



Parent - Athlete Handbook

Principles That Lead Us

FVSEF Mission Statement:

FVSEF is dedicated to preserving the promotion of athletic and personal excellence and discipline through educational and competitive programs in skiing and ski racing.

The FVSEF 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!

Values that Guide FVSEF:

Integrity-Conduct is based on values rather than personal gain.

Responsibility – Participants take ownership of their actions.

Family, Team, and Community- FVSEF is a skiing community that welcomes, includes, and respects others who share a love of the sport and the outdoor environment, and whose members sense they belong to a team.

Scholarship- Participants are open to trying new things in novel ways and are committed to a lifetime of learning.

Excellence-Youth are inspired to push their limits and learn they are more capable than they thought.

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Program Philosophy

Our goal is to help athletes build strong fundamentals so they can ski with confidence, progress safely, and enjoy the sport at every level. Coaches balance free skiing, drills, and competition to create the right mix of challenge and success.

We focus on choosing terrain that promotes learning—starting where athletes feel confident and gradually moving to steeper, more difficult slopes as skills improve. Smaller training groups are often used so athletes get the right support for their stage of development.

This approach helps athletes ski aggressively rather than defensively, grow their confidence, and develop skills that serve them both on the mountain and in life.

Athlete Safety

SafeSport and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)

Providing a safe and healthy environment for all athletes is a top priority for FVSEF. Our programs follow the **U.S. Ski & Snowboard SafeSport Code** and the **U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)**. These policies set the standards for how athletes, coaches, staff, and volunteers interact—whether at training, competitions, or during travel.

Key Policies

- **One-on-one contact:** All one-on-one in-program contact between an adult and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible, except in true emergencies or with a documented parent-approved exception.
- **Coaching requirements:** All FVSEF coaches are members of U.S. Ski & Snowboard, complete a background screening, and are SafeSport trained.
- **Communication:** Any electronic communication between an adult and a minor athlete must be **Open and Transparent** (parent/guardian or another adult copied).
- **Prohibited conduct:** U.S. Ski & Snowboard strictly prohibits sexual, physical, or emotional misconduct, bullying, harassment, hazing, and knowingly tolerating misconduct.

Travel and Housing

When FVSEF travels for races or training, we follow SafeSport and MAAPP best practices:

- Parents are encouraged to observe training and activities whenever possible.
- A minimum of two adults should be present at team activities and training.
- Overnight accommodations are arranged by gender and similar age. Chaperones stay in nearby rooms (or, with parent permission, in the same unit for athletes under 12).
- Athletes may not ride alone with a coach unless another athlete/coach is present or written parent consent is provided.
- Parents receive travel itineraries, lodging details, and coach contact information in advance.
- Curfews are enforced during overnight trips.
- Privacy is always respected—separate changing areas are provided, and electronic devices are not permitted in locker rooms or changing areas.

Reporting and Resources

- **Report concerns:** Suspected violations of the SafeSport Code should be reported immediately. Do not investigate yourself.
- **Sexual misconduct concerns:** Report directly to the [U.S. Center for SafeSport](https://www.uscenterforsport.org/)

Concussion Policy

FVSEF follows **Montana State Law** and **U.S. Ski & Snowboard (USSS) concussion policies** to protect the health and safety of every athlete.

Removal from Participation

If an athlete is suspected of having a concussion during any FVSEF activity (training, practice, camp, competition, or tryout), they will be **removed immediately** from participation by a coach or staff member.

This is a safety-first decision. Athletes will not be allowed to return the same day.

Medical Evaluation and Clearance

The athlete may not resume FVSEF activities until they have been **evaluated and cleared in writing** by a qualified health care provider who is trained in concussion management. The clearance letter must confirm that the provider has completed continuing education in concussion evaluation and management within the past three years. A copy of the clearance letter must be provided to both FVSEF and U.S. Ski & Snowboard Competition Services (if the athlete was concussed during a USSS event) before the athlete can return to training or enter USSS-sanctioned races.

Reporting

Upon removal of an athlete from a US Ski and Snowboard event for a suspected concussion or traumatic brain injury, the FVSEF coach or staff member making the removal will also inform USSS Competition Services in accordance with their Concussion Policy.

For more details, families can review the full [U.S. Ski & Snowboard Concussion Policy](#)

Safety, Accidents, and Group Guidelines

Accidents and Emergencies

- If an accident occurs, the coach will call Ski Patrol immediately, radio another coach to take over their group, and accompany the injured athlete to the Ski Patrol building.
- The coach will stay with the athlete until a parent arrives.
- Parents and the Program Director will be notified as soon as possible.

Safety Requirements

- All athletes and coaches must wear helmets.
- Everyone is expected to follow the National Ski Areas Association Skier and Rider Responsibility Code:
 - Stay in control and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.
 - People ahead of you have the right of way—it's your responsibility to avoid them.
 - Do not stop where you block a trail or cannot be seen from above.
 - Look uphill and yield when starting downhill or merging into a trail.
 - Use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
 - Obey all posted signs and warnings. Stay off closed trails and out of closed areas.
 - Know how to load, ride, and unload lifts safely.

Group Procedures

- All Mountain Ranger and Development Team groups must stay together when free skiing. If one athlete needs to go inside, the whole group will go in or wait together.
- During gate training on the T-Bar or Chair 2, Development Team athletes may occasionally be allowed to lap without a coach's direct supervision.
- Dismissal during training hours requires parent permission. If an athlete leaves without permission, parents will be contacted.

If an Athlete Becomes Separated

- If separated, athletes should go directly to the Team Room in the Hellroaring Saloon building.
- If skiing on the backside, they should go to the bottom of the lift and tell the lift operator they are separated from their race team (not ski school). The lift operator can radio dispatch to reach the coach.
- Coaches may also notify Ski Patrol and the Program Director/Lead Coach, who can mobilize additional staff to assist in locating the athlete.

Lunch

Coaches will dismiss All Mountain Ranger and Development Team athletes for lunch from the Team Room.

Sportsmanship and Code of Conduct

Sportsmanship fosters a healthy learning environment and character-building experience in athletics. We expect our participants to play hard but fair. The ideals of sportsmanship should shape our everyday lives, giving us a template to achieve our fullest potential, while treating all that surrounds us with respect.

FVSEF Code of Conduct

Overview: Flathead Valley Ski Education Foundation aims to create an environment for your best success as a person, an athlete and a student. It is the actions of our FVSEF community that define the environment. Below is a partial list of attitudes and actions we consider to be positive additions to that environment.

As a member of FVSEF you must agree to adhere to the following statements and the spirit of those statements:

- 1.) I will always act in a courteous and cooperative manner with coaches, Whitefish Mountain Resort and other resorts' customers, employees, and managers; with my teammates, their parents and families; and with race officials and volunteers. I will always treat them with respect and speak to and about them only in positive and constructive ways.
- 2.) I will foster the community and team building spirit by doing things like attending awards ceremonies, "B" Net break down, and other similar activities whenever possible.
- 3.) I will not use profane or offensive language at any time.

- 4.) I will respect and properly use the equipment and facilities of all ski areas I visit as a FVSEF athlete.
- 5.) I will always follow the rules of the ski areas I visit as a FVSEF Athlete.
- 6.) 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.
- 7.) 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.
- 8.) I will maintain a clean and neat appearance at all training and race activities to represent myself and FVSEF positively.
- 9.) I will not loan or fraudulently use my season pass or day lift ticket. I will follow the rules of the ski area regarding day lift tickets.
- 10.) I will not cut the lift lines. I will be respectful to others in lift lines and will actively and courteously show my pass to the lift attendant before being asked to do so. I will say thank you when loading and unloading from the lift.
- 11.) 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.
- 12.) I will respect and honor all FVSEF policies developed by the Board of Directors and coaching staff.
- 13.) I will handle all borrowed equipment with respect and appreciation.
- 14.) 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.
- 15.) I will set a positive role model for my fellow teammates (older and younger) by acting in a polite, respectful, and positive manner.
- 16.) 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.
- 17.) When competing in a race, I will obey the USSS Sportsmanship Guidelines as outlined in the most current Skiing Competition Guide, as well as the USSS Northern Division Code of Conduct.

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

19.) I understand that FVSEF Team members are highly visible at Whitefish Mountain Resort and at races at other resorts. I will conduct myself accordingly. I will bring attention to myself by the way I ski, not by acting obnoxious, loud, or disrespectful. I will be on my best behavior on and off the ski hill, in the lift lines, etc. I WILL BE A RESPONSIBLE, RESPECTFUL ATHLETE.

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 19 Code of Conduct rules set forth above may result in disciplinary action in the form of suspension or dismissal from FVSEF programs.

First Violation: Communication and tutoring from Coach.

Second Violation: Meeting with Coach and Program Director to discuss alternative strategies or potential disciplines.

Third Violation: Meeting with FVSEF Board of Directors, which may result in dismissal from FVSEF Programs without refund of fees.

In addition, I understand that a violation of stealing or vandalizing equipment or property, using illegal drugs, abusing prescription drugs, or drinking alcohol as a minor, will result in an immediate disciplinary meeting with the FVSEF Board of Directors and may result in dismissal with no refund of monies paid to FVSEF.

I understand and acknowledge that, if disciplined, I may appeal before the FVSEF Board of Directors at their next scheduled monthly meeting.

Equipment Guide

Properly fitted equipment is just as important as good conditioning and training. The right gear helps athletes learn, stay safe, and perform at their best.

Skis

- All Mountain Ranger – Learn to Ski: Junior skis with good sidecut, soft flex, and the right length.
 - Beginners/younger skiers: shorter than chin height.
 - More experienced: up to nose height.
- U10 Development Team & experienced Rangers: Multi-event (“Kombi”) skis, designed for both Slalom (SL) and Giant Slalom (GS). Typically reach to the bridge of the nose or eyebrows.
- U12 & U14:
 - Less experienced: Kombi skis.
 - More experienced: discipline-specific race skis (SL: chin to nose height; GS: top of forehead to 2” above head). Strong U14s should size toward the longer end.
- U16 and older: Consult your coach and follow USSS/FIS equipment regulations.
- Recreational Devo athletes: All-mountain skis with width for free skiing, but some sidecut for drills and gate training.
- General rule: If unsure, size slightly shorter rather than too long. Ask your coach if you have questions.

Bindings

- Match bindings to your athlete’s boots and weight.
- Some bindings only fit junior boots, others only fit adult boots. Be sure the shop knows which boot you’re using, especially if your child weighs under 70 lbs.

Boots

Boots are the most important piece of equipment. They must fit snugly and allow ankle flex.

- Fit: Have your boot fitter “shell size” your athlete—no more than two fingers between heel and shell when toes are touching the front. Avoid buying boots too big to “grow into.”
- Type:
 - Young/lighter skiers: softer all-mountain boots (flex 50–60).
 - Stronger/older racers: stiffer competition boots (up to 90 flex for Devo, 120–130 for U14–U18 depending on size/strength).

- Features: 3–4 buckles, proper cuff height for leg size, and a snug fit around the ankle.

Helmets

- Required for all athletes: Ski-specific helmets.
- Fit: Should grip snugly (moves skin of forehead when twisted). Try on before buying.
- Rules:
 - No helmet cameras or fairings.
 - Helmets with soft ear covers allowed only in SL. GS/SG/DH/Kombi require hard ear coverage.
 - For U14 and older racing USSS events, helmets must have the certification sticker on the back.
- Chin guards: Needed for SL once athletes begin skiing “through” gates. Remove for GS/SG/DH.
- Replacement: Any helmet that takes a hard hit should be replaced.

Slalom & Back Protection (Devo Comp and older)

- Slalom protection: Helmet chin guard, mouth guard, pole guards, shin guards. Used only when an athlete is strong/aggressive enough to ski through gates—consult your coach.
- Back protection: Recommended starting at U14/U16 when athletes are skiing harder and faster.

Race Suits & Zip Pants

- Race suits: Not needed until athletes consistently ski 25–30 mph. Used suits are fine. Some races (Tommy Moe series, USSS U12 and under) may limit suit use.
- Zip-off pants: Needed for athletes racing in suits—keeps them warm during inspection and warm-up but easy to remove at the start.

Goggles

- Must fit tightly with helmet (no “goggle gap”).
- Use lenses appropriate for conditions:
 - Lighter for cloudy/low light.
 - Darker for sunny days.
 - Clear/yellow for night training.
- Always store in a protective bag or case.

Other Safety Gear

- Whistles: Recommended for all athletes—useful in fog or tree skiing if separated from the group.

Where to Find Equipment

- FVSEF Ski Swap: Held each fall and a great place for used gear. Coaches are on-site to help size. This is not a fundraiser- it's just an opportunity for families to pass on used gear to younger ages within the team.
- Great Northern Cycles & Ski (Whitefish): Hosts a fall team night with discounted new gear and manufacturer reps available for sizing advice.
- Used vs. new: Used can save money but check for wear, outdated design, or rule compliance. New gear comes with warranties and professional fitting.

Context of Our Sport

Governing Body

FVSEF athletes compete under U.S. Ski & Snowboard (USSS). Montana belongs to the Northern Division of the Western Region.

- Scored Races: U16+ (sometimes U14), results affect USSS rankings.
- Non-Scored Races: Youth Ski League (YSL, ages 13 & under).
- Some races are Qualifiers for championships.
- Membership: Required for all sanctioned USSS races. Not needed for the local Tommy Moe Series. Short-term memberships are available if only racing one weekend.

Racing Options

- Tommy Moe Series (Ages 5–12)
 - Fun, local races at Whitefish.
 - No USSS membership required.
 - Race suits not allowed.
- Youth Ski League (YSL, Ages 15 & under)
 - USSS-sanctioned, developmental, non-scored.
 - Membership: Alpine Competitor license.
 - Age groups: U10, U12, U14, U16.
 - U14/U16 can qualify for championship events.
 - U16 and Older / FIS Racing
 - Scored races, often championship-focused.
 - USSS membership required; FIS membership for international-level races.

FVSEF Participation

- All-Mountain Rangers: Encouraged to try Tommy Moe events; may enter a local YSL race. Notify coach in advance.
- Development Team: Tommy Moe encouraged; Devo Comp athletes should do at least one home and one away YSL race.
- U14–U18 Racers: Plan schedules with coaches, especially if aiming for championships.

Racing & Training Balance

Race days are exciting but offer fewer practice runs. The focus should be on learning routines and gaining experience, not just results.

How to Enter Races

- Tommy Moe: Register at skiwhitefish.com
- YSL: USSS/Northern membership required. Parents register online and notify coach. Families share coach travel costs at away races.
- U14+/FIS: Register at adminskiracing.com

A Typical YSL Race Day

- Team meeting: get bibs/tickets.
- Course inspection with coaches.
- Two runs (second in reverse order).
- Between runs: eat, rest, re-prepare; parents often help shuttle clothing.
- After: free ski, attend awards, check in with coaches.

Travel Policies

Please notify coaches of your plans to travel to and enter races well in advance. We need to plan for the appropriate number of coaches to attend the races.

For away races, FVSEF will reserve a block of rooms at one of the motel/lodges in the area which may include a group discount. Families intending to stay at that location must call and reserve a room prior to the deadline but you may also choose to stay elsewhere.

At the Devo Team level, Coaches do not act as overnight chaperones. Families may travel with their children or have their children travel with another family.

Costs of YSL races include entry fees, lodging, food, transportation, lift tickets & coach expenses. Families will be invoiced and reimburse the Foundation for coach travel expenses and any other costs the Foundation has pre-paid for the racers.