



Dream Team Policies & Guidelines

Mission: The Dream Team uses the power of a bicycle to assist youth in developing a positive approach to life's challenges.

Team Purpose: Dream Team provides young adults with opportunities to build confidence, set goals, and create a healthy lifestyle through mentor-based interactions centered around bicycling. The bicycle is used as a tool to inspire and motivate young people, encourage lifelong wellness, and build confidence through accomplishment. Completing a 400+ mile bike ride across the state gives the participant a tangible sense of achievement, as well as a framework for setting and achieving life goals.

Charter Sponsors: YMCA, Bike World, and Des Moines Register / RAGBRAI

Background:

In 1973, two Des Moines Register columnists challenged themselves to ride their bicycles across Iowa. This challenge started what would become the largest, longest, and oldest bicycle-touring event in the world. The Des Moines Register has sponsored an annual bicycle ride across Iowa since that year. The event is known as RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa™). What started as a ride with a group of casual friends has grown to include thousands of people of all ages, from across the country and various parts of the world.

In 1996, a concern for disadvantaged and at-risk youth caused a small group of Des Moines cyclists (Jim Green, Herb Rogers, Frank Owens, and J. D. Hall) to discuss how these youngsters could participate in RAGBRAI. They wanted youth who otherwise would not have the opportunity to experience the sense of fellowship, accomplishment and goal setting that participation in RAGBRAI brings. They also wanted to get them off the streets and away from non-productive activities. Working as a grassroots organization, they successfully obtained equipment, recruited, and trained youth to participate in Dream Team activities in 1997. This group rode along with their adult mentors on RAGBRAI XXV, as the first "Dream Team." The Des Moines Register & RAGBRAI, Bike World and Dream Team mentor John Reese are primarily responsible for securing resources and funding for The Dream Team. The Des Moines Riverfront YMCA has worked hand and hand with the Register and Bike World in providing its resources for Dream Team activities since the beginning.

A nonprofit organization, known as PACE (Porter Avenue Center for Education) provides support through some of its staff and several PACE youth have participated in Dream Team activities. In recent years, The Success Program of the Des Moines Public Schools has provided support through staff and youth participants.

2014 – Air Force Cycling Team partnership: On RAGBRAI 2016 a Dream Team rider was in a minor bike accident and hit her head. Air Force Cycling Team (AFCT) came upon the scene, one diverted bike traffic and one triaged the rider. The mentor called 911. The rider was distraught and crying, the AFCT rider held her hand and promised he would stay until the ambulance arrived. He helped her into the ambulance and the medics took over. She had told him she really wanted a waffle and was only 5 miles from the food stand. At the ER, after all checked out well, the rider was unsure if she told the AFCT thank you. She was also sad about not getting the waffle.

After RAGBRAI Dream Team messaged AFCT through Facebook and retold the story and how much she and the team were grateful for their care. The director of the AFCT found the rider who helped the youth and became a team partner after all the stories were told.

Since then, a friendship has been formed. AFCT has done virtual training with the team, sent notes of encouragement. They've joined the Dream Team for meals at camp and encouraged us on the route. One has even driven from Texas to join us at a regular campout so he could get more time with the team.

A pursuit of a waffle and a bump on the head has led to priceless partnership inspiring the team members of AFCT and Dream Team!

2020 - Dream Team became a non-profit: In 2020, under the leadership of Brian O'Leary, Dream Team became an official non-profit and formed a 501c3. A board of directors was elected which allowed Dream Team to further tell its story and plan for the future.

2022 - Dream Team celebrates 25 years: Throughout the 2022 Dream Team season, there were numerous opportunities to celebrate the 25th year of Dream Team. The team had special speaker series to encourage the youth and a scavenger hunt on RAGBRAI that everyone could participate in. In August the Dream Team celebrated 25 years with a huge family reunion at Water Works Park in Des Moines. Over 300 past riders, mentors, and supporters attended this reunion.

KEY TERMS & PHRASES

Age Requirements - the minimum age at which The Dream Team will accept a youth for participation in Dream Team activities. (*See Eligibility, page 6*)

Applications - for participation will include a Dream Team Information Form, Dream Team Pledge, and a Liability Release Form.

Cut-off Date - refers to the date applications must be submitted for a youth to participate in Dream Team activities. The cut-off date is currently February 1. Any youth wishing to join the team after this date must submit to an interview to determine whether he or she should be allowed to participate.

Dream Team Leadership Committee - governs the operation of the Dream Team under the direction of the Executive Director; the Committee is responsible for recruitment, training, publicity, and other administrative tasks.

Dream Team Board of Directors – governs the overall direction of the organization. The Board of Directors are responsible for activities which do not fall under the direction of the Leadership Committee. One of the main functions of the Board of Directors is to support and encourage the Leadership Committee and mentors.

Guest Riders – will be allowed to ride on training rides with the Dream Team no more than two times per year if approved by leadership to do so. All guest riders will be assigned to a specific mentor for each ride.

Individual Assessments - the purpose is to observe the youth throughout training so that we can address deficiencies as they occur. Our goal is to get as many youth participating in training to complete training and RAGBRAI. When we recognize a deficiency, we must point it out to the youth so that it can be addressed.

Mentors — individuals from the chaire committee and members selected by the committee who ride and train with the youth. The minimum age to be eligible as a mentor is age 21 by the start of RAGBRAI.

Recruitment - will be conducted through school counselors and other contacts in youth programs who are familiar with our Mission and Purpose and know the type of youngster who could benefit from our program.

Transportation – each youth is required to get to and from training / activities on their own, allowing enough time to be fully prepared for the start of training – fill water bottle, air up tires, etc. At no time shall a mentor provide youth a ride to or from training or activities.

Training - Training is that which all youth and mentors are required to participate. Youth are required to complete a minimum amount of training to participate in RAGBRAI. Indoor training begins in March on Monday and Thursday evenings. Outdoor training begins in April and concludes the week before RAGBRAI, with training rides on Monday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings until the ride is completed. There are also three weekend campouts prior to RAGBRAI.

Training Rides - Training rides are set up by the Ride Coordinator to prepare participants for RAGBRAI. Rides will begin as soon as weather permits and bikes are available, usually around late March. Rides are scheduled for three times a week. One training ride will take place on Monday, another on Thursday, and another Saturday.

Riding Etiquette - Involves respect for fellow riders and others on the road. Riding sensibly and not recklessly. The Dream Team adheres to the principles of riding etiquette set forth in the RAGBRAI brochure, "RIDE RIGHT®".

Youth - Youth who are ages 13-18 who need additional mentoring. As part of the application process the youth will have a professional referral from a counselor, therapist, JCO (*judicial court officer*), clergy, etc.

EQUIPMENT AND ATTIRE

Participants shall wear appropriate clothing during all training and events. Attire deemed appropriate shall include biking or gym shorts, biking tights, biking shirts, T-shirts and athletic shoes. Loose fitting clothing is not appropriate and youth will not be allowed to participate after being warned that their clothing is not acceptable for training. At no time will any youth be allowed to train or ride on RAGBRAI without a shirt. Participants shall wear helmets at all times during training rides and RAGBRAI.

An eligible youth will receive the use of necessary equipment and attire to complete RAGBRAI. Equipment, attire and food are purchased with donations received from individuals, bike teams and businesses. Some equipment and attire is also donated by various businesses.

As a reward for successful completion of RAGBRAI, all youth, excluding previous Dream Team Members, will receive the bike they used during training. All members, at the completion of RAGBRAI, will be allowed to keep their helmet, biking gloves, team bike jersey and bike shorts.

Youth are encouraged to maintain their equipment and attire in an acceptable condition. Youth will be properly instructed on bicycle safety and equipment care and needs. The Dream Team program will pay for basic routine maintenance costs of keeping bikes issued by the team in working order. This includes tune-ups, tubes, tires, etc. Any costs above basic maintenance will be the responsibility of the youth and his/her family.

If a returning youth chooses to use a personal bicycle during training and on RAGBRAI, The Dream Team will pay for tubes only (fixing flat tires). All other maintenance costs incurred through use of a personal bicycle will be the responsibility of the youth's family.

RIDING ETIQUETTE

The Dream Team teaches respect for fellow riders and others on the road; riding sensibly and not recklessly. The Dream Team adheres to the principles of riding etiquette set forth in the RAGBRAI brochure, "RIDE RIGHT®".

CAMPING TRIPS

Overnight camping training rides are a great opportunity for team building and training. Youth are expected to attend all camping functions. Youth must attend both days of the campout weekends. Additionally, youth must attend at least two out of three of the scheduled campout weekends.

Youth must learn how to set up and dismantle a tent properly and clean up the campsite. Youth will observe curfews and meet expectations established by Mentors for lights out, sleeping arrangements, proper sleeping attire and tent checks.

Dream Team Tent Policy while on campout rides:

- Male and female youth will occupy separate tents
- Large tents are discouraged because of the stability during storms, the time it takes to set up and take down, and the excessive noise from multiple tent occupants
- There will be a maximum occupancy of two (2) related campers per tent

Youth must notify a Mentor when leaving the campsite or leaving the camping area. All youth must be accompanied by a Mentor when leaving the campsite. Youth are discouraged from horseplay of any type. All youth will eat with the Dream Team during meals unless express permission is given to the contrary.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is based upon youth who have a professional referral and have completed the registration process prior to the RAGBRAI's registration deadline and youth who have successfully completed the Dream Team's training program.

Youth, preferably, are to be at least 13 years of age by the date of RAGBRAI. However, we recognize that some youth mature sooner than others both mentally and physically. Therefore, we will accept youth who are younger, provided they have demonstrated that they are mentally and physically capable of handling training requirements.

However, the Dream Team will not accept a youth for participation in Dream Team activities if he or she is younger than 12 years of age at the time he or she wishes to sign up for Dream Team activities.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is important in order to build teamwork and prepare physically for the rigors of participating in RAGBRAI. All youth are required to participate in all training and team building activities/events.

- All youth are required to participate in all training and attendance is important. Youth may miss four practices or Dream Team events per month; only one of the four may be a Saturday ride. The fifth absence or second Saturday absence is a strike assigned by the youth coordinator and the contact mentor is required to communicate this with the youth and guardian.
- If youth are not ready to ride at 5 pm, the youth will be sent home and counted as absent for the training ride.
- If youth causes a delay in their riding group launching, a strike will be issued.
- There will be three Dream Team campouts during the training season. Youth may miss one campout. Missing any part of the weekend campout is considered missing the entire campout.

The Leadership Committee has the decision-making authority for dismissing youth from the program for attendance.

DISMISSAL OF YOUTH FROM PROGRAM

A youth's behavior alone will not disqualify him or her from participation in Dream Team activities. Since our targeted youth are troubled youth and many have disciplinary problems, we would not be doing them any good if we allowed them to use their behavior to escape a little hard work. Behavior problems will be dealt with, but in a way which demonstrates that obedience is better served.

The Committee maintains the right to dismiss a youth from the team in the event the youth has acted in any way deemed to be intolerable, offensive to other youth or considered to be detrimental to the Dream Team. Dismissal from the Dream Team is a last resort after all other attempts to conform the youth's activities have failed. A youth may only be dismissed following a full discussion by the Committee of the behavior, and then only after alternative measures have been employed and proven futile.

In considering whether a youth should be dismissed, the nature of the conduct and the seriousness of the behavior must be addressed. All reasonable efforts must be taken to correct the behavior by the Committee before the youth is dismissed from the program. Prior to dismissal, it must be determined that the youth has a problem not just with an individual.

His or her behavior must be such that it defeats the objectives of the program. In the event law enforcement becomes involved, under the appropriate circumstances, the youth will be summarily dismissed from the team.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Participants must obey all laws. This means no smoking or drinking if the youth is underage. Drugs will not be allowed. Any unauthorized use of drugs will result in the immediate dismissal from the Dream Team. All medications are to be administered through Mentors certified to administer medication. Youth will adhere to all curfews and group check in times.

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to support youth in their participation and be involved in social activities sponsored to recruit youth. Parents shall advise a Mentor before removing a youth from the training site to ensure that the youth's whereabouts are known.

If possible, parents shall provide transportation for youths to and from Dream Team activities. Parents may not act as a mentor for the Dream Team. Youth are to be independent of parents during rides and RAGBRAI.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Dream Team welcomes support from community groups and as support systems or youth referrals. The Dream Team welcomes the opportunity to become involved in community efforts and will be presented in an honorable and respectable manner.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL CONCERNS

The Dream Team reserves the right to deny a youth's participation based upon health and medical concerns. Each youth will be accepted to the team on an individual basis and all medical and health concerns will be considered at that time.

Each youth's parent or guardian shall notify the Dream Team of any health or medical issues prior to participation and sign a waiver upon being accepted into the program.

Each youth shall be reviewed to determine if there are any health or medical concerns that should be addressed. Participants and their parent(s) or guardian(s) assume all risk before, during and after any Dream Team event.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Snacks may be provided to youth on training rides. Dream Team will provide meals on RAGBRAI and campouts