International Students: F-1 or J-1 visa students including incoming 9th-graders, are only eligible if they meet a residency exception or if they are placed by an Approved International Student Program (AISP). AISP students are eligible immediately for one year and then wait one year (play one, wait one–no eligibility at any level). International students who are not from an AISP program may be eligible at the sub-varsity level after sitting out 90 scheduled school days without any special approval if the school desires. Otherwise, international students are not eligible for varsity sports for up to 8 semesters or 12 trimesters.

Undue Influence – Also known as the anti-recruiting regulation. This rule renders a student who is recruited by a person directly or indirectly associated with a school or athletic program ineligible for up to four years. The offending person could also be suspended from coaching and the school required to disconnect from that person for up to four years. It is against the anti-recruiting rules for any person directly or indirectly associated with a student or school to secure or encourage attendance because of athletics.

Amateur Status and Awards – Participation in school sports is limited to students who are amateurs – to those who have not received money or valuable consideration for involvement with one of the sports that the MHSAA sponsors a tournament in. Amateurs can’t sign a pro hockey contract and then play high school baseball. Amateurs can’t receive cash, gift certificates, scholarships to camp, or discounts (including those from sporting goods companies). Amateurs can’t compete in tournaments of their own choice or receive money for participation in high school sports or keep school issued items (they can purchase at season's end for fair/current market value). The amateur’s family can’t accept these prohibited items in their place. Amateurs can’t pose in school uniform to endorse a commercial product. The rule allows for meals, travel, and lodging to be accepted if in kind, not cash to buy food, but the actual meal is OK. The awards provision has a $40 cap for symbolic awards not including engraving which is often confused with a cash limit of $40. Never can a student-athlete receive cash, merchandise or gift certificates for participation in an MHSAA sponsored sport.

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Limited Team Membership – There are three parts to this rule. Part A, also known as the Loyalty Rule, states that in MHSAA sports, a student can only compete for the school team once the season starts. So in team sports, once practice (including tryouts) begins, a student can only play for the school team in that sport until the season ends. All JH/MS sports except football, ice hockey, and individual sports don’t activate the rule until participation by the student in the first contest. In individual sports and all JH/MS sports except football, students are allowed two non-school events after the first contest during the season. An event held on not more than three consecutive calendar days is considered one event under this rule (i.e. a three day non-school tournament). In skiing the rule is activated once the team participates in a scrimmage or meet. In tennis, the rule activates on the first day of allowed competition regardless of when the team begins practice or a player joins the team. Once discovered a student is ineligible for, at minimum, the next 3 dates of high school competition, 2 dates for junior high/middle school to a maximum of the entire season. An individual may not knowingly violate the regulations. To be in the MHSAA tournament in ski, hockey or soccer a student must have been a participating team member in that sport in at least four contests with his/her school team against an MHSAA school. Part B indicates that students would be ineligible for one school year if after participating in an MHSAA sport they compete in any event which is or purports to be a National High School Championships or All Star Event. A 12th-grade student may participate (with 30 days advance request from the principal) in one all-star event after his or her season and not lose eligibility in upcoming sports. Part C involves participation in U.S. Olympic Development Programs and National Governing Body teams which both involve special advance allowances that involve school administration.

Supplement and Teaching Tool
Issue 14 — An Updated Eligibility Summary (2020-21)

The following is intended to provide coaches, administrators and others a better understanding of MHSAA Regulations. Schools should review the MHSAA Handbook using the full text of the rule. This is a teaching tool.

Due to the Pandemic of 2020, modifications were made to some eligibility rules and can be found in the MHSAA Handbook or on MHSAA.com

AN ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY

This brochure will touch the surface of Regulations I and III – eligibility for sports in MHSAA member schools. Eligibility is a state of being. A student either is eligible or is not eligible and not knowing the rule does not change this fact. There are several rules that determine eligibility for school sports and over the years they have become increasingly comprehensive. Consult the full context of the rule and school administration and possibly the MHSAA about specific eligibility situations.

Enrollment – The first rule of school sports is that a student may only play for the school they are enrolled in. Enrolled means the student is: 1) on the school records receiving active credit (courses awaiting grades for credit toward graduation or a certificate of completion) for at least 66% of full credit load potential for a full time student (50% for JRH/MS) and 2) in attendance (in person or online as defined previously) for one or more classes – or participation in a scrimmage or contest. Eligible students must be enrolled in a school – any school – for the purposes of this rule – by the 4th Friday after Labor Day and the 4th Friday of February.
Age – Students must be under 19 years old to play school sports except that if students turn 19 on or after Sept. 1 of a current school year, they can finish that school year. 6th graders must be under 13 years of age; 7th-graders must be under 14 years of age, and 8th-graders must be under 15 years old. Those who turn this age on or after Sept. 1 can finish that year. For students who may be too old for their senior year an accommodation is provided called an Eligibility Advancement Form that allows these students to begin high school sports in the 7th or 8th grade and have four years of high school sports. Eligibility advancement may also extend to 6th-graders seeking two years of middle school eligibility.

Physical Exams – Prior to participation in a tryout or practice every student must submit a statement from an MD, DO, Nurse Practitioner or Physicians Assistant that they are physically able to compete in athletic tryouts, practices and contests. Parents and students must also sign an assumption of risk and acknowledgment to receiving concussion awareness material. The physical form also includes consent to disclosure of information otherwise prohibited by HIPAA and FERPA laws. These statements must be on file in the appropriate school office and must be for the current school year, not necessarily in conjunction with the insurance year. The earliest date that a physical can be dated for use in the coming school year is the previous April 15. Due to the Pandemic, for the 2020-21 school year this requirement was modified only for students in any grade who received a valid sports physical during the 2019-20 school year. In place of the physical, these students and their parents will be required to complete the MHSSA’S SPORTS HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE.

Maximum Enrollment and Maximum Competition – Once a student begins the 9th grade, they are allowed eight semesters, or 12 trimesters of enrollment (definition above). In addition they are allowed four first semesters and four second semesters, or in trimester schools, four first, four second and four third trimesters. The 7th and 8th semesters or the 10th, 11th and 12th trimesters must be consecutive – no breaks in enrollment. For the purposes of this rule, an academic term “counts” if the student participated in a game or scrimmage or if the student continues in school until the “4th Friday.” The rule does not apply to 7th and 8th graders, and often verified in writing by the MHSSA via a written interpretation.

Undergraduate Standing – Students who have graduated from high school are not eligible for sports. Students who have enough credits to graduate may continue to play sports provided they are still taking the minimum number of academic classes (66% of full credit load potential for a full time student) and have not yet received their diplomas. A graduate is a student who has accepted a diploma or a certificate of completion, including a GED or a diploma from a foreign country and is not eligible regardless of age or academic term.

Previous Academic Credit Record – A student must have received credit for at least 66% of full credit load potential for a full time student in the previous academic term (either a semester or trimester) in which they were enrolled (e.g. four of five or six classes, five of seven classes) (50% for JRH/MS). Many schools add to the MHSSA minimum eligibility requirement by increasing the number of classes a student must pass or also require a certain GPA to be eligible. In addition to setting the minimum standard, the MHSSA also sets the period of ineligibility: a trimester, or for students not in trimester schools, 60 scheduled school days. Students returning to eligibility under this rule must be passing 66% of credits on the 60th scheduled school day to become eligible. A student’s reinstatement would be when they begin to pass classes, or if the student is sitting, then on the first day that classes are held in the new trimester or on the 61st scheduled school day provided the student is passing. Students whose eligibility is reinstated for fall sports (either through making up the deficiency or having sat out) would become eligible on the first day of practices for the start of the school year. Due to the Pandemic, this MHSSA minimum was set aside for the first academic term of 2020-21. Each school will determine the eligibility of students under this rule for sports played in the fall of 2020. The traditional rule reactivates with the start of the 2nd academic term of 2020-21.

Current Academic Credit Record - The same minimum standard, passing 66% of full credit load potential for a full time student (50% for JRH/MS) must be checked periodically by the school before the end of the semester or trimester. Current academic credit checks must occur at least once in 10 weeks for a semester school and once in 7 weeks for a trimester school. Most schools check weekly, biweekly or at the time of their progress reports. When a student is not passing the minimum 66% of full credit load potential for a full time student (or a higher percentage for part time students) the student is not eligible for at least the next Monday through Sunday and so on until the student is passing 66% of classes from the start of the semester or trimester through the most recent eligibility check.

Sport Specific Transfer Regulation – This rule states that the sports a student played in the most recent previous high school year (any level) determines eligibility in the coming school year should the student transfer and not meet one of the 15 stated exceptions (more detail follows). Participation means actually entering a scrimmage against another school or entering a game or meet for any amount of time (not just practicing). However, a transfer student would be eligible in a new school if all of these students to begin high school sports in the 7th or 8th grade and have four years of high school sports. Eligibility advancement may also extend to 6th-graders seeking two years of middle school eligibility.

Maximum Enrollment and Maximum Competition – Once a student begins the 9th grade, they are allowed eight semesters, or 12 trimesters of enrollment (definition above). In addition they are allowed four first semesters and four second semesters, or in trimester schools, four first, four second and four third trimesters. The 7th and 8th semesters or the 10th, 11th and 12th trimesters must be consecutive – no breaks in enrollment. For the purposes of this rule, an academic term “counts” if the student participated in a game or scrimmage or if the student continues in school until the “4th Friday.” The rule does not apply to 7th and 8th graders, and often verified in writing by the MHSSA via a written interpretation.

Undergraduate Standing – Students who have graduated from high school are not eligible for sports. Students who have enough credits to graduate may continue to play sports provided they are still taking the minimum number of academic classes (66% of full credit load potential for a full time student) and have not yet received their diplomas. A graduate is a student who has accepted a diploma or a certificate of completion, including a GED or a diploma from a foreign country and is not eligible regardless of age or academic term.

Previous Academic Credit Record – A student must have received credit for at least 66% of full credit load potential for a full time student in the previous academic term (either a semester or trimester) in which they were enrolled (e.g. four of five or six classes, five of seven classes) (50% for JRH/MS). Many schools add to the MHSSA minimum eligibility requirement by increasing the number of classes a student must pass or also require a certain GPA to be eligible. In addition to setting the minimum standard, the MHSSA also sets the period of ineligibility: a trimester, or for students not in trimester schools, 60 scheduled school days. Students returning to eligibility under this rule must be passing 66% of credits on the 60th scheduled school day to become eligible. A student’s reinstatement would be when they begin to pass classes, or if the student is sitting, then on the first day that classes are held in the new trimester or on the 61st scheduled school day provided the student is passing. Students whose eligibility is reinstated for fall sports (either through making up the deficiency or having sat out) would become eligible on the first day of practices for the start of the school year. Due to the Pandemic, this MHSSA minimum was set aside for the first academic term of 2020-21. Each school will determine the eligibility of students under this rule for sports played in the fall of 2020. The traditional rule reactivates with the start of the 2nd academic term of 2020-21.

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