

# 2025 Handbook



RULES & GUIDELINES



## EFFECTIVE DATE

The following league standards and guidance materials are derived from terms that previously appeared in the National NICA Rulebook. These materials are made available to NICA leagues who must establish league rules and guidance materials covering the subjects included herein. The Required Standards must be included at a minimum in the guidance leagues provide to their participants. Leagues may modify the discretionary standards to accommodate the size, makeup, and other needs of their student population.

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*This edition of the NICA Handbook is made **effective April 1st, 2025** (the “effective date”), for the fall season for NICA leagues. All prior rules and regulations are superseded as of the effective date.*

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**Questions or comments?** Please contact NICA at [handbook@nationalmtb.org](mailto:handbook@nationalmtb.org)



*Founded in 2009, the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) provides interscholastic mountain biking programs for student-athletes across the United States. As the national governing body, NICA provides support, resources, and guidance to regional leagues, which operate at the local level.*

*We are dedicated to fostering a lifelong passion for cycling and building a strong, inclusive community. Welcome to NICA!*

#### OUR MISSION

We build strong minds, bodies, character and communities through cycling

#### OUR VISION

Every youth is empowered to be part of a thriving and engaged cycling community

#### OUR VALUES

Fun, inclusivity, equity, respect & community

## How to use this handbook

This handbook, which includes the student-athlete code of conduct, the adult code of conduct, and rules set forth by NICA is the foundation for our culture and provides clear guidance for all decision makers and participants. Refined since 2009, the handbook embodies best practices for upholding NICA's core values. Adherence to these standards is crucial for maintaining NICA's risk mitigation model, contributing to its low injury rates, and ensuring its insurability and financial stability. It reflects our commitment to our values, fostering a positive and inclusive NICA culture.

By upholding our standards, we create an environment where all participants can thrive.



# NICA Codes of Conduct

## Student-Athlete Code of Conduct

As a representative of the community, student-athletes and parents/guardians agree to follow this code of conduct during all NICA activities and while interacting with NICA community members. You also agree to maintain the code of conduct while connecting with other NICA community members through social media and electronic communications. The code of conduct is the starting point, teams are encouraged to create great teammate pledges (social contracts) with their teams to support building strong minds, bodies, character and communities. **Parents and guardians, please review the following expectations with your NICA student-athletes**

### BE SAFE

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- Be prepared with safety gear: always wear a helmet when your leg is over the bike
- Only ride a safe and functional mountain bike (use the ABCDE bike check to confirm this before each ride (Air, Brakes, Chain, Derailleur, Everything Else)
- Ride within your ability
- Plan ahead, ride with a friend, and let your family or guardians know where you are going and when you plan to return
- Stay on the trail or in designated activity areas and be aware of hazardous animals and plants
- Obey traffic laws

### BE RESPONSIBLE

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- Be prepared with the water, food, tools, spare parts, and clothing that you need to complete the ride
- Support your teammates, help them have a safe and successful ride
- Come to practice with a clean and well-maintained bike
- Be accountable for your actions and choices
- Never consume prohibited substances (alcohol, illegal drugs, or performance enhancing substances)
- Ride only on designated legal trails and routes
- Know and follow additional rules that may be associated with your team, school or league

### BE RESPECTFUL

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- Respect coaches, teammates, competitors, trail users and other community members
  - Be kind and treat everyone with dignity
  - Avoid language and actions that may be perceived as bullying, harassment, or discrimination
  - Be inclusive and welcoming to new athletes, coaches, competitors, and other trail users
  - Sexual harassment by NICA community members is not tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to: offensive or unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances or propositions, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic or degrading comments about an individual and/or their appearance, the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, and any offensive or abusive physical contact
  - Seek consent before touching, hugging and otherwise embracing teammates and coaches
- Always treat other trail users with courtesy
  - Slow down when approaching other trail users
  - Provide right of way to pedestrians and equestrians. Stop and ask for passing instructions from equestrians
  - Announce your passing intention, specify the passing side, and wait for confirmation from the other trail user
  - Move aside to allow others to pass you safely
- Respect the environment and trails
  - Only ride on open trails
  - Ride when conditions will ensure no damage to the trail
  - Perform trail maintenance only with full permission and permits from the land owner/manager
  - Do not litter and pick up trash before leaving practice areas, venues and campgrounds

# Adult Code of Conduct

*All staff, coaches, and volunteers within the NICA community are role models and leaders. It is our job to help student-athletes and other adults behave in a safe, responsible and respectful manner during all NICA activities and events, whenever interacting with NICA community members, and while conducting any electronic communication or social media connected to NICA. Please carefully review the following expectations:*

## **As an adult associated with NICA, a youth development organization, I agree to:**

- Follow NICA policies, rules, guidelines and training at all times.
- Prioritize participants' safety at all times. Your primary role is to ensure the physical, social and emotional safety and then the success of participants within each activity or event.
- Follow athlete abuse prevention policies, rules, guidelines and training, particularly:
  - Avoid engaging in behavior that could be interpreted as "grooming." NICA's Athlete Abuse Prevention Training is required for coaches and available to all NICA long-term volunteers. Examples of behaviors to avoid include making sexual comments in the presence of a student-athlete or setting-up 1:1 time with a student-athlete.
  - All planned 1:1 interaction between a student-athlete and coach must be observable and interruptible. That is, they must take place where another adult can see what is happening and intervene if the interaction looks inappropriate. For example, unless they are immediate family members coaches should not be 1:1 with student-athletes in a vehicle or for a bike ride.
  - If unplanned situations that result in 1:1 contact with a student-athlete occur, be sure to report to three other coaches, including team leadership. Include how that circumstance occurred and how long you were 1:1.
  - Remember the 1:1 policy applies to phone, social media, online or other virtual communications. Use your team or league platforms to communicate with student-athletes and keep electronic communications transparent, accessible, and professional.
  - Practice athlete abuse prevention strategies throughout the year, not just during the season.
- Treat others with respect.
  - Sexual harassment by NICA community members is not tolerated. These forms of harassment include, but are not limited to: offensive or unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances or propositions, repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature, or graphic or degrading comments about an individual and/or their appearance. The display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures and any offensive or abusive physical contact will also not be tolerated.
  - Discrimination by NICA community members is not tolerated. NICA prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type with regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.
- Address all concerns brought to your attention. If you see or hear something that in any way compromises the safety of our community, or is not aligned with NICA expectations, it is your job to intervene (within your ability) and inform your team leadership, league leadership or Human Resource Director at NICA.
- When coaches are acting in their roles as coaches, and have decision-making and or supervision responsibilities for student-athletes, they may not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This holds for league and event staff and volunteers when they are acting in their roles with decision-making and or supervision responsibilities for student-athletes.
- Operate within your NICA training and experience, and provide NICA-approved activities.
- Use your best judgment. If you have concerns that a task, project or activity you are working on is dangerous, or is not going to meet the agreed-upon objectives, tell the person in charge.
- Be supportive. If a fellow NICA community member is struggling, support them. If you are unable, tell the person in charge that assistance is needed.
- Be transparent. If you have a concern, share it with the person in charge. If the person in charge is the person with whom you have a concern, share it with your league director.
- Support each individual in their leadership role.
- Work as a team. Present a cohesive environment to the student-athletes, their families and the broader NICA community.
- Communicate intentionally. Be open to giving and receiving feedback.
- Be clear and consistent with student-athletes and guardians in defining when and where a NICA activity starts and ends.
- When leading or promoting an activity not associated with NICA, be sure to clearly communicate the activity is not a NICA activity.

## APPLICABILITY OF RULES

The codes of conduct and all rules in this handbook should be observed at all times when participating in all manner of NICA activities or any occasion where NICA is represented.

The interpretation and application of the policies set forth in this handbook will be made at the league's discretion by representatives of the league. This discretion may not be abused or applied unfairly, however the facts of individual cases may differ and NICA and its leagues acknowledge that the specific facts of individual cases are likely to require the use of discretion.

Appeals must first be exhausted within the league through the appeal process provided, if any, and only then will the National Rules Committee consider the appeal of a league's final application of the rules.

Consequences issued are cumulative and in effect for the entire season for violations of a Code of Conduct or a rule, unless otherwise specified in official communication. Repeated infractions will result in the next level of consequences.

All student-athletes who participate in any of the events associated with NICA and the league including, without limitation, races, training rides, clinics, camps, and practice skill sessions, do so at their own risk. Whether or not you are registered with the league, no liability shall be attached to NICA, the league or any of its officials, coaches, parents, and participants with respect to any loss or injury sustained or caused by anyone participating in these events.

By participating in a race or camp conducted by NICA or the league, a student-athlete, or a parent or legal guardian who permits a minor to participate, acknowledges understanding and acceptance of the regulations covering the event.

## CODE OF CONDUCT OR RULE VIOLATION CONSEQUENCE LEVELS

As a youth development organization, NICA's primary aim is to educate community members while upholding behavioral and safety standards.

If a situation arises that is beyond the capabilities of a head coach or team director to manage, they should reach out to league staff for assistance.

NICA relies on coaches, team directors, parents and other adults as primary educators of student-athletes to model and uphold the standards of safety, etiquette, and trail use. League directors will apply consequences to a student-athlete, individual or team based on violations. Consequences will be given to student-athletes, individuals and/or teams for violations by student-athletes, coaches, family members, spectators or any other participants.

Standard consequences: Unless otherwise specified, rule violations will result in consequences at one of the four following levels: **yellow**, **orange**, **red**, or **purple**. League staff or designated race officials will enforce consequences.

**YELLOW →**

**ORANGE →**

**RED →**

**PURPLE**

## CONSEQUENCE LEVELS

### YELLOW

#### Warning

For behavior directly contradicting NICA vision, mission, values, policies, standards, rules, codes of conduct, and training that define the NICA culture. Multiple infractions at this level may result in more severe consequences. Warnings are in effect for the duration of the season.

*An orange level consequence will be assessed if a behavior is repeated or determined to be intentional or egregious.*

### ORANGE

#### 5-minute race penalty

Infractions that occur during a NICA sanctioned race-related event by a racing student athlete.

#### D1 100/D2 50 Point Team Race Penalty

Infractions that occur during a NICA sanctioned race event by a non-athlete.

#### One-day Suspension

For behaviors that pose a significant risk to the safety of the individual or another participant and/or more severe behaviors that contradict the NICA vision, mission, values, policies, standards, rules, codes of conduct, and training that define the NICA culture.

*A red level consequence will be assessed if a behavior is repeated or determined to be intentional or egregious.*

### RED

#### Suspension

For behaviors that pose a significant risk to the safety of the individual or another participant and/or more severe behaviors that contradict the NICA vision, mission, values, policies, standards, rules, codes of conduct, and training that define the NICA culture.

#### Team suspension

Teams in violation of these rules may not host team practices or participate in league events.

#### Race disqualification

Infractions that occur during a NICA sanctioned race event. Penalties will be enforced by race officials or other league staff.

*An expulsion from the league will be assessed if a behavior is repeated or determined to be intentional or egregious.*

### PURPLE

#### Expulsion

*The NICA expulsion process is for serious offences and supports NICA league leadership in maintaining the NICA vision, mission, values, policies, standards, rules, codes of conduct, and training that define NICA culture.*



# Chapter 1: Community Conduct

## RULE 1.1 — Positive sporting behavior and attitude

### YELLOW

1.1.A — Everyone is expected to display an excellent sporting attitude and should treat all others with respect. Fair play and respectful, kind, supportive behavior is expected of everyone. Profanity in any situation is not acceptable.

1.1.B — Everyone must show respect for and deference to the person and the decisions of the league officials as it relates to sporting behavior. League officials have total discretion for the implementation of the rules and consequences.

1.1.C — Adults are role models and must demonstrate a fair and calm response in the face of protests, complaints, conflicts, or emergencies. Adults are expected to be focused on helping student-athletes develop positive character traits, learn life lessons, and grow into healthy young adults.

## RULE 1.2 — Leave No Trace

### YELLOW

1.2.A — Everyone is required to practice low-impact cycling, recognizing that there are different types of soils and trail construction. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage. When the trail bed is soft, consider other riding options. Ride it, don't slide or skid. Ride through mud puddles, not around them widening the trail. Stay on existing trails and do not create new ones. Don't cut switchbacks or otherwise modify the existing trail.

1.2.B — No littering or leaving trash behind. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.

## RULE 1.3 — Prohibited substances: B-list

### YELLOW

Student athletes cannot use or be supplied with performance-enhancing supplements, including but not limited to caffeine, guarana root and taurine.

In addition to the A-List substances, NICA advises against performance-enhancing supplements, citing potential dangers even when taken as directed. These risks include unhealthy side effects, harmful interactions with medications, inaccurate labeling, and minimal benefits for young athletes. Instead, student-athletes are encouraged to focus on nutritious, minimally processed foods, to stay hydrated, to get adequate sleep, and prioritize training and conditioning. If supplements are necessary, they should only be taken under the guidance of a doctor or dietitian to address specific nutritional deficiencies.

## RULE 1.4 — Drone policy

### ORANGE

In an effort to maintain the safety of athletes and spectators, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), also known as drones, may only be flown at races with the written permission of the league director. Unmanned aircraft are excluded from NICA's liability policy. Operators must carry their own liability policies.

## RULE 1.5 — Prohibited substances: A-list

RED

Student-athletes are prohibited from using performance enhancing or otherwise illegal substances as detailed below:

1. **USADA Rules:** Student-athletes are subject to all U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) rules pertaining to anti-doping. The use of performance enhancing substances, as listed by USADA, will result in the immediate disqualification from one (1) full season or the equivalent number of races spanning two (2) seasons. A list of banned substances is available at the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency website — click on the Substances link at [www.usada.org](http://www.usada.org) to find the current Prohibited List. Although it is already included in the banned substances identified by the USADA, for the sake of clarity, NICA emphasizes here that any product containing THC regardless of the means of consumption, is strictly prohibited.
2. **Tobacco:** Tobacco use by any means, including vaping or e-cigs, is not permitted. Only those students who provide evidence that they have enrolled in a stop-smoking (or chewing) class may continue to use tobacco during participation. Such student-athletes must provide proof to their coach of participation and when they have completed the class, and refrain from use in the future to avoid consequences for violating this rule.
3. **Alcohol and Drug Use:** Alcohol and drug use by any means are prohibited. At the league's discretion, NICA recommends the following structure of consequences to violation of this rule.
  - a. First violation: The student-athlete will lose eligibility for one (1) race. The student-athlete must continue to attend and participate in regular practice with his/her team in order to remain eligible for future participation and must attend a minimum of six (6) educational group sessions regarding alcohol and drug abuse.
  - b. Second violation: The student-athlete will lose eligibility for an additional three (3) races. The student-athlete must continue to attend and participate in regular practice with his/her team in order to remain eligible for future participation and must attend an additional minimum of six (6) educational group sessions regarding alcohol and drug abuse.
  - c. Third and subsequent violation: The student-athlete will lose eligibility for participation for an additional six (6) races for each subsequent violation. If the student becomes a participant in an alcohol and/or drug treatment program on their own volition, the student-athlete may be eligible for participation after a minimum of six (6) weeks.

## RULE 1.6 — Legal mountain biking trails only & application of rules outside of race events

RED

As representatives of NICA, the league, and our sport, student-athletes and coaches must ride only on authorized trails. This rule applies at all times. It is the responsibility of student-athletes and coaches to know which trails are legal for bikes. Building unauthorized trails or adding unauthorized features, such as berms or jumps, is also unacceptable and carries the same consequences.

## RULE 1.7 — Abusive behavior not tolerated

RED

No one may inappropriately or unwelcomingly touch another person, or cause physical harm to, or engage in any behavior that may be considered abuse, assault, or battery to any person connected with or attending any NICA or league event. An assault is an unlawful attempt, coupled with the present ability, to commit a violent injury on the person of another. Battery is defined as an unlawful application of force directly or indirectly upon another person or their personal belongings, causing bodily injury or offensive contact. Unsafe riding practices including swerving, suddenly stopping, willfully crashing into another rider, grabbing another person, hitting, or pushing another person may be abusive behavior, or possibly assault and battery.

## RULE 1.8 — Social media policy

### RED

As a youth sport and youth development organization, NICA expects communication, online and otherwise, to be done in a manner aligned with our core values of fun, inclusivity, equity, respect and community. The content and intent of all electronic communications and social media must adhere to NICA's codes of conduct and policies, especially those limiting 1:1 interactions between coaches and student-athletes.

We recognize the benefits of social media in connecting and communicating with others within the greater mountain biking community. Social media are forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

- a. The use of any social media network and postings, displays or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws as well as the requirements contained within this handbook.
- b. All electronic communication between coaches and student-athletes must be Transparent, Accessible and Professional.
  - i. All electronic communication between coaches and student-athletes should be transparent. Communication must not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendos and expectations.
  - ii. All electronic communication between coaches and student-athletes is considered a matter of record and part of the team, league or NICA's records. Always include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.
  - iii. All electronic communications between a coach and student-athlete must be conducted professionally as a representative of the team, league and NICA. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards of integrity.
- c. Disparaging, threatening, harmful or offensive behavior on social media is not tolerated by coaches, student-athletes, parents or any other person associated with the league.
- d. Cyberbullying means using the internet, a cell phone or another device to send or post text, video or an image with the intent or knowledge, or with reckless disregard, that the text, video or image will hurt, embarrass or threaten an individual, regardless of whether the individual directed, consented to or acquiesced in the conduct or voluntarily accessed the electronic communication. Cyberbullying is expressly prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action by the league.
- e. While use of social media in the NICA community is permitted, no student-athlete or coach shall be required to open or maintain a social media account or otherwise use social media to participate in the NICA community, on their team, or in any specific NICA activity or event.

## RULE 1.9 — Sexual harassment policy

### PURPLE

1.9.A — NICA and the leagues strictly prohibit sexual harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes harassment of a person of the same sex or based on gender. Sexual harassment includes: unwanted sexual advances or visual conduct such as leering, making sexual gestures, displaying of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; verbal conduct such as making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs and jokes, verbal sexual advances or propositions; and physical conduct such as touching or blocking movements.

1.9.B — If any student-athlete believes they have been sexually harassed by league staff, coach, NICA employee, or another student-athlete should promptly report the facts of the alleged incident(s) and the name of the individual involved to any adult or league representative or other party with whom they feel comfortable. The initiation of an allegation of sexual harassment by a student-athlete will not adversely affect matters pertaining to their status in any league program or activity.

1.9.C — If any student, coach, parent, volunteer, or employee feels they have been sexually harassed at a NICA or league event, they should report the incident immediately to their league director or NICA director. If any student, coach, parent, volunteer, or

employee feels they have been a victim of abuse, assault, or battery at a league event, they should report the incident immediately to their league director or NICA director. All reports will be handled in a confidential manner.

#### RULE 1.10 — Crime-related revocation of attendance privilege

##### PURPLE

Individuals with a pending charge or adjudication equivalent to conviction, for charges of sexual crimes against children or human trafficking charges may not participate in any NICA team or league activities.

#### RULE 1.11 — Weapons

##### PURPLE

Firearms or other weapons are expressly prohibited at all NICA events or activities, except by duly authorized law enforcement officers.

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## Chapter 2: Eligibility and Participation

#### RULE 2.1 — Student-athlete eligibility

##### ORANGE

2.1.A — League registration must be open to all students who attend public or private school, or who are homeschooled for high school (grades 9–12) and middle school (grades 6–8), within the league’s region.

2.1.B — Proof of school attendance may be requested for a student-athlete at any time. This proof may be in the form of a school ID, a report card, or some other form of proof.

2.1.C — Student age and grade

To be eligible to compete in either a spring or fall school-year season, a student-athlete must:

1. Be enrolled in grades 6–12, or the homeschool equivalent, and not be younger than 10 or older than 19 years of age at any time during the entire school year.
2. Not have a high school diploma, general education diploma (GED), or otherwise be graduated from high school.
3. Students older than 19 years of age who are still enrolled in high school in a school-based transition program and receive special education services must consult with league directors regarding eligibility.

Student-athletes who have skipped or been held back:

1. a single grade are placed into categories according to their current grade; or
2. more than one grade must consult with the league director regarding placement into the appropriate categories.

2.1.D — Placement of homeschooled students

Homeschooled student-athletes will be placed in categories corresponding to the grade level they would otherwise be enrolled in for public school based on their ages. The league director must consider such age-based placement in the event homeschooled student-athletes seek alternative placement under the Category Placement Standards adopted by the league.

2.1.E — College class enrollment

Student-athletes enrolled or otherwise taking classes in a college remain eligible to compete so long as they are enrolled or taking classes at the college as middle or high school students and not as college students.

## RULE 2.2 — Student-athlete registration requirements

### ORANGE

2.2.A — Student-athletes must register with the league. Registration is conducted online through the NICA Pit Zone. Student-athletes must sign and submit the following registration forms and complete the following requirements:

1. Pay applicable registration fees or apply granted financial assistance
2. Signed Agreement to Participate/Release of Liability
3. Signed Medical Form
4. Signed Media Form
5. Signed Code of Conduct Form

2.2.B — The Code of Conduct form must be agreed to and signed by the student-athlete regardless of their age, along with their guardian if the student is a minor. All other forms must be signed by a legal guardian unless the student-athlete is at least eighteen (18) years old or older. The forms will contain language indicating that parents or legal guardians who permit a minor to participate in league races or camps, acknowledge, understand and accept the rules and regulations covering the event and agree to the terms of the league's release form which shall be binding even when no proper entry form for a student has been signed and submitted.

## RULE 2.3 — Coach requirements

### ORANGE

2.3.A — All coaches must register with the league in order to participate and be covered by league insurance. This registration for coaches at all levels carries a membership fee. Coaches are not fully insured until they are licensed (Level 1 license at minimum). Registration is conducted online through the NICA Pit Zone.

2.3.B — All adults participating in team rides must be at least 18 years of age, have a NICA coach license and undergo an annual background check. Adults who switch leagues will need to repeat the background check before participation in the new league.

2.3.C — All participating teams are required to have a fully licensed coach present at all events. Coaches have a duty of care to their student-athletes at every event. This duty of care begins at the time designated by the team for the students to arrive and it ends at the conclusion of the event. The head coach, or someone acting as interim head coach, must remain at the venue until the last student-athlete from their team has departed, except in the case that any remaining student is in the care of a parent or legal guardian.

2.3.D. — Alumni who have graduated high school but will not turn 18 before the first league event may apply to be a Coach-in-Training (CIT). All requests to become a Coach-in-training must start with the team's head coach.

2.3.E — Teams must have a Head Coach or Team Director that holds at least a Level 1 license in the first year, Level 2 in the second year and Level 3 in the third year of the team.

2.3.F — During NICA trail rides, teams must maintain a student athlete to coach ratio of 8:2 or 6:1. At least one coach in the group must be a Level 2 or 3 NICA licensed coach.

## RULE 2.4 — Team training limits and preseason

### ORANGE

2.4.A — League teams and clubs are limited to the number of weeks during which they can participate in, and conduct the allowable activities described below. Insurance coverage is not provided for any activities outside of these time limits and these limits create a supportive environment and reduce exposure to physical risk and burnout.

2.4.B — Any NICA coach working with student-athletes during their off-season that is not sanctioned/insured under another organization may risk the eligibility of the coach, rider, and team to compete in NICA races.

2.4.C — Each year is divided into a pre-season, a regular season, and an off-season.

#### 2.4.C.1 — Preseason

1. Start date — Limited pre-season activities may commence April 1
2. Allowable activities — The team, club, and coaches must be registered with NICA to participate in, and conduct activities. Only the following pre-season activities are permitted and must be pre-approved by the league Director:
  - a. Team Meetings
  - b. Bike checks, equipment inspections, and bike fit;
  - c. Mechanical workshops;
  - d. All-inclusive fun rides; and
  - e. Skills clinics
  - f. Trail maintenance
3. Activities Limit — The maximum number of preseason activities is six (6)

#### 2.4.C.2 — Regular season

1. Start date — Regular training, to include up to 4 practices per week, may commence July 1
2. Racing limits — Teams and clubs may participate in races only during the regular season. NICA insurance coverage covers only NICA-sanctioned events and practices. Participation in events outside of NICA is not covered by NICA insurance.
3. Allowable activities — The team, club, and coaches must be registered with NICA to participate in, and conduct activities including meetings, team practice, rides, team skills clinics, basic trail maintenance/upkeep and NICA-sanctioned league events. NICA teams may not participate as a NICA team in non-NICA activities at any time. If coaches and student-athletes participate as a team at non-NICA events, it must be done under a separately organized, insured, and named team.
4. End of season — No team rides, or any other team activities, may take place following the 14th consecutive day after the final league race/event of the season. Any exceptions must be approved and allowed by the league director.

#### 2.4.C.3 — Offseason

The off-season is defined as the time outside of the official preseason and regular season periods. Organized NICA team rides and races are strictly prohibited during the off-season and are not covered by NICA insurance.

NICA respects off-season non-league related activities. However, all off-season coaching and activities must be done under a separately organized, insured, and named team. Participation in this team and off-season activities cannot be a requirement to participate in NICA. Teams found to be racing and operating as NICA teams during the off-season will be ineligible to participate in the league the following season.



## RULE 2.5 — Team registration and insurance

### ORANGE

2.5.A — All teams must register annually with the league at least two (2) weeks before the opening race. Teams must not conduct any practices without registering and obtaining insurance through the league.

2.5.B — NICA Insurance coverage applies only to NICA sanctioned events and team practices during the preseason and regular season. Participation in any events outside of NICA is not covered under NICA Insurance.

## RULE 2.6 — Student placement and team composition

### ORANGE

#### TEAM TYPES

2.6.A — **School Teams:** Composed of full-time students from the same public or private high school or middle school. Only one team may represent a school.

- High school only teams
- High school teams may roster student athletes from all feeder middle schools.
  - Middle schoolers must be rostered to the team based on the high school they plan to eventually attend, which may be part of a school or composite team, or rostered as a middle school only team. Once they are in high school, they must roster to the team for the high school they attend, even if it is different from their middle school team.
- Middle school only teams

School teams are not required to be officially or otherwise formally affiliated as a sports team with the school in which its members are enrolled. A school team must include the name of the school in their team name.

- School teams are defined by the school's enrollment area and may be one of the following, in no particular order
  - School aligned team - Separate entity outside of the school's purview
  - School club team - Recognized club as defined by the school
  - School sport team - Part of the athletic department
  - Homeschool Team - A group of homeschool students from a defined geographic area

Teams are responsible for obtaining permission from schools related to the team's use of school names, colors, mascots, logos, and other identifying school-related imagery or graphics.

Homeschool students join teams according to the location of the school they would attend if not homeschooled.

Student-athletes must join and compete with their school's team if one exists. They cannot compete for another team or as independent riders.

Teams can combine resources and training activities but separate school teams must be scored separately and wear separate jerseys.

2.6.B — **Composite Teams:** Composed of full-time students from multiple schools or homeschool athletes from the area. Composite teams may not overlap in geographical area nor can two composites draw student-athletes from the same schools.

A composite team must be approved by the league director prior to team registration for the season. Composite teams are constrained based on the number of potential student athletes, geographic size, and travel times. Composite teams must include "composite" and its geographic identifier in the team name.

The composite team formation must include the following:

- Proposed geographical area for its student-athletes bounded by school district lines
- List of public school and private schools in the geographic area
- The names of the team director and head coach

2.6.C — **Independent study or virtual students**

Independent study or virtual students must contact the league director with the details of their individual circumstances to determine their team placement.

### COMPOSITE TEAM EXPANSION

2.6.E — A single composite team may be composed of subdivided teams. Each subdivided team shall be scored independently. The league director will annually review each composite team's composition and must approve the expansion of teams that previously comprised a single composite team.

Composite team subdivision rules:

- The league director must approve the subdivided teams proposed by a single composite team
- If twelve (12) or more student-athletes are from the same school then they must be subdivided into a separate team the following year and scored as representatives of that school.
- If a composite team has thirty (30) or more student-athletes, high school and middle school, then the team will work on subdividing the team in the subsequent season prior to the opening of team registration. .

Composite teams may not be subdivided based on the experience and ability of the student-athletes. Doing so violates the policies that permit composite teams and creates an unfair advantage by avoiding the geographical limitations that apply to other teams.

### SAME-SEX SCHOOL TEAM ASSOCIATIONS

2.6.F — A same-sex school team ("all boys" or "all girls") may petition to be scored with an opposite-sex school team or a group of riders from that school. This association is for scoring only and does not create a composite team. The combined team competes in the division as it would be as a single school team. Approval from the league director is required before the season starts, and the association remains in place for the entire season.

### TEAM RECRUITING AND MID-SEASON TRANSFERS

2.6.G — Team efforts to recruit riders from other teams is not allowed. A student-athlete who transfers teams must meet all requirements to compete as a member of the new team.

- Individual points will transfer with the student-athlete.
- The prior team shall retain all points earned by the student-athlete before the transfer for determining team standings.
- The new team will accumulate points scored by the student-athlete after the transfer for determining team standings.

## RULE 2.7 — Inter-league participation

### ORANGE

League Directors are not required to allow inter-league participation or out-of-region student participation, however if they elect to do so, the standards for such participation must be consistently and fairly applied to all athletes seeking such participation.

1. Student-athletes must re-register in the NICA Pit Zone and be practice ready in the new league before they participate in team practices. This includes paying all applicable fees again.
2. Student-athletes may not compete in two different leagues in one calendar year. Some leagues do allow guest student-athletes to participate in one race. Guest student-athletes are not included in league scoring. Missouri does not permit guest student athletes at race events.

Student-athletes and teams located in a state that has a NICA league and or other youth cycling program may only participate in another NICA league's events and races upon agreement between the leagues' directors. Such agreements must be reviewed and approved annually by the directors. In reaching such an agreement, the league directors must consider (a) which league's race series is closest to the students and teams seeking to participate in the other league, (b) policies of inclusivity for all student-athletes and (c) policies of league development such that all student-athletes and teams can reasonably participate in events and races within the leagues in which they are located. Such an inter-league agreement must include, at a minimum, that the student-athletes and teams:

1. Declare that they are committed to participating and scoring exclusively in the other league's race series;
2. Be scored and registered in the league in which they have declared their participation; and
3. Participate in only one season, either spring or fall, per academic year and are subject to the team training limits and race season limitations.

At the league director's discretion, student-athletes and teams located outside of the league's region and in a state where there is no NICA league may be allowed to participate in league events and races.

## RULE 2.8 — Non-discrimination in participation standards

### ORANGE

2.8.A — NICA recognizes the value of participation in NICA and league events for all student-athletes. NICA prohibits all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on a student-athlete's race, religion, actual or perceived sex and gender.

2.8.B — Student-athletes may participate in NICA activities and competitions in alignment with their gender identity. If a student-athlete chooses to participate in a category different than their sex assigned at birth, they will be scored separately within that category. Scoring is at the discretion of the League Director, who must be notified of the student-athlete's category selection before the season begins.

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# Chapter 3: Bike Safety

## RULE 3.1 — Footwear

### YELLOW

Student-athletes must wear footwear that is fully enclosed and fastened with either straps, buckles, or laces.

## RULE 3.2 — Controlled riding

### YELLOW

Everyone must practice safe riding techniques and be in control of their bicycles at all times. Riding out of control or with excessive speed is not tolerated. Having a reckless attitude or taking dangerous risks is not tolerated. A dangerous risk is defined as willingly attempting anything that is beyond one's ability to control the bike or puts someone else in danger.

## RULE 3.3 — Pass with class

### YELLOW

3.3.A — Passing in a manner that compromises the safety of other riders is not tolerated.

3.3.B — Riders must not pass during portions of narrow technical or downhill singletrack which are deemed unsafe for passing.

When passing a rider, the passing rider must...

- ...say "passing on your right" or "passing on your left" to indicate which side of the rider the passer will be passing on

- ...do so only when safe and without contact
- ...be acknowledged by the rider being passed

The rider being passed must...

- ...acknowledge the pass
- ...move over as soon as it is safe to do so
- ...not intentionally block the trail when another student-athlete is attempting to pass

3.3.C — Intentional blocking or contact is prohibited. In the event two racers are vying for position, the leading racer does not have to yield to the challenging racer. However, a racer may not interfere or impede another racer's progress.

3.3.D. People walking while pushing their bike must stay on the least-rideable portion of the trail.

## RULE 3.4 — Helmets

### ORANGE

3.4.A — Everyone must wear approved helmets when sitting on or riding a bike. Helmets must also be worn when walking or running on the course with a bike due to a mechanical problem.

3.4.B — Helmets should be the correct size with little to no side-to-side or front-to-back movement.

3.4.C — Helmet straps must be adjusted to the extent that two fingers can be pushed under the strap.

3.4.D — Helmets should not have any cracks or dents from previous falls or mishandling.

3.4.E — Approved Helmets must meet one of the following standards:

1. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard for bicycle helmets.
2. Snell Memorial Foundation Standard "B" or "N" series.
3. American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard F-1447.
4. European Committee for Standardization (CE EN1078) standard for bicycle helmets.

*\*Helmet rules are not applicable to riders warming up on bikes that are securely mounted to stationary trainers.*

## RULE 3.5 — Bike requirements

### ORANGE

3.5.A — Everyone must ride and compete using mountain bikes that have 26- to 29-inch wheels\* with tires, not narrower than 1.75 inches.

3.5.B — Tires must have knobbies; slick tires are not permitted.

3.5.C — Bikes must have multiple gears; no single speed bikes.

3.5.D — Bikes must have fully operational front and rear brakes.

3.5.E — Handlebar end plugs and stem caps are required.

3.5.F — Bar ends (forward pointing handle grip extensions) may not be used.

3.5.G — No road, cyclocross, or mountain bikes equipped with drop bars.

3.5.H — E-bikes can be used by coaches, only if allowed by the trail system. Student-athletes must have league director permission to race on an e-bike and only if allowed by the trail system.

*\*If a student-athlete is unable to ride a mountain bike with 26- to 29-inch wheels due to their height or other limitations, competing on a 24 inch wheel mountain bike is permitted.*

### RULE 3.6 — Riding while distracted

ORANGE

Riding with any headphones or other portable musical devices is prohibited. Headphones are permitted while riding a stationary trainer.

### RULE 3.7 — Concussion and return-to-play

ORANGE

NICA requires adherence to, at a minimum, the return-to-play policies and procedures for student-athletes who have suffered concussions advocated by the US Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Applicable state laws and its applicable state interscholastic federation or association return-to-play management protocols and procedures for a student-athlete who has sustained a concussion or head injury will be followed.

**NICA's concussion protocols are designed to comply with the Missouri "Interscholastic Youth Sports Brain Injury Prevention Act"**

1. Immediate removal from activity: An athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a league activity, or who is suffering the effects of a concussion sustained outside of league activity, shall be immediately removed from the activity for no less than twenty four hours.
2. Medical evaluation required: After being removed from the activity, the athlete shall not be permitted to return to the activity until he or she is evaluated by a licensed healthcare provider.

Clearance required: The athlete shall not be permitted to return to the activity until he or she receives written clearance to return to the activity from a licensed healthcare provider.

Seven-day minimum graduated observation period: If the licensed health care provider determines that the athlete sustained a concussion or a head injury, the athlete shall also complete a minimum graduated return-to-play protocol under the supervision of a licensed health care provider.

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## Chapter 4: Event Rules

### RULE 4.1 — Walking the bike

YELLOW

Everyone must walk their bikes in designated areas.

### RULE 4.2 — Team apparel

YELLOW

4.2.A — Teams must have an official and distinct team jersey, t-shirt, or top.

4.2.B — Student athletes must wear their official team jersey while participating in NICA events

### RULE 4.3 — Assigned plates

#### YELLOW

4.3.A — Student-athletes must securely affix their assigned plate to their bikes for the entirety of all league events.

4.3.B — If the plate comes off of the bike while racing and it is possible to safely do so, student-athletes must move their bike off the trail, walk the trail to retrieve the plate, and keep it on their person for the remainder of their race. If the student-athlete cannot safely retrieve the plate, the lost plate must be reported to the next race official.

### RULE 4.4 — Listen to pre-race announcements

#### YELLOW

Student-athletes must be present and attentive during pre-race announcements. Student-athletes that are being disruptive and/or talking over the announcements may be relegated to the back of the group.

### RULE 4.5 — Staging race starts

#### YELLOW

4.5.A — Student-athletes must adhere to the following rules when lining up at the start line for the start of a race:

1. Student athletes must not loiter in the staging area until staging for their race begins.
2. Student athletes must enter the staging area at the designated entrance.
3. Student-athletes may not change or trade the starting position they were given.

#### ORANGE

4.5.B — Adults are expected to support the staging rules.

### RULE 4.6 — Start line etiquette

#### YELLOW

Student-athletes must have at least one foot on the ground when staged for a start and until the race begins.

### RULE 4.7 — Repair bikes off the trail

#### YELLOW

In the case of a broken bicycle or other mishap, clear the trail and do not block other riders.



## RULE 4.8 — Finish line etiquette

### YELLOW

Student-athletes must have both wheels on the ground and at least one hand on the bars as they ride through the finish line area when racing.

## RULE 4.9 — Podium Etiquette

### YELLOW

4.9.A — Student-athletes receiving medals must wear a team jersey or other branded team clothing item (e.g. shirt, jacket or sweatshirt) during the podium ceremony.

4.9B — Riders may not bring their bikes or other equipment with them to podiums when accepting awards at the podium ceremony.

## RULE 4.10 — Pre-ride during designated times only

### ORANGE

4.10.A — Everyone must abide by the league race pre-ride instructions.

4.10.B — Pre-rides must be confined to the times designated by the league. Coaches and student-athletes must begin and end their pre-ride within the time allowed that day.

4.10.C — Pre-rides that are conducted prior to race weekend must comply with the rules and regulations regarding trail use at the venue.

4.10.D — Student-athletes must pre-ride with a level 2 or level 3 coach.

## RULE 4.11 — Racers and coaches only on the course

### ORANGE

Only registered student-athletes and their licensed team coaches may ride the race course during designated times during the event weekend. No coach is permitted to ride or otherwise be on the course during a race.

## RULE 4.12 — Spectator etiquette

### ORANGE

For purposes of safety and fairness to the participants, the following rules must be observed by all persons in attendance,

1. No walking, running, or riding on the course.
2. No running or riding alongside the course or alongside a student athlete while they are racing.
3. No providing food, water, or support outside of the feed zones.
4. Spectators must not interfere with racers in any way.

#### **RULE 4.13 — Modification of the course prohibited**

**ORANGE**

Intentionally adding obstacles or removing obstacles deemed by officials to be part of the race course is prohibited.

#### **RULE 4.14 — Riding the course backwards prohibited**

**ORANGE**

Everyone must ride in the designated direction of the course. If anyone must backtrack, they must walk with their bikes.

#### **RULE 4.15 — Bring your bike**

**ORANGE**

Student-athletes must not progress on the race course unaccompanied by a bike. In the case of an inoperable bike, student-athletes may progress along the course with their bike. They must not obstruct the progress of other racers.

#### **RULE 4.16 — Switching bikes and wheels**

**ORANGE**

Student-athletes must complete the entire race on the same bicycle upon which the race was begun. A 10-minute penalty applies for switching bicycles in a race.

Student-athletes must complete the entire race on the same set of wheels upon which the race was begun. A 10-minute penalty applies for switching a wheel (defined as a pre-assembled wheel with a hub, rim and spokes) in a race.

#### **RULE 4.17 — Deviation from course**

**ORANGE**

4.17.A — Racers must not deviate from the edge of the trails (as defined either by ribbons or an obvious change in surface or foliage characteristics) by more than three (3) feet.

4.17.B — When the trail is clearly on one side of a pole, tree, or other obstacle, the racer must pass that feature on the trail side of the feature.

#### **RULE 4.18 — Leaving the course**

**ORANGE**

4.18.A — A racer may not leave the prescribed course unless ordered or permitted to do so by public authorities or a race official. In the case of mechanical problems, racers shall walk along the course to the finish line or use an approved shortcut to return to the finish line and report their DNF status to the timing official. In the case of medical emergencies, racers shall remain still and wait for a course marshal or medical help.

4.18.B — A rider that goes off-course, whether intentionally, inadvertently, or to switch or repair a bike, is not permitted to gain advantage from leaving the course and must make best efforts to re-enter the course at the same location they went off-course.

## RULE 4.19 — Penalty for outside assistance

### ORANGE

4.19.A — In the event of a mechanical issue during a race, the student athlete is expected to supply and fix the mechanical issue on their own using the supplies they have with them. If they are unable to repair or fix the issue on their own, a student may ask a course marshal, rover, or a race official for assistance. No penalty will be issued for outside assistance from a course marshal, rover, or race official for using tools or supplies carried by the athlete if the outside assistance is reported by the student athlete to a scoring official or other race official before the end of the protest period.

A penalty of 5-minutes will be issued to a student-athlete that accepts outside assistance from anyone other than those listed above and/or uses any tool(s) (multi tool, chainbreaker, air pump, etc) or supplies (chain link, tube, CO2, plug or patch, etc) provided by a rover or race official to mechanically repair their bike during a race.

**Student athletes racing in high school A categories will receive a 5 minute penalty for all forms of outside assistance.**

4.19.B — No penalty will be assessed for any prescription medical item or device (e.g., inhalers, EpiPens, etc.) given to a rider along the course or in the feed zone for safety or medical reasons.

## RULE 4.20 — Feed zone

### ORANGE

A designated feed zone must be present and easily accessible at races. The feed zone shall have a well-marked start and end.

The following rules must be followed in the Feed Zone:

1. Feeders may only hand riders food and drinks in the feed zone.
2. Feeding one student-athlete must not cause other riders to slow down or veer off course or otherwise interfere with other riders.
3. Riders bypassing the feed zone must ride on the opposite side of the course from the feed zone
4. All hand-offs must be conducted hand-to-hand only — from the hand of the feeder to the hand of the rider. No other physical contact between riders and feeders is allowed. It is not permitted for a feeder to place water bottles onto the bike or hydration packs onto riders nor may items be put into the riders' mouth or the pockets on the rider's jersey.
5. After feeding a rider, the feeder must move clear of the feed zone to allow plenty of room for other feeders.
6. Water bottles and all items must be discarded safely and within the identified area.
7. Running in the feed zone is not permitted.
8. Throwing water on riders is not permitted.
9. Clothing may only be discarded, not given, in the feed zone.
10. Feeders must wear a shirt, jacket, hat, vest, jersey, or adhesive name tag that identifies the team of the riders they are feeding.
11. If conditions such as high temperatures exist, a neutral feed zone may be provided near the halfway point of the course. The neutral feed zone will be for all student-athletes and handouts will be provided by designated race staff and/or volunteers only.

12. Each team is allowed a limited number of feeders based on the number of racers competing in the current wave:

# of Racers	# of Feeders
5 or Less	2
6 - 10	3
11-20	4
21-more	5

#### RULE 4.21 — Cutting the course

**RED**

Except in the case of injury, racers are not allowed to intentionally cut the course, ride off course, or engage in any other behavior that would indicate an intention of unfair play.

#### RULE 4.22 — Racing the wrong category

**RED**

Coaches and student-athletes are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following the category placement rules and the placement criteria. Student-athletes who race in the wrong category shall be disqualified from that race.

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## Chapter 5: Event Production Guidelines

NICA's race production, safety, and scoring standards are intended as guidance to facilitate and promote fair, safe, and challenging competition.

### SECTION 5.1 — NICA courses

NICA events follow best practices to optimize the safety and enjoyment of all participants. NICA activities are limited to off-road mountain bike activities that are intentionally inclusive to all ability levels and do not expose any participants to situations of elevated risk. Courses may consist of natural surface trails, paved bike paths, and dirt or gravel roads that are closed to vehicular traffic.

NICA courses are designed to limit maximum speed and do not include large drops, large jumps, and other features to reduce elevated risk.

### SECTION 5.2 — NICA course length

The number of laps raced in each category is determined according to riders' ability to complete the race within a specific time.

Event times are not to exceed:

- 90 minutes for high school A categories.
- 75 minutes for high school B categories.
- 45 minutes for high school C categories.
- 60 minutes for middle school A categories.
- 45 minutes for middle school B and C categories.

## SECTION 5.3 — Designated pit zone

NICA events will include designated pit zone areas where teams can set up their equipment. Leagues reserve the right to manage and restrict the flow of auto, bike, trailer, and other traffic in the pit zone area. Teams may only put up tents, tables, bike stands, mechanical stations, etc. within their designated pit zones or other areas provided by the league.

Teams will be assigned a designated area to gather and set up equipment in the Pit Zone. Assigned spaces will be approximately 20'x25' for every 12 registered athletes but may vary based on event venue space constraints. Team Pit Zone assignments with maps will be provided on the event webpage the week of the event.

No motorized vehicles are permitted in the Pit Zone. Vehicles must park in the designated parking areas identified with signs at the venue and as shown on the venue map. All vehicles must abide by the instructions of league staff and volunteers. Any violators risk penalties being assessed against their respective team (orange level penalty). Accessible parking will be available close to the Pit Zone.

If the venue layout permits it, a coach dropoff zone will be provided during Pit Zone set-up times. **Do not block the dropoff zone.** Everyone must unload equipment in the dropoff zone and immediately leave to park in the designated parking areas before returning to set up any equipment. (orange level penalty)

Everyone must walk their bikes in the Pit Zone area. (yellow level penalty)

Pets must be kept on a leash at all times during events.

Gas powered generators, grills, and fire pits are not permitted in the Pit Zone.

All vendors must receive permission in advance from the league before they are permitted to set up at a league event.

## SECTION 5.4 — Start line and first race call-ups

Start line call-ups for top placed riders takes place at all races. The following number of riders will be called up for each race start:

Races will be staged with 100% call-ups for all categories. For 7th-12th grades, the call-up order for race #1 will be determined by the series results from the previous season followed by bib number order for new racers. For 8th-12th grades, the call-up order for race #2 will be the finish order from race #1 followed by the bib number order for student athletes who did not participate in race #1. For all other races in the series, the series points total with one dropped race will be used to establish the call-up order.

For race #1, 6th graders will be randomly assigned to a start wave and staged in bib number order. After race #1, 6th graders will be assigned a race category based on their lap finish time and staged in the order of placement. All 6th and 7th grade Mighty MO jersey winners will be staged in the first position at the next race followed by the series ranking.

Student athletes must walk their bikes in the staging area. Inside the staging area, student athletes will be asked to choose their position within the row in the order in which they are called up. They may not choose a position in a later row. Racers must position themselves in the designated start lanes without overlapping the wheels of the rider in front of them. If a student athlete misses their staging time, they will be staged at the back of the category.

## SECTION 5.5 — Concussion recovery call-up accommodation

To reduce pressure on student-athletes to return to full participation and encourage lengthened healing time following a concussion, a student-athlete who has sustained a concussion may take off multiple races and when they return, maintain the same call-up position held prior to their concussion. This will impact the rider in the same call-up position and following riders by moving them back one call-up position. To be granted this accommodation, a coach or guardian of a student-athlete must submit a request in writing with an attached doctor's note no sooner than 3 days prior to the race to league officials.

## SECTION 5.6 — Air quality sensitivity call-up accommodation

To reduce pressure to race for student-athletes who are sensitive to air pollution, any student-athlete may take off any race held with an index over 100 fine particle or ground level ozone air pollution (as defined by Airquality.gov for the time and location racing) and maintain the same call-up position held previously. This will impact the rider in the same call-up position and following riders by moving them back one call-up position. To be granted this accommodation, a coach or guardian of a student-athlete must submit a

request in writing with attached AQI measurement including time and location from [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov) no sooner than 3 days prior to the race to the race director and head referee.

### **SECTION 5.7 — Student-athletes may be pulled**

Lapped riders and racers outside the last lap cutoff time limit may be pulled from the race at the finish line. At a race official's discretion, a racer may be pulled from a race at any location on the course due to circumstances that make it unsafe for the racer to proceed. Racers that are pulled out of the race must not continue and will be placed according to their position at the time they are pulled.

### **SECTION 5.8 — Time limits may be imposed**

Student athletes may be asked to withdraw at the finish line after time limits have been reached. League officials reserve the right to determine these time limits at any time. Time limits may be imposed for reasons that include, among others: safety, heat, cold, rain, muddy conditions, clearing the course, and relieving course marshals. Course closures may be announced at any time without advance notice.

League officials may also, when appropriate, opt to pull a rider who appears to be overheated, hypothermic, overly exhausted, or in any way injured, overstressed, or at risk of injury.

### **SECTION 5.9 — Race course blocked by vehicle or emergency**

In the event a race course is blocked by a vehicle or an emergency situation, all racers will stop in a single file row without changing position. Racers will remain in those positions until instructed to recommence racing.

### **SECTION 5.10 — Race finishes**

All lap and finish positions are determined by electronic timing chips (transponders).

If the electronic timing system fails to record a time or lap position for any rider, a backup system may be used at the finish line to aid the scorekeepers in determining laps completed or the finishing order of a close race. Leagues may use a manual paper backup OR league-owned video cameras. Should the paper logs or video footage from league-designated cameras be unavailable or inconclusive for any reason, the scoring of the laps or finish will be based solely on the scorekeepers' decision.

In the case of a visual tie or where a clear determination cannot be made, the riders concerned will be ranked in the order of the best lap time made during the race or awarded a tie.

### **SECTION 5.11 — League structure and categories**

Each NICA league determines the appropriate league structure to facilitate and promote fair, safe, and challenging competition based on the league's number of teams, student-athletes, and geographical circumstances.

The league will determine the criteria for placing student-athletes into categories. These criteria are based on grade level, gender, and/or ability.

- A student athlete's prior performance factors into category placement.
- Student-athletes who did not compete in the prior year and have no results are placed into the designated category
- Student-athletes who would like to petition into a different category must discuss this with their head coach, who may then submit a petition for the student-athlete.
- Head coaches must have another Level 3 coach submit a petition on behalf of their own child.
- Petitions for exceptions to the category placement criteria may be limited to certain categories.

The league will determine the category placement criteria at the beginning of each season. The category placement criteria may vary from season to season based on the league's size and categories.



Student athletes are required to compete within their season grade level. The category placement table published each season is based on the category guidelines below. The category placement table is intended to be a starting point for conversations between coaches and student athletes as they work together to select the most appropriate ability level (A, B, or C) to meet the student athlete's goals.

For 2025, all recommended categories definitions are determined by student athletes' lap time ranking from the previous season. Lap time ranking is calculated by averaging the fastest lap time from each race completed with the slowest race dropped for each grade level.

ABILITY-BASED STANDARD CATEGORIES	
HIGH SCHOOL	
11th/12th Grade Girls A	All 11th and 12th grade girls who placed in the top 60% of the 11th/12th grade girls or 10th grade girls overall lap time rankings in the prior year.
11th/12th Grade Girls B	All remaining 11th and 12th grade girls who do not qualify for A.
11th/12th Grade Boys A	11th/12th grade boys who placed in the top 40% of 11th/12th grade boys or 10th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year.
11th/12th Grade Boys B	11th/12th grade boys who placed in the top 80% of 11th/12th grade boys or 10th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year and do not qualify for A.
11th/12th Grade Boys C	All remaining 11th – 12th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.
10th Grade Girls A	10th grade girls who placed in the top 60% of the 9th grade girls overall lap time ranking in the prior year
10th Grade Girls B	All remaining 10th grade girls who do not qualify for A.
10th Grade Boys A	10th grade boys who placed in the top 40% of 9th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year.
10th Grade Boys B	10th grade boys who placed in the top 80% of 9th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year and do not qualify for A.
10th Grade Boys C	All remaining 10th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.
9th Grade Girls A	9th grade girls who placed in the top 60% of the 8th grade girls overall lap time ranking in the prior year
9th Grade Girls B	All remaining 9th grade girls who do not qualify for A.
9th Grade Boys A	9th grade boys who placed in the top 35% of 8th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year.
9th Grade Boys B	9th grade boys who placed in the top 75% of 8th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year and do not qualify for A.
9th Grade Boys C	All remaining 9th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.
MIDDLE SCHOOL	
6th Grade Girls A	6th grade girls who rank in the top 50% of 6th grade girls by lap time at race #1.
6th Grade Girls B	All remaining 6th grade girls who do not qualify for A.
6th Grade Boys A	6th grade boys who rank in the top 33% of 6th grade boys by lap time at race #1.
6th Grade Boys B	6th grade boys who rank in the middle 33% of 6th grade boys by lap time at race #1.
6th Grade Boys C	All remaining 6th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.
7th Grade Girls A	7th grade girls who placed in the top 50% of the 6th grade girls overall lap time ranking in the prior year.

7th Grade Girls B	<i>All remaining 7th grade girls who do not qualify for A.</i>
7th Grade Boys A	<i>7th grade boys who placed in the top 35% of 6th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year.</i>
7th Grade Boys B	<i>7th grade boys who placed in the top 75% of 6th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year and do not qualify for A.</i>
7th Grade Boys C	<i>All remaining 7th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.</i>
8th Grade Girls A	<i>8th grade girls who placed in the top 50% of the 7th grade girls overall lap time ranking in the prior year.</i>
8th Grade Girls B	<i>All remaining 8th grade girls who do not qualify for A.</i>
8th Grade Boys A	<i>8th grade boys who placed in the top 35% of 7th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year.</i>
8th Grade Boys B	<i>8th grade boys who placed in the top 75% of 7th grade boys by lap time ranking the prior year and do not qualify for A.</i>
8th Grade Boys C	<i>All remaining 8th grade boys who do not qualify for A or B.</i>

## SECTION 5.12 – Petitioning for a placement criteria exception

Student-athletes must compete in appropriate competitive peer groups to prevent strategic gamesmanship in category placement.

The league will not accept petitions for student athletes to compete in a grade level that differs from the one in which they are currently enrolled at school. Coach-submitted petitions to change ability categories (A,B,C) within the grade level will be accepted at any time throughout the season. Petitions must be received by Wednesday evening to apply at the race that week. Petitions received after Wednesday evening will apply to the next race in the series. Coaches are responsible for picking up race plates for the new category at the registration tent.

## Individual scoring

### SECTION 5.13 – Individual series scoring

Student-athletes compete against others in their category and are awarded points based on their placement.

All categories will have an individual race podium with medals awarded to the top five finishers. For 6th and 7th grades, a "Mighty MO" jersey will be awarded to each winner, which may be worn at ANY future middle school race at the student-athlete's discretion.

## SECTION 5.14 – Points system

All racers earn points according to the following table. Those who start but do not finish a lap receive 100 points. Racers who complete at least one lap are ranked by laps completed (descending) and then by finishing time (ascending).

Student athletes will be allowed to keep all of their series points if they transfer from C to B or from B to A. Student athletes will keep 3/5 of their points if they transfer from A to B or 2/3 of their points if they transfer from B to C.

Place	A	B	C
1	500	300	200
2	490	294	196
3	481	289	192
4	472	283	189
5	464	278	186
6	456	274	182
7	448	269	179
8	441	265	176
9	434	260	174
10	427	256	171
11	420	252	168
12	414	248	166
13	408	245	163
14	402	241	161
15	396	238	158
16	390	234	156
17	385	231	154
18	380	228	152
19	375	225	150
20	370	222	148
21	365	219	146
22	360	216	144
23	356	214	142
24	352	211	141
25	348	209	139

Place	A	B	C
26	344	206	138
27	340	204	136
28	336	202	134
29	332	199	133
30	329	197	132
31	326	196	130
32	323	194	129
33	320	192	128
34	317	190	127
35	314	188	126
36	311	187	124
37	308	185	123
38	306	184	122
39	304	182	122
40	302	181	121
41	300	180	120
42	298	179	119
43	296	178	118
44	294	176	118
45	292	175	117
46	290	174	116
47	289	173	116
48	288	173	115
49	287	172	115
50	286	172	114

## SECTION 5.15 – Overall individual series scoring

6th and 7th grade categories will not offer overall individual series scoring.

8th-12th grade categories will have a leader's jersey awarded to the current series points leader at each race event, which may be worn in the next race. In the event of a tie for the series points leader award, the student athlete with the higher placing at the most recent race will be awarded the leader's jersey and may wear it in the next race. The series points total will be calculated with one

drop race throughout the season (after the first race). Series overall individual awards for 1st-3rd place will be awarded for each 8th-12th grade category at the last race event.

## Team scoring

### SECTION 5.16 – Scoring matrix

The scoring matrix for each team is determined by their division. The league will assign each team to a division before the first race according to the number of registered high school student athletes.

- Division I consists of teams with twelve or more registered high school student-athletes. Division I scoring is based on the top eight point-earners, with a maximum of six of those point-earners scoring in either the boys’ or girls’ categories.
- Division II consists of teams with eleven or fewer registered high school student-athletes. Division II scoring is based on the top four point-earners, with a maximum of three point-earners scoring in either the boys or girls categories.

The team’s score is the highest score possible out the following boy-girl combinations:

DIVISION I TEAMS	DIVISION II TEAMS
BBBBBBGG	BBBG
BBBBBGGG	BBGG
BBBBGGGG	BGGG
BBBGGGGG	
BBGGGGGG	

Team awards will be presented to the top three scoring teams from each division at each race event. In the event of a tie for the team score, the winner will be determined based on the number of category wins at the race event in question. Should a tie remain, finishes of second, third, etc., will be tallied until the tie is broken.

### SECTION 5.17 – Overall team scoring

Overall team scoring is based on the combined team point total for all race events with the lowest single race event score dropped. Ties will go to the team with the higher score at the most recent race event.

Points bonuses may be added for team participation at adventure events. These adventure bonuses may not be used as a dropped event score.

Series overall team awards will be presented to the top three teams from each division.

### SECTION 5.18 – Race results and protest process

#### PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Preliminary race results and penalty assessments are posted at the race venue, as soon as possible after each event. The posting time shall be stated on the results and penalties sheets.

#### SUBMITTING PROTESTS

Protest forms are to be presented to the head referee or designated race official to raise rule violations and scoring issues.

- Protests to the preliminary results and opposition to penalties must be submitted by the head coach, unless the head coach is the parent in which case a different Level 3 coach from the team must submit the protest, using the forms provided to the head referee or designated race official within 15 minutes of the league determined start time
- At the League Director’s discretion, an extended protest period may be permitted after the results are posted, during which student-athletes may protest the results or oppose the assessment of penalties. Such an extended protest period must be announced along with the official results on race day, or must be announced simultaneously with the posting of the official results on the League’s website. The online posting date of the results and the protest submission deadline shall be indicated in the announcement.

## RULINGS ON PROTESTS

- After the timely protests and opposition to penalties are considered, ruled upon, and approved by the league director or the head referee, the results on race day shall be official and posted. Unless otherwise stated in a decision or ruling, such decisions and rulings made on race day regarding protests and penalties are final.
- If asked by a league official, student-athletes and coaches who are involved on either side of the dispute may submit statements within the applicable protest period. Submitting such statements after the protest period is permissible only if done at the request of league officials.
- At the discretion of the league director or head referee, the decision and ruling on a protest or opposition to a penalty may be deferred until after race day. If such a deferred decision affects the podium results for an event, medals may be awarded at a later date following resolution of the dispute
- Protests made on race day but deferred for later decision and protests submitted during an extended protest period shall be heard by the league director, head referee, or members of the league rules committee, or any one or combination thereof.

## JUDGMENT CALLS

- League officials must decide and rule upon protests despite often having little direct, firsthand information regarding the underlying incident. This is inherent to mountain biking since most of the racing takes place on the race course out of the sight of race officials. Nevertheless, every effort is made to reach the fairest and most informed decisions possible for every submitted protest.
- Student-athletes and their families and coaches are expected to understand the challenges inherent to resolving disputes, and the difficult decisions league officials must make.

Once a decision has been made on a ruling, the results are final.

# Chapter 6: Guidance for Sharing Grievances

## SECTION 6.1 — Guidance for sharing grievances

6.1A — NICA recognizes that student-athletes, parents, coaches and volunteers have the right to raise grievances about any matter related to their participation with the organization. The grievance procedure is in place to ensure that all community members are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

6.2.B — If a community member has a complaint against a member of staff, another volunteer, or the organization in general they should first discuss the issue with their head coach or team director.

6.3.C — If the complaint is against the head coach, team director or other leadership position, the matter should be taken to and discussed with the league director. If the matter cannot be resolved at this level, the complaint should be made in writing and submitted to NICA National Human Resources.

6.4.D — At this point, the aggrieved party will be notified of the issue/concern/complaint and NICA National will make every attempt to have the issue resolved within fourteen days. This and all complaints will be treated in a confidential manner.

## SECTION 6.2 — No retaliation policy

No individual who reports a suspected violation of any NICA policy, rule, standard, code of conduct, regulation pursuant to law, or is in violation of a clear mandate or public policy concerning the health, safety, welfare, or protection of the environment to a superior, whether or not the allegation turns out to be true, shall be subject to any form of retaliation, including, but not necessarily limited to, harassment, suspension, expulsion, demotion, or firing.

Let's ride!