



# **MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES**



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## Mission

**Mission:** Austin Comets Athletics is an all-male urban sports fraternity that provides mentorship for youth to develop their skills, health and moral character for the welfare or well-being of the general public.

**Why this club exists:** We wish to combat the issues of fatherlessness, which is one of the biggest problems in the U.S. that plagues our youth today. Because of the lack of affirmation from fathers, young boys seek out resources to meet their needs of safety. These negative resources include joining youth gangs, public obscenities to cause shock value, domestic violence and senseless killings. The results of these issues contribute to youth having a poor self-image, high school dropout rates, suicide, drug abuse and many mental health behavior disorders.

Boys are not being initiated into adulthood correctly. They're being taught promiscuity, drunkenness, impulsivity, rage, and violence by poor role models in the community and in the sports and music industry. Fatherless homes can be an example of a lack of commitment, inconsistency and instability. Youth use this model to deal with conflict and are not able solve problems appropriately, but find quick and easy ways out.

We hope to be model of success that changes the rearing of young men and develop their character so that they may have skills and tools progressing to adulthood. Through our activities we want to foster companionship and a strong father and son (son-ship) dynamic. Young men should be given a proper right to passage initiation and held in high regards to learning true manhood.

We believe in creating a great community of young men who understand the importance of protection, caring for others, welfare, health care, jobs/apprenticeships, social and financial support, family, companionship, ethical living, education and development of all people. We also hope that this club will take part in the viability of community including partnering with the church, social services organization, schools and libraries. Youth will have the opportunity to be involved with entrepreneurship, food service, housing (real estate), clothing or fashion, health care, transportation, law and be of service to public parks.



## Leadership Management (Chain of Command)

Acting authority within the club. Arrows show chain of command.

### Athletics Director

A **senior level member**, serves as the overall program administrator and the acting House President of the (Austin) Clubhouse #1. Once expansion takes place, he also oversees all clubhouses of Chicago and the Midwest Region. He is responsible for managing, screening, supervising, mentoring and training all Comets head coaches and oversee all sports programming.



### General Manager

A **senior level member**, serves as the main registration coordinator that is responsible for the intake of all members in the program and keeps records of athlete/parent profiles, emergency medical documents and attendance records of mentors. Reports to the Athletics Director and also serves as second-in-command.



Each clubhouse has it's own governing structure, for example a Coach will be a House President of Clubhouse #2 (Englewood). A captain can be Secretary or Treasurer. An Athletics Director would be assigned over a region.

### Comets Coaching staff and other department managers (Officer: House President, VP, Secretary and/or Treasurer)

A **senior level member**, The Head Coach is a mentor who handles the day-to-day operations of scheduling /coaching games, recruiting players, facilitating practices, creating practice plans, and mentoring athletes. All head coaches are accountable to the Athletics Director.

Assistant coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers help with different components of the club. Their main responsibility is to assist the Head Coaches with his responsibilities.



### Team Captains (Officer: House VP, Secretary and/or Treasurer)

A **senior level member**, These are Comets athletes who display leadership potential on and off the court/field. They have demonstrated the responsibility of holding team members accountable to program expectations. Team captains display a "C" on their team jersey. Report to the Coaching staff.





## **Member Athletes/Participants**

Current/prospective members or associates who participate in activities.



## **Team Managers**

Current or prospective members, Team managers are individuals (parents, kids, volunteers, interns etc) who serve as “culture keepers” responsible for the proper etiquette of players and their parents, assisting in scheduling events for the team, bringing snacks and drinks to competitions etc. Reports to the Team Captains and Coaching Staff.

## **Senior Members**

One of our major goals is to allow youth particularly the captains to lead their own clubhouse by holding all house offices (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary etc) and govern all affairs. Senior members are able to hold office, vote, manage areas (departments) of the program, wear special badges etc. Senior members are elected current members who have met the following criteria:

- 13 years of age or older
- Has been with the program for 2-3 years
- Completed promotion objectives in its entirety
- Sponsored by another Senior Member, Officer or Original for Eligibility

Parents/Guardians of members are associates of the program and they can not be members unless they are alumni.

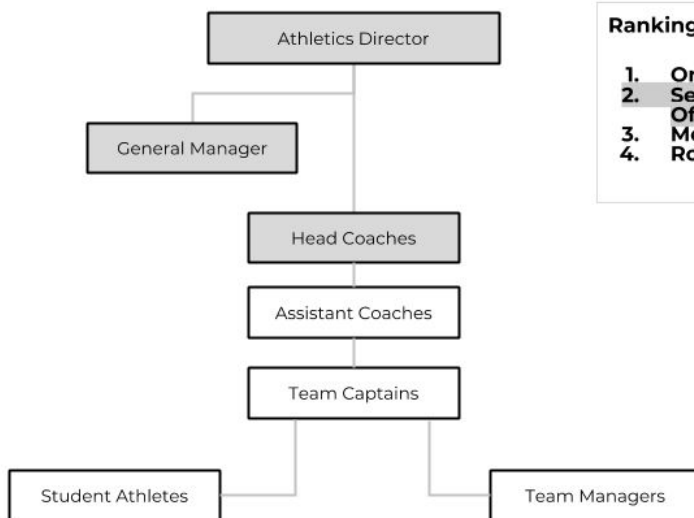
## **Originals**

These are the highest ranking level members of the program. The individuals that are selected for this are people who were the first ever members of the inaugural first class. They hold authority over all matters, wear a different uniform, serve as advisory council to decision making and primarily operate out of the founding clubhouse in Austin.



## Austin Comets Organizational Chart

(Original Local Chapter- Austin)



### Rankings

1. Originals
2. Senior Members & Officers
3. Members
4. Rookies (Prospects)



## Membership

**A member of this club is defined as:** One who has gone through and fully completed the initiation probation process with ceremony and is regularly paying dues to the club.

Membership is given to youth, children and/or their parents who are sponsored by a current or previous member of the club. It's also offered to those who want to represent the club in the community. Membership is for one year annually that must be renewed at the end of the term. Membership status, after the year, will be reviewed by senior members to consider a renewal. Although it's ongoing, a formal ceremony is given after completion of probation period. Membership probation is for 30-days. Members must agree to pay dues of \$15 a month \$150 annually to support the club activities.

Membership is private, exclusive and very selective with highly specific strict requirements.

Membership benefits include:

1. Participation in Austin Comets Athletics sports programs.
2. Discounts on club merchandise, competition entrance fees and sports program fees.
3. Work and participate in other MMI programs
4. Live in Clubhouse and participate in house meetings
5. Access to Camps, Clinics, Events, others things in the organization.
6. Wear Austin Comets identification (Badges, Letters, Gear etc.)
7. Participate on Austin Comets Committees
8. Eligibility to hold offices
9. Receive % of funds from fundraising that goes towards membership dues.

The criteria for being a member of this club is as followed:

1. Must be at least 5 years of age
2. Must be a resident of the United States of America
3. Must be a male
4. Must be nominated or sponsored by another youth/adult member
5. Must be teachable
6. Must be trustworthy
7. Must be of sound mind and body

**Sponsoring:** This is a process where a former or current member, senior member or officer gives a nomination for a young person to become a member of the club and must speak with the secretary for approval to be put on the table. Prospective members must submit an application and go through an intake alumni interview with the leadership team. Approval of membership is given through decision of the leadership team.



## Initiation Process

One of the main focuses of our club is to initiate young boys into becoming young men. All prospective members must complete the initiation process in order to participate in sports programs. After participants are selected for membership, club orientation is given and the prospective member must go through an 3- step initiation process which includes:

- **Memorization**
  - Prospective members must memorize the motto/creed and core values of the club in its entirety. They must be able to recite all language on the spot.
  
- **Trust-Building**
  - Prospective members are given physical and mental exercises to show a willingness to commit and be unselfish for the club. This is a stage of detox to get rid of old attitudes and mindsets.
  
- **Follow-Through Action**
  - Prospective members are given an action assignment to prove they are willing to follow-through with instruction from authority and be held accountable.

After completion of initiation over 30 days, the prospective member has gone through the probation period and is ready for the completion ceremony. This ceremony is to celebrate a new member and will include special activities such as having the fathers, grandfathers, uncles or other alumni pin the brother badge on their family members. It will also include a blessing/prayer from a minister.

This process will be adjusted for different age groups. For example, for boys ages 5-6 they'll only have to memorize the motto (Proverbs 27:17) or 2-3 rules of conduct.





## Voting

Voting is the process of officers and senior members making decisions on matters of the program including new membership nomination, operations, new policy, vote on new officers election etc. Meetings take place once a month in the evening. Only senior members (members who have been with the club for 3 years) and officers are allowed to take part in the voting but all members are welcome to attend the meeting.

In regards to officers, each position serves a term of one year and starts holding office after annual B.O.D. meeting for **MMI**. In most cases, if there is a election of a new Clubhouse President, he must select his own Secretary and Treasurer to serve under his leadership. At the Annual B.O.D. Meeting for **MMI** all membership dues are made up-to date. Also at the annual meeting, board members of **MMI** and the leadership of the Austin Comets Athletics meet to reward volunteers, donors, partners, program staff and other personnel with certificates and awards for their service.

## Membership Promotion (Advancement)

Only official Comets Members can move up the ranks in structure to be a senior member or hold an office for more authority and responsibility. Advancement is based on age, public or private sports & academic achievements/accomplishments, knowledge of mission/law/creed, experience or terms served and completion of projects or missions.

When a member is eligible for advancement, he must be sponsored by a Senior Member or officer and approved by unanimous vote of the officers or approval from the Athletics Director.



## Motto & Principles

**Code of Behavior:** As a member of this club there is a code one must follow in order to hold up the Austin Comets Athletics traditional name. This code is founded on our central motto:

**Proverbs 27:17- “As Iron Sharpens Iron, so One Person Sharpens Another.”**

### 10 Rules of Conduct

1. We Believe in **NONVIOLENCE** Except in the Defense of Human Rights.
2. We will **DETER FROM COVETING**, Jealousy or Envy.
3. We will **HATE THE LOVE OF MONEY** which is the Root of All Kinds of Evil.
4. We will Love and **RESPECT** Others and are Selfless at All Cost.
  - a. No member shall leave another member behind, he always put's others above himself.
5. We will walk in **HUMILITY** and be Teachable at All Times.
6. We will Always **HONOR AUTHORITY** and Rebuke Lawlessness.
7. We will have **INTEGRITY** by being Men of our Words and Practice Confidentiality
8. We Believe in **ORDER AND STRUCTURE**
9. We Share in a **OPEN DEMOCRACY**
10. We will be Intelligent in Language and **SPEAKING TRUTH** Always

**Law/Oath:** A Comet's Member shall follow the motto, the 10 rules code and be a Good and Responsible Citizen with the utmost moral character and physically, mentally, and emotionally fit.



## **Expectation and Requirements**

All club members of Austin Comets Athletics must meet certain expectations and requirements of a member. These expectations are detailed below. Those who meet these expectations are members in good standing and are granted the privileges listed below. The rights of a member may not be removed unless he is no longer in good standing or is suspended or expelled. All members will be reviewed annually to determine if they have met the expectations.

These expectations draw from all of these sources and are designed to ensure that every member is living up to what they promised. The expectations mentioned in this handbook are the benchmark.

### **Expectations of a Member**

**As a member of Austin Comets Athletics, you are required to meet each of these expectations quarterly and annually:**

1. Must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or B average.
2. Remain up-to-date on dues or current on approved payment plan.
3. Must cheer on and help to support other sports programs in A.C.A.
4. Must attend 85% of practice meetings each year.
5. Must attend 75% of all events each year.
6. Follow all directions of the senior members and/or officers.
7. Commit to ongoing fundraising for the club

### **Rights**

- To be treated equally with all other members, and with dignity, to be called a member.
- To wear Austin Comets identification (badge, letters, etc.)
- To be held to the same standards and expectations as all members
- To be given due process for all alleged infractions
- To be properly instructed and understand the concepts and teachings of the Austin Comets Athletics.



## Discipline

The Senior Members and Officers are the major authority responsible with issuing discipline according to the nature of the act or rule broken. The Athletics Director has the final decision on all routes towards discipline.

Theft/stealing, fighting/assault & Battery, disorderly conduct or possession of an illegal firearm and other prohibited activities, whether in or out of the club, will not be tolerated. Any member found in violation of this will either be suspended or removed from the club. A member can be dismissed from activities for behavior detrimental to the club. Should this happen three times or more, the Athletics Director will be contacted and the member could be suspended or removed from the club. Should the severity of the infraction require discipline, behavioral issues could result in the immediate dismissal from the club.

The following are steps that we take in order to manage different conflicts:

1. Identifying the incident or grievance that occurred
2. Immediate intervention with the member from the senior members or officers
3. Parental notification
4. In a sit-down, discuss possible alternative behaviors and the new plan of action for the future
5. Issue consequence if necessary
6. Program reintegration

Some troubled members will be placed on probationary status (30 days) to help in the process of following club rules. If there is any violation of expectations during the probation period, the member will be dismissed from the club. Suspensions are given out by the Senior Members, Officers or the Athletics Director to members who violate club rules. This involves a member not being allowed to practice or participate in games for a period of time.

If disputes occur between two parties there must be a request for a "sit-down" with the two parties and the top authority figure. The top authority figure will act as an un-bias judge and hear both arguments and make a decision accordingly. These disputes can be over anything ranging from violation of rules to fundraising territory.



## Chapters and Transfers

**Other Local and National Clubhouses and Transfers:** Depending on the growth of the club, the plan is to have local, regional and national expansion. Our goal will be to set up other Clubhouses in other states (chapters), recruit personnel and solicit funds for operations. Those chapters will govern policy of their own programs and find streams of income (owning property or other businesses, additional fundraising activities etc) to support their affairs. In each state chapter there will be a regional leader that reports to the National President who is the Athletics Director. The Austin Clubhouse of Chicago will be the Mother Clubhouse (founding clubhouse).

Our branding will be the same for each Clubhouse (i.e. Austin Comets New York Chapter, Los Angeles Chapter, Florida Chapter, Texas etc.) Each Clubhouse operates independently but with the support of the entire organization.

We believe in free enterprise where each club operates independently with help from the top. There are guidelines that each club must adhere to in order to represent the Austin Comets name. Each Clubhouse usually houses the teams they recruit in the area. Each Clubhouse also submits to the leadership of the house. Guidelines of club activities and process of transfer will be written in a constitution charter.

**Traveling club (Nomads):** A traveling club is a team that doesn't belong to a local Clubhouse but travels from house to house to fill needs to participate in competitions, club activities, support different programs, functions etc. The traveling club has it's own officers and has no rights or responsibilities or obligations to a Clubhouse.



## Activities

- **Open Houses**
  - Program staff showcase facilities and clubhouses to prospective members.
- **New Member Ceremony**
  - Special service for new members.
  - Recognition of past participants, volunteers, sponsors, donors and partners of program.
- **Athlete / Parent Meetings**
  - Parent Forum
    - Allows parents and the community to get-to-know the staff of the program and voice concerns, observations (evaluations & progress reports) or critiques of the program.
- **Sports Competitions**
  - Members regularly participate in tournaments and games for the sports season.
- **Community Run**
  - This is a time for our members to work on conditioning, have a change in venue/setting and makes the community aware of whom we are.
- **Full-Day Summer Intramurals Camp**
  - This activity is where we allow our members to experience different sports without the pressure of competition and compete against each other.
- **Media Day**
  - Members have their pictures taken for yearbook albums and do promotional videos for the program.
- **Board House Meetings**
  - Our existing members vote on on clubhouse policy, new officers and membership for new prospective youth and children members.
- **Senior Member Dinners**
  - Once a month our senior members have a communal dinner to break bread with each other.
- **Chapel**
  - On Sunday's members attend a local church service.



## Clubhouse/ Lodge Rules

Austin Comets Athletics Club Houses are privately owned by **The Metro Mentorship Initiative**. These homes will serve as an athletic country club for urban kids. Access to the Clubhouses are excluded from the general public. Clubhouses, which are 5-6 bedroom, two bathroom homes, can be occupied during the school year for a maximum of 10 kids and 2 adults per house. The following are guidelines for youth living or hanging out in the house:

1. Boys shall not bring in any drugs, alcohol, weapons or any explicit materials into the safe place.
2. Only Members are allowed to access the clubhouse.
3. Members should be responsible for the up keep of the clubhouse including chores, food prep, room care, hygiene, grocery shopping outside maintenance etc.
4. Members must participate in discipleship study sessions to remain in the clubhouse.
5. Foul language and sexually explicit music is not allowed in the clubhouse.
6. No rated R movies should be played in the clubhouse.
7. Computers and videogames shall be timed in order to allow others to play.
8. If lodging, members shall stay for breakfast.
9. Only members ages 10 and over can lodge.
10. There must be an "officer" or at least two house coach present at all times.
11. All meals shall be served at the table and eaten together as a family.
12. Each clubhouse shall have a Clubhouse President, Clubhouse VP, Secretary and Treasurer.
13. Members should show ID and display club attire to enter the clubhouse.
14. Members shall bring at least 1 guest to the house daily.
15. Clubhouse hours are from 4:00pm to 9:00pm Monday-Friday 7:00am-12pm on the Weekends. Summer time hours may vary.
16. Members should spend at least 1 hour reading a book from the clubhouse library or writing an article for the newsletter.
17. Members are allowed to train in the backyard or basement of the clubhouse.
18. Members can park their car or bikes in the garage of the clubhouse.
19. Clubhouse shall be kept clean at all times.
20. We do not condone violence or fighting in the house. Self-defense is only a means for protection.
21. Items of the house are for those who occupy the room. Please don't steal what is freely given to you.
22. Boys are only allowed to lodge for their sports season



23. No earrings or visible tattoos.

Ideally all clubhouses will consists of the following rooms or living areas:

- **Living Room**
- **Board or Meeting Room**
- **Study or Library**
- **Kitchen (Dining Hall)**
- **Offices-** In each office should be a T.V., Computer, Desk & Shelves, IPAD, Furniture and Dry-Erase Boards and Coaches gear and Mailboxes
- **Game Room (Brotherhood Room)**
- **Barber's Chair**
- **Computer Room**
- **Weight Room**
- **General Store (Comets Dollars)**
- **Trophy Room**
- **Storage Room/Shed**
  - **Equipment Room**
  - **Garage**
  
- **Nurse's Office**
- **Shared Bathrooms w/ Lockers**
- **Laundry Room (Basement)**
- **Bedrooms: Resident Hall style**





## Dues

**Membership Dues:** Dues are monthly or annual fees paid for club members (youth and families) to participate in activities and events. Members are responsible for keeping dues payments current. Coaches are initiated into leadership and have certain responsibilities in order to maintain membership in the club. Dues are used solely for the operations of the club and helps pay for the living expenses of the clubhouse.

## Fundraising

Members must develop ways to “earn” for club activities which should include various fundraisers. As an incentive to fundraising, members are offered recognitions, such as credits toward sports activities or uniforms. The recognitions are usually cumulative, so that a member who earns the recognition for selling the “most” items will also get the “most” box items. Members may choose to earn more money for their club instead of recognitions if they are working toward a goal such as a trip or other expensive activities. This type of fundraising is intended to teach members valuable skills in planning, teamwork, finance, organization, communication, and goal setting. Also, award badges and promotion exist for sales.

Each member operates its own sale of an item. Approximately 70% of the proceeds stay in the club to support members in that area, including a portion, approximately 15%, that goes directly to the member for selling the items. The profits are divided by a formula, with members receiving about 10-15% of the retail price, the council more than 50%, and the manufacturer the remainder. Some members may be “taxed” more than others. The senior members sets the rate taxes are issued based off what’s made and the level of the member.

Revenues at all levels are used to pay for events and activities for the club, maintenance of the sports programs and other properties, sale incentives, and club administrative costs. Members can sell door to door, through a form, or from a cart/bag to on-goers on the street (Commuters, bystanders, etc.)



## Attire

Our club attire is our business card and represents the brotherhood that we've established. All members shall wear the official club attire while in the clubhouse or participating in sports which is as followed:

- ❖ Members are to wear an official Austin Comets hat or knit cap.
- ❖ For Polo's, Shirts, Jackets or Sweaters the color is the following based on ranking:
  - Black: Originals (Vote)
  - Grey: Senior Members & House Officers (Vote)
  - White: Current Members
  - Red: Rookies (Prospective Members)
- ❖ Official Club Shoe is: Jordan (Black, White and Grey)
- ❖ Comets Jerseys
  - Captains get the letter C on their jerseys, shirts or sweaters.
  - Levels of Membership, Job positions and Rankings are also put on their Jerseys, Polo's, Hats as patches.
- ❖ Once a member has completed 3 years of service, they are given a special ring with rankings, level of membership, job positions for with the Comets logo and diamonds for every year after. They'll also receive a letter for their jacket.
- ❖ For different clubs located in different cities there flag should be displayed on all uniforms on the right side of the heart.
- ❖ Once a member has met transition criteria he can move to the next step and receive a patch and color. Every ranking must mentor another person below their rank except for prospects.
- ❖ Senior Members have Chicago flag on their uniforms
- ❖ Rookies are not allowed to wear the Comet's logo, colors, jerseys or patches until they have finished their initiation.
- ❖ Once becoming a member or receiving a promotion, during the ceremony member are presented with an **official Comets Box**/which include specifically Comets **City Survival Kit (Keep on them at all times)**, Shoes, Hats, Shirts, Badges/Patches etc.



## Traditions

There are special ceremonies, occasions and important life traditions that our club take part in including funerals, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, retirements, birthday parties, prom and births of a new child (bridal showers), bachelor and bachelorette parties.

- Funerals
  - Senior members and officers shall pay their respects on behalf of the club to the death of members.
  - Senior members shall present attire/jerseys and club flag to the mourning families.
  - All club members shall wear black tape on their jerseys for respect.
  - Members shall wear attire to funerals and frame jerseys.
- Weddings
  - Members should help and participate in the wedding ceremony.
  - Members shall present a gift to the the bride and groom.
- Graduations, Retirement Parties, Birthday/Sweet Sixteen Parties, Anniversary, Prom, Father's Day
  - Members shall present a gift to the graduating member.
  - Members shall perform a special ritual to simulate a right to passage for the young men.
  - Members shall wear their club attire (Special Blazer with logo and dress slacks) to all functions.

Salute: When greeting a fellow member, to salute them properly they must put hands together in remembrance of prayer to signal unity, humility and dependence on Jesus Christ.



## **Other Procedures**

Grandfather Clause: Former Austin Comets participants who were part of the club before the inception of the constitution will be initiated into the new club without going through the new member initiation process.

Challenges: A Senior member is allowed to challenge someone's leadership if there is negligence that needs to be brought to the table.

Members Hurting Other Members: This is cause for grounds of immediate excommunication from the club.

All rules or guidelines not written in this book should be taken up with the leadership team and put to a vote.

Safe Community: Dumb Question, One Person Talks at a Time, Not Forced, Confidentiality and No Put Downs.