



Rules Modifications & Guidelines

Cross Country

Fall 2020

General Information

Every school district/program should consult with their local health department to determine which risk level to start this program safely. Continued consultation with local health department should be used to determine when progression to the next risk level can be initiated.

This document is to be utilized in compliance with all EEA, DESE and DPH guidelines in place.

Pre-Workout/Pre-Contest Screening:

Athletes and coaches may not attend practices or games if they are isolated for illness or quarantined for exposure to infection.

Prior to attending practices or games, athletes and coaches should check their temperature. If a student-athlete or a coaching staff member has a temperature of 100 degrees or above, they should not attend practices or games. Likewise if they have any other symptoms of COVID-19 infection (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), they should not attend practices or games. Student-athletes and coaches who have symptoms of COVID19 infection should follow DPH guidance regarding isolation and testing.

For students with symptoms who test negative for COVID-19 infection, they may return to sport once they are approved to return to school (when afebrile for 24 hours and symptomatically improved).

Student athletes and coaches who are diagnosed with COVID-19 infection may return to school once they have been afebrile for 24 hours and with improvement in respiratory symptoms, and once ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared, according to DPH guidelines. In addition, persons with COVID19 infection need to receive written clearance from their health care provider in order to return to sport.

Student-athletes and coaches who were exposed to COVID should not participate in practices or games until their 14-day quarantine is completed.

Vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions, but should practice social distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed.

Cohorts and/or Participants:

A record should be kept of all individuals present at team activities i.e. – practices, practice cohorts, competitions, etc.

Social distancing:

- **Practice** – Coaches are responsible for ensuring social distancing is maintained between runners as much as possible. This includes additional spacing between athletes while stretching, warming up, chatting, changing drills, etc. Athletes must

maintain spacing, and there should be no congregating of athletes while running drills. Workouts should be conducted in 'pods' of athletes, with the same 5-10 athletes always working out together. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection. Records should be kept of who is in each group, each day.

- **Locker Rooms** – Locker rooms and changing areas may be used but should be limited to 50% capacity. Facility Operators should ensure that users can abide by capacity restrictions and social distancing standards and establish signage and visual guidelines. Signage should remind users to limit time spent in enclosed area. If locker rooms are utilized, staggered use based on time and distance is recommended.

When possible, students should report to workouts in proper gear and immediately return home to shower, clean clothing, and equipment at the end of every workout.

- **Practice Site/Course** – Only essential personnel are permitted on the practice site/course area. These are defined as athletes, coaches, medical personnel/athletic trainers, and officials (competition). All others (i.e. managers, photographers, media, etc.) are considered non-essential personnel and are not to be at the course.
- **Personal Items** – It is recommended that each athlete bring their own gym bag for personal items (see gym bag information below). All personal items should remain in the gym bag when not in use. Gym bags should be placed in a predetermined area 6 feet apart for the duration of practice.
- **Huddles** – Social distancing (6 feet between individuals) must be maintained, as much as possible, and face coverings utilized when the coach is communicating with the entire team, or in smaller groups. Communicating with smaller groups is preferred.
- **Team Handshakes** – Athletes shall NOT exchange handshakes before, during or following practices and competitions. Some MIAA sport specific modifications suggest sportsmanship recognition practices which replace handshakes.
- **Spectators** – Spectators must practice social distancing between different household units and accept personal responsibility for public health guidelines. The number of spectators is determined in compliance with EEA, DESE and DPH guidelines.
- **Media** – All social distancing and hygiene guidelines for spectators must be followed by media members planning to attend games. Media members should contact host school administrators prior to arriving at games to plan appropriate entry and available workspace

Practice and Game Protocols:

- **Masks/Face Coverings** – (See Cross Country Specific Modifications for additional clarity) Athletes are required to wear cloth face coverings/masks per EEA guidelines. Gaiters are acceptable. Face coverings comprised of multiple layers and a tighter weave are more effective and preferred.

Athletes should reference sport specific guidelines for mask breaks.

Caution should be exercised when replacing a mask if hands are soiled or dirty. For individuals that are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability. (Coach must possess the medical note/documentation excusing the player from wearing a mask)

It is the responsibility of the head coach to monitor and ensure that all runners not on the course are wearing face coverings. A game administrator, home athletic director, or other designee may also assist in monitoring this.

Coaches and officials are also required to wear face coverings. Coaches and officials may remove their face covering briefly for a “break” at any point during practice/competition when they are socially distanced greater than 6 feet. Spectators, workers, and others are required to wear face coverings and they are expected to follow social distancing guidelines.

- **Player habits** – Coaches should work to break old habits and create new ones to minimize the spread of the virus. Spitting and nose clearing on the course during practices and competitions is not permitted. The habit of minimizing any touching of the face and covering the cough should be practiced.
- **Interaction with Officials** – Coaches must follow social distancing guidelines (6 feet) when interacting with an official or any other individual. Conversations can occur at a distance. Athletes should not approach an official closer than 6 feet at any time.
- **Hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes** – Athletes, coaches, and officials are encouraged to provide their own hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and/or sanitizing wipes and use them frequently – including prior to and at the conclusion of running. Additionally, it is emphasized to avoid touching the face throughout practice and competition.
- **Pre-Game Introductions and Preparation** – If pre-game meetings are necessary, they should be held with limited team representation – a single coach, single captain, etc. At the pregame meeting, all participants will be required to wear face coverings and to socially distance from all participants.

If a school chooses to do introductions, runners will take their positions prior to being introduced. Introductions are suggested to be limited or eliminated to decrease time of athletes standing around. The National Anthem may be played before competition.

- **Post-Game Procedures** – Refer to Team Handshakes in this guidance. Recognition of the other team, coaches and/or officials should be done from a distance greater than 6 feet and should not delay departure from the competition venue. Teams and group of runners should maintain social distancing and/or staggering departure times at the conclusion of the contest.

Equipment:

- **General Equipment** – There should be no shared athletic equipment. Any equipment that is used for practice should be cleaned and disinfected prior to and immediately following practice. Only one individual should handle the set-up and break-down of equipment on any given day (i.e. goals, cones, etc.).
- **Personal Items** – Shoes, clothing, towels, and other personal items must not be shared among athletes. Any items that are not currently being worn/used should be stored inside a personal gym bag. Gym bags should be placed in a predetermined area 6 feet apart for the duration of practice/competition.

Hydration:

- All students must bring their own water bottle. Water bottles cannot be shared.

- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should NOT be utilized.
- Water fountains are to be used as refill stations ONLY.

COVID-19 Coach:

- It is recommended that schools could designate a coach to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns.
- All coaches, staff, officials, and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols. Conduct training virtually and ensure that social distancing is maintained during training. (NFHS COVID-19 FREE Course)

Gym Bag: (Supplies recommended for your personal gym bag)

- Reusable facial covering(s)/mask(s) – The mask/face covering must be worn at all times. Sport specific modification may have further guidance for face coverings.
- Warm-up clothing, electronic devices, and other personal items that are used by the athlete, prior to practice/competition, must be placed back in the gym bag before practice/competition begins.
- Athletes are recommended to always have a personal bottle of hand sanitizer available. There will be less chance of possible cross contamination and less time standing around waiting to use a shared hand sanitizer. Be sure to have this inside a sealable bag, in case it leaks. This will be used when you enter and exit the practice/competition site, and at other necessary times in between.
- Athletes are recommended to have disinfectant wipes for personal use. When using a restroom area, it is best to disinfect any surface that may be touched, before and after using the facilities.
- Athletic braces, tape, inhalers, or any other sports-medical item used before, during or after practice/meets should be stored in a personal gym bag when not in use.
- Additional shoes should also be stored in a separate compartment or bag inside a gym bag to prevent possible cross contamination with other items in the gym bag.
- Any other item that is deemed necessary for practice or competition must be stored in the gym bag when it is not being used

**Everything inside the gym bag must be disinfected after every practice and before return to practice again. Be sure to spray the inside and the outside of the bag as well. This is for everyone's protection.

Cross Country Specific Modifications

When scheduling dual meets, leagues and/or schools should consider the following options where practical and/or possible:

- Contesting separate gender meets at opposite sites.
- Identifying one suitable (i.e. wider spacing) and available course, per league, to contest all league dual meets, using multiple days each week to schedule. This would provide a universal course for athletes to compete on and could also evolve into virtual scoring of a "league" meet.

Pre-Practice/ Pre-Contest:

- **Practice Pods** - Workouts should be conducted in pods of students, with the same 5-10 students always working out together.

- **Personnel** - Only essential personnel are permitted on the practice area and competition area each day (i.e. athletes, coaches, medical personnel/athletic trainer, officials and timers). All others (managers, photographers, media, spectators, etc...) are considered non-essential personnel and are not to be in the starting box, finish line or practice area.
- **Watches** - Athletes and coaches should bring their own watch if use is desired and sharing is not permitted.

Meet Protocols:

- **Dual Meets Only** - Competitions should be dual meets (2 teams) only until further guidelines are given.
- **Course Previews** - Course previews should be provided virtually via maps or video before the day of the meet. No on-site course previews should be allowed. Consider increasing the amount of course markings and checkpoints to help guide runners (especially novice runners) through the course.
- **Course Selection** - An emphasis should be placed on a wider course that allows for social distancing and spacing throughout the meet.
- **Warm Up Areas** - Designated warm up areas should be provided for each team to ensure social distancing before the meet.
- **Start Line:**
 - Staggered starts in smaller groups are required; possibly waves of 8-10 athletes**
 - Runners are to be spaced out 6 feet apart individually; ** possibly 4-5 from each school
 - Separated by school - 14 feet spacing between schools
 - Schools should use previously established cohorts from practice sessions
 - A minimum of three minute spacing should be allotted between each wave, however spacing time will be determined by size of the course to maintain social distancing.
 - Runners should maintain social distancing throughout the race and not cluster on the course.
 - Consideration should be given to creating waves of junior varsity (and/or freshman) runners to allow safe spacing near the start.
 - Athletes should be grouped, with social distancing and face coverings, as a team at the start line and teams should be a minimum of 14 feet apart upon start.
 - No common bins will be utilized at the starting line for personal items. All personal items, including warmups, headphones, etc.... cannot be taken to the starting area.
- **Finish Line:**
 - Schools must develop a non-transmittal way of scoring the meet to ensure no popsicle sticks, cards, labels, etc.... are given out as athletes cross the finish line (consider FAT Timing, videoing, or multicolored bibs to score later).
 - Consideration should be given to providing additional volunteers near the finish line to help disperse athletes who have just completed their race.
 - Finish lines should be open with a minimum 28 feet to cross. Teams should be directed to finish on separate sides. Lanes should be created over the last 100 yards.

- **Masks/Face Coverings** – Athletes can remove face coverings during the race when socially distanced but must wear it at the start of the race. Athletes should prepare to use a face covering at the conclusion of a race as soon as possible given social distancing needs as well as considering exhaustion/breathing at the conclusion of a race.

Post Workout/Post Contest

- **Warm Down Areas** - Designated warm down areas should be provided for each team to ensure social distancing after the meet.
- **Race Results**
 - Consideration should be given to providing additional volunteers to help compile race results in multiple, smaller gatherings
 - Consideration should be given to providing race results virtually
- **End of Practice/End of Race** – Athletes/teams should immediately disperse upon the conclusion of practice and meets. All participants should return home to shower, clean clothes and equipment used after every workout and/or meet.

EDUCATIONAL ATHLETICS

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