



**Highlands School District  
Athletic Department  
Resocialization of Athletics Procedures**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented all Athletic Departments with countless challenges. The COVID-19 virus is a highly contagious illness that primarily attacks the upper respiratory system. The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages. Research from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), among others, has found that while children do get infected by COVID-19, relatively few children with COVID-19 are hospitalized. However, some severe outcomes have been reported in children, and a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others who may be far more vulnerable. While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, the current science suggests there are many steps schools can take to reduce the risks to students, coaches, and their families.

The Highlands School District will take the necessary precautions and recommendations from the federal, state, and local governments, CDC, Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), as well as the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), and Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) to safeguard the participants and staff of our athletic programs. The Highlands School District realizes knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing, as new information and treatments become available. The mandates below will be adjusted as needed as new information becomes available in order to decrease the risk of exposure for our staff, students, and spectators.

## **MANDATES**

The following is mandatory for **all phases** for Middle School and High School Athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. All Student Athletes, Coaches, and Staff will undergo a COVID-19 health screening prior to any practice, event, or team meeting. The purpose of the health screening is to check for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. This location of this health screening will be announced prior to the practice or event.
2. Promote healthy hygiene practices to limit the spread of COVID-19 including:
  - a. Hand washing (20 seconds with warm water and soap)
  - b. Students should wear a face covering (masks or face shields) when feasible. (Face coverings will not be required for athletes while practicing or competing.)
  - c. Coaching staff and other adult personnel should wear face coverings (masks or face shields) when feasible or in close contact with a student-athlete.

- d. Use hand sanitizer.
3. Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation in all facilities
4. Encourage social distancing through increased spacing, small groups, and limited mixing between groups, when feasible
5. Educate Athletes, Coaches, and Staff on health and safety protocols
6. Require that anyone who is sick to stay home
7. Follow the plan for a student or employee who gets sick
8. Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, coaches, staff, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
9. Athletes and Coaches **MUST** provide their own water bottle for hydration. Water bottles must not be shared. Disposable cups will not be provided.
10. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be used as needed and situations warrant, or determined by local/state governments. These items include gloves, face masks, and eye protection.
11. Identify staff and students who may be at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions such as:
  - Age 65 or older
  - Lung disease, moderate-severe asthma
  - Serious heart conditions
  - May be immunocompromised
  - Obesity
  - Diabetes
  - Kidney or liver disease

### **PHASE 1 (Pennsylvania Yellow Phase)**

- All school facilities must remain closed as per PA State Guidelines.
- Athletes and Coaches may communicate via online meetings (Zoom, Google Classroom, etc.)
- Athletes are encouraged to participate in home workouts including strength and conditioning.
- Athletes and Coaches should follow all guidelines set forth by the local and state governments.

### **PHASE 2 (Pennsylvania Green Phase)**

#### **Pre-workout Screening:**

- All coaches and student athletes will be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to any workout or event. (See Appendix for COVID-19 Screening Form)
- Screenings will include a temperature check and questioning to each person for COVID-19 symptoms. These responses should be recorded and stored to provide a record.
- Attendance should be recorded for contact tracing reasons.

- If individuals participating in sporting activities show symptoms, have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, or are sick, they must be sent home. Clearance from a medical professional must be provided before returning to play.
- Any individual with suspected positive COVID-19 symptoms should not be allowed to take part in workouts.
  - Student athletes will need to contact parents/guardians for immediate pick-up
  - Parents should contact their primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional for guidance.

### **Limitations on Gatherings:**

- Coaches and athletes must maintain appropriate social distancing at all times possible, including in the field of play, locker rooms, sidelines, dugouts, benches, and workout areas. During down time, athletes and coaches should not congregate.
- Gatherings shall not exceed 50% of the total occupancy permitted by law for the facility or no more than 250 total individuals (whichever is less), including coaches per field or court.
- Sports-related activities are limited to student athletes, coaches, officials, and staff only. Spectators will not be permitted.
- The addition of visitors and spectators will be contingent upon future health conditions within the state and local communities.
- No locker room use for out of season workouts will be permitted. Locker room use will be minimized during in season events.

### **Facilities Cleaning**

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities and common area to mitigate any communicable disease
- Athletic Facilities should be cleaned prior to arrival and following workouts and team gatherings, with high touch areas cleaned more often
- Weight Room Equipment should be wiped clean after each individual's use
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment surfaces

### **Physical Activity**

- Coaches must review and consider the CDC guidance to modify practices and games to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus. This includes focusing on individual skill building versus competition and limiting contact in close contact sports.
- Personal items should not be shared. This includes clothing, towels, and pinnies.
- If equipment must be shared, all equipment should be properly disinfected often during practice and events, as deemed necessary.
- Hand Sanitizer should be used periodically, as resources allow
- Spotters for maximum weight lifts should be stationed at each end of the bar

## **Hydration:**

- All athletes, coaches, and officials must bring their own water and drinks to team activities.
- Team water coolers for sharing through disposable cups are not allowed.
- Fixed water fountains should not be used.

## **OTHER GUIDANCE:**

### **Primary Point of Contact**

- The Highlands School District has designated Drew Karpen as the Athletic Department's primary point of contact for all questions related to COVID-19.
- Contact information for Drew Karpen is [dkarpen@goldenrams.com](mailto:dkarpen@goldenrams.com) or 724-504-9837.

### **Transportation**

- Modifications for team transportation to and from athletic events may be necessary based on current Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines.
- This may include:
  - Reducing the number of students and coaches on a bus or van
  - Using hand sanitizer upon boarding a bus or van
  - Social distancing on a bus
- These potential modifications will be determined by the school district, bus companies, Department of Education, State and Local governments.

### **Social Distancing during Contests/Events/Activities**

- Sidelines/Bench Area
  - Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines or bench area during practices and events, as deemed necessary by the school, PIAA, state and local governments.

### **Who should be allowed at events?**

- Grouping of individuals into tiers from essential to non-essential:
  - Tier 1 (Essential) – Student athletes, coaches, contest officials, event staff, medical staff, security personnel
  - Tier 2 (Preferred) – Media
  - Tier 3 (Non-essential) – Spectators
- Only Tier 1 and 2 personnel will be allowed to attend events until state and/or local governments lift restrictions on mass gatherings.
- Seating areas, including bleachers, must adhere to social distancing requirements of at least 6 feet of spacing for anyone not in the same household. To assist with proper social distancing, areas should be clearly marked. Adults should wear face coverings (masks or face shields) at all times.
- Once state and/or local governments lift restrictions on mass gatherings, caregivers or spectators will be prohibited from entering the field of play or bench areas.

### **Overnight/Out of State Events/ Events in COVID-19 Hot Spots**

- The Highlands School District will evaluate each event and follow all local/state government guidelines on a case-by-case basis.
- Every consideration must be taken as to not expose students to unnecessary or potential high-risk exposure by traveling outside of the region.

### **Other Important Information**

- Activities that increase the risk of exposure to saliva must not be allowed including chewing gum, spitting, licking fingers, and eating sunflower seeds.
- Avoid shaking hands, fist bumps, or high fives before, during or after games and practices. Limit unnecessary physical contact with teammates, other athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators.
- If multiple events are to be held at the same facility, adequate time shall be scheduled between contests to allow for facilities to be cleaned and disinfected, and to minimize interaction between athletes.
- Sports complexes with multiple fields may operate simultaneous games or practices on fields within a complex only if social distancing can be maintained.
- Establish protocols to limit entrance and exit traffic, designating specific entry to and exits from facilities with clear signage.
- Stagger pick up and drop off times and locations for practice and events.
- Ensure that athletes are not congregating while awaiting pick up and to ensure congregation or crowding does not occur on drop off.
- Parents dropping off and picking up athletes should remain outside of athletic facilities. Parents should not enter the facility.
- Concession stands or other food must adhere to Guidance for the Restaurant Industry.
- When restarting competitions, start by limiting games, scrimmages, and matches to teams in the region first (PIAA District 7 and District 8 only). Can expand beyond regional play if COVID-19 cases continue to stay low.

### **Positive Cases and Coaches, Staff, or Athletes Showing COVID-19 Symptoms**

#### **What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?**

- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The symptoms may range from mild to severe. (See CDC Fact Sheet in Appendix)
- Symptoms may include:
  - Fever or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore Throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea

### **What to do if you are sick?**

- If you are sick or think you are infected with the COVID-19 virus, STAY AT HOME.
  - It is essential that you take steps to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home or community.
  - If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.
- Notify the school immediately (principal, athletic director, school nurse, athletic trainer, and/or coach)
- It will be determined if others who may have been exposed (students, coaches, staff) need to be notified, isolated, and/or monitored for symptoms
- If a Positive case of COVID-19 is diagnosed, contact tracing will be implemented with the assistance of local health professionals and the CDC and DOH.

### **What to do if a student or staff become ill with COVID-19 symptoms during practice, event, or during transportation to or from an event?**

- Make every effort to isolate the ill individual from others, until the student or staff member can leave the school or event
- If student, parent/guardian will be contacted immediately, and arrangements will be made for the student to be picked up
- The ill individual will be asked to contact their physician or appropriate healthcare professional for direction
- The facility where the sick individual was present will need to be disinfected immediately.

### **Return of student or staff to athletics following a COVID-19 diagnosis?**

- Student or staff must provide written medical clearance from their medical doctor or CRNP
- Return to athletics can begin once the individual is determined by a medical doctor or CRNP to be non-contagious, fever free (without fever-reducing medicine), has vast improvement in respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), and experiences no vomiting or diarrhea.

### **EDUCATION:**

- Staff, Coaches, Parents, and Athletes will be educated on the following (through posters, flyers, meetings, emails, phone calls):
  - COVID-19 signs and symptoms
  - Proper ways to limit exposure to COVID-19 (hand washing, cough in your elbow, disinfecting touched surfaces, social distancing, etc.)
  - The content of this Return to Sport Guidelines Document
  - Any pertinent COVID-19 information released by DOH, local governments, NFHS, and PIAA.

# **APPENDIX**






## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on wearing or making a mask,

visit: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Stop-the-Spread.aspx>

For more information on COVID-19, visit the Department of Health’s website, [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov), or the

Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by  
texting **PA to 741-741**

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### **RESOURCES:**

NFHS: Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities  
(per update on May 2020)

Centers for Disease Control – “What You Should Know About COVID-19 to Protect Yourself and Others”

PA Department of Health – “Phased Re-opening Plan by Governor Wolf”