

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Virtual, January 8, 2025

9:00 a.m.

Committee Members:

Eric Albright, Midland
John Thompson, Brighton
Vic Michaels, Detroit
Anna Rigby, Harbor Springs
Chris Adams, Camden

Staff Members:

Cody Inglis
Mark Uyl (Recorder)

Executive Committee Authority and Responsibility – The Executive Committee reviewed its authority under Article VII of the MHSAA Constitution and specifically its responsibility to consider each application for waiver of an eligibility requirement on its individual merits, determining if the regulation serves the purpose for which it was intended in each case or if the regulation works an undue hardship on any student who is the subject of a request for waiver. (These underlying criteria may not be restated for every subject of these minutes.)

The MHSAA is a private, nonprofit corporation, made up of voluntary membership; it is neither a state agency nor a court of law, and is not bound by any particular legal standard of review or burden of proof when applying its Regulations or while administering an internal appeal. The *MHSAA Handbook* may identify which party bears the burden of proof, depending on the particular situation or if a particular Regulation is at issue. The MHSAA staff, its Executive Committee, or its Representative Council, where appropriate, shall determine whether the circumstances in each situation, as presented to the MHSAA, warrant application or waiver of a particular Regulation or Interpretation. To make that determination, the MHSAA considers what a reasonable person given the same information would decide.

The Executive Committee was reminded that it was the responsibility of each member school involved to provide sufficient information about the specific request for the Executive Committee to reach a decision without further investigation. If information is incomplete, contradictory or otherwise unclear or has been received too late to be studied completely, the Executive Committee may deny the request for waiver or delay action. Such requests may be resubmitted to the Executive Committee with additional information at a subsequent meeting or appealed to the full Representative Council.

It is possible that some of the information presented as facts to the Executive Committee by school personnel and others may be inaccurate. However, to avoid constant repetition in this report of phrases such as “it was alleged” or “it was reported,” no attempt was made in the introduction of each waiver request to distinguish between truth, allegation, hearsay, opinion, summary or conclusion. If any information provided to the Executive Committee is inaccurate, any decision of the Executive Committee to grant waiver of a regulation shall be vacated.

The Executive Committee is not authorized to approve waiver based on alleged or actual differences between schools based on “environment,” demographics, curriculum or extracurricular offerings nor to change schools for athletics, discipline, or family finances. A determination of undue hardship is a matter addressed to the discretion of the Executive Committee within the educational philosophy and secondary role of voluntary extracurricular competitive athletics in the academic environment. The Executive Committee will avoid making exceptions that would create precedent that effectively changes a rule without Representative Council action or local board of education adoption, which would exceed Executive Committee authority. The agreement the MHSAA has with member schools obligates the MHSAA to not change rules during the school year.

Students for whom waiver of a particular regulation is approved must be eligible in all other respects under all sections and interpretations of the regulations prior to their participation.

Adoption of these regulations, as well as policies, procedures and schedules of MHSAA tournaments, is a choice schools make locally when they consider their option of MHSAA membership. Consistent with rulings of the Attorney General and Michigan Supreme Court, schools are not bound by the decisions of the Executive Committee, but the association may limit participation in the postseason tournaments it sponsors to those schools which choose to apply rules and penalties as promulgated by the MHSAA and adopted by each member school's board of education. The MHSAA exercises no independent authority over schools or students.

Middleton-Fulton and Ashley High Schools (Regulation I, Section 1[E]) – The Executive Committee approved a cooperative program in baseball (varsity and JV) between these schools. The combined enrollment of 201 students will place the team in Division 4, removing one team from the division. Middleton-Fulton will be the primary school. Support from the Mid-State Activities Conference was submitted.

Clio High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A third request to waive the transfer rule was made on behalf of a 12th-grade student who transferred to Clio High School from Montrose High School to start the 2024-25 school year. The student competed in volleyball, basketball, and softball at Montrose. The student attended Montrose for her educational career despite living in the Clio attendance area. The family has gone through some challenging times and the student also experienced issues with a student at Montrose that involved a police report and numerous school discipline issues. The family indicated that going to Clio would alleviate several challenges for the family and student. The new school continues to seek full athletic eligibility in softball for the student. The new documentation included a letter from a Montrose coach as well as a more thorough explanation of the reasons for the transfer.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Ishpeming High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A continued request to waive the transfer regulation, specifically Interpretation 62 (closest public school district), was made on behalf of an 11th-grade student who transferred back to Ishpeming High School in November of 2024. The request was tabled at the December 2024 meeting pending further and additional information about the circumstances and transfer to and from Howards Grove High School in Wisconsin. The student transferred to Ishpeming from Howards Grove where she was deemed ineligible. The student's parents live outside of the Ishpeming attendance area in Marquette, but the student attended Ishpeming for her 9th and 10th-grade years. The student moved with a host family in Wisconsin to pursue higher-level club volleyball, which resulted in allegations about how she got to Howards Grove. Ishpeming has requested eligibility in basketball and track for the 2024-25 school year and in volleyball for the 2025-26 school year. Additional information provided included clarifications on the timeline of the transfer, letters of support, and a letter from the parents indicating why the move was made by the student to Wisconsin and then home to Michigan.

The Executive Committee approved the request for waiver.

Rochester Hills-Rochester High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A request to waive the transfer rule was made on behalf of a student who transferred from Birmingham-Brother Rice High School to Rochester High School after his 9th-grade year. During the 2023-24 school year, the student attended Brother Rice and wrestled. The student had attended the Rochester Public Schools through middle school before attending Brother Rice. The student desired to come back to Rochester for because of a challenging environment at Brother Rice. The new school requested subvarsity eligibility in wrestling.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Stanton-Central Montcalm High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A request to waive the transfer regulation was made on behalf of a 10th-grade student who transferred from Greenville High School to Central Montcalm High School to start the 2024-25 school year. The student attended Greenville during the 2023-24 school year as a 9th-grader, where he participated in freshman baseball. The student and family experienced a tragedy with the death of the student's uncle, who had been a mentor to him. In addition, the student experienced challenges with his baseball team and the school after his uncle's death. The family determined a smaller school environment was desired for the student. The new school requested immediate eligibility in baseball, and if that couldn't be granted, then subvarsity eligibility.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Utica High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A request was made to waive the sport-specific transfer rule on behalf of two 10th-grade students who have always lived in the Utica High School attendance area but chose to attend Warren-De La Salle High School for the start of their 9th-grade year and played JV hockey during the 2023-24 school year. The students then independently transferred to Utica for similar reasons, including the classes available at De La Salle, which led to a poor environment for these two students. The request was for immediate eligibility at Utica in varsity hockey as a part of the cooperative program.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Wayne Memorial High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A request to waive the transfer regulation was made on behalf of an 11th-grade student who transferred from East Lansing High School to Wayne Memorial High School on November 26, 2024. While at East Lansing, the student competed in basketball. The student's mother was in a negative relationship with the student's father and determined that a fresh start at a new school was desired. The mother picked Wayne Memorial because of the connections with the school, including that the student played non-school basketball with some girls on the Wayne Memorial basketball team, which was coached by the JV girls basketball coach at Wayne Memorial. The mother wanted the daughter to be around someone she felt comfortable with because of the domestic situation and she is currently in the process of filing for divorce. The new school asked for eligibility in basketball based on the circumstances.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Westland-John Glenn High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A request to waive the sport-specific transfer rule was made on behalf of a 10th-grade student who attends John Glenn High School. The student transferred from Canton High School in April of 2024 during his 9th-grade year. The student was a victim of an assault at Canton that was dealt with by the administration but led to challenges and other social media threats for the student. The family determined that a new school was desired and went to their home school district in Westland. The student competed in football and wrestling at Canton in the 2023-24 school year but did not participate in football at John Glenn in the fall of 2024. The school requested that the student be allowed to wrestle for the 2024-25 school year based upon the challenging situation the student dealt with at his previous school.

The Executive Committee approved the request for waiver.

Wyoming-Godwin Heights High School (Regulation I, Section 9) – A third request to waive the transfer regulation was made for an 11th-grade student who competed in basketball the previous two years at East Kentwood High School. The student transferred to Godwin Heights High School to start the 2024-25 school year because she needed a fresh start following some incidents that occurred during her time in basketball at East Kentwood. The request was for immediate eligibility in basketball at Godwin Heights. The former school submitted a letter indicating support. New documentation included a letter from the principal and letters from former teammates.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Caledonia-Duncan Lake and Caledonia-Kraft Meadows Middle Schools (Regulation III, Section 1[D]) – The Executive Committee approved a cooperative programs in boys and girls cross country, adding 6th grade to an existing cooperative agreement (6th, 7th and 8th grades combined), boys and girls tennis, adding 6th grade to an existing cooperative agreement (6th, 7th and 8th grades combined), and wrestling (6th, 7th and 8th grades combined) between these schools. Duncan Lake will be the primary school.

Wyoming and Wyoming-Lee Middle Schools (Regulation III, Section 1[D]) – The Executive Committee approved a cooperative program in wrestling (6th, 7th and 8th grades combined) between these schools. Wyoming will be the primary school.

Saline High School (Regulation V, Section 4) – A request to waive the ineligibility status, specifically Interpretation 294, is made on behalf of a 12th-grade student at Saline High School. On September 30, Saline self-reported the participation of an ineligible student in football, basketball, and track & field during the entire 2023-24 school year, as well as the first three football games of the 2024-25 season, when it learned that the student's transfer to Saline from Ann Arbor Huron High School for the student's 11th-grade year (2023-24 school year) did not meet an exception to the transfer rule after all, and was determined by the school to have been "residency fraud" (due to the family reporting a false new address). Staff confirmed the self-reported violations, and Saline forfeited the first three football games of the 2024 season. *MHSAA Handbook*, Regulation V, Interpretation 294, was referenced regarding the student's future eligibility which states that a student is deemed ineligible for the same number of contests as he had participated in while ineligible. Saline Public Schools recently received a ruling from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) regarding the student's McKinney-Vento homelessness status, which stated that the student was not granted McKinney-Vento status during the 2023-24 school year (the year the student transferred to Saline and participated while ineligible) but determined that the student qualified for McKinney-Vento status for the current 2024-25 school year. As a result of this MDE designation, Saline is now requesting immediate eligibility in all sports.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver because the change in the student's McKinney-Vento status did not coincide with the student's change of schools. In other words, the student's transfer from Ann Arbor Huron to Saline in the summer of 2023 was not related to the student's homeless status under McKinney-Vento, as the student was not deemed homeless under McKinney-Vento until a full year later with respect to the 2024-2025 school year. As a result, the student participated in all three sports while ineligible during the 2023-2024 school year. Regulation V, Interpretation 294, therefore, renders the student ineligible for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Executive Committee did not approve the request for waiver.

Girls Wrestling Tournament Format – Because of larger numbers than anticipated and the growth of Girls Wrestling, MHSAA staff is requesting an alteration from the published 2024-25 girls wrestling tournament format. The recommendation is to expand the girls wrestling postseason format from four Regionals to eight Districts prior to the four Regionals. Number of participants, recommended tournament format changes, and rationale was presented by MHSAA staff. Adopted.

Next Meetings – Thursday, February 13 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Thursday, March 20 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Wednesday, April 9 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Friday, May 2 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Thursday, June 12 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Monday, August 4 at 9 a.m. – Virtual; Wednesday, August 20 at 9 a.m. – Virtual.