



Flathead Valley Ski Education Foundation  
Employee Handbook  
2025-26

## MISSION

The Flathead Valley Ski Education Foundation (FVSEF) is dedicated to the promotion of athletic and personal excellence and discipline through educational and competitive programs in skiing and ski racing.

## VISION

To connect us to the culture and principles of the skiing generations that preceded us, to instill a lifelong love of skiing, of finding joy in the mountains and snow, and of the mastery of the sport. FVSEF participants become better skiers, better students, and better citizens - for life!

### Purpose and Values:

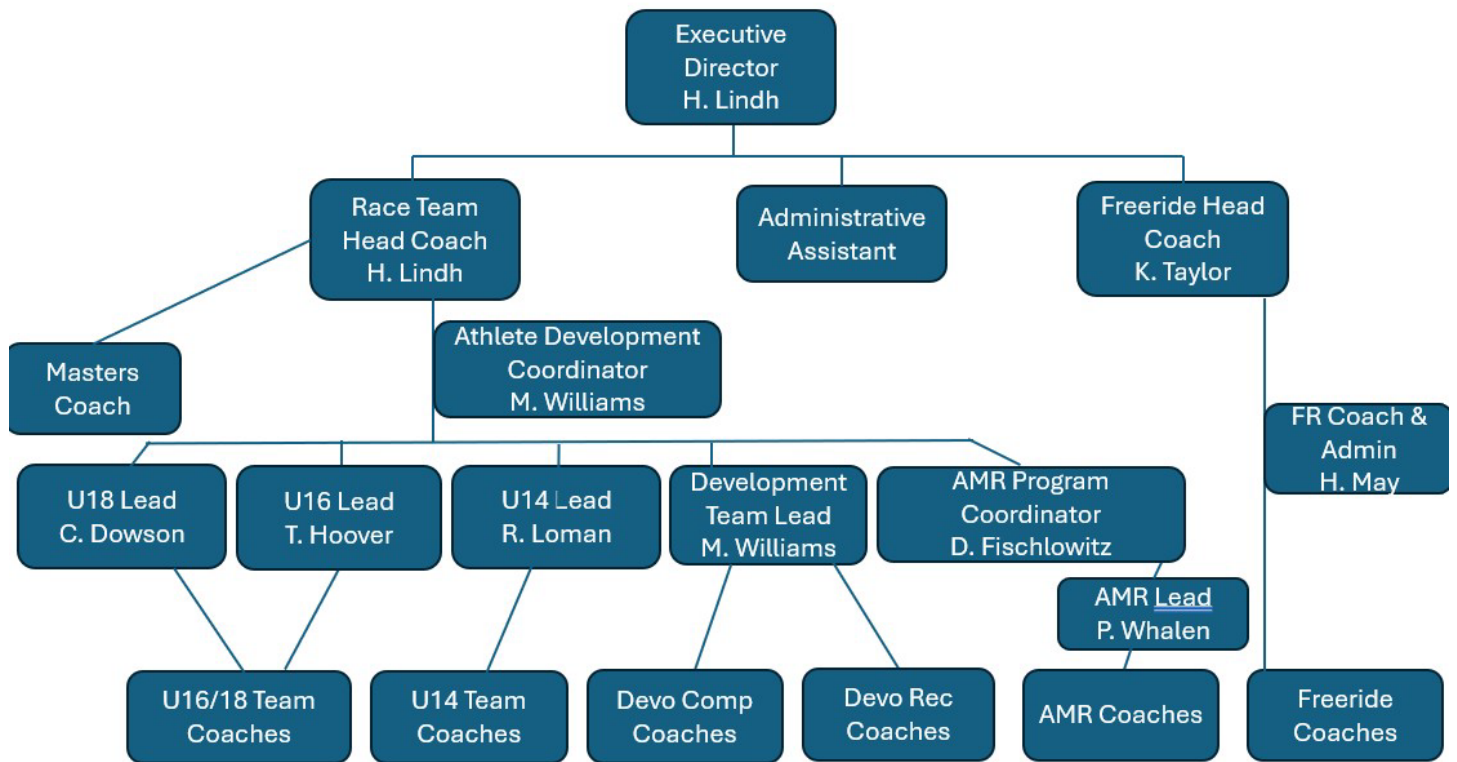
- To instill a lifelong love of skiing, to find joy in the mountains, the snow, and in **the mastery of skiing downhill fast.**
- To foster a ski community, one that welcomes, includes, and respects others who share a love of the sport and the outdoor environment.
- To inspire youth to believe they are more capable than they ever thought before, to encourage young people to be open to new experiences and new approaches to pushing their limits.

### Coaching Philosophy: FVSEF coaches strive to

- help young people push their limits and learn they are more capable than they thought.
- build confidence in young people.
- motivate young people to take ownership of their actions.
- build relationships with young people and adults.
- create a sense of belonging to a team and a community.
- encourage an outdoor and physically active lifestyle.

### Objectives:

- To provide a program with continuity and excellence for all athletes, from the youngest newcomer to the most experienced veteran.
- To provide coaches who are committed, experienced, professionally educated and USSS certified.
- To provide modern coaching techniques and tactics
- To provide coaching to all levels of competition.
- To communicate with athletes, parents, and faculty in a regular and timely manner.
- To provide on-snow and physical conditioning training plans throughout the calendar year.
- To provide a physically and emotionally healthy environment where all athletes can reach their full potential.



## SECTION I

### FVSEF GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETE SUPERVISION AND HANDLING


FVSEF is a nationally recognized organization that prides itself on setting and enforcing high standards for snow sports training and competition. These guidelines are in place to ensure a safe environment for our athletes and membership. **As a U.S. Ski & Snowboard member club, we follow SafeSport and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP). Please review U.S. Ski & Snowboard's [Athlete Safety policies](#), the [SafeSport Code](#) and the [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies](#) information and join us in sustaining a culture of safety.**

#### Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)

All employees and volunteers are required to comply with the following standards of behavior when working with athletes under 18.

1. One-on-One Interactions
  - No private, one-on-one meetings with a minor athlete.
  - All interactions must be observable and interruptible.
  - Meetings should occur in open/public spaces or with another adult present.
  - Exceptions only in emergencies or when a parent/guardian is present.
2. Electronic Communications
  - Texts, emails, and social media messages must include the athlete's parent/guardian or another adult.
  - No private or late-night communications with minor athletes.
  - Club-related communication only — no personal conversations.
3. Transportation
  - Adults may not transport a minor athlete alone.
  - A parent/guardian must provide advance written consent if individual transport is unavoidable.
  - Best practice: at least two athletes or two adults in the vehicle at all times.
4. Locker Rooms & Changing Areas
  - Adults may not be alone with a minor athlete in locker rooms or changing areas.
  - No phones, cameras, or recording devices allowed in these areas.
  - Supervision must balance athlete privacy with safety.
5. Treatment & Training Modalities
  - Massage, physical therapy, or similar treatments for minor athletes require:
    - Advance written consent from the parent/guardian.
    - Another adult present or an open/observable setting.
  - Never conducted in a hotel room or private residence.
6. Boundaries & Social Media
  - Maintain professional boundaries with all athletes.
  - **Do not “friend,” “follow,” or privately message minor athletes on personal social media.**
7. Reporting
  - All staff are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse.
  - Report any concerns immediately to:
    - Law enforcement if abuse is suspected.
    - The U.S. Center for SafeSport.
    - The Club's SafeSport Coordinator or Executive Director.

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 **Reminder:** All interactions with minor athletes must be transparent, observable, and interruptible. Protecting athletes is a shared responsibility.

The complete MAAPP will be provided to all FVSEF employees for their review and signature prior to the ski season.

## Safety & Emergency Procedures

### Lost Athlete Procedure

Staff should prioritize prevention by teaching athletes:

- How to return to the Team Room.
- To go to the bottom of the lift and ask for help if they cannot find their way.

If an athlete becomes separated from the group:

1. Briefly search the area where the athlete was last seen.
2. Check the Team Room, pre-designated meeting areas, and the bottom of the lift.
3. Use radio channels 6, 8, or 9 to alert other coaches.
4. If necessary, contact Ski Patrol Dispatch on Channel 1 or at 406-862-2940 (program this number into your phone; it is also on your season pass).
5. Provide Ski Patrol with:
  - Athlete's name, age, program, and coach.
  - Description of clothing.
  - Area last seen.
  - Parent/guardian location (on hill or not).
  - Your contact information.

Communication Guidelines:

- Phone or face-to-face with Dispatch is preferable to radio.
- Avoid the word "lost" on radios.
- Switch channels for private coach-to-coach communication if needed.
- Establish consistent meeting areas with athletes (Team Room, lift bottom, or other pre-set locations).

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### Tree Skiing & Tree Well Risk Mitigation

Tree wells and deep snow immersion are serious hazards. Staff must follow safety protocols and actively educate athletes to minimize risk.

#### Prevention Measures:

- All athletes are strongly encouraged to carry an accessible whistle.
  - 1 blast = I'm OK
  - 2 blasts = I'm down but OK
  - 3 blasts = I need help
- Use the Buddy System: no athlete skis alone. Buddies must remain visible to each other.
- Rangers and Development Team athletes must ski in groups. At least two groups should plan to ski tree areas together.
- If an odd number of skiers requires a group of three, they must all agree to remain together.
- One coach should lead, and one coach should trail the group.
- All athletes and coaches must agree on the route, ski the same line, and stop frequently to account for everyone.
- Do not ski farther downhill than you can safely climb back up.

#### Resources & Education:

Staff are expected to review and be familiar with the following resources:

- [Deep Snow Safety](#)
- [Whitefish Mountain Resort Tree Well Safety](#)

These sites provide valuable information on:

- How tree wells form and where they are most likely to be found.

- Strategies to reduce risk, including the Buddy System and constant visual awareness of your partner.
- Group management techniques for skiing in higher-risk terrain.

**✓ Key Reminder: Tree wells are unpredictable. Consistent buddy checks, frequent stops, and coach oversight are essential to athlete safety.**

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## **FVSEF Injury/Incident Action Plan**

### **Step 1: Control the Environment**

- Stop all participants immediately.
  - Protect yourself if you suspect bleeding (use gloves).
  - Shelter the injured participant from the elements and skier traffic.
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### **Step 2: Initial Assessment**

If the injured athlete shows any of the following critical signs, immediately activate EMS:

- Not breathing
- No pulse
- Profuse bleeding
- Impaired consciousness
- Suspected back, neck, or head injury

Action:

- Contact Whitefish Mountain Resort Ski Patrol via Channel 1 on FVSEF radios.
- State you are an FVSEF coach, provide your exact location, and describe the injury.

If none of the critical signs are present, proceed to Step 3.

### **Injured Athlete Transport Procedure**

- When accompanying an injured athlete, attempt to connect your group with another coach.
  - If near Chair Two or the Team Room, direct athletes to the training hill or team room only if they are mature enough to travel independently, and after confirming with the receiving coach.
  - If further out on the mountain, or if athletes cannot travel independently, coordinate a transfer with another coach at the injury site, en route to the first-aid room, or at another safe location.
  - Injured athletes transported to the first-aid room should be accompanied by their coach until a parent or FVSEF staff member can take over.
  - Parents should be notified as soon as possible by phone, or by Patrol posting messages on lift whiteboards if parents are skiing.
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### **Step 3: Assess the Injury**

- Gather details from the injured participant and witnesses.
  - When unsure of severity, always call Ski Patrol.
  - Remain with the athlete and provide reassurance; tone and body language are important.
  - If safe, move the participant to a comfortable, low-traffic area. Do not move athletes with possible back or neck injuries—allow Patrol to assess.
  - Keep the athlete warm and comfortable.
  - Follow the Transport Procedure if first-aid room care is required.
  - If the injury appears minor, proceed to Step 4.
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#### **Step 4: Return to Activity**

An athlete may return to activity only if all the following apply:

- No swelling or deformity
- No continued bleeding
- Full range of motion
- No pain during use

If in doubt, sit them out.

- Suspected concussions must follow the FVSEF Concussion Policy. The athlete must be removed from training/racing and cleared by a physician before return.
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#### **Step 5: Documentation**

- Complete an FVSEF Accident Report Form.
  - If necessary, also complete a USSS First Report of Accident Form.
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#### **Concussion Policy**

- Per Montana law and USSS policy, any FVSEF athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion must be immediately removed from participation by any FVSEF coach or agent.
  - The athlete may not return until evaluated and cleared in writing by a qualified health care provider trained in concussion management.
  - The Clearance Letter must confirm the provider has completed a concussion management course within the last three years.
  - FVSEF coaches must also notify USSS Competition Services in line with USSS policy.
  - The Clearance Letter must be provided to both FVSEF and USSS before the athlete can return to sanctioned events.
  - Additional concussion resources are available on the FVSEF website.
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#### **Return from Injury Policy**

- Any FVSEF athlete suspected of injury must be removed immediately from participation by an FVSEF coach or agent.
- The coach must inform the athlete's parent/guardian promptly.

If medical care is sought:

- The athlete may not return until cleared in writing by a qualified health care provider.

If medical care is not sought:

- The decision regarding return to sport will be made jointly by the parent/guardian and the FVSEF coach.

## **SECTION II**

### **Employee Policies**

#### **Expense Reimbursement, Travel, and Credit Card Use**

FVSEF employees, coaches, and volunteers may occasionally incur expenses on behalf of the organization. These expenses must be documented and submitted for timely reimbursement.

#### **Reimbursement Process:**

1. All expenses must first be approved by the employee's supervisor.
  2. The Executive Director (ED) reviews and approves all reimbursement requests.
  3. Accounting will issue reimbursement within two weeks of receiving an approved request.
  4. Original receipts are required for all expenses (other than per diem). Exceptions may be allowed with ED and/or Treasurer approval.
  5. Reimbursements to the ED must also be approved by the Treasurer or another Board Member.
  6. Requests must be submitted within one week of the expense and include:
    - o Date
    - o Amount
    - o Description/reason for the expense
    - o Attached receiptsRequests may be submitted electronically or in hard copy and must be signed by the requestor.
  7. FVSEF will not reimburse expenses submitted more than 30 days after the expense, unless an exception is granted by the ED.
  8. FVSEF will not reimburse fines or violations (e.g., speeding tickets, parking tickets).
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#### **Coach Per Diem**

For FVSEF-related travel:

- Day trips: No per diem.
  - Overnight trips: \$60 per full day; \$30 for partial days (travel only).
  - Coaches (or trip lead coach) must complete and submit a Per Diem Form to the ED. Forms are available from the Head Coach.
  - Receipts for meals are not required under the per diem policy.
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#### **Mileage Reimbursement**

When a personal vehicle is used for FVSEF purposes:

- Reimbursed at the annual IRS rate (currently \$0.70/mile). Gas receipts not required.
  - No reimbursement for regular travel to Whitefish Mountain Resort.
  - Travel begins and ends in Whitefish unless otherwise specified. Personal travel to departure or rendezvous points is not reimbursed.
  - Coaches must carpool when possible. If a coach chooses not to carpool when a seat is available, mileage will not be reimbursed.
  - For long-distance travel with few athletes, FVSEF may instead reimburse fuel costs (with receipts) plus \$35/day for vehicle use.
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#### **Travel Day Pay (Hourly/Day-Rate Coaches)**

To comply with Montana wage laws, hourly or day-rate coaches are paid for travel days as follows (does not apply to salaried coaches):

- Half day travel (<4 hours): Paid at contracted half-day rate.
  - Full day travel (>4 hours): Paid at contracted full-day rate.
  - Travel days are only paid when travel occurs without paid on-snow coaching.
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### **Credit Card Use**

FVSEF credit cards are for business purposes only.

- Approved uses: FVSEF travel expenses (e.g., hotels, flights, fuel for FVSEF vehicles, emergencies).
  - Personal expenses are prohibited.
  - If using a personal vehicle under the mileage reimbursement policy, do not use FVSEF cards for gas (unless under the alternative reimbursement policy).
  - Receipts must be submitted to the Accountant via the ED per the expense policy.
  - Employees should confirm planned expenditures with the ED whenever possible.
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### **Travel Expectations**

- All drivers must follow traffic laws, speed limits, and seatbelt requirements.
  - Distracted driving (texting, watching videos, etc.) is prohibited.
  - Remember: when transporting athletes, you are responsible for their safety.
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### **Professional Development**

FVSEF is committed to supporting the professional growth of staff and volunteers. We aim to hire, retain, and support coaches and staff of the highest caliber.

Program Elements:

- Competitive compensation with opportunities for advancement based on performance, responsibility, certification, and tenure.
  - Extended seasonal or full-time positions when possible, with increased compensation opportunities.
  - USSS or IFSA licensing and certification support. FVSEF pays for required certifications (minimum Level 100 for Devo coaches and above).
  - Preseason on-snow training, clinics, and in-house education.
  - Annual performance evaluations with constructive feedback.
  - Opportunities for professional development, including:
    - Leadership seminars and management training for Program Directors
    - Regional and national coaching projects/events
    - Attendance at USSS and IFSA conferences and congresses
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### **Employee Standards of Conduct**

Employees are expected to uphold the highest professional standards, including:

1. Standards in their Employment Agreement.
2. Codes of Conduct (FVSEF, USSS, IFSA) and Coaches' Handbook policies, including SafeSport, Travel, Concussion, and Grievance procedures.
3. Compliance with FVSEF expense and travel pay policies.
4. Adherence to grievance procedures.
5. Compliance with driving laws while operating FVSEF vehicles.
6. Following guidance in the Staff Manual. FVSEF, as an employer, is committed to providing:
  - Clear expectations and resources for your role
  - Timely pay and reimbursements
  - Fair compensation and benefits



- Reasonable accommodations
  - Respect, feedback, and due process
  - A supportive and fun work environment
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### **Termination of Employment**

- All employees work under a written Employment Agreement, renewed annually based on performance and need.
  - Either party may terminate with 30 days' notice.
  - Employees may be dismissed immediately for cause, including:
    - Endangering athlete safety (e.g., skiing out of bounds, unsafe transport, driving impaired, failing to use seatbelts)
    - Alcohol consumption at lunch when coaching resumes in the afternoon
  - Due process will be provided under Montana law in cases of termination for cause.
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### **Leaves of Absence (LOA) and Time Off**

- FVSEF work hours vary based on season, training, and travel schedules. Most staff are seasonal.
  - Standard time-off policies do not apply, but LOAs may be granted for emergencies, personal events, or rest after intense work periods.
  - Staff must communicate with their supervisor to ensure coverage of responsibilities.
  - Year-round staff are encouraged to take at least two weeks off annually (more depending on workload).
  - Example: Not all coaches may take Christmas week off due to training commitments.
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### **Employee Grievance Procedure**

1. Bring issues first to your direct supervisor (Assistant Coaches → Head Coach; Head Coaches and Office Staff → ED).
  2. If unresolved, escalate to the next level of supervision.
  3. If still unresolved, bring the issue to the ED. If necessary, the Board will review at its next scheduled meeting.
  4. Illegal behavior by a supervisor must be reported to the ED or Board.
  5. Complaints must be made by appointment, not via group emails or public forums.
  6. FVSEF will address all concerns seriously. If no resolution is possible, the Board's decision is final.
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### **Staff Evaluation Process**

FVSEF conducts annual performance reviews for all staff.

- The Board (President) reviews the ED.
- The ED reviews Head Coaches, Lead Coaches, and office staff.
- Lead Coaches review assistant coaches.
- Parent feedback is included in evaluations.

#### **Evaluation Steps:**

1. Use the Employment Agreement and Job Description as the review template.
2. Supervisor completes the evaluation based on job description and performance.
3. Employee and supervisor meet face-to-face to discuss.
4. Both parties may clarify/revise before finalizing.
5. Final signed evaluation is filed in personnel records and used as the basis for future reviews.

## **Critical Incident Communications Plan**

A critical incident includes:

- Serious vehicle accident involving FVSEF staff/athletes
- Serious injury or death of an athlete or staff member
- Alleged or confirmed abuse by FVSEF personnel
- Major disaster during an FVSEF event (avalanche, fire, earthquake, etc.)

Procedure:

1. ED or Board President informs the Executive Committee and Program Directors immediately.
2. Leadership assesses the incident and determines communication needs.
3. ED or Board President shares updates with: parents, Board, staff, coaches, and/or the public as appropriate.
4. One spokesperson, designated by the ED or Board President, handles all media communication.

Other Communications:

- Athlete Code of Conduct breaches (with disciplinary action) → Program Director informs ED and Program Directors.
- Major Code of Conduct infractions → ED informs the Board.

## **FVSEF CODE OF CONDUCT**

As a member of the FVSEF Organization:

- 1.) I will act in a courteous and cooperative manner at all times with FVSEF and other team's coaches, Whitefish Mountain Resort and other ski areas' customers, employees and managers; with my teammates and their parents and families; and with race officials and volunteers.
- 2.) I will not use profane language at any time.
- 3.) I will respect and properly use the equipment and facilities of the ski area.
- 4.) I will follow the rules of the ski area at all times.
- 5.) I will obey all posted mountain signs and all verbal or written instructions received from the ski patrol, coaches, or area employees or management of the ski area.
- 6.) I will not use illegal drugs, abuse prescription drugs, or use any banned performance-enhancing drugs or supplements. As a minor, I will not drink alcohol.
- 7.) I will maintain a clean and neat appearance at all training and race activities to promote myself and FVSEF.
- 8.) I will not loan or fraudulently use my season pass or lift ticket. I will follow the rules of the ski area regarding day passes.
- 9.) I will not cut the lift lines. I will be respectful to others in lift lines and show my pass courteously to the lift attendant as asked to do so. I will say thank you when loading and unloading from the lift.
- 10.) I will load and unload the ski lifts only at staffed and open lift ramps. I will stay on the track of the T-bar.

11.) I will respect and honor all FVSEF policies developed by the Board of Directors and coaching staff.

12.) I will handle all borrowed equipment with respect and appreciation.

13.) I will take responsibility for my actions. I understand that any damage I cause either directly or indirectly is my responsibility. If damage is done, I will reimburse property owners, hotel management, ski areas, or ski clubs for any loss incurred because of my actions.

14.) I will set a positive role model for all my fellow teammates (older and younger) by acting in a polite, respectful, and positive manner.

15.) I will take responsibility for the Team Room and for my ski gear; Always storing my gear in my assigned space and making sure to leave the Team Room better than I found it.

16.) When competing in a race, I will obey the USSS or IFSA Sportsmanship Guidelines as outlined in the most current Skiing Competition Guide, as well as the USSS Northern Division Code of Conduct.

17.) I will be on time and ready to ski at the start of each practice.

18.) I understand that FVSEF Team members are highly visible at Whitefish Mountain Resort and at competitions at other resorts. I will conduct myself accordingly. Bring attention to yourself by the way you ski, not by acting obnoxious, loud, or disrespectful. Be on your best behavior on and off the ski hill, in the lift lines, etc. I understand that as a member of FVSEF and while wearing a team jacket, I have a responsibility to set a positive example and be a good citizen. I fully understand that any infringement of the 17 Code of Conduct rules set forth above may result in disciplinary action in the form of suspension or dismissal from FVSEF.

First Violation: Warning Second Violation: Suspension from the next scheduled race or program date. Third Violation: Dismissal from the FVSEF without refund of fees. In addition, I understand that a violation of rule 3 (stealing equipment or property) or violation of rule 7 (using illegal drugs, abusing prescription drugs, or drinking alcohol as a minor), will result in immediate dismissal with no refund of monies paid to FVSEF.

### **National Ski Areas Association SKIERS AND RIDERS' RESPONSIBILITY CODE**

1.) Always stay in control and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.

2.) People ahead of you have the right of way. It is your responsibility to avoid them.

3.) You must not stop where you obstruct a trail or are not visible from above.

4.) Whenever starting downhill or merging into a trail, look uphill and yield to others.

5.) Always use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.

6.) Observe all posted signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails and out of closed areas.

7.) Prior to using any lift, you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload safely.

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the FVSEF Code of Conduct and the National Ski Areas Association Skiers and Riders Responsibility Code. I also understand and acknowledge that, if disciplined, I may appeal before the FVSEF Board of Directors at the next scheduled monthly meeting.

## ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date of injury: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of injury: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of injured person: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Snow Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Ability level of injured person: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the nature of the injury? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you see the accident? YES or NO

If YES, briefly describe how the accident occurred. \_\_\_\_\_

If NO, how did you learn about the accident? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe what action you took to handle the situation after the accident. \_\_\_\_\_

Was there further action taken? \_\_\_\_\_

### WITNESSES:

List the names of the participants in your group who saw the accident: \_\_\_\_\_

List names and phone numbers of any other witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

Form has been completed by:

Coaches name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE PAGE**

Please sign and date this page and return it to Hilary.

I have read the FVSEF Coaches Handbook for the 2025-26 Season, and I agree follow the policies and procedures as set forth and explained here-in.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

FVSEF Signature: \_\_\_\_\_