

South Dakota Cross Country/Track & Field Officials Association (SDCCTFOA)

Newsletter, Fall 2025

Officiating Philosophy

Be Safe: Safety – for athletes, officials, coaches, fans, and media – is the number one priority. Safety is the responsibility of EVERY OFFICIAL! Be proactive in promoting safety and make sure proper safety protocols are followed. Do not be timid if you see unsafe situations or if others are not being vigilant.

Be Fair: Know the appropriate rules for the meet and the event you are officiating and apply them consistently. Don't make up rules. No athlete should be allowed to gain an unfair advantage and no athlete should have to suffer an unfair disadvantage. All athletes should be regarded as equals,

Guidelines for Hosting Cross Country Meets

The following guidelines may be recommendations for hosting Cross Country meets, and serve as a good review for the Starter/Referee prior to the meet.

- Courses should be marked with two continuous painted boundary lines. (4" line). When not possible, use a single continuous painted line. (4" line)
- Flags or cones should be placed at every major turn. Flags or cones should be set back from the painted line at least one foot.
- Course marshals should be present at each major turn to watch for violations.
- If possible, one & two mile marker flags or other markings should be marked on the course. Be sure those one & two mile marks are on maps that are shared with coaches, athletes and spectators.
- Remove large rocks, walnuts, branches and leaves from the course to assure a safe competition environment.
- Fill in holes on the course in which athletes may be injured. Mark tree roots and smaller holes with paint or cones.
- If possible, mow the grass lower where the athletes run or roll the course prior to the meet. This will allow for a safer running surface.

- Place two large cones at 100 meter mark from start line to mark the recall line for the starter.
- Starting boxes should be a width of 6' for each team. If not 6', all boxes must be the same width. The box assignments must be a random draw, not alphabetical. All boxes should be numbered for identification.
- Two flags or large cones should be placed at the ends of the start line.
- Finish Chute—Flag rope or barriers should be used in which to keep spectators away from the finish line area. The finish chute should be a minimum of 100 feet prior to the finish line and 50 feet past the finish line. This area needs to be kept cleared of spectators so the timer, medical personnel, chute workers and starter can do their jobs.
<https://assets.nfhs.org/umbraco/media/1019952/finish-corral-in-cross-country.pdf>
- Two flags or two large cones should be placed at the ends of the finish line. A finish line should be painted on the course. (2" line)
- A lead cart and a trail cart should be present at each meet. The lead cart serves as a guide to lead the athletes around the course. The lead cart should stay 40-50 feet ahead of the lead runner. The trail cart will pick up any injured athlete on the course and bring them back to the finish line area. The trail cart should stay back 30-40 feet behind the last competing athlete.
- A cart should also be available for the starter/referee to review the course prior to the meet, and to facilitate their viewing of the races.
- If the weather is extremely warm a second trail cart may be appropriate.
- A Start Line Clerk should assist the starter and get the teams into the assigned starting boxes. If used, they will check to see all athletes competing have a chip/racing bib on. They can count the number of athletes in each race and report it to the timer.
- Send the meet starter all information on the meet and box assignments prior to the meet.
- Hire a reliable timer. Ask your timer to use live results if at all possible. If not, post the site where meet results may be downloaded by coaches and spectators.
- Coaches Meeting: A coaches meeting should be held by the Starter/Referee 30 minutes prior to the first race for all Head Coaches or a representative from each school. The meeting should be short, and may include the following items
 - Collection of Medical notes
 - Location of trainer
 - Review box assignments
 - Review race times
 - Weather concerns(Heat/Cold)
 - Course markings (Double/Single line)

- Lead/Trail cart
- Mile markers
- Starting protocol
- Awards presentation information
- Remind coaches to review race results before leaving the meet
- Any concerns come to the Starter/Referee

2025 Cross Country Meet Officiating

SDHSAA cross country meets must be officiated by a SDHSAA register official. We are encouraging schools to hire a second official, but if only one is hired they serve as both the meet referee and starter. We expect the official to arrive an hour before the first race, attired in the official uniform.

It is imperative the official travel the course to ensure it is marked properly and free of unsafe conditions. To do so, make sure the school has a golf cart available for the referee for the entire meet. It is best to tour the course with an official from the host school so that any course adjustments that need to be made are observed by the host school. Check the starting area and assure there are an adequate number of starting boxes. Mark the 100 meters for recalls. Check to see the set up for the chute/corral at the finish line.

30 to 45 minutes prior to the first race, conduct a coach's meeting to cover uniforms, sportsmanship, receive physician's statements and handle other administrative duties. During the meet, at the start line, check for uniform compliance, and conduct a fair start. Be on the course during the race, particularly at locations where runners could potentially cut distance. Be sure to be at or near the finish line at the conclusion, as most violations occur near that point, and be prepared to sort out the order of finish if there is a dispute.

Uniforms:

- the uniform must be school issued or school approved
- it is legal to wear a headband – multi-colored, any width, with tails- all OK
- stocking hats and gloves may be worn if weather conditions necessitate
- arm and calf sleeves are legal and have no color or logo restrictions
- visible items worn under the uniform are considered a foundation garment with no restrictions
- all team members must wear uniforms clearly indicating they are on the same team-predominant color, school logo, and color combination.
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These Items are legal:

- inhalers can be carried by a competitor with a proper physician's statement
- medical alerts should be visible
- liquids can be passed out by a coach, teammate, parent or volunteer (should be done so as not to interfere with runners)
- a competitor may stop to assist another runner, providing there is no advantage gained—the runner receiving assistance is disqualified
- watches, with or without GPS are legal

Tim Casper has prepared an excellent outline of before, during and after the meet, which was included in your registration packet with your rule books. Make sure you spend some time going over that outline prior to every meet you work.

SDCCTFOA 2026 Clinic Topics, Dates and Locations

Beginning with the 2024 Track & Field season, a clinic or jamboree is required for SDHSAA registered track and field and cross-country officials. A new official is required to attend a clinic in their first or second year, and current officials are required to attend a clinic every three years to maintain their registered status. See Page 4 of the SDHSAA Officials Handbook.

To fulfill this requirement, SDCCTFOA will again present track & field clinics before the track season. Those clinics are in-person presentations. Regional Representatives are responsible to host the meeting for the purpose of presenting a clinic in their respective area. Track coaches and athletic directors will be invited to the clinic.

The SDCCTFOA has endeavored to present locations in various locations over the entire state to assure officials a reasonable opportunity to attend one over the three year period. Clinics have been held in Tea, Pierre, Webster, Rapid City, Yankton, Huron, Aberdeen and Murdo. This year (2026) clinics are tentatively scheduled in Mitchell, Watertown, Rapid City and Pierre, with a possibility of an additional clinic in Huron.

2026 will be the third year the SDCCTFOA has conducted clinics to fulfill this requirement. Several officials are in need of a clinic this upcoming year, or they will not be in compliance with SDHSAA requirements and will face sanctions

Clinic topics for 2026:

2026 Track and Field officiating clinic which will be held in February or early March.

Tentative Locations for 2026 SD track and field clinics:

- **Mitchell**
 - POC: Tony Waterman, 605-941-1106, twater.cups@hotmail.com
- **Watertown**
 - POC: Robert Kwasniewski, 605-265-0008, rkwas1@abe.midco.net

- **Rapid City**
 - POC: Larry Stevens, 605-877-4081, ldstevens57@outlook.com
- **Pierre and possibly Huron**
 - POC: Steve Charron, 605-354-4716, scharron123@hur.midco.net

Want to be More Involved in the Association

All you need to do is let a board member know. The only way we can grow this organization is to include more officials. No contribution is too little, so if you have an idea, concern or objection, please reach out.

Terms of office for President, President-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer and all four Regional Representatives expire in June 2026, and elections will be held for each position. If any member is interested in any of the positions, they should contact a current board member to express such interest.

New Officials

Do you know someone who may be interested in becoming a track & field and/or cross country official? We are losing officials annually, and we need to make efforts to turn that trend around. The SDHSAA is looking for new officials. Be responsible and recruit someone to succeed you when you retire. Have them contact the SDHSAA and register.

Next Newsletter & Contributions

The SDCCTFOA produces two newsletters, one during cross country and one prior to track season. Anyone with topics is encouraged to reach out to J.D. Evans, Dana Nelson or Tim Casper. We need more input and ideas, and many of you have things you may like to share. Thank you and best of luck in track & field and cross country.