NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES
PHASE 1

June 19, 2020

PHASE 1
CONDITIONING
JULY 13, 2020 THROUGH JULY 26, 2020

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES MUST BE FOLLOWED PRIOR TO THE START OF PHASE 1

1. Student-athletes who presently have COVID-19, or who have tested positive for COVID-19, shall provide clearance from a physician before he/she will be permitted to participate in workouts.

2. Student-athletes who have pre-existing medical conditions and/or are immunocompromised (e.g., diabetes, asthma, auto-immune disorders, etc.) shall provide clearance from a physician before he/she will be permitted to participate in workouts.

3. The COVID-19 Questionnaire must be completed seven (7) days prior to the start of the first workout session. This form only needs to be completed one time. Any athlete that does not have a COVID-19 Questionnaire on file will not be permitted to participate in any workouts.

4. Districts shall develop COVID-19 protocols and procedures detailing, among other things, the name and contact information of the individual(s) who will be primarily responsible for responding to and addressing COVID-19 related issues; how it will conduct screenings (including administration of a screening questionnaire and temperate checks); how it will respond to a positive COVID-19 test or a student-athlete or coach who is symptomatic including, without limitation, contact tracing and a communication plan with parents, student-athletes, coaches, and appropriate health authorities.

5. Districts shall examine their Emergency Action Plans and determine what changes, if any, may be needed to respond to emergencies, including those related to COVID-19.

6. Districts shall determine how they will handle and respond to the routine treatment and care of student-athletes who may be injured during workouts, including both on the field and in the training room.

CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL SPORTS DURING PHASE 1

1. Pre-Screening

a. Each district must designate school personnel to conduct daily pre-screening. This person cannot be involved in coaching student-athletes on the day they are tasked to conduct the pre-screening.
b. To the fullest extent possible, districts should consider staggered arrival and departure times of student-athletes.
c. Each day all coaches, student-athletes, and staff must clear the pre-screening process before they are permitted to participate in the workouts.
d. The pre-screening process will consist of a review of the pre-screening questionnaire, which shall be completed and provided to designated school personnel, and a temperature check.
e. Any individual who answers "yes" to any question on the questionnaire, or who has a temperature greater than 100.4°F, shall not be permitted to participate in the workout and shall be required to return home.
f. Any Individual who answers "yes" to any question on the questionnaire shall be required to provide clearance from a physician before they will be permitted to resume participation in the workouts.

2. Workouts

a. Workouts shall be no more than ninety (90) minutes in duration and shall include a ten (10) minute warm-up, and a ten (10) minute cool down.
b. Only one workout per day is permitted and there must be one (1) day of rest per every seven (7) days.
c. All workouts shall take place outside during PHASE 1.

d. Access to workouts must be limited to student-athletes, coaches, and appropriate school personnel.
e. There shall not be any physical contact, of any kind, between student-athletes and coaches during PHASE 1.
f. Throughout PHASE 1, workouts shall be limited to conditioning, skill sets, and sport-specific non-contact drills.
g. Coaches should have pre-drawn structured workouts for the duration of the session.
h. Workouts shall always comply with the NJSIAA Heat Participation Policy.
i. Student-athletes should be provided with unlimited access to fluids.

During all workouts, coaches and staff are reminded to be alert for any students exhibiting signs of distress regarding mental health secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. **Face Coverings**
   a. Student-athletes who are engaged in high-intensity aerobic activity, e.g., running, sprinting, etc., do not need to wear face coverings during the period of the aerobic activity. Once the aerobic activity is over, student-athletes shall wear face coverings.
   b. Student-athletes who are not engaged in high-intensity aerobic activity, e.g., sitting on the bench, reviewing plays, watching videos, waiting in line, etc., are encouraged to wear face coverings.
   c. Coaches and district personnel must wear face coverings at all times.

4. **Groupings/Social Distancing**
   a. No more than ten (10) student-athletes may be grouped together in a single area and the groups should be pre-determined by the coach prior to the start of the workout.
   b. Social distancing of at least six (6) feet shall be maintained between student-athletes and staff at all times, including within the ten (10) student-athlete groupings.
   c. Once student groupings are determined, student-athletes may not switch to another grouping, even for another sport.
   d. More than one group of student-athletes can be in a single area, provided there is twelve (12) to eighteen (18) feet between each group of student-athletes.
   e. Groupings **must** stay together throughout the entirety of PHASE 1.
   f. There shall not be celebratory contact, e.g., fist bumps, high-fives, huddles, etc.
   g. Student-athletes who participate in more than one sport are encouraged to be grouped with their fall sports teammates.

5. **Sports Equipment**
   a. Sports equipment shall not be shared at any time during PHASE 1.
   b. Each student-athlete shall bring individual water bottles to each workout for his/her own personal consumption. There shall not be any trading or sharing of water bottles.
   c. All sports equipment and touchpoints (e.g., benches, agility cones, ladders, clipboards, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected after each workout with EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants against COVID-19.

6. **Locker Rooms/Restrooms**
   a. Student-athletes shall not have access to locker rooms at any time unless needed for restroom access.
   b. Restrooms shall be cleaned and disinfected regularly with EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants against COVID-19.
   c. Restrooms use shall be limited to one person at a time.
   d. To the fullest extent possible, appropriate social distancing shall be maintained, and face coverings are worn when more than one student-athlete is in the restroom.

7. **Hygiene**
   a. Students and staff should make every effort to wash their hands as often as possible including before and after the workout.
   b. Hand sanitizer shall be accessible at all times.
   c. Student-athletes shall wear their workout gear to the workout and shall return home in the same workout gear.
   d. There shall be no spitting, chewing seeds or gum during the workout.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why does this guidance differ from the guidelines issued by the New Jersey Department of Health?

    - Because student-athletes have not been actively engaged in interscholastic sports, whether in practice or games, since earlier this year, there are significant concerns that student-athletes may be severely deconditioned, and high-intensity workouts could result in avoidable injuries or other health issues. As a result, and to ensure the health and safety of student-athletes to the fullest extent possible, the NJSIAA's Medical Advisory Task Force believes it is most medically appropriate to recondition student-athletes before beginning rigorous workouts during the summer months. There is no urgency or immediacy for interscholastic sports to begin contact workouts or games, therefore, with the benefit of this additional time, greater precautions can be taken in the near term.

    - Recent media reports have also demonstrated that, despite restrictions, return to sports at both the college and professional levels has been linked to an increased number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. As New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country, we must implement and abide by even more rigorous restrictions as we reopen. If we do not do this, the likelihood of a spike is greater and could cause more restrictive, as opposed to less restrictive, conditions on all New Jersey residents.

2. How long will PHASE 1 be in effect?

    - It is anticipated that this PHASE will continue for approximately two (2) weeks, or from July 13, 2020, through July 26, 2020. Progression to the next PHASE will be dependent upon directives from the Governor and changes in the prevalence of COVID-19 throughout the State.

3. When will the PHASE 2 guidance be released?

    - The NJSIAA's Medical Advisory Task Force is finalizing the next PHASE of guidance. It is anticipated that the next PHASE of guidance will be released at least two (2) weeks prior to the start of the next PHASE.

4. What kind of supplies will the district need?

    - Thermometer for temperature screenings
    - Hand sanitizer
    - EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants against COVID-19
    - Face coverings
    - Disposable gloves

5. Why is it required that the COVID-19 Questionnaire be completed and submitted seven (7) days prior to the start of the summer recess period?

    - Potential risks of cardiac injury caused by COVID-19 infection warrants a cautious return to play for active people and competitive athletes. Significant cardiac damage has been observed in about 25% of severely ill patients with COVID-19 which is much higher when compared with the other viral infections.

    - Myocarditis (heart muscle inflammation) caused by the virus invading the heart muscle cells could **result in cardiac dysfunction, abnormal heart rhythms, and death**. This can be determined by blood tests looking for elevated heart muscle enzymes or abnormalities on EKG or ECHO (heart ultrasound).

    - In the acute phase of the infection, **exercise could result in accelerated viral replication, increased inflammation, and heart muscle damage**.

    - Therefore, it is imperative that we identify students that have been diagnosed or potentially exposed to COVID-19 using the COVID Questionnaire.

6. What kind of screening questionnaire needs to be administered?

    - A recommended template for the screening questionnaire will be made available to all schools. Districts can determine the best means (electronic or paper) and platform (Survey Monkey, Microsoft Teams, etc.) to administer the screening questionnaire. Screening questionnaires must be completed prior to arriving on school grounds.

7. How can temperature screenings be conducted?

    - Districts may determine the most effective way to conduct temperature screenings. If districts are unable to purchase a thermometer, consideration may be given, among other things, to observing a parent/guardian take the temperature of a student-athlete (with a thermometer from the student's home) in the presence of district personnel.

8. Why are groupings limited to 10 student-athletes?

    - As New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country, and New Jersey has one of the highest rates of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country, the NJSIAA's Medical Advisory Task Force believes it is most medically appropriate to initially limit the size of student groupings. In this way, if a student tests positive for COVID-19, the universe of other potential confirmed cases will be limited. As the weeks progress, the size of student groupings will increase appropriately.

9. If groupings are limited to 10 student-athletes, does that mean that no more than 10 people from a team may be at a single practice?

    - No, there can be multiple groupings from the same team at the same practice. However, the total number of student-athletes that may be at the same practice is limited by the parameters of the Governor's Executive Orders.

10. What is the protocol/procedure for student-athletes who need to use the restroom?

    - The number of student-athletes who will be permitted to use the restroom at the same time will vary by district and will depend on the size and capacity of each district's restrooms, including the number of stalls and sinks in each restroom. To the fullest extent possible, appropriate social distancing shall be maintained, and face coverings are worn when more than one student-athlete is in the restroom. Restrooms should be cleaned and disinfected with EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants against COVID-19 as often as possible throughout the day, but at least daily.

11. After a parent/guardian (or another adult) drops off a student-athlete, can he/she remain on school grounds?

    - After a student-athlete completes the screening questionnaire and temperature screen process, the individual who provided transportation for the student-athlete should leave the facility immediately.

    - However, if an issue occurs during the workout, and a parent/guardian is called back to the facility by a coach or other district personnel, they should return as soon as possible. Any parent or guardian asked to come to the facility shall wear face coverings and shall comply with social distancing requirements.

RESOURCES / REFERENCES
(*Non-Exhaustive)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Considerations for Youth Sports*.
- New Jersey Department of Health, *Guidance for Sport Activities*.
- National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC), *Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities*.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), *Coronavirus Resources*.
- The Aspen Institute, Return to Play, *COVID 19 Risk Assessment Tool*.
- U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, *Sports Event Planning Considerations Post-COVID-19* (updated May 7, 2020).
- U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, *Return to Training Considerations Post-COVID-19* (updated April 28, 2020).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs*.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles*.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again* (pages 45-48) (May 2020).
- U.S. Department of Education, *COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel*.
- Minnesota Department of Health, *Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth Sports*.
- Minnesota Department of Health, *Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth and Student Programs*.
- Iowa Department of Education, *COVID-19 Reopening Guidance: Summer Sports*.
- Colorado Department of Education, *Planning the 2020-21 School Year, A Framework and Toolkit for School and District Leaders for Feedback*.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools* (June 3, 2020).
- Little League International, *Best Practices on Organizing, Playing, and Watching Little League Baseball and Softball During the Coronavirus Pandemic*.
- American Academy of Pediatrics, *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools*.