will be **\$50 per athlete**.

We are honored to work with your children and we do not take that task lightly. Please also understand that participation in the program is a choice and a privilege. Any parent or athlete who displays negative behavior or is counter-productive to the overall success of the program can be dismissed from the program at anytime without warning.

INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS

Information can be found on our website at www.ljcallstars.com

BAND: PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU CHECK OUR "BAND APP" OFTEN. THIS IS THE WAY IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION WILL BE SENT. The "Season 20" BAND will contain info pertinent to every family in the gym. Your "Team Bands" will be specific info for your team. Many times we will remove the ability to comment to avoid unnecessary chatter that may result in missed information. If you have a specific questions, feel free to reach out privately to our staff using the app.

Please download the BAND app on your smartphone, as our staff & coaches will use this as their main source of communication with the teams.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: Lightning All-Stars

Instagram: [lightning_allstars_](https://www.instagram.com/lightning_allstars_)

STAFF, PARENTS, AND ATHLETES

USASF CERTIFIED GYM

The mission of the United States All Star Federation (USASF) is "to support and enrich the lives of our All Star athletes and members. We provide consistent rules, strive for a safe environment for our athletes, drive competitive excellence, and promote a positive image for the sport."

ROLE OF THE LIGHTNING STAFF

The LIGHTNING staff is highly trained, motivated and committed to the success of your athlete. You can expect the following of the Lightning coaching staff:

- Lead with character and by example
- Develop a positive, demanding coaching style
- Remain safe and realistic with athlete progression, while also challenging the athlete to reach his or her potential
- Strive to provide a fun, safe, and overall positive experience for your athlete, while focusing on the importance of healthy competition

ROLE OF THE LIGHTNING ATHLETE

We expect the following from all athletes as members or alternates of Lightning teams. These expectations will be strictly enforced, during practices, clinics, competitions and any other Lightning events.

ATHLETES ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Cheer for FUN!
- Be gracious when you win and graceful when you lose
- Treat fellow teammates, coaches, and staff with respect. Put the team first.
- Be accountable for your own actions
- Show good sportsmanship and class at all times
- Refrain from using any social media networking, messaging services or electronic media to distribute negative or inappropriate information that could be detrimental to yourself, your family, and the Lightning reputation in any way. These are grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

ROLE OF THE LIGHTNING PARENT

PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Do everything possible to make the athletic experience positive for your child and others
- View the routine with team goals in mind
- Encourage their athlete to always treat fellow parents, teammates, coaches and Lightning staff with respect

I also understand that there will be fundraising events created to support the gym. My family will be required to sell tickets, provide items, and volunteer time at these events.

EVERY PARENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO VOLUNTEER 8 HOURS DURING THE CHEER YEAR FOR GROUP EVENTS, SIGN UPS WILL BE PLACED IN BAND. FAILURE TO VOLUNTEER WILL INCUR A FEE TO YOUR ACCT

ROLE OF THE LIGHTNING PARENT, CONTINUED

- Defer to the coaches discretion regarding team decisions. Inevitably, we will lose or gain team members through the course of a season. Any dismissal or addition of a team member is solely at the discretion of the Coach, All-Star Program Director and Owner.
- Refrain from using any social media networking, messaging services or electronic media to distribute negative or inappropriate information that could be detrimental to yourself, your family, and the Lightning reputation in any way. These are grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.
- Parents should not listen, participate or instigate idle, worthless gossip. It is a detriment to team unity and chemistry.

PARENT TRAVEL OBLIGATIONS



- Parents are responsible for their athlete's activities and behavior at out of town events.
- Parents must understand that competitions are a time for the athletes to focus and should be fully committed to the team and Lightning through the time of the event.
- Athletes may need to arrive by a designated time on Friday evenings of a 2 day event for scheduled practice times at the event. It is also possible that awards for some teams could be late Sunday evening. The gym will give you this info as soon as it is available to them. Awards are mandatory for all athletes.
- If a parent/guardian cannot attend an out of town event, they will need to arrange for another Lightning parent or responsible

adult to travel with your athlete to and from the event, and to be responsible for the athlete during the entire event.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

This policy was developed to increase the improvement and performance of every team at Lightning All-Stars. Attendance is a major factor in the success of the teams.

Once placed on a Lightning team, it is your responsibility to attend all practices. Athletes will be allotted 9-12 hours (non-approved) for the season (September-May). Athletes will not be excused from practices the week of a competition. "Excused absence" must be communicated to team COACHES in advance. Excused absences include graded school activities, a death in the family, hospitalization or contagious illnesses (accompanied by a doctor's note).

Any parent who threatens to quit or remove their athlete from the program, will be removed from the program immediately.



ATTENDANCE POLICIES (CONTINUED)

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

All graded school activities are considered excused absences if notification is given in advance.

VACATIONS

Please try to plan any summer vacations so they do not conflict with any choreo dates posted. We also ask that winter vacations are planned not to interfere with comp schedule dates. Tuition holds your athlete's spot in the program and therefore cannot be prorated due to vacation, no matter the length. The gym does not close for spring break, as we have multiple school systems in the program.

INJURY

In the event that an athlete is injured, you should notify your Coach immediately. Athletes can sit for one practice and then a doctor's note will be required or the athlete will be required to participate fully in practices. Thereafter, you should continuously update Coaches as soon as possible with all information concerning doctor's prognosis, estimated length of recovery, potential for surgery, and any change in circumstance affecting their ability to perform the physical skills required to fulfill their role on the team. Athletes who have a doctor's note to keep them out of practice will require a fully cleared doctor's release note to come back in to practices.

Coaches will re-choreograph routines based on the athlete's injury and length of recovery. Once the individual has fully recovered, he or she may or may not be choreographed back into the same spots in the routine. The determination of when the athlete will be placed back into the routine is up to the Coach and All-Star Program Director, based on the team and competition schedule at the time. Every situation can vary. If an athlete is out due to injury, they must continue with regular monthly payments to secure their roster spot. Failure to do so forfeits the roster spot. Athletes are to continue to attend practice while recovering from their injury.



WSA
WORLDWIDE SHOOT ASSOCIATION

HOW TO HANDLE BEING TAKEN OUT **FOR AN INJURY**

EXTRA/EXTENDED PRACTICES

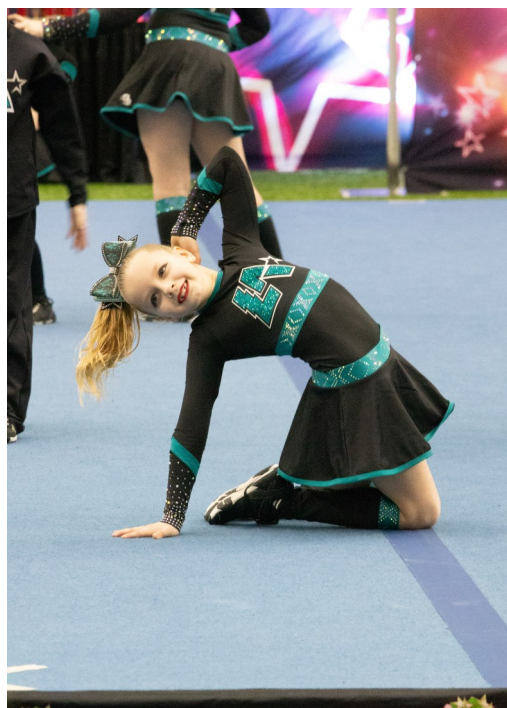
It is normal for teams to be scheduled for extra and/or extended practices throughout the year. The majority of the extra and/or extended practices will be called during our major competition season (January 1- End of the year). As the season progresses, teams can often add an additional practice day and/or extended hours. Extra and/or extended practices are mandatory and will be communicated as soon as possible.

COMPETITION ATTENDANCE

EACH COMPETITION IS MANDATORY

Prior to each competition, parents/athletes will be given the following set of team-specific times for each competition. If your team is having Friday night practice at an event - it is considered a mandatory practice time

- **Arrival Time** – When you must be present in the competition venue fully dressed
- **Meet Team Parent Time** – When the athlete meets the team parent at the designated area. Athletes must leave all backpacks, purses, make-up, warm up jackets and pants etc., with parents at this time. Team parents will send out the designated meet spot prior to the event.
- **Meet Coach Time:** The time the team parent delivers the team to the coach for warm-ups
- **Warm-up Time** – The time the event-hosting company has scheduled the team to warm up
- **Performance Time** - The time when the team is scheduled to perform
- **Award Time** - the time of the awards ceremony that your team has been scheduled to receive its award
- Awards Ceremonies are mandatory for all athletes—If you are not present at awards, you will forfeit any awards and prizes you may win. There is also a fine listed in your contract regarding missing awards.
- If an athlete does not show up for a competition, he or she may be dismissed from the team. There are also applicable fines for this listed in your contract.



COMPETITION POLICIES

CHECK-IN WITH TEAM PARENTS

All team members should report to the area designated by their Team Parent and check in with them. All team members are to stay with their respective teams and team parents until it is the Meet Coach Time.

Note: Members are not allowed to leave the team area without first asking their coach's/team parent's permission.

All meeting times are mandatory. If you know that you are typically a few minutes late, please plan to arrive 5 or 10 minutes early. It cannot be stressed enough how important this is. Also, every member must report to watch all Lightning teams assigned to them for that specific competition. Parents, please respect these meeting times. Please do not attempt to plan any family outings or family lunches, dinners, etc. Every athlete is expected to be at the assigned meeting places every time and present to watch all Lightning teams assigned to them.

At two day competitions, it is possible that coaches will ask to meet with a team after receiving day 1 scores to make a few adjustments, based on judge recommendations, to increase our score for day 2. Athletes must be available for meetings following their performance. If no changes need to be made, coaches will release the athletes.

Also at two day competitions, all members must cheer for their assigned Lightning teams. This includes parents and athletes. You will enter the VIP or Viewing Area for each assigned team.

Parents should never be in the warm-up area unless they are a designated team parent. If you need to contact your athlete, please call or text the team parent and they will communicate with the coaches and/or your athlete. The USASF now requires every adult in the warm-up area to have a "green light" background check. We are no longer permitted to send other parents back to the warm-up area.

It is critically important that the coaches know where each member is at all times. This includes being on time to each meeting time, and asking permission before going anywhere on your own. In a venue of this size, it will be impossible for the coaches to track down a single member who may be unaccounted for. After performances, team parents will collect the team and release them to the parents. Each parent or designated adult must be present to pick up a child from the team parent.

The following fees will be imposed for failure to comply with Lightning Policy

Early withdraw from Program - Minimum \$500.
Addl fees after choreography per on-line agreement

Late arrival to Competition - \$50.00
Early departure from Competition - \$50.00

AWARDS

Our policy is that everyone must stay for awards and be in full uniform. During awards ceremonies, athletes must be in full competition uniform and may not wear backpacks, warmups or have any other items unless directed by the coaches. No cell phones on the awards floor. Regardless of the results, we must act with dignity and respect and accept our award with chins up. If we receive first place, we may celebrate but should not do so until our name is called (this includes parent reactions as well). Be humble and congratulate the other teams on their placements. If we do not receive first place, we should stand up and clap for the first place team and congratulate them.

At Lightning, we stress sportsmanship, especially in the competition setting. All Lightning teams will stand and clap for each division's first place winner. Athletes who do not stand to clap for first place teams will be addressed by coaches first and if a second instance happens, will not be permitted on the awards floor for the next competition. Even at a young age, sportsmanship is so important.

PRACTICE DRESS CODE

All athletes are required to wear their assigned practice wear for practice. No jewelry is permitted.

- Athletes must wear the correct practice clothes. Cheer shoes must be worn at every practice. In the event that practice clothes are lost, damaged, or outgrown you may purchase a new set.
- Athletes are free to purchase larger sizes or additional sets of practice clothes at anytime throughout the season.
- Athletes that are out of dress code will be excused once; additional instances will require the athlete to purchase practice wear (from the front desk) or they will sit during practice. If there are no available practice wear sets, the athlete will sit from practice.
- Hair should be pulled up and out of the face.
- NO Jewelry of any kind is allowed. Neither Lightning, nor a Lightning employee is responsible for jewelry if it is worn into the gym, removed for practice, and is lost or stolen.
- Fingernails should be kept at an athletic length. No nail polish is permitted for competition, with the exception of the Worlds athletes.
- New piercings are also strongly discouraged during competition season. Athletes will be required to remove the piercings for practices and competitions. No clear "stoppers" allowed.

LIGHTNING MERCHANDISE

All Apparel should be ordered through the gym.

- To protect the integrity of our brand, no parent, athlete, family member, etc. is permitted to use the Lightning logo without authorization from the Owner. This includes, but is not limited to - gym logos, team names, Lightning logo or any gym initials. If you have apparel ideas please submit them to the Owner or Program Director.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media plays a huge role in today's society. Athletes and parents are expected to represent the Lightning program with respect and dignity when posting on social media, especially when wearing Lightning merchandise/uniforms.

Athletes will not be permitted to post pictures of themselves in Lightning attire if the pictures are not tasteful and age appropriate. Foul language, sexually explicit language/posing or hate speech will not be permitted on social media by any Lightning athlete.

"Retweets" or "shared" posts on social media will be regarded as if the actual athlete posted it themselves, so please choose what you post on social media wisely. Lightning staff has the right to remove athletes from the program for failure to obey social media standards set forth.

ELITE SUMMIT TEAMS—PREP END OF YEAR EVENTS

1) The 2026 Summit competition is not included in the payment plan or competition fees. All Summit fees are additional, and will be determined upon our qualification. These fees can range between \$50—\$485 depending on type of bid achieved. Travel and accommodations will also be at family Expense

2) Semi-travel/Regionals teams will have 1 end of year event that is included in your payments for the exception of travel and accommodations.

Failure to abide by any part of the PARENT CONDUCT POLICY may result in IMMEDIATE removal of the athlete from the Lightning All-Stars program with no refunds given. It WILL include parental notification (if under age of 18).

STAFF MEMBERS

Joell Leighbody - President/ Competition Coordinator/Instructor

Gary Leighbody - Vice President/Business/ Instructor

Ms Heather - Fundraising

Bills Games/Concerts - Gillian, Devon, Heather, Anna

Coach Caitlin/Coach Kendra— Social Media

TEAM COACHES

Coach Louis

Coach Tori

Coach Sam

Coach Lindsay

Coach Kendra

Coach Caitlin

Coach Alyssa

Coach Madi

Jun-

The athlete handbook is subject to revision throughout the year. Updates will be posted in the SEASON 23 BAND for reference

FUNDRAISING

COORDINATOR - Heather Radder

INDIVIDUAL FUNDRAISING

On a month to month basis, the organization will communicate opportunities to earn funds to be used to pay expenses incurred during the cheer year. These fundraisers are **OPTIONAL** and are created for our families to help in meeting your financial obligations to Lightning. Individual fundraising proceeds go directly to the families for the exception of a administrative fee that funds expenses incurred for implementation(this fee will not exceed 5% of the proceeds) Once a fundraiser is completed, the funds will take up to 30 days to be applied to your account until payment is received by the fundraising company so please plan accordingly,

Some individual fundraising includes

BUFFALO BILLS/DARIEN CONCESSION STANDS

PIEROGI

SUPERBOWL SQUARES

ZAP A SNACKS ETC

GROUP FUNDRAISING

During the cheer year, the organization will have 2-3 events that are MANDATORY FUNDRAISERS.

MEAT RAFFLES

BUFFALO BOOKS

LOTTERY

BASKET RAFFLES etc

These events are put in place to supplement and fund operational expenses that would normally incur a higher tuition payment. We are proud to say that we have the lowest tuition payment in WNY and these fundraisers also omit the need to have a "Booster club payment". These mandatory fundraisers will be communicated from Erika in the "Season 22 BAND".

If the family does not participate, the can do a buyout, which means they are charged a fee which can range from the cost of the fundraiser to what the lost funds were to the organization for not participating. You can pay the buyout in cash or it can be charged to your cheer account with a additional 5% fee for cc fees. Buyouts listed below

VOLUNTEER HOURS - \$100.00

GROUP FUNDRAISING PARTICIPATION - \$500