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STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS



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200 West Baltimore Street
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To: Signatories of the Standards of Competition and MPSSAA Member Schools

From: Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association

Date: June 17, 2024

Subject: Standards of Competition Reminder

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a reminder of the criteria established in the Standards of Competition. The Standards of Competition is designed to provide annual compliance of non-public schools within Maryland who voluntarily choose, based on the eligibility criteria of their school, to become approved non-member schools of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) and eligible to compete against MPSSAA member schools.

The 2024-25 academic year will represent the fifth season of interscholastic athletic competition since the 2020-21 academic year, in which various offerings of full or modified seasons were administered by private and public schools. This is important for MPSSAA member schools and signatories of the Standards of Competition alike.

- For MPSSAA member schools, COMAR 13A.06.03.02D states: Students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 may participate in interscholastic athletic contests for a maximum of four seasons in any one sport.
- For signatories of the Standards of Competition, Standard 10 states: High school team members who are registered in and represent a nongraded school or are home instructed pursuant to the requirements of COMAR 13A.10.01, shall not have participated in interscholastic athletic contests for more than a maximum of four seasons in any one sport between the ages of 13 and 19.

Under both Standard 10 and COMAR 13A.06.03.02D, students who entered a bona fide contest in a sport of eligibility in a given season, including a modified season during the 2020-2021 academic year, are considered to have used a season of eligibility. Both Standard 10 and COMAR 13A.06.03.02D account for seasons of participation and do not concern themselves with student grade levels or how many years a student is enrolled in grades 9-12. Therefore, those students who participated in the 2020-2021 school year may have now exhausted their four seasons of eligibility based on their participation each academic year.

Schools choosing to sign the Standards of Competition for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year must be in full compliance with all standards, including Standard 10. Schools compete against each other with the understanding that signatories are adhering to each standard throughout their athletic programs regardless of the nature of the competition. Choosing to apply the Standards of Competition only to competitions with member schools does not comply with the spirit or letter of the Standards.

The Standards of Competition are designed to, among other things, ensure athlete safety, minimize risks, deter exploitation of students, maintain athletics as an integral part of the educational program, and promote competitive fairness. Each year, approximately 100 nonpublic schools in Maryland voluntarily agree to the Standards of Competition and become eligible to compete against MPSSAA member schools.



APPROVED STANDARDS OF COMPETITION FOR HIGH SCHOOLS TO PRACTICE OR PLAY AGAINST MEMBER SCHOOLS OF THE MARYLAND PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (MPSSAA) PURSUANT TO COMAR 13A.06.03.04

1. **Introduction:** The Maryland State Superintendent of Schools seeks to maintain the integrity of Maryland Public Schools athletic programs when MPSSAA member public schools practice or play against non-member high school teams. Accordingly, the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools has established Standards of Competition to achieve the following purposes: ensure athlete safety, minimize risks, deter exploitation of students, ensure that competing school teams are appropriately supervised by a responsible entity, maintain athletics as an integral part of the total educational program, promote competitive fairness, foster student leadership, encourage academic progress and minimize administrative burdens on MPSSAA member schools.
2. **High schools considered to meet the Standards of Competition:**
 - (a) Members of a state interscholastic athletic association recognized by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS);
 - (b) High schools that have been approved to play members of a state interscholastic athletic association recognized by the NFHS;
 - (c) High schools that are members of an athletic conference that formally adopts these Standards of Competition as part of its Constitution and Bylaws and has enforcement authority; and
 - (d) Individual high schools that verify compliance with these Standards of Competition.
3. **Compliance:** To verify compliance with the Standards of Competition, the administrative head of the school, responsible for the daily administration, must sign and submit this verification application for annual approval. This verification shall be submitted to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools prior to the first practice or athletic competition against an MPSSAA member high school team.
4. **Timeline:** This verification applies to all practices and athletic contests with MPSSAA member high schools beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. MPSSAA member school teams may not practice or play any team that is not listed on the current MSDE approved list. Renewal of these standards must represent continuous maintenance of compliance from the previous school year.
5. **Approved schools:** Those schools that meet the Standards of Competition will be listed as MSDE athletically approved schools eligible to practice or play against MPSSAA member schools.

Standards of Competition

PURSUANT TO COMAR 13A.06.03.04D(6), INDIVIDUAL HIGH SCHOOLS THAT PRACTICE OR PLAY AGAINST MPSSAA MEMBER HIGH SCHOOLS SHALL ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. The athletes of the high school team are registered and attending a nonpublic school pursuant to COMAR 13A.09.09; are registered and attending an institution operated by a bona fide church organization pursuant to Md. Code Ann. Educ. 2-206(e)(4); or are home instructed pursuant to the requirements of COMAR 13A.10.01 and represent a nonpublic school or church organization as described herein, and pursuant to the requirements of the school.
2. The athletes of the high school team remain affiliated with the school for the duration of the academic school year in which they participate in interscholastic athletics and are not permitted to represent more than one school in interscholastic athletics unless they change their primary residence.
3. The administrative head of the school who is responsible for the day to day administration of the school shall:
 - (a) Assure/Document that each school team member has received the written permission of the parent/legal guardian to practice and play in interscholastic athletics;
 - (b) Assure/Document that each high school team member has been examined by a licensed physician, a certified physician assistant under supervision of a licensed physician, or a certified nurse practitioner as being physically fit to participate in any try out, practice, or contest;
 - (c) Assure/Document that all team members enrolled and attending a school meet academic eligibility standards of the school;
 - (d) Assure/Document that each home school team member is registered in a bona fide home instruction program, as defined in COMAR 13A.10.01;
 - (e) Assure/Document that during the period of participation, each home school team member demonstrates educational progress in all subjects taken in the home education program as required by COMAR 13A.10.01.
4. The high school team does not permit students, who have reached the age of 19 years old or older as of August 31, to practice or play.
5. The high school team does not permit high school graduates to practice or play.
6. The high school team has a defined sports season within the season parameters of the interscholastic sport in which they will practice or play against a MPSSAA member school team.
7. The high school team permits equal opportunity for participation in athletic programs.

Standards of Competition

8. High school team members maintain amateur status as defined in COMAR 13A.06.03.10.
9. High school team members may participate in interscholastic athletic contests in a maximum of four seasons in one sport within the 9th through 12th grades.
10. High school team members who are registered in and represent a nongraded school or are home instructed pursuant to the requirements of COMAR 13A.10.01, shall not have participated in interscholastic athletic contests for more than a maximum of four seasons in any one sport between the ages of 13 and 19.
11. The high school represented by the high school team assumes responsibility for the coaches and athletes on the high school team.
12. The head coach or primary coach of the high school team is an employee of the represented school for at least the sport he/she is coaching.
13. Competition against MPSSAA member high school teams is conducted using certified officials, when required by the MPSSAA.
14. Competition against MPSSAA member high school teams is conducted using NFHS Rules of the game when applicable.
15. If a MPSSAA member school student is ineligible for academic and/or disciplinary reasons and subsequently becomes home schooled, he/she may not participate in interscholastic athletics for the remaining academic school year.
16. Foreign, exchange, and international student athletes holding a F1 or J1 visa, who practice and play on high school teams must be sponsored by an organization with "Full Listing" status by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and comply with these Standards of Competition.
17. Policies pertaining to wrestling in COMAR 13A.06.03.04E(1) and (2) are followed:
 - (1) Students shall have their minimum weight class in which they can wrestle certified by a qualified physician before the student's first match.
 - (2) Students may not wrestle below the minimum weight class established for them at the time of certification.
18. Send completed verification forms to:

Maryland State Department of Education
Athletic Compliance Services (MPSSAA)
200 West Baltimore St. - Ground Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Verification of Compliance

Section 1 (To be completed by a **Conference**)

Conference Name: _____	Application Date: _____
Address: _____	Telephone #: _____
_____	Email: _____

PLEASE LIST ALL CONFERENCE SCHOOLS, INCLUDING ADDRESSES, ADMINISTRATIVE HEADS, TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBERS.
 (Attach additional sheets if necessary)

NAME OF SCHOOL/ADDRESS	ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD	TELEPHONE & FAX NUMBERS
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NAME OF SCHOOL/ADDRESS	ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD	TELEPHONE & FAX NUMBERS

Section 2 (To be completed by an **Individual school**)

School Name: _____	Application Date: _____
School Address: _____	Telephone #: _____
_____	Email: _____

Section 3

I verify as administrative head of _____ conference/high school, that our interscholastic athletic teams accept and participate in accordance with the MSDE Standards of Competition for the _____ school year.

Signature		Witness
Print Name	Date	Print Name

For MSDE use only:

Comments and recommendations