



MIAA Board of Directors Advisory Notice on MIAA Rule 59 *May 11, 2021*

Dear MIAA Member School Leaders,

In response to numerous questions from MIAA Member School administrators, please accept this communication as an advisory notice with respect to MIAA Rule 59, *Time Allowed for Participation After First Entering Grade Nine*, as it relates to the MIAA Board of Directors interpretation of the rule and its relation to the ongoing pandemic.

MIAA RULE 59:

Student Eligibility: Time Allowed for Participation After First Entering Grade Nine

59.1 A student shall be eligible for interscholastic competition for no more than four consecutive years after initially entering Grade 9. This limitation shall apply without regard to actual participation or attempt to participate.

59.2 In no case may a student be eligible to participate in more than four of each of the three annual athletic seasons. In special cases where a student has been absent from school because of an accident or illness, the executive director, or designee, shall have the authority to extend the student's eligibility upon presentation of a doctor's certificate on the student's behalf, a letter from the principal attesting to the inability of the student to attend school during a specific period because of an accident or illness, and waiver application for Rule 59. In instances where an extended eligibility is granted, the student may be declared eligible only for the season(s) that the student's accident/illness prevented participation.

The MIAA Board of Directors would like to remind the membership that students who voluntarily chose to reclassify, despite earning enough credits to advance to the next grade, do not meet the specific criteria outlined in the rule. To reiterate, rule 59.2 above states, "*In special cases where a student has been absent from school because of an accident or illness...*" The above reminder applies whether it is a student/family decision to reclassify or school policy requiring the student to reclassify, despite enough credits to advance grades. While the schools and families have a right to make these decisions, the cognizant choice to reclassify does not rise to the level of a waiver consideration.

Additionally, the MIAA Board of Directors is in support of each school adopting a document that is signed by the Principal, Athletic Director, student and parents/guardians during any transfer or reclassification, attesting to the understanding of MIAA eligibility rules. [Click here](#) for a link to a template schools can adopt.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Council (MIAC) and the Eligibility Review Board (ERB), the MIAA Board of Directors will not be making any alterations to MIAA Rule 59 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Federation of High Schools Executive Director, Dr. Karissa Niehoff, addressed this in a press release from April 9, 2021. [Click here](#) to view the press release.

Many students and schools had seasons moved and cancelled because of COVID-19. The general condition of COVID-19, which impacted all of the 230,000 student athletes in Massachusetts, was the norm, not the exception.

- **Example A** – I am a sophomore whose school was unable to offer soccer this year due to the pandemic. Even though I earned enough academic credits to advance to my junior year, can I repeat my sophomore year and use the above as a condition to apply for a fifth year waiver when I become a senior?

Answer: No, repeating an academic year by choice or preference does not meet the criteria outlined in Rule 59.2. Additionally, Rule 59.1 states, "*A student shall be eligible for interscholastic competition for no more than four consecutive years after initially entering Grade 9. This limitation shall apply without regard to actual participation or attempt to participate.*"

- **Example B** - I am currently a junior who was diagnosed with COVID-19 in October. As a result, I missed more than three months of school and was unable to earn enough academic credits to advance as a senior. Would this scenario qualify as something that would be considered when applying for a waiver of Rule 59?

Answer: As outlined in MIAA Rule 59.2, an accident or illness that prevents a student from attending school, resulting in the student not earning enough credits to advance grades, is something that could warrant consideration during the waiver process.

For all other MIAA Student Eligibility Rules, please review the [MIAA Handbook](#).

EDUCATIONAL ATHLETICS

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