



Rules Modifications & Guidelines

Soccer

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 players 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.

- **Benches** – No benches should be used during practice. Players' items should be separated as below for personal items, at least 6 feet apart. Benches should be permitted only during games.
- **Practice Field** – Only essential personnel are permitted on the practice/competition field. 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 on the field of play.
- **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** – 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.

During play when spacing between players is greater than 10 ft athletes may momentarily take brief face covering relief. The default expectation is that the mask will be on. Athletes should reference sport specific guidelines for mask breaks.

Athletes that use mouthpieces should prepare to have extra face coverings available. 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 players not on the playing field 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 play 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, nose clearing on the field, licking fingers, and spitting on gloves 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 a referee 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 taking the field and upon return to the sideline. 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, players will take their position on the field prior to being introduced. Introductions are suggested to be limited or eliminated to decrease time of athletes on the competition field. The National Anthem may be played before competition.

- **Ball Retrievers** – Ball retrievers for any sport ARE NOT permitted. See sport specific modifications for extra ball placement procedures.
- **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 players 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.).

- **Balls** – Each player should bring their own ball or use the same school-issued ball during practice. Skill training, conditioning, agility, etc. can be done with the one player/one ball concept. Balls must be sanitized before and after each practice/game. Sport specific modifications also list other ball cleaning practices during competition.
- **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 a 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.

Soccer Specific Modifications

Massachusetts high school soccer will be played under the NFHS rules as has always been the case, with the following modifications.

Game Management:

- Each bench area must be set up at least 10 yards from midfield. Team benches (or chairs) must be set up to ensure social distancing between players, coaches, trainers, etc. on the sidelines. Teams may end up having players stretched out far down the sideline. Each team may have no more than 3 adults in the bench area throughout the contest (coaches, volunteers, statisticians, trainers, videographers - are all included).
- Cheerleaders will not be allowed. This is to limit the number of people on the sidelines during games.
- The Timeout Rule will be suspended. No timeouts will be allowed.
- All games will be played in four equal quarters with a 2-minute break between quarters 1 2, 3 and 4. Halftime will remain as 10 minutes. Each of the 11 players heading to the sidelines for two minutes may take their face covering off and get water from their own container. They should also use hand sanitizer at this time.
- All substitutes checking into the game should use hand sanitizer provided at the score table and check into the game "near" midfield but socially distant from others including game administrators.

Equipment:

- All players, coaches, referees, and other game personnel must wear a face covering during play except:
 - A player can take off their face covering at a point during the game when they are more than 10 feet away from an opponent. This is to take a "mask break."
 - The default expectation is that the face covering will be on. Failure to have your face covering securely/properly worn according to these modifications/guidelines, will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team as well as a yellow card for the player in violation.
- It is the responsibility of the head coach to certify that their entire team is wearing appropriate/approved face coverings prior to each contest. When the official asks the coach if the team is properly equipped, this will also include that the team has appropriate face coverings.
- If the game official feels that conditions are not safe in the bench area, as it relates to face coverings, they may issue a yellow card to the head coach for failure to enforce the face covering or social distancing rules in the bench area.
- The home team must provide at least 8 balls to have available around the playing area that may be put in play at any time. Members of each team who are not on the field may assist in retrieving balls with their feet to get them back to the sideline/goal line.
- Balls must be wiped down or sprayed (with approved disinfecting products) by the game administrator after each quarter of play and at the game's end.
- Goalkeepers may not spit on their gloves. They can wet them with a water bottle. If the coach/official sees this happen, gloves will be taken out of play.

Rules within the Game:

- It is a violation to intentionally head the ball. It will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team.
- It is a violation to place your hands on any part of an opposing team member's body. It will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team.
- It is a violation to intentionally make body contact with an opposing team member's body. This includes "shoulder to shoulder" tackling, backing into them or any other intentional contact. It will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team. However, a player is allowed to make unintentional contact with an opposing team member if the player is attempting to make "foot to ball" contact and the resulting contact with the opposing team member is below the torso, fleeting and minor in nature.
- It is a violation to attempt or to slide tackle. This will result in an indirect kick.
- Persistent infringement of any of the above modified rules (III a-d) will also result in a yellow card.

Restarts:

- All players on the field MUST properly wear their face covering on every restart. No restart may be taken prior to the official indicating that play may resume. On each restart, the referees will whistle as usual upon the violation or stoppage of play, then they will pause to make sure all players are properly wearing the face covering, then whistle to indicate that play may resume.
- All players must maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and all teammates and opponents at the commencement of all restarts.
- All indirect kicks MUST be played on the ground except for a goal kick which is addressed below.
- There will be no throw-ins. When the ball crosses the touchline, the restart will be a "kick-in," which will be treated the same as all other indirect-kicks- including that the opposing team members must be at least 10 yards from the ball. The ball will be placed on the spot on the touchline where the ball went out of bounds or behind it. It is important to note that the kick-in is indirect and therefore the off-sides rule is in play. This is different than the rules around traditional throw ins.
- When any indirect kick is played in the air, the resulting restart will be an indirect kick for the other team from the spot of the kick.
- It is a violation to kick a goal kick in the air beyond the midfield line. If the ball does travel in the air beyond the midfield line without touching a player, the resulting restart is an indirect kick for the opposing team from the spot it crossed midfield.
- It is a violation for the goalkeeper to kick, punt, dropkick or throw the ball in the air beyond the midfield line. If the ball does travel in the air beyond the midfield line without touching a player, the resulting restart is an indirect kick for the opposing team from the spot it crossed midfield.
- The use of a dropped ball is suspended. To replace this procedure, an indirect kick will be awarded to the team whom the referees deemed to be in possession at the time of stoppage.

- The use of a traditional defensive “wall” is not allowed on any restart. Players may attempt to impede the path of the ball to the goal by standing in the way but they must be at least 10 yards away from the ball and at least 6 feet away from other players.
- Corner kicks are an indirect kick.
- Penalty kicks will be handled in the same manner of a penalty shootout in that the ball will be dead once it has hit the goalkeeper or goal. No rebounds allowed. All the typical rules of a penalty shootout apply. If a goal is scored - it is a goal. If the ball goes over the goal line but is not a goal, it is either a goal kick or corner kick depending on the call of the official. If the ball rebounds off the goal or goalkeeper and comes to rest in the field of play, the restart will be a goal kick for the defending team.

Referees/Game Officials:

- If a player steps in the direction of the referee with intent to complain/argue, that player will be given a yellow card. If the player comes within 6 feet of an official to complain/argue, a red card will be issued.
- Referees are instructed to exit the field and facility immediately upon the final whistle. They are not expected to sign the game sheet this year. It is the responsibility of the game administrator/coaches to make sure the information on the game sheet is correct.
- Officials shall use alternative whistles such as electronic whistles; air horns are permissible.

EDUCATIONAL ATHLETICS

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