



The Official Miss Gulf Coast Equality Handbook

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The Official Miss Gulf Coast Equality Handbook

The handbook provides the rules, regulations, and guidelines for the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant and any other sister franchises that may be added in the future. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to these standards to maintain fairness and professionalism. The handbook applies to all parties involved. In the event additional franchises are established, the primary difference between divisions is eligibility requirements. Any reference to the word crown will also apply to the queen in full character with the crown represented.

Miss Gulf Coast Equality Responsibility Summary

The primary function of the Miss Gulf Coast Equality titleholder is to promote the official Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant and to serve as a field ambassador for Gulf Coast Equality. The titleholder is expected to behave professionally both onstage and offstage and to uphold the tradition of being a “Symbol of Diversity and Inclusion,” established by the former titleholders and the board.

Miss Gulf Coast Equality Requirements

- Valid form of government identification.
- Contestants must be 18 years of age.
- Contestants must be a legal United States resident with a valid tax ID or social security number.
- Any contestant found to have knowingly provided false or misleading information on their application may be disqualified from competition and may be deemed ineligible for future participation.
- The Board of Directors reserves the right to prohibit an individual from competing if their conduct, reputation, or actions are determined to be detrimental to the integrity, mission, or reputation of the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant or Gulf Coast Equality. Any such decision will be documented and communicated to the affected party.
- Former contestants (excluding former winners) of the Miss Gulf Coast Equality pageant may not judge the pageant moving forward.

The Board of Directors and Pageant Chair

The board's core purpose is to oversee compliance with all rules and regulations to ensure the pageant serves the highest interest of Gulf Coast Equality.

Board Composition:

Dawn Taylor: *President*
Logan Williams: *Vice President*
(Pageant Representative)
Jonathan Starko: *Secretary*
Theresa Avina: *Treasurer*
John Perkins: *Festival Chair*

Jules Savage
Buddy Johnson
Ali Hathaway
Lela Treacle
Brittany Warner

Administrative Responsibilities of Miss Gulf Coast Equality

Miss Gulf Coast Equality and the Board will maintain full oversight of the pageant and conduct inquiries regarding any judge selected. To ensure transparency and the integrity of the pageant and the Board, all official communication must include the reigning queen and the Board. All disputes will be resolved in a professional manner that prioritizes the best interests of both the pageant and Gulf Coast Equality. Furthermore, board members reserve the discretionary authority to disqualify any judge, contestant, and/or scorecard that fails to align with the official established criteria for any segment of the competition.

Code of Conduct Standards for Miss Gulf Coast Equality and 1st Alternate

By entering Miss Gulf Coast Equality, all participants, including the contestants, former titleholders, judges, and the Board, commit to upholding the professional standards outlined in this handbook and in all official communications from Gulf Coast Equality. Representatives of the pageant must always present themselves professionally, ensuring their conduct, wardrobe, and entertainment epitomize the organization's brand. This includes being mindful of alcohol intake and refraining from smoking while in the crown, avoiding profanity during official gatherings, and never lecturing the audience. Furthermore, all parties must act with respect toward the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant and its board. Altercations and demeaning behavior, including social media, are strictly prohibited; instead, individuals are expected to resolve conflicts peacefully and act only as mediators when necessary. Failure to adhere to these standards or causing substantial disruption to the pageant and/or Gulf Coast Equality may result in disciplinary action.

Social Media Policy

All participants within the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant are expected to uphold the organization's reputation as a symbol of Diversity and Inclusion by maintaining a culture of mutual respect towards the pageant, its participants, the board, and Gulf Coast Equality. While the organization does not actively police social media, the winner and contestants are expected to conduct themselves within the highest degree of professionalism. This commitment to professional integrity includes avoiding public rants, refraining from online bullying, and ensuring one does not purposefully instigate unnecessary drama. All parties involved with the Miss Gulf Coast Pageant should remain mindful of their digital footprint, as all posts and tagged imagery should reflect the dignified standards of Gulf Coast Equality. Contestants, titleholders, and participants retain the right to express personal opinions; however, public statements should not imply endorsement or official representation of Gulf Coast Equality unless specifically authorized to do so.

Promotional Photography Requirements (Prize Package Item)

The winner must provide a high-resolution promotional headshot for advertising purposes. This headshot session will be included in the prize package for the winner. We encourage artistic yet tasteful photography, preferably against a solid background and free of any watermarks or photo credits.

Disqualification of Contestants, Potential Contestants, or Affiliated Parties

Violation of any rules and regulations may result in immediate disqualification from the pageant. Gulf Coast Equality reserves the right to disqualify any contestant whose actions, or those of their affiliates, are deemed detrimental to the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant. While every attempt is made to investigate complaints with all appropriate parties, contestants may be suspended immediately if a credible source verifies a claim. Specifically, the use, sale, or distribution of illegal drugs or prohibited substances is strictly forbidden for all contestants, participants, and their teams. This policy will remain in effect for the active titleholder through their reign. Contestants are expected to ensure that their assistants, support staff, and guests conduct themselves in a professional manner. Repeated misconduct or failure to address inappropriate behavior may result in administrative deductions, disciplinary action, or disqualification.

Revocation of the Crown, 1st Alternate, and Remaining Court

Gulf Coast Equality reserves the right to review the conduct of all titleholders and alternates across every level of competition. Any actions deemed detrimental to the Gulf Coast Equality, including illegal drug use, intoxication while representing a title, or chronic tardiness- may result in sanctions or title revocation. If a title is revoked, the individual must return all prize money and physical awards to Gulf Coast Equality. If this occurs with less than six months remaining in the term, the next alternate will ascend to the position. The formal revocation process involves a thorough investigation where all parties are allowed to address the allegations. The Pageant Chair and the Gulf Coast Equality board will then adjudicate the request and notify the parties via email and phone. Once a decision is rendered, the affected party has 10 calendar days to file an appeal, after which the final ruling is binding.

Miss Gulf Coast Equality Prize Package:

- Official Miss Gulf Coast Equality Crown
- Official Miss Gulf Coast Equality Sash
- Professional Promotional Photography Session
- Official Recognition as Miss Gulf Coast Equality
- Sponsor Gifts and Awards
- Promotional and Performance Opportunities arranged through Gulf Coast Equality

- Additional prizes and benefits secured through sponsorships and community partnerships.

The Board of Directors reserves the right to modify the prize package based upon sponsorship availability and organizational resources at any time.

Resignation of Titleholder

Should the reigning Miss Gulf Coast Equality voluntarily resign their title, written notification must be submitted to the Pageant Chair and Gulf Coast Equality Board of Directors. Upon acceptance of the resignation, the First Alternate shall be offered the title. If declined, succession will continue down the line of placement until the title is accepted or otherwise determined by the Board of Directors.

General Rules and Regulations of the Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant

The Miss Gulf Coast Equality titleholder is responsible for upholding and enforcing all pageant rules during their “give-up” to the best of their ability. This requires a thorough understanding of The Miss Gulf Coast Equality Handbook and partnership with The Gulf Coast Equality Board of Directors, which serves as the evolving standard. While the handbook provides comprehensive guidelines, it is recognized as a "guideline" that may occasionally require a judgment call in "gray areas"; in such instances, the titleholder must consult with the Pageant Chair and the Gulf Coast Equality board to ensure all decisions align with the organization's standards.

Appearance & Attire

- **General Image:** Miss Gulf Coast Equality must always maintain a professional appearance, whether in or out of character. Presentation must reflect the integrity of Gulf Coast Equality. The Pageant Chair and the Board of Gulf Coast Equality reserve the right to determine the acceptability of all attire.
- **The Crown:** The crown must be worn during all public appearances where the Gulf Coast Equality Board requests the presence of their titleholder.
- **Exclusivity:** Only the reigning queen may wear the crown. Former titleholders are allowed to wear their sash from the year of their reign.
- **Event Logistics:** Miss Gulf Coast Equality must arrive at the pageant in character unless they are completing their entire package on-site.

The Crown

The Miss Gulf Coast Equality crown must be held in the highest regard and maintained in pristine condition throughout the titleholder's reign. The crown should be worn during official appearances and events representing Gulf Coast Equality whenever practical and appropriate. Exceptions may be approved by the Pageant Chair or Board of Directors. Furthermore, the titleholder must ensure their hairstyle is complementary to the crown without obscuring it. To ensure longevity, the crown and all associated jewelry must be kept clean.

No Smoking

To maintain the high standards of professional conduct expected of a titleholder, the reigning Miss Gulf Coast Equality is strictly prohibited from smoking at any point during an event, including while performing, mingling, or observing the contest. Smoking or vaping may only occur in designated areas approved by the venue and must remain out of public view while representing the title. This rule always applies, whether the titleholder is in character or out of the crown.

Administrative & Professional Conduct

- **Conflict Resolution:** All complaints must be submitted to the Pageant Chair and the Gulf Coast Equality Board.
- **Publicity Requirements:** Provide a satisfactory Official Photograph wearing the crown within 30 days of coronation.
- **Communication Standards:** Respond to official pageant and Gulf Coast Equality communications in a timely manner, generally within 48 hours unless prevented by work, travel, illness, or family obligations.
- **Sobriety:** Maintain professional decorum by never becoming overly intoxicated while representing the title; the Pageant Chair and the Board of Directors reserve the right to define excessive consumption.

Promotion & Growth

- **Pageant Development:** Collaborate on the creation, advertising, and execution of the pageant theme.
- **System Expansion:** Actively motivate potential contestants to grow the pageant's base.
- **Public Relations:** Maintain a positive reputation on and off stage, showing consistent concern for the needs of Gulf Coast Equality, contestants, and the audience.

Preliminary Pageant Oversight

- **Logistics & Mingling:** Arrive early to greet venue management and audience members to ensure accessibility and a smooth event flow.
- **Contestant Support:** Frequently consult with contestants to ensure their needs (such as dressing room requirements) are met.
- **Judging & Observation:** Observe all phases of competition from the judges' table to monitor for scoring irregularities or bias.
- **Scoring Validation:** Review and sign off on all score sheets.
- **Orientation:** Conduct thorough orientations for both contestants and judges.

Performance Standards

- **Professional Media:** Ensure all performance music and video are professionally mixed prior to arrival; DJs are **not** responsible for mixing tracks on-site.

- ***Entertainment Value:*** Provide a variety of entertainment levels and fashion choices to maintain high production value for frequent supporters. The winner must perform at least (1) Crowning number at the end of her reign.

First Alternate

The first alternate must be prepared to step into the titleholder's role should the winner be unable to fulfill their duties. While the first alternate maintains the right to decline this promotion, the title will then pass down the line of succession until accepted. If no contestant assumes the role, the Gulf Coast Board of Directors reserves the authority to determine how the title will be represented. All alternates remain bound by the standard rules and regulations detailed in this handbook.

Application for Contestants

The Pageant Chair and The Gulf Coast Equality Board will provide all contestants with a comprehensive application package. This application will include details such as pageant dates, times, and location, as well as specific category descriptions and scheduling requirements for roll call. To ensure a seamless competition, contestants are expected to be fully familiar with all rules and regulations before arrival. The current handbook will be posted on the official Gulf Coast Equality website. Applications are initiated by contacting Logan Williams, Pageant Chair, at logan@gcequality.org. Upon receipt of the required registration fee, contestants will be provided with the official application packet and all necessary competition materials. Completed applications must be returned in a timely manner. Additional information, schedules, and competition details will be provided throughout the registration process. Same-day applications may be accepted at the discretion of the Pageant Chair and may be subject to an increased entry fee.

Orientation for Contestants

To ensure all participants are fully prepared, the Pageant Chair must conduct a comprehensive registration and orientation session at the designated time and location. Attendance is mandatory for both contestants and the reigning Miss Gulf Coast Equality, who will provide essential verbal guidance, including personal testimony, category insights, and clarifications on pageant-specific rules. The Pageant Chair is required to supply a Written Pageant Schedule that explicitly details all roll call requirements.

***Please note: Punctuality is critical! Any contestant arriving late to orientation or a scheduled roll call will incur a one-point administrative deduction and will automatically become contestant number one.**

Orientation for Judges

The Pageant Chair is required to conduct a detailed orientation for the judging panel to ensure they are fully informed on every aspect of the preliminary pageant. The reigning Miss Gulf Coast Equality must be in attendance to assist with verbal instructions, providing personal testimony and clarity on Category Descriptions, scoring procedures, and professional etiquette. At this orientation, a Lead Judge must be designated before the first scored category begins. To facilitate a professional environment, the Pageant Chair should provide each judge with a comprehensive judge's book containing all necessary scorecards and worksheets, as well as a written event schedule.

Judging Integrity & Conflict of Interest

Judges shall remain impartial and evaluate contestants solely on the established criteria for competition. Any judge with a significant personal, romantic, financial, professional, or familial relationship with a contestant must disclose the relationship to the Pageant Chair prior to competition. The Pageant Chair and Board reserve the right to replace or remove a judge if a conflict of interest may compromise the integrity of the competition.

Categories of Competition, Category Descriptions, & Contest Scoring:

The official score sheet and category weighting for the current pageant season will be provided to all contestants prior to competition. The Pageant Chair and Gulf Coast Equality Board reserve the right to revise category weighting and scoring procedures between pageant seasons to ensure fairness and continued growth of the system.

Presentation: Contestants will be evaluated on poise, confidence, stage presence, appearance, and overall presentation.

Evening Gown: Contestants will be evaluated on elegance, confidence, fit, fashion, stage presence, and overall presentation.

Talent: Contestants will be evaluated on entertainment value, creativity, execution, audience engagement, professionalism, and overall effectiveness of the presentation.

Administrative Point Deductions

These regulated infractions include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting talent music that exceeds the 7-minute performance limit.
- Submitting competition music that is not appropriately labeled.
 - **All media must have the contestant's name.**
- Submitting an incomplete application.
- Tardiness for roll call and contestant orientation.
- Excessive use of profanity

- Non-Compliance with standards of conduct within the dressing room.
- Disruptive behavior by a contestant or their team.

Competition Music for Talent

Contestants must submit their talent music in high-quality condition. Music will be collected on the day of the pageant. The DJ and Contestant can partner together to ensure the music is stage-ready. When turning in talent music, the drive or CD should only have (1) track. Please note: point deductions will be applied for music that is improperly labelled.

Talent Competition Rules

- Talent presentations may not exceed seven (7) minutes in length.
- Live vocals are permitted.
- Contestants may utilize props and assistants as part of their presentation.
- Contestants are responsible for the setup and removal of all props.
- Open flames, pyrotechnics, glitter, confetti, liquids, and hazardous materials are prohibited unless approved in advance by the Pageant Chair.
- All talent presentations must comply with venue regulations and safety requirements.

Former Titleholders

The Pageant Chair and Gulf Coast Equality proudly invite back all former titleholders to participate in the current pageant season. Further, an Emcee will be selected to host the current pageant and follow the guidelines listed under the Emcee Book.

Emcee Book

To ensure a professional product, the emcee will use the following articles and materials:

- Pageant Schedule
- Judges Biographies
- Evening Gown Scripts provided by the contestants
- Talent performance descriptions and introductions
- Sponsors
- Acknowledgments and any additional information
- Progress the pageant as efficiently as possible to maintain high energy.
- Use Visual Cues from the head judge to continue the competition.
- Ensure all placements and awards are clearly printed to prevent errors during crowning.

Food and Beverage Policy

The Emcee, Judges, Reigning Queen, and contestants should not consume any alcohol during any portion of the competition. Further, the above should not be seen eating during any portion of the competition. However, during breaks in competition, the above may choose to eat and

consume a non-alcoholic beverage. The Pageant Chair and Gulf Coast Equality reserve the right to make any changes to this policy and enforce consequences for violations.

Outgoing Queen

The Outgoing Miss Gulf Coast Equality is required to perform three numbers during their give-up.

- Opening Number to start the pageant
- Open Number to start Talent
- Give up Number to close the pageant before crowning.

Post Pageant Report

After the pageant, the outgoing queen and the reigning queen will report to the next board meeting to review the positives and negatives of the pageant. Queens need to be prepared to debrief the Pageant Chair and the Board of Directors.

Tie Score

In the event of a tie, the contestant with the highest talent score will be named the winner.

Dressing Room Policies & Conduct

To maintain a professional environment, all contestants and assistants must strictly adhere to the following regulations. Contestants are held fully accountable for the conduct of their assistants and support staff. Violations will result in administrative point deductions or immediate disqualification.

- **Smoke-Free Environment:** Smoking is strictly prohibited in all dressing room areas.
- **Assistant Limits:** Only **one** assistant per contestant is permitted in the dressing room at any time.
- **Prohibited Items:** Only non-alcoholic items are allowed in the dressing room.
- **Room Supervision:** An assigned **Dressing Room Monitor** has full authority over the space. They may escort any individual out at their discretion to ensure safety and order.
- **Station Setup:** While basic mirrors are provided at each station, contestants and entertainers are permitted to bring their own mirrors if desired.

Any specific variations to these rules must be clearly communicated to all contestants during registration.

Miss Gulf Coast Equality Pageant Schedule of Events:

- 1.** Overture & Opening Remarks from Emcee and Gulf Coast Equality
- 2.** Opening Number by the Reigning Queen
- 3.** Presentation
- 4.** Entertainment
- 5.** Evening Gown
- 6.** Judges Biographies
- 7.** Second Number by the Current Reigning Queen
- 8.** Entertainment
- 9.** Talent
- 10.** Entertainment
- 11.** Final Number by Reigning Queen
- 12.** Crowning