

MHSAA Track & Field State Finals Early Additional Qualifier

Frequently Asked Questions

The Why:

Why is this needed?

Each year deserving athletes are left out of the MHSAA State Finals due to the conditions at their MHSAA Regional. Due to a date range of three days, weather, and geography, each region can have drastically different conditions, and conditions make a huge impact on performances. Some regions may be running into a strong headwind, while others may have a strong tailwind. Others may have 60 degrees and sunny while another is 35 degrees and rain/snow. Allowing specific meets to qualify throughout the season gives all athletes in the State an equal chance to earn Additional Qualifying marks and thus qualify for the MHSAA State Finals.

Additionally, this will allow teams to place a greater emphasis on winning a Regional Trophy. You will no longer have to be as concerned with limiting your top athletes to their best events for the State Finals. Coaches will be free to put athletes in spots to maximize points at Regionals without having to sacrifice State Meet qualification or seeding.

The Details:

Where will the standards come from? Will there be 2 sets, a regular season AQ and an AQ only for regionals?

Yes. For the initial rollout of this process, there will now be 2 sets of standards that can qualify athletes to the State Finals and 1 set that will qualify additional athletes on your team to Regionals. The standards are:

RQ – Regional Qualifier - the Regional entry standard required for *all* competing athletes *if* you will have more than two compete in the Regional event, can be earned in any meet on the school's official season calendar. The process to determine these standards has not changed and is done through the MHSAA T&F Standards committee and is a 3-year average of 6th place in Regionals in that Division.

EQ - Early Qualifier - any athlete achieving this mark in *any round* in a *valid pre-qualified event* that meets the proper standards (*requires FAT and 6+ teams, etc.*) is qualified to participate in the LP final in that event. Regional meets are valid pre-qualified events, and EQs can be earned in those meets, including preliminary heats in Regionals. The process to establish these standards will be new, and they will be tougher than the normal State Finals AQs. Initially, these marks will be set by determining a 3-year average of 6th place at the Finals in that Division.

SQ—State Qualifier—any LP athlete achieving this mark in any round of a field event or final round of a running event at a Regional competition will advance to the LP Final in that event regardless of place. The process to determine these standards has not changed. It is done through the MHSAA T&F Standards committee and is a 3-year average of 2nd place in Regionals in that Division.

How will it be determined what meets can qualify as EQ Meets?

Meets will have to apply and prove that they qualify under the guidelines set forth. MHSAA will approve meets if they meet the requirements. This will be done prior to the season starting and have a deadline. After the deadline new EQ meets will not be accepted.

Requirements are that meets will:

- Have 2 Officials
- Use FAT Timing
- Have 6 or more teams (teams mean a full team of athletes from a school or organization, not a select sub-group)
- Weigh Implements
- Take place from the start of the season and the Wednesday heading into Regional Weekend (May 14th in 2025)

What are the guidelines for FAT Timing and Officials?

One official will obviously be the starter and the other will act as a referee. The referee will monitor that best practices (NFHS guidelines/rules) are followed at all Field Events and by the FAT operator. FAT Timing systems must be systems that the MHSAA/NFHS recognizes as being Fully Automatic. More information about specific guidelines will be available prior to the start of the 2025 season.

Are Regionals changing? Do athletes who place first or second at Regionals still qualify even if they do not hit the AQ?

Yes, they still qualify. There are no major changes to Regionals. Any athlete who places first or second at regionals will still automatically qualify for the State Finals even if they did not meet the AQ standards.

The most significant change at Regionals is that now, if an athlete attains an EQ in the prelims of the 100m, 100m/110m Hurdles, or 200, they will qualify for the State Finals, provided that they compete in the Final.

Do athletes need to compete in the events they have qualified in at Regionals?

No. Athletes who have met the EQ throughout the season do not need to compete in those events at Regionals. Some athletes will likely qualify in more than 4 events, this is OK. There will be a declaration period after Regionals where all qualified athletes must be declared for the State Meet. By the declaration deadline, athletes must be entered in no more than 4 events.

What about indoor meets?

Indoor meets will not be approved as EQ meets.

What about Elite Meets? I heard they were not included.

That is correct in some settings, certain Elite Meets designed for a small number of events to be competed under ideal circumstances will not qualify. Meets will be verified so that they follow a traditional order of events and have all of the events. If a meet has all 17 events, then it would be eligible to be an EQ Meet. However, attached or unattached athletes may compete. If less than a full team of select athletes attend on behalf of a team, that participation does not count as one of the required six teams.

What seed times/marks will be used at the State Finals?

An athlete's best qualifying mark will be used. This mark may come from an EQ, an SQ, or a first—or second-place finish at Regionals.

What about out-of-state meets/invites?

At this time meets that take place outside of Michigan would not count as EQ Meets.

The Logistics:

How will the declaration process work? How will we know if our athletes are qualified?

As with any new rules the exact processes are still being finalized. The MHSAA will be working with MITCA and MichiganCrossCountry.com who handle the current advancement to the State Finals to come up with the best process. A coach will need to “declare” what individual events an athlete will compete in at the Finals. We hope to utilize athletic.net as much as possible so that meet entry remains as simple as it always has been.

How can this be monitored to be a fair process?

For a meet to qualify as an EQ meet, it must meet specific conditions and be registered with the MHSAA prior to the season starting. Meet officials will monitor meets to ensure they follow the rules. Meets that register as EQ meets and then do not follow through with the guidelines will be removed from the EQ meet list.

This will add too many athletes to the MHSAA State Finals and add time to the meet.

This is a legitimate concern and the reason behind developing the EQ as a new third standard. With the EQ standard being tough it is not anticipated that there will be a drastic increase in participation at the State Finals. Furthermore, data has shown that the number of athletes meeting the SQ (Previously known as the State Finals Additional Qualifier) in the regular seasons of 2023 and 2024 was not a massively larger number than those who ended up qualifying for the State Finals. There were differences between many events and event types. The initial rollout of the EQ will give the MHSAA data to track for a few years and best establish a process to allow for Early Qualifying meets.

Allowing athletes to qualify before Regionals will diminish the importance of Regionals, and coaches will not field full teams at Regionals.

While this is technically a possibility it is not likely. MHSAA Regionals will still be giving away an MHSAA Regional trophy which has meaning in every single sport. Regionals will also still be qualifying for the State Meet by placing in the top 2 and SQs at that meet as well, like normal. Regionals are meets at the end of the season when all athletes are trying to perform their best. Likely under some of the best weather conditions of the season to that point. Athletes who have already qualified will then be able to use Regionals as a springboard into the State Finals or compete in other events to better serve their team.