MHSAA staff has been working diligently for months with the Governor’s office and health department officials on return to activity plans during the COVID pandemic. On June 30, Governor Whitmer released the MI Safe Schools Roadmap and it tasked the MHSAA with creating and publishing the guidance for the reopening of school sports. For the past eight weeks, staff has worked to fulfill this mandate and has published all materials at MHSAA.com. During this process, the MHSAA has made certain that athletic guidance complies with all Executive Orders of the Governor.

Over the past two weeks, our staff has been in regular communication with the Governor’s office seeking further clarification and guidance on issues within the current Executive Orders as well as answers on the use of indoor school gyms and swimming pools in Regions 1-5 and 7. Today, the Representative Council was ready to allow competition in all Regions of the state in boys soccer, girls swimming & diving and volleyball but was not able to do so yet because of these unanswered questions. It is our hope that further guidance on these questions will reach the MHSAA within the coming week. The MHSAA, the Representative Council and member schools are committed to following all current and future Executive Orders in keeping our athletic programs fully compliant with all orders and by following all safety precautions.

Based on these facts, the Representative Council approved the following items today, subject to current and future Executive Orders.

1. Competition in boys soccer, girls swimming & diving and volleyball in Regions 6 and 8 may begin as scheduled on August 21 with all published safety protocols being followed. All individuals not in active participation (players in the game and officials) must wear a face covering at all times which includes substitutes, coaches, game workers/management, auxiliary or support personnel, medical personnel, media members and spectators. School personnel, not contest officials, are responsible for face covering compliance. In Regions 6 and 8, the outdoor limitations are 25% of the venue capacity or 500, whichever is smaller and includes all persons (players, coaches, officials, game workers, medical personnel, media and spectators). In Regions 6 and 8, the indoor gymnasium limitations are 25% of the venue capacity or 250 individuals, whichever is smaller, that again includes all persons. Indoor pools in these two Regions are limited to 25% of the bather capacity for that pool.

2. In Regions 1-5 and 7, competition in boys soccer, girls swimming & diving and volleyball may begin upon the issuance of future Executive Order(s) permitting soccer competition and opening of indoor school facilities for volleyball and swimming competition. Under current Executive Orders, these three sports in Regions 1-5 and 7 may continue to practice outdoors under published protocols but may not compete within these six Regions. Schools could travel into Regions 6 and 8 and compete based on the guidance above.
3. Beginning on Monday, August 24, out-of-season football is allowed 16 voluntary coach-player contact days (with more than four players) with helmets only until October 31. Consistent with the Representative Council’s decision last week to move the football season from fall to spring, no competition or practice with students from other schools is allowed on any of the 16 voluntary coach-player contact days and this allowance is for practice sessions on-site at school facilities if the school permits with all stated safety protocols being followed. The guidelines from the Acclimatization Week on August 10-16 shall be followed on all coach-player contact days used with all activity taking place outdoors. Non sport-specific conditioning continues to be permitted with all published safety protocols. The four-player rule resumes on November 1 for football. The MHSAA has heard from numerous schools and individuals about the need for students to stay connected with school coaches for a variety of wellness and mental health reasons. This allowance for football seeks to address that concern.

4. Beginning on Tuesday, September 8, all spring sports are allowed 16 voluntary, out-of-season coach-player contact days (more than 4 players) until October 31. No competition or practice with students from other schools is allowed on any of the 16 voluntary coach-player contact days; this allowance is for practice sessions on-site at school facilities if the school permits with all stated safety protocols being followed. Non sport-specific conditioning continues to be permitted with all published safety protocols. Guidance for spring sport contact days will be available on each sport’s home page at MHSAA.com by September 1. These will be similar to the protocols used during the summer with all activity taking place outdoors. The four-player rule resumes on November 1 for spring sports. The MHSAA has heard from numerous schools about the need for students to stay connected with school coaches for a variety of wellness and mental health reasons, especially for spring sports that lost entire seasons last spring. This allowance for all spring sports seeks to address that concern.

5. The four-player rule continues for winter sports following all published safety protocols. This activity must take place outdoors, subject to current and future Executive Orders.

6. Sideline cheer activities (practices and cheering for fall contests) are allowed until the preseason downtime for competitive cheer begins on October 25. Sideline cheer activities must follow the protocol of using face-coverings, physical distancing and no stunting which keeps this activity in the low-risk group. This activity must take place outdoors, subject to current and future Executive Orders.

7. MHSAA junior high/middle school regulations allow fall sports practices to begin on Monday, August 24 at school facilities if the school permits with all stated safety protocols being followed. Schools may proceed in all middle school sports except football this fall based on decisions of leagues and/or individual schools.

8. Finally, the Council reaffirmed that MHSAA Handbook, Regulation II, Sections 9-11 limits a student to only one football season in a school year. For example, if a student participates in fall football in a different state, that student would be ineligible for a second football season in the spring in Michigan even if an exception to the transfer rule were met.

We understand that some school districts may opt-out of fall sports. If your fall teams do not intend to have a fall season, please alert the MHSAA.

The MHSAA will continue to keep schools informed with additional and updated information as we have throughout the COVID pandemic.

Thank you.