

**Maryland Public Secondary Schools  
Athletic Association  
(MPSSAA)**



**Roadmap for Return to Interscholastic  
Athletics**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) is committed to providing guidance and recommendations to assist all interscholastic athletics' stakeholder groups with recovery from the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The MPSSAA *Roadmap for Return to Interscholastic Athletics* provides a framework of action items from the MPSSAA, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the 24 Local School Systems (LSSs), and the 198 MPSSAA member schools.

This guidance is built specifically for education-based athletic programs by high school athletic administrators based on the fundamental values, structure, competition level, and logistical frameworks that separate interscholastic athletics from all other levels of sport offerings. The recommended guidelines found in this document represent options for LSSs to gradually resume interaction between student-athletes based on local, state, and federal guidelines. All coaches, athletic directors, and principals should consult with their LSS on criteria in place that allow for increased socialization and use of facilities. This document is intended to be fluid and will adapt as needed based on guidance from the MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).

## **WHERE WE ARE**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency declared by Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland schools have been closed since March 16, 2020, and will remain closed through the end of the school year. On April 28, 2020, the MPSSAA announced the cancellation of the remainder of the 2020 state basketball tournaments, the entire 2020 spring sports season, the 2020 Minds in Motion Scholarship Banquet, and the 2020 Student-Athlete Leadership Conference.

On April 24, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan announced the *Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery* that details a three-phased approach to reopening Maryland. On May 6, 2020, Dr. Karen Salmon, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, released *The Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education* to guide LSSs and school communities on the path forward. The guide was drafted in collaboration with the Maryland State Board of Education, local school superintendents, and with input from a wide array of stakeholders through the state. The plan, updated on June 10, 2020, establishes a foundation of options for school systems as they begin to consider how they will bring students and educators back into buildings in a safe environment.

The MPSSAA, after its announcement to cancel all athletic-related activities for the remainder of the current school year, has convened numerous statewide meetings with LSS, medical professionals, and fellow state athletic associations. The MPSSAA has shifted all focus and resources to aligning the return of interscholastic athletics and activities with the State of Maryland's recovery plans.

## **I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Annually over 111,000 student-athletes participate in interscholastic athletic competitions administered by the MPSSAA with an additional 6,500 in corollary sports and over 10,000 additional participants in other extracurricular activities and middle school athletic programs. Education-based athletics distinguishes itself from youth sports as an extension of the classroom that supports the educational mission of our LSS. Research on student participation in interscholastic athletics and activities shows the undeniable enhancement they bring to the academic mission of schools as an inherent educational extension to the classroom that keeps students more engaged in academics which in turn fosters post-graduate success. Research has also shown that interscholastic athletics and activities promote the health and well-being of students mentally, emotionally, and physically creating positive psychological and academic outcomes. With a focus on students' mental health and social and emotional well-being, research has shown the benefits of exercise, social interaction, and sense of belonging - all components of interscholastic athletics participation. Additionally, coaches play an integral role in mentoring students' social and emotional growth and development.

In this regard, the MPSSAA roadmap forward for interscholastic athletics and activities embodies these guiding principles, while gradually aligning with the MSDE and the LSS educational and health and safety decisions in order for education-based athletics and activities to resume during Stage one and Stage two of the Governor's *Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery*. As such, the staged in reopening of interscholastic athletics should mirror LSS instructional and logistical decisions by allowing for an incremental return of participation, using factual data and aligning with local and state health department recommendations and restrictions.

### **MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The MPSSAA believes it is crucial not only to the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of our high school students across the state to return to physical activity and athletic competition but for attaining a high level of academic engagement as well. The MPSSAA recognizes that it is likely that ALL students will not be able to return to – and sustain – athletic activity at the same time in all schools, regions, counties, and cities. There will also likely be variation in what sports and activities are allowed to be played and held based on LSS protocols and procedures.

## **II. ROADMAP FORWARD**

The MPSSAA, in aligning to MSDE's *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*, envisions that interscholastic athletics will be reimagined as each LSS determines the needs for their locale. In order to successfully administer a safe, education-based athletics program during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the MPSSAA recognizes that there will be varying degrees of participation across sports and geographic areas of the state. There are three possible states of athletic activities, based on the guidance of MPSSAA, each LSS, and local and state health departments. These states incorporate instructional decisions, social distancing requirements, size of gatherings, transportation, and many other factors that would be deemed locally necessary to administer interscholastic athletic activities. The three states are as follows:

### **Cancellation of All Activities**

Cancellation of all athletics and activities may take place in various geographic areas or statewide at any given time based on local and state health department decisions. LSSs should be prepared for interruptions to athletic schedules and operations during the course of a season.

### **Modified and Gradual Resumption and Administration of Athletic and Activities**

Modified and gradual resumption and administration of athletics and activities are aligned with the *Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery* stages one and two and with the instructional options found within *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*. The MPSSAA envisions LSSs to operate within the modified and gradual resumption until reaching stage three of the Governor's recovery efforts.

Within stages one and two of the Governor's recovery plan there will be segmented approaches for gradual resumption and administration of athletics and activities. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes the segmented approach through a risk assessment.

- **Lowest Risk:** Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- **Increasing Risk:** Summer out-of-season school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings/In-Season Team Based Practices
- **More Risk:** Within-team competition.
- **Even More Risk:** Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area.
- **Highest Risk:** Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.

The health and safety of student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, event staff, spectators, and officials is of paramount importance to the MPSSAA. Guidance in conjunction with medical experts and athletic administrators will be developed to fully implement the staged approach. Schools must be mindful that different sports could be operating at different risk assessment levels. Each sport carries its own risk based on the ability of social distancing to be maintained, indoor versus outdoor participation, duration of contact, face-to-face contact, and shared equipment.

### **Full Resumption and Administration of Activities**

Full resumption and administration of athletics and activities coincides with the Governor's stage three, which includes the resumption of large scale events and LSSs engaging students at full capacity and functionality. The MPSSAA will issue additional detailed guidance periodically, as deemed necessary by the state's movement toward phase three and schools operating under a new modified sense of normalcy.

## SEASONAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Planning in advance and establishing dates and timelines has been a hallmark of the MPSSAA and LSS interscholastic athletics programs. The entire MPSSAA community for generations has set their cyclical calendar to evolve around first practice dates, first play dates, and state championships. The MPSSAA recognizes that this calendar notion needs to be reimagined given the unknown in this instance and instituting best practices to avoid COVID-19 spread. LSS athletics programs and stakeholders are encouraged to embrace the notion that the safe return of interscholastic athletics will need to be administered on an incremental basis, using the latest national, state, and local health recommendations and operational procedures.

As schools reopen and considerations are made to meet the needs of current health and safety standards, including social distancing, face mask coverings, and size of gathering, the following are some options for instituting participation opportunities:

- Team-based and skill development practices with no competition for extended periods of time.
- Intra-school competitions utilizing multiple varsity teams or intramurals. Examples include limits on roster sizes and the creation of multiple teams.
- Competition confined to a set number of schools in the same geographic area. Multiple competitions against the same schools may take place within this scenario.
- Modifications of seasonal schedules.
- City/County/Conference competition only.
- Modified culminating events, tournaments, or invitational events.

### III. MPSSAA GUIDANCE

The MPSSAA is committed to providing guidance and recommendations to assist all interscholastic athletics' stakeholder groups with recovery from the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The MPSSAA has been working with the heads of athletics from all 24 LSSs, the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee, and a cohort of sports medicine and pediatric infectious diseases professionals from the University of Maryland Medical System, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Medstar Health, and Lifebridge Health as well as contributors from U.S. Lacrosse and the Maryland Athletic Trainers Association to provide recommendations as it relates to the resocialization of high school sports and physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MPSSAA has created an update page on [www.mpssaa.org](http://www.mpssaa.org). This page will focus on the latest information on the stage of the Maryland Recovery Plan, size of gatherings allowed by state ordered guidance, up-to-date resources for implementation of athletic practices and contests, expectation dates, and other pertinent information to assist and direct LSS in the return of interscholastic athletics. This page will also serve for continued resources related to the preparation, preseason, participation, and postseason phases.

On June 23, 2020, the Maryland State Board of Education approved a request of waiver to certain regulations for the specific use of LSS navigating delayed, modified, or interruptions during the course of the 2020-2021 academic year. These regulations, at the request of the

MPSSAA and local Superintendent of Schools, will give the LSS the flexibility to navigate county COVID-19 restrictions and administer interscholastic athletic opportunities based on local conditions.

MPSSAA member schools are reminded these waiver requests have been identified for specific purposes to assist schools related to delayed or modified instructional decisions. MPSSAA member schools are expected to be in full compliance with COMAR 13A.06.03 unless specific needs arise that require LSS to implement plans with the flexibility found in the waiver requests.

Please note the following important points regarding the waiver requests (APPENDIX A).

- As MPSSAA members, the LSS agrees to institute schedules that adhere to defined practice and seasonal structure based on MPSSAA decisions. The MPSSAA maintains authority on defining sport seasons. The waiver request provides flexibility for athletic administrators to modify in-season sport schedules related to increased or decreased participation opportunities.
- MPSSAA does not seek a waiver of the requirements for B(1)(a) through (q) for seasonal and weekly limitations for the number of contests allowed per school athletic team and student participation during the course of a season. MPSSAA member schools in any scheduling must adhere to the seasonal and weekly limitations on the number of contests.
- As MPSSAA members, the LSS agree to institute a set out-of-season practice time frame per sport before operating any out-of-season practices and obtain approval from the MPSSAA Executive Director for the out-of-season practice time frame. These requests must be school system based requests through the LSS administrator for interscholastic athletics and be directly related to specific purposes regarding the LSS response to COVID-19. The intent of the out-of-season regulation waiver is for the specific purpose of LSS operating participation opportunities within an intra-school setting for an extended period of time or for the reconditioning of the deconditioned athlete.
- MPSSAA member schools must continue to follow all regulations regarding sanctioning. The waiver request gives the MPSSAA office flexibility in approving sanction requests after deadlines.

### **LSS COVID-19 RETURN TO PLAY CONSIDERATIONS**

Since District Athletic Administrators in each LSS are the well-respected voices for safety issues involving interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities, the MPSSAA strongly urges that these individuals engage with their local authorities and health departments to develop coordinated policies and procedures with positive approaches for the return of interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities, the other half of education.

## LSS RETURN TO PLAY TEAM

An LSS Return to Play Team should consider the following as members:

- Superintendent - Designee
- School District Athletic Administrator(s)
- Principal Representative
- System Health Coordinator/Nurse
- Sports Medicine/Primary Care Provider
- Transportation
- LSS Risk Management
- LSS Operation/Facility Managers
- Lead Athletic Trainer
- Athletic Director Representative
- Coach Representatives
- Open communication with local health department

## IV. PREPARATION, PRESEASON, PARTICIPATION, POSTSEASON

The MPSSAA has broken each season into four time frames based on the cyclical operations member schools face throughout the course of an interscholastic season. Under these timeframes are specific guidance to assist LSS systematically implement interscholastic athletics.

### **PREPARATION**

LSSs should begin the preparation phase as soon as possible, assembling a return to play team to assess upcoming guidance from the MPSSAA and begin to implement policies and procedures related to health and safety measures and operational measures for the return of interscholastic athletics. This section has been divided into health related and operational related guidance.

**Health-Related Items** - Each LSS should communicate effectively and implement plans for addressing the following areas:

**PreParticipation Physicals** - Athletes must continue to follow the state regulations regarding completion of an annual pre-participation physical examination. The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee has added a supplementary sheet to this physical form for the use of appropriate health care providers. This form is attached to the linked PPE form below. LSSs should use the preparation phase to ensure all students have an up-to-date physical on file. Recommended preparticipation physical form may be found at: <https://www.mpssaa.org/membership-services/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-recommended-forms-and-resources/>

**The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee Recommends:**

- If parents think their child is immunocompromised, please check with your child’s healthcare provider (Physician (MD/DO), Nurse Practitioner (NP), Physician Assistant (PA)) before returning them to sports.
- Athletes who have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 or multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) should have a thorough cardiovascular evaluation or cardiology consultation prior to return.
- Athletes, coaches, and officials who should consider delaying their participation in sports and activities are those with any of the following:
  1. Age Greater than 65;
  2. Diabetes;
  3. Chronic lung disease including moderate to severe asthma;
  4. Severe obesity (Body Mass Index >40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>);
  5. Chronic kidney disease treated with dialysis;
  6. Chronic liver disease (cirrhosis);
  7. Heart conditions (coronary artery disease, hypertension, heart rhythm problems (arrhythmia), and heart defects you are born with (congenital heart defects);
  8. Immunocompromised (e.g. any transplant recipient, needing immunosuppressant medications (e.g. steroids, biologics, etc.), patients receiving chemotherapy, etc.);
  9. Nursing home resident or long term care resident;
  10. Thalassemia or sickle cell disease.

CDC People Who Are at High Risk For Severe Illness

**Parent/Student-Athlete Participation Acknowledgement Statements** - Included among pre-participation forms, it is recommended LSS implement a sign off acknowledging both parent/guardian and student athlete has read provided information on the risk of COVID-19 as it relates to their participation in interscholastic athletics and activities. This form also includes acknowledgement of the symptom free requirements from the CDC for attendance at any gathering or event. (APPENDIX B)

**Attendance Tracking Sheet** - Athletes, coaches, officials/referees/umpires, and other essential athletic administrators (i.e. athletic trainers, facility managers, grounds crew, etc.) MUST be listed on an attendance tracking sheet. These documents should be saved to document attendance at events for contact tracing if it should become necessary. (APPENDIX C)

**School Health Service and Athletic Administration Communication** – It is imperative that schools ensure appropriate communication between school-based health service staff and athletic administration staff. This communication is necessary to ensure properly administered, athletic health decisions are aligned with everyday instructional decisions and schools are prepared to handle a positive case.

**Communication & Social Media** - Schools should communicate the game plan and framework for student-athletes to be eligible for participation.

- Communicating the game plan/framework effectively
- Promoting expectations
- Separating facts from myths - quote sources
- Sell the safety of sports

**Positive Cases** - LSS Planning teams should be prepared for handling a positive test within their teams or schools. LSS protocol should be followed and aligned with protocol if a positive case was found during the normal course of the school day. The CDC provides additional guidance on handling positive cases.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html#preparing>

**Operational Guidelines** - Each LSS should communicate effectively and implement plans for addressing the following areas:

**Facility Assessment, Preparation, and Equipment Needs**

- LSSs and schools should assess each facility and prepare for various athletic opportunities. [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html#reduce)
- Plans and forms should be developed to ensure daily equipment and facility disinfection needs. School systems should assess personal protection equipment, sanitizers, face masks and other needs. These items should be a high priority due to the limited availability and supply of some items.
  - CDC Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html#reduce>
  - CDC Maintaining Health Environments  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html#environments>
  - CDC Health Operations  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html#operations>

**Entrance/Exit Strategies**

- Practice or games times should be spaced out to decrease the number of individuals coming and going at the same time and facilitate social distancing.
- Limit spectators allowed at any workouts or practices. Parents/caregivers can remain in their cars during this time. No congregating should be allowed in the parking lot or fields. A drop-off line for practices is recommended to avoid unnecessary exposure.
- Carpooling should not be allowed unless only members of immediate family

### **Limitations on Gatherings**

- Follow most recent state ordered guidance on the size of gatherings.
- During competitions, spectators should practice social distancing as permissible and spectators should wear masks/face covering. Limits on the number of spectators should be determined by organizations and schools based on multiple factors (i.e. gym size, indoor/outdoor) to promote social distancing. The maximum number of spectators should be posted at all gates, along with reminders of 6 ft. social distancing.
- Only essential individuals should be present on the field for games. Schools should limit the presence of managers and student assistants to on-field exposure.

### **Face Coverings**

- To the extent possible, individuals engaged in the sport and at the venue shall wear a face covering, especially when social distancing is not feasible. (Maryland Health Department Order: 6.12.01)
- Participants on the sideline are recommended to use face coverings.
- The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee recommends any participants wearing a face mask cover should:
  - Be aware of the face mask will increase CO2 retention;
  - Be aware of increased concerns of heat illness;
  - Be disinfected daily by the user;
  - Take additional water and rest breaks;
  - Find social distancing areas of six or more feet from other participants during recovery; and,
  - Designate a set area for intermittent removal and storage.

### **Hygiene Practices**

- Hand hygiene is essential. Organizations and facilities need to promote frequent and effective, hand hygiene with ample hand sanitizer (>60% ethanol or >70% isopropanol) dispensers and areas with soap and water in many different locations. Families may be asked to provide their own.

### **Hydration and Nutrition**

- No sharing of water bottles. An individual athlete should use their own clearly marked bottle.
- Coolers, which should be limited in use, should be properly sanitized after each use, and a new cooler should be used for each team or group. [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed.](#)
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) are not recommended. If used, they should be utilized only for the refilling of personal water bottles and must be cleaned after every practice/contest.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing food and utensils. Offer hand sanitizer or encourage hand washing
- Ice towels should be marked for individual use only, then discarded or washed properly.

- No whirlpool or cold/hot tubs should be used during any of the listed phases. Best practice for emergency use still applies.
- Have a cold water immersion tub on-site or within 5 minutes of the field.
- On field, having ice towels ready in addition to the cold tub is recommended for cooling during breaks and for covering the head in the event that an athlete has an exertional heatstroke and needs to be immersed.

### **Locker Rooms and Training Areas**

- The use of locker rooms is not recommended during these stages. Proper area for equipment storage and cleaning is recommended as well as appropriately spaced individual areas for athletes to store their personal belongings during activity.

### **Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment**

- No handshakes or fist bumps should take place.
- No team huddles.
- No spitting or sunflower seeds
- Any equipment used during activities should be disinfected with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified products as able.
- Any jerseys used during these workouts should be washed daily and not switched to different players during workout. No sharing of pennies should be permitted.

### **Return to Exercise, Conditioning, and Weight Training**

- Athletes have had a prolonged break from organized sports and conditioning. Although some athletes may have continued independent strength and conditioning and cardiovascular training, some athletes may return deconditioned. Coaches need to reassess the physical conditioning status of all athletes on their return and plan for a graduated return in duration, frequency, and intensity of athletics. Please reference the National Federation of High Schools joint statement with other appropriate health and sport national organizations on the [Return to Sports and Exercise during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance for High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs](#).
- All policies of the [MPSSAA regarding heat acclimatization and heat related illnesses](#) must be followed. Duration and heat indexes must be monitored during non-season conditioning sessions.

### **Accommodations for students with special needs**

- Exceptions may be needed for some of these conditions based on circumstances.
- Showers may be needed after practice in some circumstances (eg. working after practice, homeless). Coaches and administrators can make these exceptions. Social distancing should be maximized and proper cleaning should occur.
- Water bottles that can be clearly marked for individuals should be made available. Daily cleaning should occur after an individual uses them.
- For parents/caregivers that rely on public transportation or walk, an area away from practice should be set aside that allows for social distancing.
- Schools and organizations should attempt to have extra masks/face coverings

- available. These should be washed after each use if cloth-based.
- For athletes not able to wash workout clothes attempts should be made by the school and organizations to help in providing this for them.
- Additional situations may arise based on social vulnerabilities. Schools and organizations should attempt to think of these situations and develop solutions that continue to practice the key elements of preventing COVID-19 transmission.

## **PRESEASON**

The preseason timeframe focuses on the re-engagement of students and coaches throughout the first three CDC described risk assessments.

- Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- Increasing Risk: Team-based practice.
- More Risk: Within-team competition.

### **Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.**

**Goals:** Re-engagement of student-athletes and the reintroduction of athletics and activities for the betterment of the social, emotional, and physical well-being.

#### **LSS Recommendations:**

- School systems operating during the lowest risk are recommended to reframe any form of in-person contact with students.
- Regarding the well-being of students during the global pandemic, schools and coaches are recommended to virtually engage students through controlled and safe measures put into place by the LSS.
  - Virtual sessions may be for student check ins, virtual conditioning workouts for students on their own time,
  - Virtual sessions may not be considered as a prerequisite for team tryouts and voluntary.
  - Any virtual contact with students must occur on approved platforms through the LSS.
  - LSS are recommended to have a submitted parent permission and have a current physical on file for any conditioning instructions of students.
- Coaches may not conduct virtual team sport-specific practices or in-person practices.
- School coaching staffs may meet virtually regarding sport-specific instruction with up to two returning student-athletes per day, per MPSSAA regulations.
- Any virtual engagement by coaches with students must be communicated to athletic directors.

**Increasing Risk: Summer out-of-season school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings/In-Season Team Based Practices**

**Goals:** The resocialization of sport to increased physical activity and practice while being mindful of the health and safety of our youth and high school athletes, coaches/personnel, parents/caregivers and spectators.

**LSS Recommendations: LSS may be operating in the Increasing Risk category during Summer out-of-season timeframe through school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings or in-season through team based practices. The following recommendations apply to both in and out-of-season student and coach contact.**

- LSS operating during the increasing risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place before interactions begin.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the Lowest Risk Stage or what to do in regards to a positive case.
- During this phase, individual workouts are allowed to begin on campus or at the organization's facility. However, groups must be in compliance with the most recent state order and protocols on social gathering sizes.
  - It is recommended schools begin with inclusion of small groups. The space should be separated by a barrier or large enough distance that individuals can maximize social distance and no players/coaches should be within 6 feet of each other.
  - State ordered guidance may permit gradual increase in the size of gatherings while maintaining social distancing.
  - Athletes should not interact with anyone outside the area where their individual workout is located.
  - Any equipment used during activities should be disinfected with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified products between each use.
  - Gathering limitations and cleaning to be enforced by school administration, not the athletic trainer.
- LSS may allow for coaching staffs to work with two players per day with all precautions in place.
- General concept: Get in, Get out and complete essential training.
- In-Season
  - Practices must be in compliance with heat acclimatization policies.
  - Minimal protective equipment (i.e. helmets only for football) should be used during initial stages and gradually increase.
  - Team drills can occur where players are less than 6 feet apart, but this should be minimized to brief one-on-one drills. LSS may

choose to allow certain sports to begin based on the individual risk of each sport.

- No two teams should be in the same location at one time. If the same field or gym will be used back to back, allow ample time between sessions to clean the area between teams. Half field use is permitted. Be sure that there is no interaction between teams.

### **More Risk: Within Team Competitions**

**Goals:** The resocialization of sport to increased practice and competition between a larger squad that may incur limited contact while being mindful of the health and safety of our youth and high school athletes, coaches/personnel, parents/caregivers and spectators.

#### **LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in regards to a positive case.
- LSS should focus on this phase of continuing all precautions in the previous phase with specified game-like simulations that may incur contact based on the nature of the sport to specified times.
- At the conclusion or during breaks of game-like simulations or within team competitions, proper disinfection should be used on all equipment and proper hand hygiene should be used by all participants.
- Participants on the sidelines or taking breaks should continue to use social distancing.
- During competitions, spectators should practice social distancing as permissible.

## **PARTICIPATION**

### **Even More Risk: Full Competition between teams from the same local geographic area**

**Goal:** To increase competition opportunities for schools through expanding their geographic area to include local schools in competition and scrimmages within a set boundary. Communication between athletic administrators is paramount during this phase.

#### **LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in

- regards to a positive case.
- LSS should align transportation decisions with LSS policy for instructional purposes.
- Hosting schools must communicate effectively on their school's facility plan, entrance/exit strategies, and all logistics to schools and officials.
- Number of spectators may be limited based on size of the facility and the promotion of social distancing by organizations and schools.
- Regular Public Address Announcements during the course of competitions.

**Highest Risk: Full Competition between teams from different geographic areas**

**Goals:** The increased competition opportunities for schools through expanding their geographic area to include competition and scrimmages from larger geographic areas. Communication between athletic administrators is paramount during this phase.

**LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in regards to a positive case.
- LSS should align transportation decisions with LSS policy for instructional purposes.
- Hosting schools must communicate effectively on their school's facility plan, entrance/exit strategies, and all logistics to schools and officials.
- LSS may incrementally increase the geographic areas of competition allowed during this phase based on local and state health department guidance.
- Number of spectators may be limited based on size of the facility and the promotion of social distancing by organizations and schools.
- Regular Public Address Announcements during the course of competitions.
- 

**POSTSEASON - MPSSAA STATE TOURNAMENTS AND CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS**

The MPSSAA recognizes the highest risk, according to the CDC, is increased participation opportunities that includes statewide competitions among different geographic areas. This reality places state championships or culminating events in jeopardy depending on the sport. Each respective sport will be evaluated by the MPSSAA on an individual basis to make calculated and informed decisions dependent on the characteristics of the MPSSAA-administered sport, the number of programs being administered by member schools, and local and state health department guidance on the status quo of statewide participation.

## V. SCHOOL AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

This guidance for the return to education-based athletic programs during the state of emergency is based on the fundamental values, structure, competition level, and logistical frameworks in returning to athletics. Interscholastic athletics and activities, as modified here, benefit the physical and social-emotional well-being of participants and their communities. Even as modified by these scenario-based reasonable practices, these programs instill a sense of pride in school and community, teach lifelong lessons and skills of teamwork and self-discipline, and facilitate the physical and emotional development of our state's high school students.

These guidelines along with guidance from State, LSS, and county government officials are intended to reduce the further spread of COVID-19. The MPSSAA drafted this guidance with its partners based on the current information available. As scientists and our public officials continue to learn about this disease, this guidance will be updated to incorporate up-to-date information and guidance.

Returning to sports guidance during the state of emergency should be incorporated into the lessons integral to school athletic and activity programs. Student athletes should learn about reasonable and science based strategies intended to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases during training, practices, and competition. Coaches and other athletic personnel can help student athletes understand the importance of being responsible for adhering to reasonable health precautions applicable in athletics and within their communities.

This guidance is intended to support the *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*, academic mission of the school, school systems as an extension of a great educational program. Returning to school based athletics during the state of emergency is expected to bring with it the benefits to students of traditional school based athletics including higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates, and fewer discipline problems. Returning to athletics and activities consistent with this guidance supports the mental and physical health intrinsic in athletics. Student athletes will learn valuable lessons and skills for leadership, teamwork, fair play, and hard work within reasonable and practical science based recommendations.

Even in these unusual and challenging times, student athletes learn self-discipline, build self-confidence, empathy, and develop skills to handle unconventional situations through participation in athletic programs. These are qualities consistent with being responsible adults, productive citizens, and skilled professionals.

The experience of participating in interscholastic athletics while in the state of emergency continues to be paired with what a student learns throughout the school day. Coaches and athletic personnel impact our students' lives in a positive way, an impact beyond the sole purpose of winning: helping fulfil the educational, human growth, and positive development of young people. These benefits are the reason education-based athletics, even as modified for the state of emergency, are imperative to the 111,000 students who participate in the athletic programs offered by the MPSSAA, as well as the 6,500 students who partake in the corollary athletic programs, and more than 10,000 participants who are involved in other extracurricular activities in our LSS.

# APPENDIX - A

ORGANIZED 1946

MEMBER OF THE  
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
STATE HIGH SCHOOL  
ASSOCIATIONS



Maryland State Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

TELEPHONE: (410) 767-0376  
FAX: (410) 333-3111

R. ANDREW WARNER

**To:** Local School System Supervisors of Athletics

**From:** R. Andrew Warner, Executive Director, MPSSAA

**Date:** June 23, 2020

**Subject:** Interscholastic Athletics Update

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The Maryland State Board of Education at their June 23, 2020 meeting supported the request for waiver of interscholastic athletic regulations found in COMAR 13A.06.03. These regulations, at the request of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) and local Superintendent of Schools, will give the local school systems (LSS) the flexibility to navigate county COVID-19 restrictions and administer interscholastic athletic opportunities based on local conditions.

MPSSAA member schools are reminded these waiver requests have been identified for specific purposes to assist schools related to delayed or modified instructional decisions. MPSSAA member schools are expected to be in full compliance with COMAR 13A.06.03 unless specific needs arise that require LSS to implement plans with the flexibility found in the waiver requests.

Please note the following important points regarding the waiver requests.

- As MPSSAA members, the LSS agrees to institute schedules that adhere to defined practice and seasonal structure based on MPSSAA decisions. The MPSSAA maintains authority on defining sport seasons. The waiver request provides flexibility for athletic administrators to modify in-season sport schedules related to increased or decreased participation opportunities.
- MPSSAA does not seek a waiver of the requirements for B(1)(a) through (q) for seasonal and weekly limitations for the number of contests allowed per school athletic team and student participation during the course of a season. MPSSAA member schools in any scheduling must adhere to the seasonal and weekly limitations on the number of contests.
- As MPSSAA members, the LSS agree to institute a set out-of-season practice time frame per sport before operating any out-of-season practices and obtain approval from the MPSSAA Executive Director for the out-of-season practice time frame. These requests must be school system based requests through the LSS administrator for interscholastic athletics and be directly related to specific purposes regarding the LSS response to COVID-19. The intent of the out-of-season regulation waiver is for the specific purpose of LSS operating participation opportunities within an intra-school setting for an extended period of time or for the reconditioning of the deconditioned athlete.
- MPSSAA member schools must continue to follow all regulations regarding sanctioning. The waiver request gives the MPSSAA office flexibility in approving sanction requests after deadlines.

[www.mpssaa.org](http://www.mpssaa.org)



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education

**FROM:** Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.  
Maryland State Superintendent of Schools

**DATE:** June 23, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Request for Waivers Related to Interscholastic Athletics due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**PURPOSE:**

To review waiver recommendations related to requirements for interscholastic athletics as a result of the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures. The waiver recommendations would apply to interscholastic athletics from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency declared by Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland schools have been closed since March 16, 2020, and will be closed through the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. On April 28, 2020, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) announced the cancellation of the remainder of the Spring Sports season and all in person interscholastic athletic and activities. The MPSSAA has focused all efforts on aligning the return of interscholastic athletics and activities with the Maryland State Department of Education *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education* and the Governor's *Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery*. Some of the most common and fundamental statewide regulations for interscholastic athletic participation as found in COMAR 13A.06.03 require set scheduling, set practice dates, length of preseason practice, out-of-season practice, and other limits of participation that present logistical barriers as it relates to delayed or modified instructional decisions. Based on the ongoing emergency, the superintendents of the 24 Maryland local school systems jointly request through the MPSSAA waiving certain regulations while the State of Emergency continues. Waiver of the regulations will give the local school systems the flexibility to navigate

county COVID-19 restrictions and administer interscholastic athletic opportunities based on local conditions.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The designees for interscholastic athletics for the local school system superintendents have been meeting regularly with the MPSSAA Executive Director to address issues related to COVID-19, such as identifying concerns, sharing best practices, and making recommendations for the return of interscholastic athletics and activities aligned with the *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*. The MPSSAA Executive Council with support from all 24 local school system superintendents has identified certain waivers of Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) pursuant to the State Board's authority under COMAR 13A.01.01.02-1 that would alleviate logistical barriers related to delayed or modified instructional decisions. Through the MPSSAA, the local superintendents of schools on behalf of the local school systems have collectively requested the following waivers of COMAR for good cause, as necessary and justifiable, arising from the state of emergency:

**COMAR 13A.01.01.02-1 *Waivers from Regulations*** – Request a waiver from the requirement that each local superintendent of schools on behalf of the school system file a waiver request with the State Superintendent of School regarding statewide interscholastic athletics governed under COMAR 13A.06.03 *Interscholastic Athletics in the State*.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.03 A - *Sports Season*** - Request waiver of the defined sport seasons. The waiver request allows the MPSSAA to modify the length and timeframes of sports seasons. This allows local school systems to administer interscholastic athletic participation based on local county conditions and orders and allows the MPSSAA to work with individual local school systems to safely operate interscholastic athletics consistent with the latest county, State, and federal information, and to make calculated decisions to best support safe student, school personnel, and referee participation. **NOTE:** As MPSSAA members, the local school systems agree to institute schedules that adhere to defined practice and seasonal structure based on MPSSAA decisions. The MPSSAA maintains authority on defining sport seasons.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.03 B(1) - *Maximum Number of Contests During a Sports Season*** - Request waiver of the requirement that all sports schedules must be set by the first allowable playdate. This allows local school systems the flexibility to reschedule and adapt to the latest local and State health department COVID-19 guidance and orders. Some areas of the State may see interruptions during the course of the year or their local health department may implement stricter requirements that would affect intercountry and statewide contests. **NOTE:** MPSSAA does not seek a waiver of the requirements for B(1)(a) through (q) for seasonal and weekly limitations for the number of contests allowed per school athletic team and student participation during the course of a season.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.04C(9) - *Limits of Participation*** - Request waiver of the limit of participation to permit students who play on junior varsity and varsity teams in the previous season to participate in interscholastic competition and in intramurals or school sponsored

athletic programs in the same sport outside the sport season. Intramural programs may be one of the earlier stages to create student participation before expanding into interscholastic and multi-school participation.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.04E - *Out-of-Season Practice*** - Request waiver of the regulations related to school participation in practice outside the defined seasonal limitations or beyond the regular sports season. This waiver allows for the MPSSAA and local school systems to re-engage coach and student interaction for the social-emotional and physical well-being of the student. Moreover, it permits coaches to conduct teaching and training beyond the regular sports seasons to help students' athletic conditioning and skill development after the long layoff from interscholastic sports. Flexibility for allowing coaches to conduct reconditioning and training is necessary for student safety and to permit schools to safely operate practices and individual student drills. **NOTE:** As MPSSAA members, the local school systems agree to institute a set out-of-season practice time frame per sport before operating any out-of-season practices and obtain approval from the MPSSAA Executive Director for the out-of-season practice time frame.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.08(1)(b) - *Sanctioning for Interstate Competition*** - Request waiver of the sanction request deadline date for interstate competition. The waiver does not change the requirement to request sanction approval from the MPSSAA, but provides flexibility to make necessary modifications during the course of the year.

**COMAR 13A.06.03.08(2)(c) - *Sanctioning for Intrastate Competition*** - Request waiver of the sanction request deadline date for intrastate competition. The waiver does not change the requirement to request sanction approval from the MPSSAA, but provides flexibility to make necessary modifications during the course of the year.

## APPENDIX - B

### COVID-19 Awareness Parent/Student-Athlete Participation Acknowledgement Statements

I \_\_\_\_\_, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received information on all of the following:

- What you should know about COVID-19 to protect yourself and others
- Share facts about COVID-19
- Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)
- COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions from the Maryland State Health Department.  
<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/#FAQ>

I \_\_\_\_\_, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, will follow the requirements for in-person attendance at any extracurricular athletic and activity event.

- I will not send my child to extracurricular athletic and activities if they are exhibiting any signs/symptoms of COVID 19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID 19 (or presumed to have COVID 19) in the past 14 days.
- I will review symptoms with my child and monitor my child's symptoms every day that my child attends in-person activities/events.
- If my child becomes ill during any in-person activity/event, I will ensure they are picked up promptly. I will follow-up with an authorized health care provider/health department and comply with recommended quarantine or isolation as directed. If my child is ill, I understand that a release to return to in-person activity from an authorized health care provider will be required.

#### Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19:

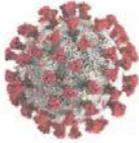
- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| • Fever (100.4°F or greater) or chills        | • Headache                   |
| • Cough                                       | • New loss of taste or smell |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Sore throat                |
| • Fatigue                                     | • Congestion or runny nose   |
| • Muscle or body aches                        | • Nausea or vomiting         |
|   | • Diarrhea                   |

Students must be free of fever without the use of fever reducing medications.

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature and Date

Student Athlete \_\_\_\_\_ Student Athlete \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature and Date

# What you should know about COVID-19 to protect yourself and others



## Know about COVID-19

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has spread throughout the world.
- COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness.



## Know how COVID-19 is spread

- You can become infected by coming into close contact (about 6 feet or two arm lengths) with a person who has COVID-19. COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person.
- You can become infected from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.



## Protect yourself and others from COVID-19

- There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others.
- Wear a cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth in public settings.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



## Practice social distancing

- Buy groceries and medicine, go to the doctor, and complete banking activities online when possible.
- If you must go in person, stay at least 6 feet away from others and disinfect items you must touch.
- Get deliveries and takeout, and limit in-person contact as much as possible.



## Prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.
- Separate yourself from other people and pets in your home.
- There is no specific treatment for COVID-19, but you can seek medical care to help relieve your symptoms.
- If you need medical attention, call ahead.



## Know your risk for severe illness

- Everyone is at risk of getting COVID-19.
- Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more severe illness.



CS 214912A 04/15/2020

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# Share facts about COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

FACT  
**1**

**Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.**

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

FACT  
**2**

**For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.**

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

FACT  
**3**

**Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.**

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.

FACT  
**4**

**There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- When in public, wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

FACT  
**5**

**You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms, which can include:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical attention immediately if you or someone you love has emergency warning signs, including:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or not able to be woken
- Bluish lips or face

This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.



CS316439-A 04/14/2020

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



## Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)

Updated May 20, 2020

MIS-C is a severe inflammatory syndrome where pediatric patients present with features similar to Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome. The condition can cause problems with the heart and other organs and may result in hospitalization.

MIS-C appears to be rare and most children who get COVID-19 will not develop MIS-C, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, children with this syndrome may become seriously ill. If you have any concerns about your child's health, please call your child's doctor.

### What are the symptoms of MIS-C?

Symptoms of MIS-C might include persistent fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees F or 38.0 degrees C or greater), a rash or changes in skin color, red eyes or conjunctivitis, red cracked lips or red, bumpy tongue that looks like a strawberry, swollen hands and feet, abdominal pain or swollen lymph nodes.

### When should I get emergency care?

Call your child's doctor and seek immediate care if your child has:

- Persistent fever for several days
- Difficulty feeding (infants) or is too sick to drink fluids
- Severe abdominal pain, diarrhea or vomiting
- Dehydration with decreased frequency of urination
- Change in skin color or appearance — becoming pale, patchy or blue, swelling
- Trouble breathing, breathing is painful or breathing very quickly
- Racing heart or chest pain
- Acting unusually sleepy, dizzy or confused

If your child is severely ill, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 immediately.

### Is MIS-C contagious?

MIS-C is not contagious, but it is possible that your child has COVID-19 or another infection that may be contagious.

### Is there a treatment for MIS-C?

Children with MIS-C are being treated with therapeutic medications to support the body's immune system and inflammatory response. Children may also receive medications to protect their heart, kidneys and other organs.

### How can I prevent my child from getting MIS-C?

You should take steps to prevent your child from being exposed to COVID-19. Stay home when you can, practice social distancing and wear a mask if you must go out and wash hands frequently. Children with underlying medical conditions can be at higher risk for poor outcomes of COVID-19.

For more information about COVID-19 in Maryland, visit [coronavirus.maryland.gov](https://coronavirus.maryland.gov).



## RESOURCES

### Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

CDC Guidance for [Handling Positive Cases](#) of Covid-19

CDC Guidance for [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) of public spaces, workplaces, businesses, schools, and homes

CDC Guidance for [Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread](#) of COVID-19

CDC Guidance for [Maintaining Healthy Environments](#). This document outlines ways in which sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

CDC Guidance for [Healthy Operations](#). This document outlines ways in which sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

### Maryland State Department of Education

Maryland State Department of Education Maryland Together [Maryland Recovery Plan for Education](#). This document outlines the MSDE plan for return to school.

### Maryland State Government

*Maryland Strong: Roadmap for Recovery*

Governor Hogan's [Executive Orders for COVID-19 Pandemic](#) guidance and orders currently in effect.

Directive and Order Regarding Community, Recreational, Leisure, Cultural, and Sporting Gatherings and Events from the Maryland Department of Health [Maryland Department of Health Guidelines for Size of Gatherings](#) updated June 10, 2020

### Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association Health Forms

American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Sports Medicine, American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine, and American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine. [Pre-Participation Physical](#)

MPSSAA [Model Policy for Heat Acclimatization](#) to be followed upon a return to athletic practices and competitions

## **National Federation of State High School Associations**

NFHS article [The Case for High School Activities](#) which lays out the rationale and guiding principles for high school athletics and activities

[Guidance for Return to High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs](#). Endorsed by: American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCCA), Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI), Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). June 2, 2020

NFHS Guidance document for state associations regarding the [Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)

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