



# **Registered Observer Program Handbook**

10th Edition

## **WELCOME and THANKS**

Welcome to the position of Registered Observer. MHSAA Registered Observers serve an important role in the development of new officials and the promotion of tournament-level officials for postseason assignments. Your role is invaluable to improving officiating across the state of Michigan. This handbook will provide you the MHSAA's expectations for Observers and instructions on how to provide officials with a constructive and positive experience. We thank you for your passion and dedication in taking on this task. Your commitment to the MHSAA and the Officials Program is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Rice", with a large, stylized initial "B" and a flourish at the end.

Brent Rice

Assistant Director, MHSAA

## **PURPOSE and GUIDELINES**

### **Purpose of the MHSAA Officials Program**

The MHSAA Officials Program is designed to provide opportunities and resources for individuals that register as officials with the MHSAA and to set regulations and standards in rules enforcement and mechanics that help to provide consistent application throughout the state.

As a result of these aims, and in accordance with the purpose of the MHSAA, the MHSAA Officials Program provides member schools:

- Increased promotion of the educational values interscholastic athletic programs provide.
- Assistance in the regulation of interscholastic athletic competitions.
- Promotion of uniformity, predictability and competitive equity.
- Promotion the physical welfare of participating students.

### **Purpose of the Registered Observers Program**

The purpose of the Registered Observer program is to assist the MHSAA in identifying potential and future tournament officials by providing contributions to officials' overall performance analysis, candid explanations of performance deficiencies and areas in which they excel. Registered Observers' feedback also proves beneficial to Registered Assigners and Local Approved Association leadership for the training and advancement of officials. Most importantly, this program is designed to help all registered officials (new, improving and veteran) learn, develop and grow through constructive criticism and positive reinforcement provided by experienced, caring observers. Through the Registered Observer program, the MHSAA hopes to improve officiating, increase consistency of officiating throughout the state and provide officials with increased support and mentoring.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The MHSAA Officials Program provides for Registered Observers in baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball, volleyball and wrestling. Individuals interested in serving as Registered Observers should be nominated by their Local Approved Association using the Registered Observer Nomination form. It is essential that the Registered Observer be a person skilled in officiating and recognized as capable of technical interpretation of the contest performance. Individuals nominated as Registered Observers must meet the following minimum standards to maintain their status:

1. Shall have a minimum of five years varsity experience in the sport for which he/she observes or extensive experience at the college or professional level in the sport.
2. Shall have demonstrated good communication and writing skills.
3. Shall be a member of the Local Approved Association that has nominated him/her.
4. Shall currently be a registered official in the sport for which he/she observes.
5. Shall complete the annual rules test in the sport for which he/she observes.
6. Shall have attended the mandated Officiate Michigan Day trainings when offered by the MHSAA.
7. Shall follow all Registered Observer Guidelines when observing officials and submitting observations.

In addition, the MHSAA may invite additional persons to become observers in this program based on years of service, experience and familiarity with officiating in the sport.

### **Registered Observer Guidelines**

1. Represent the MHSAA in the discharge of your duties, and your behavior and conduct should always be beyond reproach and reflect a genuine commitment to help officials improve.
2. Be professional in your interactions with MHSAA officials, spectators, administrators or other personnel working for the school. Maintain cordial, but limited, interactions with school administration and coaching staffs.
3. Recognize new, impressionable officials and encourage them to stay in officiating by providing informative, tactful and positive feedback.
4. Contact Registered Assigners that assign in the area to receive a list of officials that are being recommended for postseason tournament consideration.
5. NEVER become involved with decisions of contest officials during the contest, including crew consultations that might occur in the locker room on playing surface.
6. Maintain good notes to improve the system you use for observations, as well as for providing suggestions for improvement to the MHSAA.

7. Do not engage the media regarding your observations or the performance of the official(s) working the contest. Rather, use “no comment” and direct any member of the media to contact the MHSAA for questions or concerns.
8. Submit a Contest Observation Form that includes rating, recommendations and notes. Ratings and recommendations should be sent only to the MHSAA; however, it is recommended that you share the notes on the official(s) with the official(s) involved as a follow-up.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Registered Observers should have no emotional or vested interest in the outcome of the contests they observe. Similarly to working officials, Registered Observers must remain neutral and avoid the appearance of impropriety. Some potential conflicts include:

1. Observer’s child is competing in the contest being observed.
2. Observer (or immediate family member) is a current coaching staff member for the contest being observed.
3. Observer has a close connection or relationship to the coach of a participating school.
4. Official is a recent graduate, i.e., within 4 years, or a closely connected alumni of a participating school.

You should avoid completing formal observations for officials that you have a close, personal relationship or connection. This includes relatives and best friends, but also officials you may have animosity toward or with who you might have a dispute. You should never be in a position where someone could challenge your impartiality based on the history you have with an official you observe. Additionally, Registered Observers may not submit reports on officials for games in which the observer is also an official himself/herself.

## **Timeline and Expectations for Observers**

1. Reach out to the host school administrator at least a day in advance to notify him/her of your expected attendance and to ask for, or make, any special arrangements or requests.
2. Identify yourself at the facility entrance by using the identification card provided to you by the MHSAA, indicating the sport and year for which you are registered. Registered Observers may not request free admittance for additional persons (*e.g., friends, family, colleagues, etc.*). If you seek admission to a postseason tournament site, advanced permission must be granted by the MHSAA.
3. Move to an inconspicuous location to observe contests. You must determine the appropriateness of seating requests, and under no circumstances should you demand to be located in a specific location. Registered Observers enter facilities as the guests of the schools and should comply with any restrictions or requirements the school sets.
4. Do not voluntarily make yourself known as an observer to spectators or personnel other than the athletic

administrator.

5. Plan on being in attendance for the entire contest in which you observe. If you are not able to attend the full contest, you should still submit a Contest Observation Form for the portion of the contest observed. Contest Observation Forms can be found using the Registered Observer link under the Officials page of the MHSAA.com website.
6. Record as much information as possible. Not everything needs to be included in the report or shared with the officials, but you should not share important details with the officials that you would not include in a written report to the MHSAA – and vice versa.
7. You may use notebooks, computers, tablets or voice recorders to catalog observations during contests; however, the information may only be officially submitted to the MHSAA using a Contest Observation Form.
8. Thoroughly review the Observation Standards as published by the MHSAA for the specific sport. Feedback should always be based on the official's performance during the observed contest as it comports to NFHS and MHSAA rules and interpretations and the MHSAA approved mechanics for the sport. You should not substitute your personal preferences for those outlined in the documents listed above.
9. Make every effort to meet briefly with the officials following the contest to discuss its details, any unusual situations and to provide them your observations and thoughts on their performances.
10. Submit completed report(s) to the MHSAA office within 10 days by email to [brent@mhsaa.com](mailto:brent@mhsaa.com).

## **Tips for Successful Observations**

### ***SHOW YOUR FACE***

Officials deserve to be told what areas require improvement and need the reinforcement that positive feedback offers. Information is best conveyed in person and reduces the possibility of miscommunication. Furthermore, these face-to-face interactions allow observers to ask questions, receive clarifications and even learn new things themselves. In-person critiques are more personal and tend to be found more valuable.

A discussion with the officials to debrief following the contest is important. This is the time where you can ask for clarifications on anything that you might not understand or questioned during the contest. If there is a major altercation or an ejection, ask the official(s) about the details. Discuss with the official(s) the areas where he/she/they excelled and were positive and areas of deficiency where improvement is needed.

It's okay, and even recommended, for a Registered Observer to reach out to the officials before the contest to let them know he/she will be observing. If you would like to visit the officials before the start of the contest, you should ask permission from them (crew chief if on a regular crew) during this initial contact. Visits with officials should be limited to prior to and after the conclusion of the contest. Visits between games or at intermissions should be avoided unless an obviously incorrect and serious issue needs to be addressed. An observer's disagreement as to rule enforcement or judgment decisions would not be considered serious enough to justify getting involved. This would

primarily be reserved for potentially dangerous situations or safety concerns that may be prevented through intervention.

### ***START WITH A “3”***

Observer ratings scale ranges from 1 to 5 (1 is low and 5 is high) and corresponds with the following descriptions:

- **Superior (5)** – Performance demonstrates an exceptionally high degree of competence and knowledge of the category.
- **Above Standard (4)** – Performance exceeds the standard and performance better than average official in the category.
- **Meets Standard (3)** – Performance is standard and expected, and official is functional and competent in the category.
- **Marginal (2)** – Performance barely acceptable and corrective action is suggested in the category.
- **Below Standard (1)** – Performance unacceptable and corrective action is clearly necessary in the category.

It is recommended that all officials start a contest with a “3” in each category. There is nothing wrong with a “Meets Standard”. In fact, the largest number of officials should fill this category. When an official does something particularly good, his/her rating should be moved higher. When an official does something that doesn’t fit with the standards expected, his/her rating should be moved lower.

### ***CONSISTENCY MATTERS***

Like so much in officiating, the biggest expectation for Registered Observers is that the feedback provided is consistent in both content and from one observation to another. The observation program is primarily designed to improve performance and put the best available officials on the most important contests. That’s why it’s critical that officials know what standards by which they’ll be observed, and that they’ll be compared against other officials being observed by the same standards.

### ***THE IMPORTANCE OF “WHY?”***

Registered Observers should ask at least as many questions as they make statements. Asking “why” provides you three main benefits: (1) You are able to determine whether an official knows the mechanics to use and rules to enforce and whether he/she is doing the right things for the right reasons. (2) Asking questions encourages a good dialogue. It creates an environment of openness and invites honest responses from the official. Most officials avoid giving explanations at the risk of seemingly making excuses – to be known as a “yeah, but” guy/gal. (3) It can prevent you from making a fool of yourself. From time-to-time, even the very best and brightest officials make mistakes. By asking questions about something observed and believed to be incorrect, you may get insight into something that

makes you reconsider your position. This can't be done if he/she were to stake a claim to a position before knowing all of the information.

### ***SPREAD THE WEALTH***

Attempt to see as many different officials as you can. Observations of veteran officials or those that are consistently working late into the postseason may be more effectively directed to new or up-and-coming officials. Observing as many officials as possible will both provide the assigner, your association and the MHSAA with insight on the development of the next generation of talent, and it will also show that every level of official is important and appreciated. This includes observing both varsity and subvarsity contests when possible. By observing at the subvarsity level, you may very well be the person that identifies that diamond in the rough that just needed some exposure.

### ***MANAGE PERSONALITIES***

Registered Observers should be conscious of who they are observing, especially when providing negative critiques. Many veteran officials may be set in their ways and not as receptive to criticism. This does not mean weaknesses and other areas that need to be corrected shouldn't be pointed out; but the way this message is conveyed will play a large role in how/whether it is accepted. Some of the officials you observe will be Registered Observers themselves. Take into consideration that this is an avocation where officials never stop teaching OR learning.

### ***PUT IT IN WRITING***

If you're not willing to say it in person, don't put it on paper... and you should be willing to put things on paper. Following up with officials in writing with the same things that were said to them emphasizes the importance of the information an observer offers. It also allows them to reference specific critiques when they encounter similar circumstances in the future. Finally, written observations are needed because it allows the MHSAA to compile records to which can be referred at the end of the season for tournament consideration and to determine if patterns develop with a particular official's work.

### ***PROFESSIONALISM WINS THE DAY***

A professional approach to the Registered Observer position is necessary. This begins even with the dress in which you arrive. The clothes you wear should be befitting of the position and as if you were working the contest yourself. It can be especially embarrassing if the observer provides a critique on professionalism if the observer is dressed unprofessionally himself/herself.

Language, both in person and in writing, should be appropriate for the situation. Slang terms should be avoided for more generic and layperson language. There's no need to be confrontational or argumentative with officials.

An explanation of what you observed and the reason(s) for a particular rating should be provided. You should be mindful of the Conflict of Interest Policy and avoid areas where bias may be alleged or your impartiality might be challenged.

Discretion is a very important piece of professionalism as well. The contents of observations should be kept between yourself, the officials being observed, the assigners and associations the observations are made on behalf and with the MHSAA. They should not be shared with or amongst officials outside the crew, coaches or school administrators.

### ***USE A POSITIVE SANDWICH***

Be as constructive as possible in your criticisms, while avoiding sugar-coating areas of deficiency that could impact future contests. Also consider that while every game is the most important to someone, we're still just dealing with high school sports and high school officials. They shouldn't be observed and critiqued as if they're working the Super Bowl or the seventh game of the World Series.

Observations should be given using the "positive sandwich" philosophy. Each in-person observation should be started with a positive point or two. This should then be followed up with areas for improvement or deficiencies that need to be remedied. You should then wrap up the observation on a note referencing a positive point from the contest. This will allow the official to receive both positive and critical feedback in a way that doesn't discourage or frustrate him/her.

### ***STAY IN YOUR LANE***

Registered Observers should be more than capable to relay advice to officials regarding rules, interpretations, mechanics and signals; however, offering authoritative opinions on MHSAA policies, protocols, *MHSAA Handbook* or *Officials Guidebook* regulations should be left to administrators from the MHSAA office.

It's also okay for you not to have all the answers. If something occurs during the game, or a question is raised during the post-game meeting, which you missed or do not know the answer, it is perfectly acceptable to direct the officials to another authority figure or let them know that you will follow up with them at a later time. If you commit to the latter, make sure to follow up quickly and to everyone involved.

# DEFINED STANDARDS for OFFICIALS' OBSERVATIONS

Find the Baseball Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **BASEBALL**

### **Plate Work**

#### ***Stability of Head and Body Position***

Establishes a "locked in" position before the pitch is released and does not drift side to side or up and down with the pitch. Does not flinch on swings or pitches. Feet are to remain stable throughout the pitch, providing a solid base. Maintains proper distance from the catcher so as not to become entangled if catcher moves quickly and unexpectedly. The head and eyes remain at horizontal with ground and do not dip as game wears on. The head is at the proper height to allow an unobstructed view of entire plate which means the umpire's chin should be no lower than the top of the catcher's head. Works in the "slot" (the area between the hitter and home plate) and not over the top of the catcher or to the outside unless "squeezed out" by the catcher giving an inside target.

#### ***Timing***

Does not anticipate the pitch and allows everything that can happen, to happen, before making the decision, and subsequent call, on the pitch. Does not make a call as the ball is approaching the plate or crossing, but after the catcher has caught the ball.

#### ***Proper Positioning for Plays***

Proper positioning for plays at the plate, when assisting on plays at other bases and to view tag-ups, touches of bases and other responsibilities.

#### ***Style & Signals***

Gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the umpire. Coordinates voice and signals to give a professional appearance. Does not showboat or change the signals of his/her calls during the course of a game and the voice is loud enough to be heard, but does not draw undue attention.

#### ***Judgment & Interpretation of Strike Zone***

Interprets and calls the zone to its written limits. He/she does not call "unhittable" pitches strikes nor is the zone too small for the level of play.

### ***Consistency of Strike Zone***

Uses the same strike zone for both teams and throughout the games and makes reasonable adjustments when necessary based on circumstances at-hand.

### ***MHSAA Two-Person Mechanics***

Demonstrates proper knowledge of approved mechanics and rotates in the correct situations as defined by the MHSAA Baseball Umpire Manual and is alert enough to adjust if a partner misses coverage.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

Proper use of verbal and non-verbal communications with partner during the game. Proper pre-pitch signals are shared with partner(s) to ensure everyone can react accordingly when the ball is put in play. Good eye contact with partner is maintained between hitters and during developing plays.

### **Base Work**

#### ***Timing***

Does not anticipate plays and allows everything that can happen, to happen, before making the decision on each play. Does not make a call as the ball or runner is approaching but after the entire play has concluded, including any tags. Good timing is a process – the umpire should see the play, replay it in his/her head, make a decision in his/her head and then call the play.

#### ***Proper Positioning for Plays***

Proper positioning for plays on the bases, and is in proper position to view tag-ups, touches of bases and other responsibilities.

#### ***Style & Signals***

Gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the umpire. Coordinates voice and signals to give a professional appearance. Does not showboat or change the mechanics of his/her calls during the course of a game and the voice is loud enough to be heard, but does not draw undue attention.

#### ***Judgment for Decisions***

Observes and makes objective and accurate decisions, rulings and penalizations based on the action that occurs.

### ***MHSAA Two-Person Mechanics***

Displays a good knowledge of proper mechanics and rotates in the proper situations as defined by the MHSAA Baseball Umpires Manual and is alert enough to adjust if a partner misses coverage.

### ***Reaction to the Development of Plays***

Exhibits the knowledge and correct perception of how plays will develop through correctly anticipating where, how and the speed at which the play will occur. This leads to consistently being in the proper position for plays.

### ***Communication(s) with Partners***

Proper use of verbal and non-verbal communications with partner during the game. Proper pre-pitch signals are shared with partner(s) to ensure everyone can react accordingly when the ball is put in play. Good eye contact with partner is maintained between hitters and during developing plays.

### **Game & Situation Management**

#### ***NFHS Playing Rule Applications***

Adheres to and applies rules, accepted practices and interpretations as detailed in the NFHS Baseball Rules book.

#### ***Situation Management***

Maintains professional control during the contest, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel and handles difficult situations appropriately (*e.g., ejection, restriction to the dugout, warnings, etc.*) in light of the game situation.

### **Effort & Professionalism**

#### ***Focus***

Displays consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire game without regard to the score, inning, weather or standing of the teams involved. This includes being prepared for every pitch and play and attention to developing plays and situations. Demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a game and maintains positive body language during the contest.

#### ***Hustle***

Displays movement with a purpose during a play to get into proper position to cover plays. The distance to be covered will often dictate the speed or method used to get into position (*i.e., running vs. jogging*). Walking on the field

is not an acceptable technique unless the distance is so short that running is not practical (*e.g., moving into position for a force play or steal play, going out on a short fly ball or line drive, etc.*).

### ***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA horizontal logo (required beginning in the 2020-21 season). The uniform itself is clean and pressed, with shoes being polished. Demonstrates a fit or athletic appearance within the uniform. Displays a conscientious and earnest desire to carry out on-field duties. He/she exhibits posture that reflects interest in the game. It is taken for granted that during certain times in the game (*between innings, pitching change, etc.*) posture can be more relaxed, but not to the extent that a complete disinterest in the game is exhibited.

### ***Mobility***

Possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on field to cover all possible plays for which he/she has responsibility.

### ***Fraternization***

Avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with uniformed coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time should there be direct conversation with spectators during the game.

Find the Boys Basketball Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Find the Girls Basketball Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **BASKETBALL (BOYS and GIRLS)**

### ***Positioning***

Proper position during live and dead ball situations, which includes reporting fouls, timeouts and period intermissions. During live ball action, the official is moving to adjust and react to developing plays and situations, always keeping proper angles to avoid being straight-lined on plays.

### ***Style & Signals***

The official gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the official. The official shall coordinate the voice and signals to give a professional appearance. All signals and mechanics used are those prescribed in the MHSAA Basketball Officials Manual and NFHS Basketball rulebook.

### ***Judgment for Decisions***

The official observes and makes objective and accurate decisions, rulings and penalizations based on the action that occurs.

### ***Consistency of Decisions***

The official is consistent during a game (play to play, quarter to quarter, half to half) when having similar or like plays. Violations, fouls and no-calls at one end of the floor are consistent with the same types of plays being called in the same manner at the other end of the floor. The official also works well with his or her partner(s) in building crew consistency during a contest when confronted with similar or like plays.

### ***Decisiveness***

The official demonstrates a high level of confidence in their movements, calls and non-calls. The official is not timid or weak, and projects confidence, decisiveness and credibility during the contest.

### ***MHSAA Two- and Three-Person Mechanics***

The official works the correct mechanics as prescribed in the MHSAA Basketball Officials Manual during a scholastic contest. The official uses the approved high school mechanics when working a high school game, and does not use NCAA or NBA mechanics which are different from those approved for high school play.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

The official works effectively with other members of the crew through voice and signals during live and dead ball situations, with special attention given to end of period situations. The crew comes together and discussing situations when appropriate, working together to get all plays called correctly.

### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The official demonstrates proper understanding the NFHS playing rules by consistently applying the rules, and subsequent penalties when applicable. The official does not confuse NFHS rules with other rules codes (*i.e.*, NCAA and NBA) when working a scholastic contest.

### ***Common Sense and Fair Play***

The official demonstrates a use of common sense when applying the rules correctly and consistently. The official understands the importance of player safety, and manages the game accordingly. The official understands the difference between fouls that have a significant impact on the play versus contact that has no bearing on the play.

### ***Situation Management***

The official maintains professional control during the contest, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel and handles difficult situations appropriately (*e.g.*, warnings, technical fouls, ejections, etc.) in light of the game situation.

The official effectively communicates with all participants (coaches, players, substitutes, bench personnel) when appropriate. This includes coach-official communication being done through the head coach, and demonstrating a friendly but firm approach with all other game participants.

### ***Focus***

The official has consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire game. This includes giving attention to developing plays and situations. The official demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a game and remains alert without regard of score or the standings of the teams involved.

### ***Poise***

Steady and in control in high-intensity circumstances.

### ***Hustle***

Demonstrates energetic, definitive and purposeful movements on the court.

### ***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA emblem. The uniform itself is clean and pressed, with shoes being polished. The official demonstrates a fit and athletic appearance within the uniform. **Note: The only acceptable shirt for MHSAA competition is the black and white striped shirt and does not include the black shoulder panels.**

### ***Mobility***

The official possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on the court to cover all possible plays for which they have responsibility.

### ***Fraternization***

The official avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time is the official to engage spectators in a confrontational manner.

Find the Football Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **FOOTBALL**

### ***Positioning***

The official is aligned correctly prior to the snap, and completes all pre-snap responsibilities from that location (counting the defense or offense, setting the chains, etc.). The official continues to be in the proper position at the snap and during the play, moving to adjust and react to developing plays and situations.

### ***Recognition & Reading Keys***

The official is reading their assigned player(s) at the snap in determining the type of the play, and focuses on their areas of responsibility during the down based on the reading of that key. The official exhibits the knowledge and correct perception of how plays will develop through correctly anticipating where, how and the speed at which the play will occur.

### ***Judgment for Decisions***

The official observes and makes objective and accurate decisions, rulings and penalizations based on the action that occurs.

### ***Consistency of Decisions***

The official is consistent during a game (play to play, quarter to quarter, half to half) when having similar or like plays.

### ***Decisiveness***

The official demonstrates a high level of confidence in their movements, calls and non-calls. The official is not timid or weak, and projects confidence, decisiveness and credibility during the contest.

### ***MHSAA Four-, Five- and Seven-Person Mechanics***

The official works the correct mechanics as prescribed in the MHSAA Football Officials Manual during a scholastic contest. The official uses the approved high school mechanics when working a high school game, and does not use NCAA or NBA mechanics which are different from those approved for high school play.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

The official works effectively with other members of the crew through voice and signals before and during plays, as well as between downs. The crew comes together and discussing situations when appropriate, working together to get all plays called correctly.

### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The official demonstrates proper understanding the NFHS playing rules by consistently applying the rules, and subsequent penalties when applicable. The official does not confuse NFHS rules with other rules codes (*i.e.*, NCAA and NFL) when working a scholastic contest.

### ***Common Sense and Fair Play***

The official demonstrates a use of common sense when applying the rules correctly and consistently. The official understands the importance of player safety, and manages the game accordingly. The official understands the difference between fouls at the point of attack versus fouls that occur away and that have no bearing on the play.

### ***Style & Signals***

The official gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the official. The official shall make signals visible and crisp to give a professional appearance. All signals and mechanics used are those prescribed in the MHSAA Football Officials Manual and NFHS Football Rules book.

### ***Situation Management***

The official maintains professional control during the contest, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel and handles difficult situations appropriately (*e.g.*, *sideline issues, warnings, penalties, ejections, etc.*) in light of the game situation.

### ***Focus***

The official has consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire game. This includes giving attention to developing plays and situations. The official demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a game and remains alert without regard of score, weather or the standings of the teams involved.

### ***Poise***

Steady and in control in high-intensity circumstances.

***Hustle***

The official displays movement with a purpose during a play to get into proper position to cover plays. The distance to be covered by the official will often dictate the speed or method the official uses to get into position (*i.e.*, *running vs. jogging*).

***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA emblem. The uniform itself is clean and pressed, with shoes being polished. The official demonstrates a fit and athletic appearance within the uniform.

***Mobility***

The official possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on field to cover all possible plays for which they have responsibility.

***Fraternization***

The official avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time is the official to converse with or address spectators during the game.

Find the Boys Soccer Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Find the Girls Soccer Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **SOCCER (BOYS and GIRLS)**

### ***Positioning***

The official is in the proper position during all situations. If working as referee, this includes knowing where AR's are positioned, acknowledgment of AR's signals and good use of the whistle. All officials (*i.e.*, *R and AR*) kept up with the pace of play, accelerated when necessary and appeared fit throughout the entire game. During game action, the official is moving to adjust and react to developing plays and situations, always keeping proper angles to avoid being straight-lined on plays.

### ***Judgment for Decisions***

The official recognizes intent correctly and makes calls suitable to the level of play. The official correctly recognizes advantage, offsides, free kick infractions (direct and indirect) and misconduct.

### ***Consistency of Decisions***

The official is consistent during a match for similar or like situations (*e.g.*, *50/50 calls*). Infractions, awards and no-calls at one end of the field are consistent with the same types of plays being called in the same manner at the other end of the field. The official also works well with his or her partner(s) in building crew consistency during a contest when confronted with similar or like situations.

### ***Decisiveness***

The official demonstrates a high level of confidence in their movements, calls and non-calls. The official asserts authority firmly during the contest, dealing with criticism, dissent, time wasting and injuries correctly. The official gets play restarted quickly and maintained composure throughout the contest.

### ***MHSAA Mechanics***

The official works the correct mechanics as prescribed in the NFHS Soccer publications during a scholastic contest. The official uses the approved MHSAA mechanics when working a high school game and does not use other association or federation mechanics which are different from those approved for high school play.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

The official works effectively with other members of the crew through voice and signals during live and dead ball situations, with special attention given to end of period situations. The crew comes together and discussing situations when appropriate, working together to get all plays called correctly.

### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The official demonstrates proper understanding the NFHS playing rules by consistently applying the rules, and subsequent penalties when applicable. The official does not confuse NFHS rules with other rules codes when working a scholastic contest.

### ***Common Sense and Fair Play***

The official demonstrates a use of common sense when applying the rules correctly and consistently. The official understands the importance of player safety, and manages the game accordingly. The official understands the difference between infractions that have a significant impact on the play versus contact that has no bearing on the play.

### ***Style & Signals***

The official gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the official. All signals and mechanics used are those prescribed in the NFHS Soccer publications.

### ***Situation Management***

The official maintains professional control during the contest, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel and handles difficult situations appropriately (*e.g., sideline issues, warnings, penalties, disqualifications, etc.*) in light of the game situation.

### ***Focus***

The official has consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire game. This includes giving attention to developing plays and situations. The official demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a game and remains alert without regard to score, weather or the standings of the teams involved.

### ***Poise***

Steady and in control in high-intensity circumstances.

***Hustle***

The official displays movement with a purpose during a play to get into proper position to cover plays. The distance to be covered by the official will often dictate the speed or method the official uses to get into position (*i.e.*, *running vs. jogging*).

***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA emblem. The uniform itself is clean and pressed, with shoes being polished. The official demonstrates a fit and athletic appearance within the uniform.

***Mobility***

The official possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on field to cover all possible plays for which they have responsibility.

***Fraternization***

The umpire avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with uniformed coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time is the umpire to converse with or address spectators during the game.

Find the Softball Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **SOFTBALL**

### **Plate Work**

#### ***Stability of Head and Body Position***

The umpire establishes a "locked in" position before the pitch is released and does not drift side to side or up and down with the pitch, only moving the head slightly as a result of tracking the pitch with the tip of the nose. The umpire does not flinch on swings or pitches. The feet are to remain stable throughout the pitch, providing a solid base. The umpire maintains proper distance from catcher so as not to become entangled if catcher moves quickly and unexpectedly. The head and eyes remain at horizontal with ground and do not dip as game wears on. The head is at the proper height to allow an unobstructed view of entire plate which means the umpire's chin should be no lower than the top of the catcher's head. The umpire works in the "slot" (the area between the hitter and home plate), not over the top of the catcher or to the outside unless "squeezed out" by the catcher giving an inside target.

#### ***Timing***

The umpire does not anticipate the pitch and allows everything that can happen, to happen, before making the decision, and subsequent call, on the pitch. The umpire shall not make a call as the ball is approaching the plate or crossing but after the catcher has caught the ball.

#### ***Proper Positioning for Plays***

The umpire is in proper positioning for plays at the plate, when assisting on plays at other bases and to view tag-ups, touches of bases and other responsibilities.

#### ***Style & Signals***

The umpire gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the umpire. The umpire shall coordinate the voice and signals to give a professional appearance. The umpire does not showboat or change the signals of his/her calls during the course of a game and the voice is loud enough to be heard, but does not draw undue attention to the umpire.

#### ***Judgment & Interpretation of Strike Zone***

The umpire interprets and calls the zone to its written limits. He/she does not call "unhittable" pitches strikes nor is the zone too small for the level of play.

### ***Consistency of Strike Zone***

The umpire has the same strike zone for both teams and throughout the game. Makes reasonable adjustments when necessary based on circumstances at-hand.

### ***MHSAA Two-Person Mechanics***

The umpire demonstrates proper knowledge of approved mechanics and rotates in the correct situations as defined by the MHSAA Softball Umpire Manual. The umpire is alert enough to adjust if a partner misses his/her coverage.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

The umpire has proper use of verbal and non-verbal communications with partner during the game. Proper pre-pitch signals are shared with partner(s) to ensure everyone can react accordingly when the ball is put in play. Good eye contact with partner is maintained between hitters and during developing plays.

### **Base Work**

#### ***Timing***

The umpire does not anticipate plays and allows everything that can happen, to happen, before making the DECISION on each play. The umpire shall not make a call as the ball or runner is approaching but after the entire play has concluded, including any tags. Good timing is a process – the umpire should see the play, replay it in his/her head, make a decision in his/her head and then call the play.

#### ***Proper Positioning for Plays***

The umpire is in proper positioning for plays on the bases, and is in proper position to view tag-ups, touches of bases and other responsibilities.

#### ***Style & Signals***

The umpire gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the umpire. The umpire shall coordinate voice and signals to give a professional appearance. The umpire does not showboat or change the mechanics of his/her calls during the course of a game and the voice is loud enough to be heard, but does not draw undue attention to the umpire.

### ***Judgment for Decisions***

The umpire observes and makes objective and accurate decisions, rulings and penalizations based on the action that occurs.

### ***MHSAA Two-Person Mechanics***

The umpire has a good knowledge of proper mechanics and rotates in the proper situations as defined by the MHSAA Baseball Umpires Manual. The umpire is alert enough to adjust if a partner misses coverage.

### ***Reaction to the Development of Plays***

The umpire exhibits the knowledge and correct perception of how plays will develop through correctly anticipating where, how and the speed at which the play will occur. This leads to the umpire consistently being in the proper position for plays.

### ***Communication(s) with Partners***

The umpire has proper use of verbal and non-verbal communications with partner during the game. Proper pre-pitch signals are shared with partner(s) to ensure everyone can react accordingly when the ball is put in play. Good eye contact with partner is maintained between hitters and during developing plays.

### **Game & Situation Management**

#### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The umpire adheres to and applies rules, accepted practices and interpretations as detailed in the NFHS Baseball Rules book.

#### ***Situation Management***

The umpire maintains professional control during the contest, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel, and handles difficult situations appropriately (ejection, restriction to the dugout, warnings, etc.) in light of the game situation.

### **Effort & Professionalism**

#### ***Focus***

Displays consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire game without regard to the score, inning, weather or standing of the teams involved. This includes being prepared for every pitch and play and

attention to developing plays and situations. The umpire demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a game and maintains positive body language during the contest.

### ***Hustle***

The umpire displays movement with a purpose during a play to get into proper position to cover plays. The distance to be covered by the umpire will often dictate the speed or method the umpire uses to get into position (i.e., running vs. jogging). Walking on the field is not an acceptable technique unless the distance is so short that running is not practical (*e.g., moving into position for a force play or steal play; going out on a short fly ball or line drive; etc.*).

### ***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA horizontal logo (required beginning in the 2020-21 season). The uniform itself is clean and pressed, with shoes being polished. The umpire demonstrates a fit or athletic appearance within the uniform. The umpire displays a conscientious and earnest desire to carry out on-field duties. He/she exhibits posture that reflects interest in the game. It is taken for granted that during certain times in the game (between innings, pitching change, etc.) an umpire's posture can be more relaxed, but not to the extent that a complete disinterest in the game is exhibited.

### ***Mobility***

The umpire possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on field to cover all possible plays for which he/she has responsibility.

### ***Fraternization***

The umpire avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with uniformed coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time is the umpire to converse with or address spectators during the game.

Find the Volleyball Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **VOLLEYBALL**

### ***Positioning***

#### **R1**

The first referee focuses on the attacking side appropriately and demonstrates the ability to make quick adjustments during the match.

#### **R2**

The second referee has a clear view of the receiving team at serve and is positioned on the blocking side during play. The official maintains the proper distance from the net support and makes quick and timely transitions. The second referee also keeps a clear view of blockers and attackers, while remaining visible to the first referee.

### ***Judgment and Consistency for Decisions***

#### **R1**

The first referee demonstrates consistent judgment on both sides of the net from game to game, team to team, skill level to skill level, position to position and action to action. The official does not allow the pressure of match, personalities of the participants or match situation to influence consistency of judgment. Areas of attention include sets, passes, first team contacts, tips, blocks, illegal blocks/attacks, antenna decisions rotational faults and touches.

#### **R2**

The second referee demonstrates consistent judgment on both sides of the net from game to game, team to team, skill level to skill level, position to position and action to action. The official does not allow the pressure of match, personalities of the participants, or match situation to influence consistency of judgment. Areas of attention include net faults/insignificant contacts, center line faults, position faults on receiving team, illegal attacks/blocks touches and antenna decisions.

### ***Decisiveness***

The official demonstrates a high level of confidence in calls and non-calls. The official asserted authority firmly during the contest, dealing with criticism, dissent, time wasting and injuries correctly.

### ***MHSAA Mechanics***

The referee utilizes the proper volleyball mechanics as prescribed in the approved MHSAA Volleyball Officials Manual.

### ***Communication with Partner(s)***

The first referee conducts a pre-match briefing with the second referee and line judges. During the contest the referee maintains good eye contact and voice communication when appropriate with the other referee, line judges, scorekeeper, libero tracker and game management.

### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The referee demonstrates proper understanding the NFHS playing rules by consistently applying the rules and subsequent penalties when applicable. The referee does not confuse NFHS rules with other rules codes when working a scholastic contest.

### ***Common Sense and Fair Play***

Demonstrates a use of common sense when applying the rules correctly and consistently. The referee understands the importance of player safety and manages the game accordingly. Allows the players to dictate play and makes enforcements according to the spirit of the rules, looking for when improper play creates an advantage.

### ***Style & Signals***

The referee utilizes the proper volleyball mechanics as prescribed in the approved MHSAA Volleyball Officials Manual.

### ***Situation Management***

Administers the captains meeting and carries oneself in a respectful and dignified manner. The official communicates with team members when necessary and acknowledges coaches appropriately when addressed in a respectful and sportsmanlike manner.

### ***Focus***

The referee has consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire match. This includes being prepared for every point with attention to developing plays and situations. The referee demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a match and maintains positive body language during the contest.

### ***Poise***

Steady and in control in high-intensity circumstances.

### ***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the game, including the proper placement of the MHSAA horizontal logo (required beginning in the 2020-21 season). The uniform itself is clean and pressed. The referee demonstrates a fit or athletic appearance within the uniform.

### ***Whistle Quality & Technique***

Uses the whistle appropriately in controlling the match and uses the whistle at the proper times during the match.

### ***Control of Match and Pace of Play***

Controls the match in a professional manner. This includes proper site inspection, warm-up administration, proper match protocols, verbal warnings or sanctions when appropriate, bench control, court awareness and match tempo.

### ***Substitutions/Record Keeping (R2)***

Administers substitutions while making sure substitutes are recorded properly on the scoresheet. When a coach or team captain requests a time out, the referee blows the whistle and signals time out. Properly times the time outs, whistles at the end of time and signals how many time outs have been taken by each team.

### ***Fraternization***

Avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with coaches, student-athletes or other game personnel during a contest. At no time is the official to engage spectators in a confrontational manner.

Find the Wrestling Observation Form by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## **WRESTLING**

### ***Positioning***

The official is in the proper position on the mat in keeping a clear view of both wrestlers at all times to ensure wrestler safety first and foremost. This includes position during wrestling, during restarts and between periods.

### ***Judgment for Decisions***

The official observes and makes objective and accurate decisions, rulings and penalizations based on the action that occurs.

### ***Consistency of Decisions***

The official is consistent during a match (*e.g., move to move, period to period, match to match*) when confronted with similar or like situations.

### ***Decisiveness***

The official demonstrates a high level of confidence in his/her movements for both calls and non-calls. The official is not timid or weak and projects confidence, decisiveness and credibility during the match.

### ***MHSAA Mechanics***

All signals and mechanics used are those prescribed in the MHSAA Wrestling Officials Manual.

### ***Mobility***

The official possesses the physical ability to move into proper position on the mat to cover all possible situations for which they have responsibility.

### ***Communication with Partner***

Proper use of verbal and non-verbal communications with partner during the match and in consultation, when appropriate.

### ***NFHS Playing Rules Application***

The official demonstrates proper understanding the NFHS playing rules by consistently applying the rules and subsequent penalties when applicable. The official does not confuse NFHS rules with other wrestling rules codes (*e.g., NCAA or club*) when working a scholastic contest.

### ***Common Sense and Fair Play***

The official demonstrates a use of common sense when applying the rules correctly and consistently. The official understands the importance of participant safety and manages the match accordingly. The official understands the difference between infractions that have a significant impact versus those that have no bearing.

### ***Style & Signals***

The official gives clear and authoritative signals in a smooth, relaxed style that projects confidence and does not draw undue attention to the official. The official shall coordinate the voice and signals to give a professional appearance.

### ***Situation Management***

The official maintains professional control during the match, while not being overly aggressive or overbearing. He/she effectively communicates as necessary with contest personnel and handles difficult situations appropriately (*e.g., corner issues, explanations at the table, misconducts, unsportsmanlike conduct, disqualifications, etc.*) in light of the match situation.

### ***Focus***

The official has consistent concentration on the crucial elements throughout the entire match. This includes being prepared for every match and gives attention to developing situations. The official demonstrates an awareness of all that is going on within a match.

### ***Poise***

Steady and in control in high-intensity circumstances.

### ***Movement on the Mat***

The official is constantly moving during the match to guarantee the best possible angle and “look” at each move and situation. The official keeps working on the mat as to not get straight-lined by the wrestlers.

### ***Appearance & Demeanor***

The proper display of uniform as defined in the MHSAA Officials Guidebook is used during the match, including the proper placement of the MHSAA emblem. The uniform itself is clean and pressed. The official demonstrates a fit and athletic appearance within the uniform.

### ***Stalling/Pace of Play***

The official demonstrates an understanding of the stalling rule and subsequent penalties. The official shows good judgment in knowing when to issue the warnings, cautions and penalties. The official demonstrates the courage to make difficult decisions for stalling during the match when the situation warrants.

### ***Anticipation of Situations***

The official is constantly reading the wrestlers to anticipate the next move or situation. The official then moves in the proper position in anticipating these situations, keeping the wrestlers in clear view.

### ***Match Procedures***

The official administers each match in accordance with MHSAA procedures. The match is conducted efficiently and professionally, with the official keeping control at all times.

### ***Fraternization***

The official avoids excessive, casual and/or unnecessary conversation with coaches, student-athletes or other match personnel during a match. At no time is the official to converse with or address spectators during the match.

## **CONCLUSION**

The MHSAA appreciates your willingness to assist and improve your fellow officials by providing feedback and assessments on their work. Registered Observers play an important role in providing information to officials, the associations, assigners and the MHSAA to identify and promote officials for both regular season and postseason tournament contests. Please do not hesitate to contact the MHSAA office if you have any questions or concerns regarding anything involving the Observers Program.

For questions regarding the Registered Observer Program, please contact:

### **Brent Rice**

Assistant Director, MHSAA

1661 Ramblewood Dr.

East Lansing, MI 48823

517.332.5046

[brent@mhsaa.com](mailto:brent@mhsaa.com)