



MHSAA Track & Field Finals Early Qualifier

Frequently Asked Questions

The Why:

Why is this needed?

Each year deserving athletes are left out of the MHSAA Lower Peninsula State Finals (Finals) due to the conditions at their MHSAA Regional Meet (Regionals). 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 Finals. Coaches will be free to put athletes in spots to maximize points at Regionals without having to sacrifice Finals qualification or seeding.

The Details:

Where will the standards come from? Will there be 2 sets, a regular season qualifying standard and a different standard only for regionals? Yes. There will now be 2 sets of standards that can qualify athletes to the 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 approximately the 3-year average of 6th place in Regionals 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 based on a 3-year average of 2nd 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 is new, and they are tougher than the normal Finals SQs. These marks are set by reference to a 3-year average of 6th place at the Finals in that Division while balancing the number of anticipated EQ's.

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. The application and approval process will begin prior to the season starting. The application deadline is April 15, 2026. After the deadline applications for additional EQ meets will not be accepted.

Requirements for EQ meets:

- Have 6 or more teams represented
- Have 2 MHSAA registered officials (1 Head Official/Starter and 1 Referee)
- Use FAT Timing
- Shot puts and discus must be weighed and inspected
- Must certify correct poles and officials will inspect pole vault poles and pits
- Must apply for the EQ status as a meet no later than April 15, 2026 and before the meet is conducted. Please use this form: [EQ Meet Sign-up Form](#)
- Must submit an [Officials Verification Form](#) within 2 days of the completion of the meet.
- Meet results must be posted on [Athletic.net](#)
- Meets must be competed on an outdoor track.
- Meets must be completed on or between March 18th, 2026 and May 13th, 2026

Must be one of the following types of meets::

1. An **invitational**, which includes the standard 17 outdoor events in the traditional order (pole vault is optional),
2. A **relay meet** which contests the traditional four running relays in the correct relative order, includes standard field events (pole vault is optional) (field events can be relays as long as individual marks are reported) and the meet includes at least the four standard relay running events in relative order.

Are there specifics about certain events that must be followed?

Yes, most of these are covered under the normal MHSAA and NFHS rules but a few specifics that meets and officials should follow are:

- **Shot Put and Discus** - all implements should be weighed and inspected.
- **Pole Vault** all poles should be inspected.
- **High Jump and Pole Vault** the bar should be measured at all EQ heights.
- **Long Jump** should be inspected for proper level of sand and a clearly marked take-off board.
- **Cones** are required to be used on each turn on the inside of lane one.
- **Cones** are required to be used on the waterfall stagger line up until the cut in, and required if the inside line is not a unique color.

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.

What are the guidelines for FAT Timing and Officials?

One official will act as 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 may be available prior to the start of the 2026 season.

What constitutes a team if a meet requires 6?

A team is competing at a meet provided that the bulk of their eligible roster is competing within the entry constraints of that meet (for example many invitational meets only allow 2-3 entries per event which is acceptable). Obviously there are schools throughout Michigan of many different sizes. The intent of this requirement is to make sure the EQ meets are meets where many (minimum of 6) teams are competing. Meets may have certain events that draw individual athletes, but, the rule regarding number of teams and traditional event order remains in place. This means that an EQ meet can't be a meet specifically made to hold only elite sections, but an otherwise qualifying EQ meet can have elite sections in several events and still qualify.

Speaking of the meet order, it looks like relay meets are now allowed?

Yes, a small change for 2026 is that relay meets can now qualify as an EQ meet provided a few requirements are met. The meet must contest the standard 5 field events (pole vault is optional if facilities do not exist) and traditional 4 relays. The 4 traditional relays must be contested in the correct relative order. For example the 3200m Relay needs to be before the 800m Relay, but it would be allowable for any other relays to be in between those. If you are unsure if your meet meets these requirements submit it on the EQ form and explain the way that your meet operates and you will receive guidance.

So Elite Meets are not allowed? I heard they were not included.

That is correct in some settings, certain Elite Meets designed for a limited 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 or is a relay meet following the rules above, then it would be eligible to be an EQ Meet.

Are Wind Gauges required?

No, in 2026 Wind Gauges will not be required, but they are recommended, especially for the running events (100m, 200m, 110m/100m Hurdles). We do anticipate that Wind Gauges will become required in the future for these running events and potentially the long jump. It will be very helpful for EQ Meets to start to learn the Wind Gauge process and to report Wind readings in their results.

Are Unusual Events Allowed in an EQ Meet?

An otherwise qualifying EQ 17 event or relay meet can contain additional events, so long as that does not alter the order of the running events in an 17 event meet or the four traditional relays in a relay meet. Examples are co-ed relays, specialty relays (jumper, thrower, etc.) or odd events like a sprint medley or distance medley. Adding such events to an otherwise qualifying meet has no effect on the meet as an eligible EQ meet.

What About a Meet Cancelled Due to Weather Before Completion.

Marks at a meet that has to be discontinued will still qualify.

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

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 Finals even if they did not meet the EQ or SQ 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 200m, 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 okay. 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 and times/marks will not qualify for EQ status. However, RQ times/marks may be earned on indoor track *if* the time or mark is during the high school season when the athlete is competing with his team at a meet on his team's calendar.

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

An athlete's best mark at any EQ or Regional Meet will be used. This mark may come from an EQ, an SQ, or a first—or second-place finish at Regionals. This is a small change for 2026. So now if an athlete does not quite meet an EQ at an EQ meet, but then does qualify at Regionals with a mark that is not as good as the EQ meet mark, the better mark from the EQ meet will be their State Finals seed.

What about out-of-state meets?

Another change in 2026 is that the MHSAA will consider some out-of-state meets, providing that they follow our EQ meet rules to the best of their ability and that all MHSAA travel rules are followed.

If a team plans to attend an out-of-state meet please visit the MHSAA Track & Field page and download the "[EQ Meet - Out of State Form](#)", fill that form out and then submit it through the normal "[EQ Meet Sign-Up Form](#)". The attending coach and AD are responsible for submitting this form.

The Logistics:

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

The MHSAA and MichiganCrossCountry.com will handle the advancement to the MHSAA Finals from EQ Meets and Regionals. The 2026 process will be very similar to the 2025 process and information will be communicated to coaches who have athletes qualify. You will be able to view EQ qualifiers on the MHSAA Track & Field website.