

NDHSAA Football Classification Guidelines and Deadlines

The following guidelines are being considered by the NDHSAA Football Committee for the administration of football and management of football divisions.

1. There will be 4 divisions of football. Those divisions are named AAA, AA, A, and 9-man.
2. AAA and AA Divisions will consist of schools and any co-op that contains 160 or more male students (actual enrollment) in grades 7-10 for two or more consecutive years.
3. A and 9-man Divisions will consist of schools and co-ops which do not exceed 160 male students (actual enrollment).
4. Enrollments for division placement will be determined by the following steps:
 1. Step 1: Obtain total male enrollments for grades 7 – 10 as provided by the Department of Public Instruction.
 1. Step 2: Multiply the enrollment created in Step 1 by the percentage of the student body that qualified for free and reduced meals during the previous school year according to Department of Public Instruction data. That number will be multiplied by 50%.
 1. Step 3: The number derived in Step 2 is subtracted from the grades 7 – 10 enrollment created in Step 1. The remainder number will represent the Football Enrollment for classification purposes during the next season.
5. The dividing line between AAA and AA will be determined by finding the median of AAA and AA Football Enrollments. If there is an odd number of AAA and AA teams, the median is the football enrollment of the center school; the median team and all larger teams will be placed in the AAA Division. If there is an even number of AAA and AA teams, the median is the average of the football enrollments of the two center schools divided by two; all teams larger than the median number will be placed in the AAA Division.
6. The dividing line between the A and 9-man divisions will be determined by finding the median of A and 9-man Football Enrollments. If there are an odd number of A and 9-man teams, the median is the football enrollment of the center school; the median team and all larger teams will be placed in the A Division. If there are an even number of A and 9-man teams, the median is the average of the football enrollments of the two center schools divided by two; all teams larger than the median number will be placed in the A Division.
7. Any school may request to move up to any division for the following season. Such requests to opt up shall be made annually by October 15th.
8. Each school may submit a request to NDHSAA indicating the division in which the team wishes to compete by the established deadlines. A school failing to meet the designated deadline will not be permitted to request a division other than the one assigned by the NDHSAA. The classification committee will consider the following factors:
 - a. Competitive history and balance
 - b. Geography
 - c. School's enrollment trend
 - d. Student participation rate
 - e. Socioeconomic factors of the school's population
 - f. Retention and mobility rate of school's population
 - g. Additional information unique to school community
9. Schools will be allowed to appeal their placement to the classification committee using any/all of the factors listed in Section 8 a-g above. A successful appeal requires a favorable vote of 2/3 or more of classification committee members voting.
10. All decisions of the classification committee are final. The classification committee will be comprised of 9 members with a 3-year term/rotation appointed by the NDHSAA Board of

Directors. An effort will be made to diversify the Classification Committee so it is representative of the membership.

2 – Superintendents, Principals, or Athletic Directors from each NDHSAA football division (8 total)

1 – Member of the NDHSAA Board of Directors will chair the Committee

11. Teams may opt down to the next lower division if they meet both items a. and b below:
 - a. The team's Football Enrollment must be within 25% of the median between divisions.
 - b. The team may not have qualified for the playoffs more than once at the higher division in the previous four seasons.
 - c. Such requests to opt down shall be made annually by Oct. 15th.
 - i. Qualifying for the playoffs in the current season may affect a team's ability to opt-down in the next season.
 - ii. Schools who request to opt down by Oct. 15 but later lose their ability to opt-down after qualifying for the current playoffs will be immediately notified by the NDHSAA office.
12. Playoff Performance Factor
 - a. Teams shall earn the following point values for the final level of the playoffs they achieve as follows:
 - i. Eliminated in quarterfinal – One (1) point
 - ii. Eliminated in semifinals – Two (2) points
 - iii. State Runner-Up – Three (3) points
 - iv. State Championship – Four (4) points
 - b. Division AA, A, and 9-man teams achieving twelve (12) points or greater due to playoff performance during a four-year period shall move up to the next largest division for the next two seasons. Teams may appeal this move to the classification committee.
 - c. Teams that have achieved eight (8) points or greater due to playoff performance during four consecutive years as an opt down team shall move up to the next largest division for the next two seasons. Teams may appeal this move to the classification committee.
 - d. After participation in a larger division for two years, a team achieving a two-year total playoff performance point value of two points or below shall be eligible to move down.
 - e. After participation in a larger division for two years, a team achieving a playoff performance point value of three or more points shall remain in the same division for the next two seasons.
13. Schools may request to field an independent or 6-man team by officially notifying the NDHSAA Office annually by October 15 of the previous year.
14. Any school planning to opt up, opt down, or declare an independent status shall confirm their intentions with both divisions in order to better plan future game schedules.
15. Teams in the AAA and AA divisions will only schedule teams within their own division unless there is mutual agreement between teams to play non-division teams.
16. Any varsity team that chooses to play a team that declares independent status after the October 15th deadline will be ineligible for the playoffs. Any teams that declare independent status after the October 15th deadline shall be responsible for paying game fees to all contracted officials and \$1000 to any contracted opponent that loses a varsity game.
17. BY – LAW REMINDER: Football coops must be submitted by September 15th of the previous year.
18. A North Dakota school may apply for an emergency coop if the following criteria are met:
 - a. An approved coop for the following year must be in place prior to being eligible for an emergency coop.

- b. Emergency coop applications will only be considered if the requesting school has provided proof that student-athletes have no opportunity to compete at the varsity level for the upcoming football season.
 - c. If the emergency coop is approved:
 - i. The host school shall be that school with the largest enrollment. The NDHSAA Realignment Committee shall determine the new co-op's Division and Regional alignment.
 - ii. Only seniors from the applying school would be eligible for varsity competition for a \$1000 non-compliance fee per player unless the new coop's classification is not affected.
 - iii. Sub-varsity players from the applying school could compete for a \$200 non-compliance fee per player.
 - iv. A \$500 late coop fee will apply.
 - v. An approved emergency coop will be ineligible to opt down a division for the two seasons following the emergency season.
19. Following the implementation of these guidelines for the fall of 2021, NDHSAA staff members will be responsible for researching, receiving opt up and down requests, and placing teams into their applicable Divisions. The Classification committee will rule on opt up and opt down appeals and the decisions of the Committee are final. The NDHSAA Realignment Committee will be responsible for creating any necessary adjustments to regional assignments within those divisions.
20. The NDHSAA Board of Directors shall have final say in the administration of these guidelines.

NDHSAA Football Plan Annual Deadlines

- June 1 All requests for football coop dissolutions due
- September 15 Deadline for new football cooperative agreements
- October 15 Deadline for requests to field an independent or 6-man team
- October 15 Deadline for requests to move up a division
- October 15 Deadline for requests to opt down a division

September Board Meeting: Board addresses coop applications and creates preliminary Division assignments and regional placements for following season.

October or November: Classification committee addresses opt up/down appeals.

November/December Board Meeting: Board finalizes division assignments and regional placements.