

Welcome!

Parents, we would like to welcome you to the Lakeland Gators Football and Cheer Organization! We know that it will be the best season yet! With your help we know that all of our participants will enjoy their season and find success both on and off the field. While having fun is our goal, we are also a competitive organization, thus why attendance and participation is a must. (Please refer to the Attendance section of your handbook.)

We will practice Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 6:30 to 8:30 until school starts. All practices are mandatory and if a player will not be at practice due to illness or a school assignment you must contact your child's coach. (Please refer to the Communication section of your handbook for more information on this topic.)

Weather will be evaluated on a case by case basis, however practice will continue in the rain. We will have many practices and games in the rain and possible makeup practices and games because of rain. We live in Florida and as Hurricane season approaches this is to be expected. We keep a lightning meter on the field and will evacuate the field if needed. (Please refer to the weather policy in your handbook.)

Our coaches are required to have background certification, concussion training, and complete the NAYS coaches training prior to the start of practice. They are prepared to coach our teams. Coaches with badges and players are the only people allowed onto the field.

Parents are not allowed on the field for practice or games. Security will escort parents off of the field if necessary and it will be considered a violation of our written code of conduct and could result in the parent not being allowed to attend practice or games. We value your child's safety and strictly adhere to this policy. (Please refer to the parent conduct section of your handbook)

Each player is required to participate in a minimum of two fundraisers per season. The first fundraiser is simple, each child is required to bring in **(1) 24 pack of 20 oz. Gatorade** to be sold in concession. These can be handed in to your team mom or our fundraising manager during your team's scheduled month. Our second fundraiser will be communicated to you through your assigned Team Parent. (Please refer to the fundraising section of your handbook.)

Each parent is required to do 4 hours of volunteer work. This could include concession, gate duty, field set up, or field clean up. Your team parents will be assigning you a concession shift. Once those are filled they will start assigning clean up and gate duty. Our players and cheerleaders work hard and we want to reward them for their efforts after each game with a snack and a cold drink. The team parents will be assigning you a date to bring either snacks or drinks. If your child has a food allergy please let the team parent know so they can communicate the information to other parents. (Please refer to the Volunteer section of your handbook.)

Each organization in our league is required to pay the referees for officiating our games. Gate fees are used to pay the field officials. We pay over \$1,000 each home game for the officials. Therefore, there is a gate entry fee. **The fees are \$5.00 per adult (ages 14 and up) and \$2.00 for children (13 and under). Cash only at the gate.** There is no charge for football players or cheerleaders.

We look forward to the start of the upcoming season. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your coach or a Board Member.

Lakeland  Board of Directors

Welcome to the Lakeland Gator Family!

Enclosed in this handbook is the information that will help you prepare for your involvement with the Lakeland Gator Football and Cheer program. While it would be very challenging to cover every situation, we have tried to create a reference for you in preparation for the season. We are excited about the future and direction of our program. Please refer to our website (www.lakelandgators.com) or Facebook page Lakelandgators65 regularly as some of the data in this packet is yet to be finalized. It is also vital that you download the communications app for your specific team info.

Mission

The Lakeland Gators Youth Athletic Association, Inc. was established in the 1960's as a non profit organization dedicated to providing the youth of Lakeland, a place to enjoy the sports of football and cheerleading. While having fun, children learn valuable lessons about honesty, teamwork, loyalty, and respect. The Lakeland Gators maintain a winning tradition both on and off the field.

The goal and focus of the Lakeland Gators is to promote a safe and enjoyable environment for young athletes to participate and excel in football and cheerleading. To develop a true sense of sportsmanship and teamwork and nurture the fundamentals of honesty, integrity, and a positive self-image. It's our belief that these values and virtues are important to their growth and to them becoming active members of our community and society.

Player Release Policy

With a maximum limit on each team or squad it will be Lakeland Gators procedure not to release players that might help the program. While the coaching staff would like to keep all athletes interested, athletes sometimes lack the basic skills or proper attitude to help build a strong program. It is very difficult for coaches and players alike, when a player is released. Whenever possible, coaches will not release players. Team selection for the Lakeland Gators will be permanent prior to the first game or contest in August. Coaches will evaluate each player through skill tests as well as attitude and attendance which will determine play time, the coaching staff will look for the following:

- § • Skill level
- § • Attitude
- § • Effort and Coachability
- § • Aggressiveness
- § • Intelligence/Field Sense
- § • Commitment, including attendance during off-season

Please be aware that there is a no refund policy. There will be every effort made to communicate between coaches, parents, and the board before release action is taken.

Physical and Health Insurance Paperwork

All players must have an updated physical exam on FHSAA form (EL2 High School Form) to participate in games and/or practices. All players are also required to have health

insurance. If a family does not have health insurance please contact the Athletic Director or Cheer Director to determine alternative options.

Player Expectations

We will operate the Lakeland Gators Youth Football and Cheer Program in accordance with the rules, regulations, and policies as outlined by the TCYFCC, and the administrative policies of Lakeland Gators. Within that framework we will provide a program of the highest quality that meets the needs of our athletes and community.

We believe that our sports program provides a vital link between the school and the community. Student, parent, alumni, and community involvement is vital for the success of our program, to develop sound minds and bodies, and develop skills and qualities which endure for life. As a rule, all players are to conduct themselves with class and dignity, both on and off the field. Your behavior is a direct reflection of our school and football program. Any actions that will embarrass you, your team, school, or family is an action that should not be taken. All players in this program will recognize and respect the authority of all coaches, teachers, administrators, and staff members or they will not be a part of our program. Any violation of one or more of the rules covered in this handbook is an indication that this youth program, and being a part of it, is not important to you. Any violation will be dealt with accordingly, ranging from warnings to dismissal from the team. Those who work hard and adhere to these policies are showing that being part of this program is important and will be rewarded with success, satisfaction, and wins.

Attendance

All players are expected to be present and on time to practice.

1. Any player who is late to practice will be held accountable if not properly communicated.
2. Any player who misses practice without notifying his or her Coach in person or by email/phone ahead of time will be dealt with accordingly per coach.
 - a. 1st Unexcused absence = could result in miss game time at Coach's discretion (i.e. miss 1st quarter of the game)
 - b. 3rd Unexcused absence = 1 game suspension
 - c. 5th Unexcused absence = possible removal from team
3. In the case of an unforeseen emergency, parent must contact his or her coach as soon as possible.
4. All illness and sickness absences lasting more than 2 days need to have a prior approval or doctor's excuse upon returning to ensure the health and welfare of the other athletes.
5. Any absence, regardless of excused or unexcused, will require conditioning to be made up upon returning to practice. (This does not include players injured, determined by the medical professional, but are in attendance for practice)
6. The Lakeland Gators policy states that an athlete should be at school for the entirety of that practice day.
7. Any circumstances (Dr. visit, Dentist, etc.) that would be excused may ONLY be excused through your Lakeland Gators Coach.

Inclement Weather

When a practice is scheduled and harsh weather is expected (with the exception of extreme occurrences such as a hurricane, hail etc.) practice will ALWAYS be on. You are required to show up to practice unless prior notice has been given by the Athletic Director through the email, facebook, or on the Lakeland Gators website. When inclement weather (i.e. lightning) is present players are required to wait in their vehicles until the inclement weather procedure is complete.

Drugs and Alcohol Use

The use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco will not be tolerated. Follow the park's rules for designated smoking areas. The possession or use of drugs or alcohol during school and/or Lakeland Gators activities will result in dismissal from the team (player) or being banned from attending practices and/or games (parents/guardians).

Equipment Care

All players must have regard for the equipment. Equipment care is very essential in maintaining good quality equipment for you and others to use while participating in our program. The average cost of outfitting you with essential and proper fitting safety gear is around \$250 per athlete. The costs continue to rise each year, so it is necessary for you, as the borrower, to take full responsibility for your equipment care. Game day uniforms are included in the registration fee, we only require players to purchase their own cleats. Everything else will be loaned to the athlete so you should follow some simple maintenance steps for your borrowed equipment throughout the year:

- **Helmet (cost \$75.00 and up):**

This is not a device made to use as a weapon. The use of the helmet other than a safety device is strictly prohibited:

- u • Inspect & tighten facemask screws weekly.
- u • Inspect & tighten chinstrap screws weekly.
- u • Inspect chinstrap buckles weekly.
- u • Wipe down your helmet weekly (inside & out) with a damp cloth.
- **Shoulder Pads (cost \$100.00 and up)**
- u • Inspect all straps, strings, & clips weekly.
- u • Tape all your straps after proper clip adjustment has been received.
- u • Wash the molded plastic with a damp cloth.
- u • Clean Shoulder Pads on a regular basis with boiled water and a disinfectant

Parent Expectations

Be positive with your athlete. Let them know you are proud they are part of the team. *Focus on the benefits of teamwork and personal discipline.*

Encourage your athlete to follow all training rules. Help the coaches build a commitment to the team. *Set a good example in your personal lifestyle.*

Allow your athlete to perform and progress at a level consistent with his ability. *Athletes mature at different ages; some are more gifted than others.*

Always support the coaching staff when controversial decisions are made. *The coaches need your back up to keep good morale on the team.*

Insist on positive behavior in school and a high level of performance in the classroom.

Numerous studies indicate extracurricular involvement helps enhance academic performance.

Stay calm in injury situations. *Parents can help minimize the trauma by being in control and offering comfort. Allow the medical staff to perform their assessment of your son or daughter's injury. No parent is allowed on the field unless the training staff requests it.*

Cheer for our team and players. Opponents and referees deserve respect. *Realize that youth players will make mistakes. Your support is needed during tough times.*

Promote having fun and being a team player. Youth players aren't signing D1 scholarships just yet! *Concentrate on what is best for the team. Preoccupation with statistics can be very distracting.*

An athlete's self-confidence and self-image will be improved by support at home. Comparison to others is discouraged. *Encourage the athlete to do their best regardless of family or friends who may have been outstanding players.*

Winning is fun, but building positive team values is most important. *The concept of working together to perform a task will have lasting benefits. Winning takes place when all the little things are done correctly.*

Athletes must be responsible to attend all practices, games and team events. *Stress the necessity to make a commitment to the team.*

Emphasize the importance of well-balanced meals, hydration, and regular sleep patterns. *An athlete functions best when care is taken to consume nutritious food and obtain sufficient rest.*

Persistence and being able to accept a role is extremely important for the team to be successful. *Not everyone will be a starter, but everyone is important to the team. Some players may not develop during their active season. Encourage them to be persistent.*

Parent Code of Conduct

I will enjoy my child's opportunity to experience the benefits of Cheer and Football.

I will trust in my child's ability to have fun and to perform and achieve excellence on his own.

I will help my child learn the right lessons from winning, losing, individual achievement, and mistakes.

I will respect my child's teammates as well as fellow parents and fans.

I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child or his teammates.

I will support the efforts of the coaching staff.

I will not instruct from the sidelines unless asked to by the coach.

I will ensure that my child will attend all practices and games and will inform the coach in advance if unable to attend.

I will respect all facilities made available to my child.

I will respect the equipment and uniform loaned to my child for practice and play.

I will respect the officials and their authority during games.

I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behavior.

*** COVID-19 acknowledgement.

Communication Process

Coaches have the authority over who becomes a participant of the team and when the participant plays or is removed from the team. The coaching staff determines coaching strategy. Acceptance of a position on the team includes acceptance of this policy. Therefore, these issues are not appropriate topics for parent involvement and discussions with coaches is discouraged. It is NEVER acceptable for a parent to attempt to discuss playing time with a coach during a game or practice. It is also NEVER acceptable for a parent to attempt to discuss the performance or playing time of another participant. Head Coach, athlete, and/or parent meetings may help to resolve OTHER issues creating concern or dissatisfaction. Such meetings MUST be scheduled. Any meeting with a parent may also include an assistant coach, board member or administrator. Meetings can be scheduled by contacting your Head Coach or Lakeland Gators President through email or phone. Contact should not be made to an assistant coach as they are relieved from meeting with parents and will simply point you toward contacting the Head Coach. If the player or parent were not satisfied with what transpired at the coach's level, the next step would be to involve the Athletic Director or Assistant Athletic Director. If all else fails, the President will become involved. During the season parents **WILL NOT** discuss player concerns (other than injuries) within the time 24 hours before a game to 24 hours after a game. A parent may send an email but a response should not be expected within this time frame.

Parents Attending Practice

All practices are open to parents unless otherwise notified. However, it is prudent for parents to stay off the field and not communicate with any players or coaches. The time allocated for practice is short and all attention needs to be on practice. Parents are welcomed to sit in and observe. If you are dropping your child off at practice, please make sure your contact information is up to date in case of an emergency.

Fundraising

It is critical that all players contribute to the team and/or participate in fundraisers. No we don't teach kids to "beg for money"! Fundraising teaches our kids people skills, good manners, math skills, community awareness. Every opportunity spent with a child is a teaching moment!

What is the fundraising income allocated to?

- o Up keep of equipment rental (recertification of helmet, pads, and other equipment)
- o DJ/ Announcer equipment during games/ competitions.
- o HUDL web-based video system – GREAT tool for coaches and the capability to make highlight videos for personal use or recruiting purposes.
- o End of the year banquet or other team events.

Volunteering

Each player's family is required to do 4 hours of volunteer work. This could include concession, gate duty, field set up or clean up, or committee participation (event planning). Your team parent will assign you a concession shift automatically. This will usually be scheduled before or after your child's game so that you do not miss any of their action on the field. You will also be assigned to bring a snack or a drink on game day. Our players and cheerleaders work hard and we want to reward them for their efforts after each game with a healthy snack and a cold drink.

Player/Parent Contract

(Submission required for participation)

I, _____ (player), and

_____ (parent/guardian), have read the

Lakeland Gator Football Player & Cheer Parent Expectations Handbook. By signing below, we

acknowledge that we understand its contents and agree to the terms of the handbook. We

understand the guidelines for attendance, playing time, fundraising, volunteering, etc. We will

do our best to work together to provide a positive experience. We are aware of the commitment

it takes to be a part of the Lakeland Gators Football and Cheer Program and are aware that all

decisions that are made are for the betterment of the TEAM.

It is a privilege to play football and cheer as a Lakeland Gator, NOT a right!

Athlete

Date

Parent or Guardian

Date