



OVERVIEW OF IMPORTANT RETURN-TO-PLAY TOPICS

***This document was updated on May 15, 2021.** Over time, this document will change. Please check back frequently for updates. The first four pages of this document feature easy-to-understand overviews of Spring 2020-21 COVID document-related guidelines. For more detailed answers, read this entire packet. Spring athletics will not be risk-free, but by following the guidance in this document, we all can help mitigate those risks. You should also consider your interactions outside of sports during this season in order to limit the potential for exposure in other portions of your daily routine.*

PROTOCOL FOR POSITIVE CASES: A detailed and more complete version of these protocols can be found on page 4 of this document (“What to Do When Someone Gets Sick”).

1. Contact health department and follow guidance.
2. Close contacts MAY have to quarantine for 14 days; follow health department guidance. “Close contact” is defined as someone who was within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, starting from two days before illness onset.
3. Notify all schools, families and officials involved without identifying the person involved.
4. Students, coaches, officials and others at the event but NOT in close contact should be closely monitored for symptoms and may not need testing. Follow health department guidance.
5. Clean the area.

FACE MASKS: The **May 15, 2021** order issued by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) states that masks are no longer required for any outdoor activity. Individuals may opt to wear a face mask but there is no longer a requirement that face masks be worn outdoors by any player, coach, team personnel, official or spectators. Contact sport athletes in boys lacrosse, girls lacrosse and girls soccer are no longer required to wear a face mask while participating.

REGULAR-SEASON TOURNAMENTS, INVATIONALS, MULTI-TEAM COMPETITIONS: The following limitations are in place for regular season spring tournaments and invitationals, both home and away. Regular-season dual/head-to-head matchups, between multiple levels of two different schools, are not affected.

- Baseball – four schools/teams at a site
- Golf – traditional contest limits apply
- Lacrosse – four schools/teams at a site
- Soccer – four schools/teams at a site
- Softball – four schools/teams at a site
- Tennis – traditional contest limits apply
- Track & Field – 16 single-gender teams at a site

When determining the number of teams present at a tournament, count the school’s varsity team as one team, and its JV team as a second team. The goal is to achieve physical distancing at all possible times; teams not in competition should be provided adequate space, and spectator limitations must be followed. Consider staggered contest and team arrival times to maintain physical distancing.

Where two sites and/or facilities are used, there should not be any crossover competition between the two tournaments.

SCRIMMAGES: There are no scrimmages allowed for any sports this spring.

SPECTATOR LIMITATIONS: The current MDHHS epidemic order indicates that outdoor entertainment and recreation facilities must not allow more than 1,000 patrons to gather. Schools may limit spectators further (two per participant, as suggested by MDHHS) but the order defines the maximum number of spectators based on facility size and type. If local health department orders exist that are stricter than these updated MHSAA requirements, member schools and host venues are expected to follow those local orders.

Sideline cheerleaders, dance team members and pompon squads would be considered participants if a school allows. If a non-athletic support organization such as a pep band is allowed at a facility, all those individuals must be counted in the total number of spectators.

ENTRANCE/EXIT STRATEGIES: Event organizers and venues must consider proper scheduling, seating areas, and crowd entry and exit to facilitate needed sanitizing and physical distancing protocols.

PRE-WORKOUT AND PRE-GAME SCREENING: All coaches and students should be screened daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to participating, including with a temperature check. This check may take place onsite or be completed and verified prior to arrival onsite (at home, for example). Anyone with a temperature of greater than 100.3 degrees should not participate and be sent home. Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case a student develops COVID-19. These records must be kept confidential. Any person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed to participate, should self-isolate and contact his or her primary care provider or other healthcare professional. Continue to remind and insist that coaches and students disclose symptoms so all schools can compete safely. Involve local health departments if positive cases of COVID are discovered. Vulnerable adult individuals should not coach, supervise or participate in any competitions or workouts. School districts will make the decision on vulnerable individuals.

COVID GAME CANCELLATIONS: Any game or contest cancelled because of COVID issues is not considered a forfeit. It is considered a no-play, provided the contest has not started. For officials' payment purposes, this is considered an act of God.

TICKETS: Schools should strongly consider using a digital ticket or cashless system. Schools must work together to develop a distribution plan for the limited amount of tickets available per game. If a physical ticket is used, each school should consider conducting a pre-sale, with no onsite ticket sales – only tickets, not money, is collected at the event site.

TRANSPORTATION: The use of buses is a local school district decision. Cleaning and ability to physically distance should be part of the decision. Schools should also consider length of trips when determining the season schedule. When feasible, consider having parents drive athletes to and from games.

LOCKER ROOMS: Home teams are not required to offer locker room access. Visiting teams should arrive dressed and ready to play. Locker room restrooms should be available, and a cleaning schedule should be created.

FACILITY CLEANING: Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities. Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (bleachers, chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.). Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds before participating in workouts. Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.

CONCESSIONS: The current MDHHS order states that consumption of food or beverages is permitted only where patrons are seated and those groups of patrons are separated by at least six feet. The order also states that no more than six patrons may be seated at a table and those groups of patrons cannot intermingle.

BEST PRACTICES FOR NON-ATHLETES – THIS IS NOT SPORT-SPECIFIC

Administrators/Host Management

- Administrators are not required to wear face masks but may opt to do so at outdoor events. Proper physical distancing should be practiced.
- Obtain officials' information in order to trace contacts if necessary. (This information may be accessible through Arbiter.)
- Provide clear instruction to teams in advance of contests about entrance and exit points of the facility.
- At larger spectator events, consider providing volunteers to monitor entrances and spectator seating areas who can promote physical distancing.
- Schools should restrict spectators on both sides of the gym from sitting in the first two rows of bleachers closest to the gymnasium floor to allow for adequate spacing between the spectators and contest participants, permit a

scorer's table/judge's table and benches to be moved back or use the first row of bleachers for team bench seating if needed.

- When possible, officials and teams should be provided separate bathrooms and/or gathering areas.
- Scorer's Table/Press Box – essential personnel should be 6 feet apart when possible.
- A cordless microphone could be used.
- Cleaning supplies should be available onsite with devices sanitized between uses.

Coaches

- Coaches are not required to wear face masks but may opt to do so at outdoor events. Proper physical distancing should be practiced.
- Provide and review NFHS Playing Rule modifications with players and parents.

Spectators

- Spectators are not required to wear face masks but may opt to do so at outdoor events. Proper physical distancing should be practiced.
- Entrance and exit protocols and posted signs by host management must be obeyed.

Media Personnel

- Media are not required to wear face masks but may opt to do so at outdoor events. Proper physical distancing should be practiced.
- Press box/table accommodations should allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- Promote to local media the need to call in advance of the event to secure accommodations.
- Designate locations where photographers may shoot from and enforce it. Make sure photographers are aware of restrictions when they arrive. Photographers must be kept out of team box and bench areas.
- Limit postgame interviews to open-air areas. No locker room access.
- Establish times when the venue will become available to the media and when it will close.



SPORT: Softball
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Considering all recommendations by the [MISafeSchools Return to School Roadmap](#), [MHSAA Re-Opening Guidelines](#) and the SMAC guidelines, the following are the specific guidelines for Softball:

The MHSAA/NFHS Guidance for Re-Opening School Sports lists Softball as a moderate risk sport.

Moderate risk sports involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.

Competition and Spectator Limitations

- No scrimmages between opposing schools are permitted for the 2020-21 season.
- 2020-21 Spring regular season tournaments or other multi-team events are limited to no more than four school softball teams (or connections of those teams) at the same facility on the same date.

NOTES:

- Each varsity and subvarsity softball team from a single school counts separately toward the number of permitted teams at a site (*e.g., a varsity and JV team would be two teams*).
 - A coinciding softball event at the same site does not factor into the permitted number of softball teams, though the MHSAA recommends that coinciding baseball and softball events involve teams from the same schools.
 - Events with more than four school softball teams (must be at different sites) cannot intermix teams from one site with those of another. **EXAMPLE:** Six team softball tournament at two sites. Six teams can be divided into two “pods” of three teams each, and games can occur between all teams within the pod. However, no teams from one pod can compete against any of the teams from another pod on the same date.
- All outdoor softball events are limited to 1000 spectators.

Special Equipment and Facility Considerations for Softball

Sports Equipment	Facility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Softballs ● Bats ● Helmets ● Gloves ● Catcher’s Equipment ● Bases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bleachers ● Team Area/Bench ● Warm-up Areas ● Bathrooms ● Locker Rooms ● Ticket Booths ● Entry Gates ● Concessions ● Weight training facilities

Note: This is not an exhaustive list and there might be additional steps in each school to help prevent the spread of the virus. Even when taking all precautions, there is still a risk of transmitting illnesses. The situation with COVID-19 continues to change and these considerations may quickly become outdated. Continue to keep up with the latest from the CDC and your local health department. A coach within the program should be designated to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns.

SOFTBALL – Return to Play Guidelines

OUT-OF-SEASON ACTIVITIES and IN-SEASON PRACTICES

- **All students must have provided a Physical Examination or Health Questionnaire to the school prior to participating in MHSAA organized athletic activities.**
- Traditional four-player activities are permitted during the MHSAA winter season and may include rotations of conditioning, open gyms and skill development sessions as long as they are voluntary, do not contribute to the selection of the team roster and coaching does not take place to more than four players of the same district grades 7-12. Confirm with the school’s athletic director before conducting any four-player activities to ensure they are permitted by MHSAA regulations.
- All coaches and students should be screened daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to participating, including a temperature check. Anyone with a temperature of greater than 100.3 degrees or any other positive signs/symptoms for COVID-19 should not participate and be sent home (see **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick** on page 3 for additional guidance). Coaches must keep accurate records of athletes and staff who attend each practice in case contact tracing is necessary (see **COVID-19 Monitoring Form** on page 4). While screening, all individuals must be physically distanced.
- When activities take place *indoors*, all coaches and participants shall wear masks at all times and maintain six feet of distance from others. This includes conditioning and weight training activities.
- When activities take place *outdoors*, participants need not wear masks as long as they are able to maintain six feet of distance from others except in fleeting moments. When the activities will bring participants within six feet of one another except for fleeting moments, they shall wear masks.
- Coaches and athletes should wash and sanitize their hands prior to athletic activities. All individuals should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Schools will make the determination regarding vulnerable individuals (*e.g. those with a medical condition or over age 65*) as to whether they should oversee or participate in any athletic activity.
- Allow adequate space between spots where players deposit gear and water bottle for breaks.
- All coaches must be cognizant of guidelines, but we recommend each team designate an Asst. Coach as a Safety - Hygiene Coordinator whose main responsibility is to ensure safety protocols.
- Where possible, athletic activities should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same small group (includes coaches and participants) always working together. This minimizes contacts and assists in contact tracing.

- Appropriate clothing and shoes, gloves and required protective gear must be worn at all times.
- Participants should be appropriately spaced to ensure proper physical distancing (six feet) and participants should minimize contact with other participants.
- Seeds, gum and spitting are not permitted. Participants may not bring their hands in contact with their mouths, or apply spit to their hands or gloves, even if normally permitted by the playing rules.
- Shared equipment should be reduced to the minimal extent possible. When equipment must be shared, it should be isolated to as few players as possible. For instance, if there are not enough helmets for each player to be assigned his/her own, a single helmet should be reserved/assigned to as few players as possible to minimize contacts and assist on contact tracing.
- All athletic equipment and clothing should be cleaned/sanitized/washed after use.
- Balls may be thrown, pitched and caught by athletes and coaches, provided they wash their hands before and after practice and sanitize as often as possible. Sanitized back up balls(s) should be available and should be rotated in regularly. Sanitized and non-sanitized balls should be kept separated.
- Any common equipment, such as bat, balls and helmets, must be cleaned as permitted, before, during and after practices/workouts.
- Each individual should bring their own water bottle which must be marked with name and cannot be shared. Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.
- No huddles, chest bumps, hugging, handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, etc. Spread out players for meetings.
- Coaches should work to continue to reinforce safe and healthy habits. This includes reminding players to avoid their face, maintain physical distancing of six feet between individuals, and constant hand washing. Always remind players that what they do away from the field is very important in stopping the spread of the virus and helping to ensure that sports will continue.
- No spectators, officials or parents should be in attendance at these out-of-season activities.
- Additional guidance and Information could be updated after reassessing future epidemiology data and/or health department and CDC directives.
- See attached document “**Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick.**”

COMPETITION

- No pregame or post-game handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps or embraces between opposing players and/or umpires.
- All equipment should be cleaned and sanitized before the start of the game.
- Face coverings are required for both coaches and umpires at the plate meeting prior to the start of the game. The plate meeting should be conducted with all individuals 6 feet apart from one another.
- Each team shall have on-hand sanitizer for participant usage and also sanitizing product for playing equipment and softballs.
- A cache of reserve softballs should be ready to be put into play upon request, if a softball must be removed because it needs to be sanitized. Softballs should be lightly sanitized when removed from the game. This can be done by spraying a cloth with aerosol sanitizer, then wiping down the balls.
- All coaches and students are required to wear face masks in the dugout or while inactive and when they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.
- Coaches and students are not required to wear face masks while in active participation and on the field of play. **EXCEPTION: A head coach that wishes to request a discussion of a play or ruling with an umpire at the foul line must wear a face mask over his/her mouth or nose even if able to maintain six feet of distance.**
- It is recommended that occupants of the dugout or bench area be spread out appropriately.
- A school may choose to extend the dugout or bench area (only toward the outfield side in foul territory) to provide for adequate spacing. If this occurs, this area must be marked off and will be considered Dead Ball Territory and must be mirrored for both teams’ dugouts or bench areas.

SOFTBALL – MHSAA and NFHS Playing Rule Modifications

- **Pregame Conference (2-14-12)**
 - The head coach of each team shall attend the pregame plate meeting to exchange lineups.
 - Both coaches and the umpires shall all wear face masks during the conference and will maintain 6 feet of distances between one another.
 - A single lineup card shall be presented to the plate umpire. The plate umpire will not review or tender copies of the lineup to the opposing coach.
 - It is recommended that lineups be exchanged between coaches electronically if possible.

- **Face Shields (1-7-1, 1-8-4):** Per guidance from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, plastic shields covering the entire face (*unless integrated into the face mask and attached to a helmet*) shall not be allowed during contests. Their use during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates.
Additional Equipment (1-8): Cloth facial coverings are recommended but not required. Facial coverings must be of one color, not distracting, and no designs. Pitchers cannot wear optic yellow cloth facial coverings.

- **Substitutions: (3-3-3):** The verbal exchange should occur 6 feet from the coach to scorer and opposing team when making lineup changes.

- **Coaching (3-5-1 NOTE):** Umpires do not handle equipment on the field during play. Contact with the game balls should be as limited as possible. There are several strategies to protect the student athlete from cross contamination due to exposure to game balls. It is recommended each state choose a strategy that best fits their specific circumstances.

- **Coaching (3-5-3, 3-6-14):** Coaches who wish to discuss a rule or a ruling on the field must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from the umpire.

- **Coaching (3-5-2):** Base coaches must stay 6 feet from a runner at all times after suspension of play.

- **Bench and Field Conduct (3-6-6):** Players are not permitted to leave the dugout area to congratulate players when scoring or after home runs. The number of individuals in the dugout is dependent on the size of dugout. Players and coaches must maintain 6 feet of social distance. NFHS rules allow for dugouts/designated warm up areas to be extended to provide for social distancing.

- **Charged Conferences (3-7-1, 3-7-2, 3-7-3):** Coaches holding defensive conferences must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the player or players must be on the opposite of the pitcher's circle maintaining the 6 feet distance. No more than 2 players plus the pitcher is allowed. Only one coach is permitted during the conference. If a coach visits the pitcher, all other players should stay outside the pitching circle.

- **Infractions By the Pitcher (6-2-2):** Prohibit licking of fingers and wiping them off. Pitchers are not allowed to put their hands to their mouths or blow into their hands prior to pitching the ball. This will be a "no pitch." Any umpire is permitted to make this call. The ball should be called dead immediately and it will be a "no pitch." Ball goes to the dugout for sanitizing, pitcher sanitizes hands before play continues.



Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Precautionary Measures (in addition to other protocols and precautions)

- Anyone attending or participating in an MHSAA regular season or tournament event should check his/her temperature before arriving. Spectators, participants or personnel displaying COVID-19 symptoms (*e.g., fever, cough or shortness of breath*), or with temperatures of 100.3F or greater, should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if symptoms persist.
- Prior to participation, the COVID-19 athlete/coach monitoring form should be used, which includes five questions plus a temperature check. **NOTE: Athletic Directors should consider requiring similar precautions for game officials.**

Protocol for Suspected Cases of COVID-19

- All schools should have an emergency action plan in place for each site. If a student, coach or official is or becomes sick on site with symptoms of COVID-19, they should be placed in a clearly identified and designated quarantine area with a mask in place until they can be picked up. Staff who are identified to care for students must wear a mask.
- A symptomatic student should be sent home with a parent or designated adult until they have tested negative or have been released from isolation according to the local health department's protocols.
- Students, coaches, and/or officials should be transported by their parent or guardian, emergency contact or ambulance (if clinically unstable) for off-site testing. If an ambulance is called, or someone is being brought to the hospital, there should be an attempt to call the hospital first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19. If a student, coach or official becomes sick, they must not use group transportation to return home.

Protocol for Positive Cases of COVID-19

- The local health department should be contacted by the school for further direction. They likely will initiate contact tracing, following regular public health practices.
- All schools, public and private, must cooperate with the local public health department if a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, and collect the contact information for any close contacts (*i.e., individuals less than six feet apart for more than 15 minutes*) of the infected individual from two days before he or she showed symptoms to the time when he or she was last at the event. Close contacts should be quarantined for 14 days at home. Local health officials may identify other contacts who require quarantine.
- Administrators of the schools involved, as well as students/families/officials in attendance, should be notified of the presence of any laboratory positive or clinically diagnosed cases of COVID-19 so there continues to be awareness and close observation of any symptoms. **NOTE: Student communicable disease related information is protected health information. The individual with COVID-19 should not be identified by name to non-family or non-health department officials. Even if a family/student acknowledges and publicly discloses a positive test, school staff and officials must not participate in discussion or acknowledgement of a positive test by identifying a specific student.**
- Students, coaches or officials who were at the event, but not in close contact with a positive case, should continue to be closely monitored for any symptoms of COVID-19. At this time, these individuals are not required to receive testing unless they develop COVID-19 symptoms.
- Areas that were used by the sick person should be closed off and should not be used until after cleaning and disinfecting them (this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area). If possible, cleaning and disinfecting of the area should not occur until at least 24 hours has elapsed. If 24 hours is not feasible, as much time possible should be allowed to pass before cleaning or disinfection occurs.

COVID-19 Athlete/Coach Monitoring Form DATE: _____



Name	Time	Circle Yes/No below										Temp (if higher than 100.3°F)
		Fever		Cough		Sore Throat		Shortness of Breath		Close contact, or cared for someone with COVID-19		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	