

Best Practice Recommendations For Return to Sport Post-COVID-19 For Secondary Schools

BACKGROUND & SCOPE OF SERVICES

The following guidelines are developed to provide recommendations for the resocialization of youth and scholastic sports during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, our goal is to protect the health and safety of student-athletes and the coaches and staff who oversee them while identifying some best-practices for a safe, progressive return to athletic activity.

Documents from various health organizations including the CDC, WHO, the National Athletic Trainers' Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as sports organizations such as the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, NCAA, and National Federation of High School Sports Association (NFHS) were reviewed in the development of these guidelines. We must recognize that the body of knowledge around COVID-19 is expanding rapidly, causing frequent changes and updates to the recommendations from these organizations. Consumers of our guidelines should review referenced documents to insure timely, accurate, and up-to-date information.

Any resocialization of youth and scholastic sport must be considered in the context of federal, state, local, and school division orders and policies as well as pronouncements from state high school sports associations. It will be these agencies that dictate the process by which society in general is re-opened in a progressive, thoughtful way. These guidelines are meant to identify ways to mitigate risk specific to return to activity following a long hiatus and to the reduction of the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission during the phases of resocialization, it is imperative that each individual involved in the sports program take personal responsibility in prevention efforts. The following are the roles and responsibilities of each cohort for risk mitigation:

Student-Athletes

- Continue to be in compliance with social distancing and facemask recommendations for yourself at all times that are currently in place within your school, community and organizations.
- Continue to prioritize hand hygiene frequently.
- If you are not feeling well, notify a parent or adult as soon as possible.

Parents

- Continue to reinforce compliance with the social distancing and facemask recommendations for your family that are currently in place in the community at all times.
- Monitor your child for fever and symptoms of COVID-19.
- If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, please keep them at home and contact your physician.
- If your child has recovered from COVID-19, please consult with your physician about a safe return to activity plan.
- Make arrangements to be able to pick up your child from activities in the event that they begin to report symptoms of COVID-19.

Coaches

- Maintain effective communication with members of your team and their families.
- Design effective skill and conditioning activities that:
 - Conform with the social distancing and facemask recommendations currently in place
 - Follow a gradual progression of volume and intensity of activity, ramping up over a period of 2-4 weeks¹
 - Encourage acclimatization to the environment while following existing heat illness guidelines²
 - Take into account individual differences in fitness and skill level among members of the team
- Encourage participation, but avoid making team activities mandatory or assign punishments for missed team activities.
- Model compliance with social distancing and facemask recommendations currently in place in the community and reinforce those practices with members of the team.
- Assist the athletic trainer with pre-activity screening as needed.

Administrators

- Direct sanitation procedures at all facilities.
- Create site-specific risk mitigation policies and practices as needed.
- Acquire the necessary supplies to implement risk mitigation practices.
- Manage the schedule of team activities to prevent more than one team from being on campus at any given time. If more than one team must be present, schedules should be staggered to allow one team to be screened at a time and no facility should be shared by more than one team.
- Assist the athletic trainer with pre-activity screening as needed.

Athletic Trainer

- Perform pre-activity screening on coaches and student-athletes prior to practice.
- Evaluate and modify existing emergency action plans (EAPs), lightning plans, and heat illness response plans to conform with social distancing and facemask guidelines currently in place in the community.
- Direct the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this document.
- Assist administrators in the development and implementation of site-specific risk mitigation policies and practices as necessary.
- Assess and maintain the inventory of supplies necessary to implement risk mitigation strategies.
- If a student-athlete reports symptoms of COVID-19 or has a fever, isolate him or her from the group and notify parents that they should pick up their child and consult with their physician.
- If a coach reports symptoms or has a fever, isolate him or her from the group. If that coach was the sole supervisor, parents should be contacted to make arrangements for their children to be transported home.
- Model compliance with social distancing and facemask recommendations currently in place in the community and reinforce those practices with members of the team.

INDIVIDUAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES

While COVID-19 is present in the community, each individual must take personal responsibility to follow the recommendations of public health officials to reduce the risk of transmission. As stay-at-home restrictions are eased and our movement and interaction increases, these practices become the primary means to prevent illness. The following are individual mitigation strategies that should be practiced by all:

Education on COVID-19

- To increase compliance with public health recommendations, coaches, student-athletes, and parents should receive education on COVID-19 including symptoms, transmission, sanitation, and preventative strategies.
 - The Yale School of Medicine produced a six-minute video entitled, “Infection Prevention for COVID-19: An Illustrated Summary”³ that covers these topics in a concise online format. It can be accessed at <https://covid.yale.edu/media-player/5105/> and should be shared with coaches, parents, and student-athletes and viewed prior to athletic participation.
 - Parents will document viewing of the video on the COVID-19 History and Clearance Form (see Appendix 1)

Face Coverings

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.⁴
- State, local or school district guidelines for cloth face coverings should be strictly followed. Student-athletes and their families should be encouraged to practice social distancing at all times consistent with the recommendations within the community at that time.
- Cloth face coverings should be considered acceptable. There is no need to require or recommend “medical grade” masks for athletic activity.⁵
- Any student who prefers to wear a cloth face covering during a contest should be allowed to do so.⁵
- In the absence of guidelines to the contrary, we recommend that cloth face coverings be worn by students during Phases 1 and 2 as outlined below. Exceptions are swimming, distance running or other high intensity aerobic activity. Cloth face coverings may continue to be used during Phase 3 when not engaging in vigorous activity, such as sitting on the bench during contests, in the locker room and in the athletic training facility.⁵

- Plastic shields covering the entire face (or attached to a helmet) shall not be allowed during contests. Their use during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates.⁵
- Coaches, officials and other contest personnel may wear cloth face coverings at all times during Phases 1 through 3. (Artificial noisemakers such as an air horn or a timer system with an alarm can be used to signal in place of a traditional whistle.)⁵
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.⁶

Social Distancing

- COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs.⁷
- Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19.
- Coaches and student-athletes should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others during athletic activity while similar recommendations are in place in the community.
- Coaches should design drills and conditioning activities that maintain social distancing for participants.
- Coaches and student-athletes should avoid congregating or meeting in dugouts and bleachers during training or practice sessions.⁸
- Student-athletes and their families should be encouraged to practice social distancing at all times consistent with the recommendations within the community at that time.

Handwashing

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- In early phases in which indoor access may be restricted, hand sanitizer must be readily available.
- If portable temporary toilets are utilized, hand sanitizer inventory must be maintained.

INSTITUTIONAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES

When student-athletes return to campus and athletic facilities, procedures must be in place to mitigate the risk of transmission. In addition to individual mitigation strategies, these practices are instrumental to prevent illness. The following are institutional mitigation best practices:

Facility Sanitation

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- The supply inventory necessary for facility sanitation should be maintained by a designated administrator in coordination with the athletic trainer (See Appendix 2).
- The athletic trainer should maintain the sanitation of the athletic training equipment and facility in accordance with the Athletic Training Facility Infection Control Policy (see Appendix 3).
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training facility tables, etc.).
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning home.
- Outdoor facilities (sidewalks, outdoor courts, and turf fields) do not require disinfectant. Only frequently touched surfaces (door handles, handrails, etc.) need to be disinfected.⁹

Scheduling of Activities or Events

- Practices should be scheduled such that only one group is using a particular field or court at a given time.
- Activity start times should be staggered to ensure limited contact and maintained social distance.
- Staggered times also allows for social distancing within parking lots when student-athletes are arriving to and departing practice.

Access to Indoor Facilities

- In the event of an emergency where an AED is needed inside the facility, an individual should be designated as part of the emergency action plan to enter the building and retrieve the emergency equipment.
- A delegated restroom (preferably one closest to an exterior wall with direct access outside for outdoor sport usage) will be identified and properly cleaned and disinfected before and after daily usage.
- In the event of a weather emergency (lightning, heat, etc.), a designated area indoors should be assigned to appropriately and effectively house each team where social distance can be maintained.

PROGRESSIVE RETURN TO ACTIVITY PHASES

Each sport presents a different level of risk for transmission of COVID-19 due to such factors as the ability to social distance during participation, equipment used, and amount of physical contact inherent with the sport. As such, some sports may be able to begin training at different phases than others. The NFHS, based on recommendations from the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee has stratified the risk of various sports in the following classifications.^{5, 10}

Higher Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: Wrestling, football, boys lacrosse, competitive cheer, dance

Moderate Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.

Examples: Basketball, volleyball*, baseball*, softball*, soccer, water polo, gymnastics* (if equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), ice hockey, field hockey, tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, girls lacrosse, crew with two or more rowers in shell, 7 on 7 football
*Could potentially be considered "Lower Risk" with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants

Lower Risk: Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.

Examples: Individual running events, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus), individual swimming, golf, weightlifting, alpine skiing, sideline cheer, single sculling, cross country running (with staggered starts)

The following phases were derived from the NFHS Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities which are in accordance with guidelines published by the White House and CDC available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>.⁵ Not all states are using the same criteria, and what is allowable during specific phases will vary from state to state, or even within a state. The Commonwealth of Virginia released the "Forward Virginia Blueprint" which outlines the criteria for each of three phases.¹⁰ Likewise, the State of North Carolina published "Staying Ahead of the Curve" with a similar three-phase approach.¹¹

These guidelines for return to sport do not specify a timeline for implementation because the "gating" criteria to establish Phase 1 and the further criteria must be met to advance from one phase to the next will be determined by state and/or local governments and must be strictly followed. Rather, our goal is to provide a snapshot of what athletics should look like within the parameters of each phase. As local public health conditions may fluctuate, administrators must be prepared to modify the allowable activities to maintain health and safety.

Phase 1

Pre-workout Screening

- All coaches and students should be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. Screening includes a temperature check.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded on the Pre-Activity Screening Form (see Appendix 4) and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case an individual develops COVID-19.
- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- Individuals with higher risk for severe illness should not oversee or participate in any workouts during Phase 1.

Limitations on Gatherings

- No gathering of more than 10 people at a time (inside or outside).
- Locker rooms should not be utilized during Phase 1. Students should report to workouts in proper gear and immediately return home to shower at end of the workout.
- Workouts should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same 5-10 students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times. If this is not possible indoors, then the maximum number of individuals in the room must be decreased until proper social distancing can occur.

Facilities Cleaning

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual’s use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.

Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment

- There should be no shared athletic equipment (towels, clothing, shoes, or sports specific equipment) between students.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing) individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned after each use and prior to the next workout.
- Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.
- Resistance training should be emphasized as body weight, sub-maximal lifts and use of resistance bands.
- Free weight exercises that require a spotter cannot be conducted while honoring social distancing norms. Safety measures in all forms must be strictly enforced in the weight room.
- Practice in Low risk sports may begin as they can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by student-athletes. Other sport activities and drills must be modified to maintain social distancing and to eliminate sharing of equipment. Examples (including by limited to):
 - A basketball player can shoot with a ball(s), but a team should not practice/pass a single ball among the team where multiple players touch the same ball.
 - A football player should not participate in team drills with a single ball that will be handed off or passed to other teammates. Contact with other players is not allowed, and there should be no sharing of tackling dummies/donuts/sleds.
 - A volleyball player should not use a single ball that others touch or hit in any manner.
 - Softball and baseball players should not share gloves, bats, or throw a single ball that will be tossed among the team. A single player may hit in cages, throw batting practice (with netting as backstop, no catcher). Prior to another athlete using the same balls, they should be collected and cleaned individually.
 - Wrestlers may skill and drill without touching a teammate.
 - Cheerleaders may not practice/perform partner stunts or building. (Chants, jumps, dances without contact are permissible.)
 - Tennis players may do individual drills, wall volleys and serves.
 - Runners should maintain the recommended 6 feet of distancing between individuals

Hydration

- All students shall bring their own water bottle with adequate water for the activity session. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

Phase 2

Pre-Workout/Contest Screening:

- All coaches and students should be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. Screening includes a temperature check.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded on the Pre-Activity Screening Form (see Appendix 4) and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case an individual develops COVID-19.
- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- Individuals with higher risk for severe illness should not oversee or participate in any workouts during Phase 2.

Limitations on Gatherings:

- No gathering of more than 10 people at a time inside. Up to 50 individuals may gather outdoors for workouts.
- If locker rooms or meeting rooms are used, there must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times.
- Workouts should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same 5-10 students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times. If this is not possible indoors, then the maximum number of individuals in the room must be decreased until proper social distancing can occur. Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines and benches during practices. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and coaches.

Facilities Cleaning

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual’s use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.

Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment:

- Lower risk sports practices and competitions may resume (see Potential Infection Risk by Sport below).
- Modified practices may begin for Moderate risk sports.
- There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing or shoes between students.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned intermittently during practices and contests.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all contests and practices.
- Athletic equipment such as bats, batting helmets and catchers gear should be cleaned between each use.
- Maximum lifts should be limited and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar.

Hydration

- All students shall bring their own water bottle with adequate water for the activity session. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

Phase 3**Pre- Workout/Contest Screening**

- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded on the Pre-Activity Screening Form (see Appendix 4) and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case an individual develops COVID-19.
- Individuals with higher risk for severe illness can resume public interactions, but should practice physical distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed.

Limitations on Gatherings

- Gathering sizes of up to 50 individuals, indoors or outdoors.
- When not directly participating in practices or contests, care should be taken to maintain a minimum distance of 3 to 6 feet between each individual. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and coaches.

Facilities Cleaning

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.

- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.

Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment

- Moderate risk sports practices and competitions may begin.
- There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing or shoes between students.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all contests and practices.
- Athletic equipment such as bats, batting helmets and catchers gear should be cleaned between each use. Other equipment, such as hockey helmets/pads, wrestling ear guards, football helmets/other pads, lacrosse helmets/pads/gloves/eyewear should be worn by only one individual and not shared.
- Maximum lifts should be limited and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar.
- Modified practices may begin for Higher risk sports:
 - Continue pre-practice screening as in Phases 1 and 2. Shower immediately after practices/contests.
 - Re-assess epidemiology data and experiences in other states and other levels of competition to determine when Higher risk sports competition may resume.

Hydration

- All students shall bring their own water bottle with adequate water for the activity session. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) may be utilized but must be cleaned after every practice/contest.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pre-Participation Exams

Pre-participation exams are an important way to screen student-athletes for conditions that may expose them to risk of injury, illness, or death during athletic activity. Both the Virginia High School League (VHSL) and the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) require annual pre-participation exams prior to any athletic activity. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to primary care for routine, preventative care such as well-child visits has been extremely limited in most areas.

The NCHSAA has announced that the North Carolina Department of Education has amended its policy on the effective date of the physical such that All student athletes who have a valid Pre-participation Examination (PPE) form for the 2019-2020 season will be allowed a one-year extension through the end of the academic year 2020-2021. An athlete planning to participate in a sport during the 2020-2021 season without a current PPE form (date of physical 3/1/2019 - 5/1/2020) will need to obtain an evaluation/physical before they will be allowed to participate.¹²

The VHSL has not released any changes to the policy. Currently, the 2019-20 VHSL Physical Forms expire on June 30, 2020. Therefore, any student-athlete must obtain a physical prior to any athletic participation moving forward.

Many athletic departments use a mass screening, station-based format at the school to provide a convenient way for student-athletes to obtain their physical. Often, these physicals serve as a fundraiser for the athletic department as well. Due to the group limitations and social distancing requirements during the early phases of re-opening in communities, physicals administered in this format provide significant challenges to remaining compliant with recommendations. Therefore, student-athletes should be advised to seek a physical through their physician or another provider in the community.

Prior to participation, each student-athlete should present a completed COVID-19 History and Clearance Form (see Appendix 1) to provide information regarding any suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and documentation from a physician of recovery and clearance to participate.

Individuals at Higher Risk for Severe Illness

The Centers for Disease Control identifies the following risk factors for an individual developing severe disease due to COVID-19:¹³

- People age 65 years and older
- People of any age with serious underlying health conditions, particularly if not well controlled including:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People with serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised, whether due to cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV/AIDS, prolonged use of corticosteroids or other immune-weakening medications, or any other cause
 - People with severe obesity
 - People with chronic diabetes
 - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - People with liver disease

Student-athletes who have one or more of these risk factors should consult with their physician prior to their return to activity. Coaches and staff should consult with their physician prior to overseeing or attending team activities.

Individuals with Suspected, Confirmed, or Resolved COVID-19 Infections

If an individual has a positive finding on their Pre-Activity Screening Form (see Appendix 4), the following should occur:

- The individual should be separated from the group and advised to wear a face mask.
- His or her parent or guardian should be contacted to arrange for pick up.
- The individual should be advised to contact his or her health care provider
- School officials will be notified per school division policy
- The individual will not be permitted to return to athletics until a note from a physician is presented indicating one of the following scenarios:
 - COVID-19 was ruled out and that the individual is cleared to resume normal athletic activity
 - The individual has partially-recovered from COVID-19 and may begin activity within specified limitations
 - The individual has fully-recovered from COVID-19 and may resume normal activity

If an individual has a confirmed (via testing) or presumed (via clinical findings) case of COVID-19, the following should occur:

- School officials will be notified per school division policy
- The individual will not be permitted to return to athletics until a note from a physician is presented indicating one of the following scenarios:
 - COVID-19 was ruled out and that the individual is cleared to resume normal athletic activity
 - The individual has partially-recovered from COVID-19 and may begin activity within specified limitations
 - The individual has fully-recovered from COVID-19 and may resume normal activity

Acclimatization and Progression of Activity

Data gathered during “normal” times indicates that injuries and deaths due to conditions such as exertional heat illness, exertional rhabdomyolysis, and sudden cardiac death are more likely to occur during periods when student-athletes are transitioning from relative inactivity to regular training. ¹ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been limited or no access to gyms, parks, and youth sports programs since March 2020, creating a much longer period of inactivity. Therefore, coaches and athletic trainers should expect student-athletes to have varying degrees of deconditioning and intolerance to exercise in hot, humid conditions. The following are best practices, adapted from the recommendations of the Inter-Association Task Force for Preventing Sudden Death in Secondary School Athletics Programs: ²

- Conditioning periods should be phased in gradually and progressively to encourage proper exercise acclimatization and to minimize the risk of adverse events. ²
- The first 7 to 10 days (at minimum, the first 4 separate-day workouts) of any new conditioning cycle are referred to as *transitional periods*. ²
- A progressive program of increasing volume, intensity, mode, and duration should be instituted for all transitional periods. ²
- Transitional periods should consist of an appropriate work-to-rest ratio for the sport. This is especially important during serial, intense activity. It is imperative to allow sufficient recovery during training sessions. ²
- New conditioning activities should be introduced gradually. Any new exercise or training drill introduced into a strength-and-conditioning program should be added in a deliberate, gradual fashion. This is particularly important during the early stages of a conditioning program. ²
- Exercise and conditioning activities must not be used as punishment. ²

- Rest breaks should be planned, and the work-to-rest ratio modified to match environmental conditions and the intensity of the practice session.¹
- Student-athletes should be acclimatized to the heat gradually over a 7- to 14-day period.¹
- The heat acclimatization policy in place should be followed and environmental conditions should be monitored. In stressful environmental conditions, practice sessions should be delayed, shortened, or rescheduled.¹

Weight Room Considerations

Strength training is an important component of the preparation for a variety of sports. The COVID-19 pandemic presents some unique challenges that must be addressed in order for student-athletes to safely return to the weight room. The following are best practice recommendations for coaches and student-athletes.

- Cloth face coverings should be worn during weight training.
- Coaches should design workouts that maintain social distancing.
- While social distancing recommendations are in place, students will only use equipment that can be used safely without aid (spotter). As restrictions ease, spotters wearing face coverings may be used on each end of the bar.
- Due to the prolonged hiatus due to the pandemic, coaches should design workouts that are progressive in volume and intensity to reduce the risk of injury.¹

Social Distancing at Games, Matches, and Events

As sports progress from training and practice to actual contests, it is important to continue to implement social distancing practices on the sidelines that would conform to the recommendations within the general community at that time. The following are strategies to maintain social distancing recommended by the NFHS:

- Sidelines and benches: Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines/bench during contests and events. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and coaches.⁵
- Limitations of personnel at events: Consideration should be given to which groups of people should be considered essential or non-essential to the safe conduct of the contest.⁵
 - Tier 1—Essential: Participants, coaches, officials, administrators, medical staff, and security
 - Tier 2—Preferred: Media
 - Tier 3—Non-essential: Spectators, vendors
- Student managers and student athletic training aides assist coaches and athletic trainers during practices and games, and they could be used in risk mitigation efforts on the sideline (i.e. monitoring social distancing efforts and facemask compliance, assisting with hydration, etc). However, their presence represents a potential exposure to COVID-19 for them and/or the potential to transmit the virus to others. Further, any additional personnel will require additional space to maintain social distancing on the sidelines and in team transportation. These factors must be weighed against the potential benefits when deciding whether or not these students should be allowed on the sideline. If they are allowed on the sideline, they must adhere to facemask and social distancing recommendations in place at that time.
- Student-athletes, coaches, and officials should refrain from handshakes, high-fives, and other such forms of interpersonal contact between teammates and members of the other team.

Transportation of Student-Athletes

While social distancing recommendations are in place, the transportation of student-athletes to athletic events by bus presents a challenge. Any transportation of student-athletes must be done in accordance with the school division policies in place for student transportation. The following are recommendations to reduce the risk of transmission in the transportation of student-athletes to events.

- The seating arrangement on the bus should be determined by the coach to establish social distancing.
- Face masks must be worn by all personnel on the bus.
- Athletic administrators may consider policies to allow student-athletes to travel with a parent or guardian in a personal vehicle to and from the event.
- Student-athletes should be encouraged to only travel in personal vehicles with members of their own household
- Athletic administrators may need to consider additional buses to allow for social distancing.
- Only essential personnel should be utilizing the bus for transportation.

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APPENDIX 1
COVID-19 History and Clearance Form

COVID-19 History and Clearance Form

Please complete

Print Student Full Name	Date of Birth
Print Parent or Guardian Name	Parent Cell
Parent Email	

Check and complete all that apply to your child since **January 1, 2020**.

- My child had close contact with a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or coronavirus disease.
Please explain _____
- My child had one or more symptoms of COVID-19 or coronavirus disease as defined by the CDC. Circle all that apply:
- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Fever or Chills | Cough | Shortness of breath | Difficulty Breathing |
| Fatigue | Muscle or body aches | Headache | Loss of Taste or Smell |
| Sore throat | Congestion or runny nose | Nausea or vomiting | Diarrhea |
- Date of onset _____ Duration of symptoms _____
- My child was evaluated by a physician due to these symptoms.
Date of evaluation _____ Diagnosis by physician _____
- My child was tested for COVID-19.
- My child was instructed to quarantine at home due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or coronavirus disease.
Date of quarantine _____ Date of release from quarantine _____
- My child was hospitalized for treatment of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or coronavirus disease.
- My child has recovered from suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or coronavirus disease.
- My child has been cleared by the treating physician and/or by his or her pediatrician to resume athletic activity.
- I have attached documentation from the physician indicating that my child has recovered from COVID-19 or coronavirus disease and that explains any limitations or recommendations for physical activity.

Please initial each statement and sign below

_____ I have watched the online video "Infection Prevention for COVID-19: An Illustrated Summary" with my child. The video can be accessed at <https://covid.yale.edu/media-player/5105/>.

_____ I authorize school officials to exchange information related to the information on this form with such health care providers and public health officials as they deem necessary in the execution of their duties and in adherence to federal, state, and local policies.

Print Parent Name _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 2
Checklist of Supplies and Equipment

Checklist of Supplies and Equipment

- Adequate PPE
 - Medical masks
 - Eye shields
 - Gloves
- Thermometers with necessary accessories (probe covers, alcohol wipes, etc)
- Disinfectant solution (REF--EPA list)
 - Surfaces
 - Coolers
- Paper towels
- Disinfectant wipes
 - Athletic equipment
- Hand sanitizer
 - Dispensers
 - Entrances to building
 - Locker rooms
 - Athletic training facility
 - Bottles for sanitation at practices
 - Bottles in athletic trainer kit
- Soap for handwashing in restrooms

APPENDIX 3
Athletic Training Facility Infection Control Policy

Athletic Training Facility Infection Control Best Practices

Adapted from Brigham and Women's Hospital Policy Document ¹⁵

Athletic training facilities and spaces typically are shared environments with multiple individuals and groups of student-athletes all seeking the attention of the athletic trainer or other member of the sports medicine team during a short consolidated period of time as the student-athletes prepare for practice or a game. This close contact environment in a shared space may act as a source for the spread of infection. It is therefore critical that infection control standards be adopted to attempt to mitigate this risk.

Infection control in and around the athletic training facility is a shared responsibility among the certified athletic trainer, other members of the Sports Medicine Team, the student-athletes, and the school.

Hand Hygiene and Common Materials

- Athletic trainers should use and demonstrate appropriate hand hygiene, by thorough hand washing or the use of approved hand sanitizer, before and after contact with each student-athlete.
- Student-athletes entering the athletic training facility should be required to use hand sanitizer before entering and after exiting the athletic training facility. Sanitizer stations should be located outside the athletic training facility door.
- To minimize the volume of student-athletes who need to enter and exit the athletic training facility, common individual items/products (band-aids, tape, under-wrap, etc.) should be available for student-athletes outside the athletic training facility door. Student-athletes should be required to use hand sanitizer prior to accessing common products.

Athletic Training Facility Physical Space and Equipment Cleaning Standards

- All exposed surfaces (desks, counter tops, chairs) should be cleaned with EPA-approved anti-viral and anti-bacterial cleaners at the start and end of each day. EPA approved disinfectants can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>
- Treatment surfaces should be cleaned with appropriate anti-viral and anti-bacterial cleaners after a student-athlete has been treated utilizing that surface
- Excess unpacked supplies should not be stored in the athletic training facility where student-athletes typically are treated.
- Coolers and extra team medical kits should not be stored in the athletic training facility area where student-athletes typically are treated.
- The inside and outside of coolers should be cleaned after each use/day they are checked out. Cleaning should be done by team members based on procedures set up and outlined by athletic trainers.
- The outside of travel medical kits (often used by individual teams) should be cleaned upon return. The inside should be inspected by the athletic trainer and cleaned as appropriate based on that inspection.
- Floors and other hard surface areas should be cleaned at the end of each day with EPA-approved disinfectant by school custodial staff.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Personal protective equipment, including but not limited to gloves, gowns, masks (surgical and N95), and protective eyewear, should be available for use by the athletic trainer, at their discretion, based on the student-athlete they are treating.
- Used PPE and contaminated materials (such as used PPE, sharps, contaminated medical waste) should be discarded in appropriately labeled containers and disposed of through appropriate methods.

Appendix 4

Pre-Activity Screening Form

