

# COVID-19 Resource Center

Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.



The Indiana High School Athletic Association, with support of its Board of Directors and feedback from its Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, will continue to work in collaboration with The Governor's office, the Indiana State Department of Health, and the Indiana Department of Education to provide guidance to its member schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Resource Center will continue to be updated with new information as conditions change during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IHSAA believes it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of student-athletes to return to organized physical activity and build team relationships with their peers and coaches. Students who participate learn life lessons in an environment that cannot be duplicated. Academic achievement, the development of leadership and social skills as well as the mental health benefits are known to be greatly enhanced in students who participate in these programs compared to those who do not. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has already resulted in thousands of our students missing out on these life-shaping educational experiences over the past several months. A [study conducted by UW Health & the University of Wisconsin](#) concluded that more than two-thirds of high school athletes report anxiety and depression since the onset of the pandemic. Another [report by the group](#) measured the impact of School Closures and Athletic Cancellations on the health of Indiana adolescents.

The IHSAA fully supports its member schools in determining what is in the best interests of the health and well-being of their student-athletes and staff. Each IHSAA member school's athletic department will operate with the approval of its school administration in moving forward throughout the 2020-21 school year. It will be the decision of each local school district to determine if they can safely conduct athletic practices and contests.

Due to the nature of the outbreak, there may be inequities due to geography within the state of Indiana as some areas will have higher COVID-19 rates that may not warrant full athletic participation while another area has lower COVID-19 rates that allow full participation.

For workouts, practices and competitions to continue, social distancing and other preventive measures such as face covering/masking and frequent sanitizing of hands, implements, and equipment are strongly encouraged. This will likely remain in place until a cure, vaccine or very effective treatment is readily available, or so-called "herd immunity" is confidently reached.

As the science about COVID-19 evolves, it will be important to remain vigilant and nimble to respond to new developments. Students and their families, along with school personnel, must recognize these risks and implement best practices to reasonably mitigate these risks. Participation in school activities is voluntary and every individual will need to evaluate the risk versus the benefits of athletics participation. Those immune-compromised students and staff, or those who live with family members with elevated health concerns, should evaluate associated risks of participation and may choose not to participate.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, and also may be produced when yelling, cheering, singing and spitting. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about six feet). Risk mitigation strategies should be aimed at reducing the likelihood of a person being exposed to respiratory droplets coming from another person. Every school is different, and every

athletics activity is different. Certain mitigation strategies may be feasible in one school or for one activity, but not another.

We are also providing sport-specific recommendations and/or considerations that our team has developed in conjunction with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) or a similar governing body. These documents have been shared with member school administrators and links are available below. Note that a rule modification is a modification to a playing rule from the governing body of the sport and is a requirement to adhere to and follow. A recommendation is a consideration to the sport and allows for optional guidelines. Recommendations are not required but are permitted.

**Again, this Resource Center will be updated as necessary.**

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**NFHS Officials Considerations for Returning to Officiating:** [Link](#)

**Wilson Game Ball Cleaning Recommendations:** [Link](#)

#### **IHSAA Fall Sport-Specific Guidelines**

- **Golf** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)
- **Tennis** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)
- **Cross Country** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)
- **Soccer** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)
- **Volleyball** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)
- **Football** specific recommendations and/or considerations: [Download](#)

#### **IHSAA Winter Sport-Specific Guidelines (Added 10/19/20)**

- **Basketball** specific recommendations and/or considerations [Download](#)
- **Gymnastics** specific recommendations and/or considerations [Download](#)
- **Swimming & Diving** specific recommendations and/or considerations [Download](#)
- **Wrestling** specific recommendations and/or considerations [Download](#)

#### **IHSAA Winter Public Service Announcements (Added 10/19/20)**

- **Thank you for maintaining a thankful and respectful disposition toward athletes, coaches, officials, and school personnel and volunteers who are making this event possible!**

## Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH)

- COVID-19 Home: [Link](#)
- Back-to-School Resources: [Link](#)

## Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)

- Resources for Indiana Schools: [Link](#)
- Re-Entry Guidance (Extra-Curricular Activities in Appendix C): [Link](#)

## National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

- Free online course from NFHSLearn.com: [COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators](#)
- Guidance for opening up High School Athletics and Activities: [Link](#)
- Plans to Preserve High School Athletics, Performing Arts Continue Amid Pandemic: [Link](#)

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

COVID-19 Home: [Link](#)

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## Q&A

**Q. Who was involved in the decision to move forward with the start of the fall sports seasons?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** Since the beginning of the pandemic, The IHSAA team has worked closely with the IHSAA Board of Directors, Indiana Governor's Office, the Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Department of Education to make decisions regarding the start of the fall sports season.

**Q. Why is the IHSAA continuing with starting the fall sports season during the pandemic?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** COVID-19 has had a greater impact in some areas of the state than others. Despite some school districts deciding to halt extra-curricular activities, including sports, to start the school year, most of our member schools around the state are still able and want to offer a fall sports program. The IHSAA fully supports and respects the decisions of schools that choose not to offer a fall sports program. For those schools that do offer a fall sports program, the IHSAA is committed to having fall sports start as safely as possible and as long as it is permitted by the Indiana Governor's Office, the medical experts at the Indiana State Department of Health, the Indiana Department of Education and the IHSAA Board of Directors.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and several studies have concluded there are major health, social and educational risks to keeping children at home. More than anything, young people need the physical activity and structure with coaches and teammates that high school sports offer. COVID-19 has left them with a void, and there is no doubt that being a part of a team can bring a community together.

The IHSAA will continue to share the latest information on the pandemic and safety guidelines with member school personnel as it has throughout the last several months.

**Q. If some universities and colleges are shutting down sports, why are high school sports continuing?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** It's important to remember that most high school student-athletes have been practicing and training with others for weeks, and even months. High school sports are different in that the student populations come from those communities they serve and are not mixing with other individuals from all over the country and, even the world, as in in university and college settings.

Indiana high school sports also don't have the extensive travel to other parts of the country that you do at the collegiate level.

The IHSAA also believes student-athletes, coaches and school administrators – in education-based programs – are best suited to be the advocates for safety and strongly promoting and following mandates and the recommended guidelines to wear facial coverings, adhere to social distancing and other precautions.

**Q. Did the IHSAA consider delaying the start of the season to see if the number of COVID-19 cases subsided?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** That option of delaying the start of the fall sports season was thoroughly discussed by the IHSAA team. The fact that a majority of student-athletes have either been competing on non-school teams or training and conditioning for the past several months was a factor.

**Q. What concerns did the IHSAA have about postponing sports seasons?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** If member schools cannot offer sports, there is little doubt that non-school programs will continue to fill the void for our student-athletes as many did throughout the summer months. Our staff and Board of Directors believe that our schools are the best, most reliable providers of these programs in an environment that implements best practices for dealing with COVID-19 restrictions. Most non-school programs do not focus on the “education-based” aspect of athletics in the same manner as our member schools.

Additionally, not providing school-based programs can also lead to socioeconomic concerns when it comes to student-athletes. Many of the non-school programs require significantly more costs to participate than school-based programs, so many student-athletes and their families would not be able to afford to participate.

Young people need extra-curricular activities and the structure that comes with them and most will not just stay home and do nothing without that opportunity.

**Q. What about schools or school districts that have decided to either postpone the start of their sports seasons or not offer sports in the fall based on the recommendations of their local or county health departments? Will they be allowed to begin competing at a later date?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** Yes. While some school districts have delayed offering sports this school year, our hope is that they will resume fielding teams sometime in the fall and start playing during the season. However, we owe it to the majority of high schools that want to and can participate, to move forward. The IHSAA anticipates that some school teams may compete one week and not the next throughout the fall season and they will be permitted to do so without penalty. Local schools have the discretion to make their own decisions based on what they feel is best for their students and their communities and the IHSAA fully supports and will respect their decision.

**Q. What makes interscholastic athletics programs different than non-school programs?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** The IHSAA is about education-based athletics, which are intended to foster a sense of community and belonging as well as to teach teamwork, citizenship and discipline, and provide a unique form of structured competition. Our coaches, many of whom are teachers with years of professional training and experience, are the people who are best positioned to lead our student-athletes.

It is also well-documented that student-athletes who compete in interscholastic athletics have better educational outcomes; our programs are a valuable part of the high school experience; our programs promote positive development and provide opportunities to learn life skills and values not always taught in the classroom, and that active students have healthier behavior, leading to better physical and mental health. Additionally, this is a critical time in the lives and development of our student-athletes, whether this is the last time they suit up for their team or if they are hoping to go on to play in college.

**Q. Is the IHSAA prepared to make modifications or changes if we must delay or postpone seasons?** (added 8/24/20)

**A.** Yes, If conditions force a change course, we will adjust accordingly. Obviously, this has not been a traditional year to this point and the foreseeable future promises challenges ahead, but we solicit your support as we strive to provide these memorable opportunities and experiences for the student-athletes of our state.

#### **Healthcare Provider Clearance** (Updated 9/29/20)

**Q. Should a student-athlete with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis be cleared by a licensed healthcare provider (MD, DO, PA, or NP) prior to participation?**

**A.** A documented medical exam should be performed clearing the student-athlete to return to play. The documented medical exam should specifically include an assessment of the cardiac/heart risk of high-intensity exercise due to the potential of myocarditis occurring in COVID-19 patients.

- [Guidance for Assessing Cardiac Issues in High School Student-Athletes with COVID-19 Infection](#)
- [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports](#)

#### **Cancellation Fees**

**Q. If a school must cancel a contest due to COVID-19, do they need to pay the contract cancellation fee to the offended school?**

**A.** No, contests canceled due to COVID-19 will not be required to pay a cancellation fee.

#### **Canceled Contests**

**Q. If a school must cancel a contest due to COVID-19, does it count as a loss, or simply a no contest?**

**A.** If a contest is canceled due to COVID-19, it should be recorded as "No Contest".

#### **Tournament Series** (Added 8/24/20)

**Q. What if a team is quarantined and unable to play when the IHSAA tournament series begins or is quarantined after the tournament series begins?**

**A.** The tournament contest will be recorded as a no contest, the opponent will advance, and the tournament series will carry on as scheduled.

#### **Masks**

**Q. During contests, do players not participating have to wear masks?**

**A.** Yes, the governor's mask order dictates this. Anyone who is not engaged in strenuous physical activity should be wearing a mask.

#### **Neck Gaiters** (Updated 8/24/20)

**Q. Can student-athletes wear neck gaiters while participating?**

**A.** Yes, athletes can wear neck gaiters and should slip them up over their nose when they are not participating in the contest and, if they choose to, down around the neck when they enter the contest. Anyone who is not engaged in strenuous physical activity should be wearing a mask. Note: By NFHS rule Football players are not permitted to wear a Gaiter around the neck while participating in a contest.

#### **Concessions**

**Q. May schools sell concessions at contests?**

- A. Yes, but it is at the discretion of the host school. If a school chooses to, it is recommended that all items sold in the concession stand be pre-packaged prior to sale. Pre-packaged can be items purchased like a bag of chips, bottled soft drinks, candy bar etc. These types of items would be considered the safest and easiest to handle. However, pre-packaged can also be items packaged by concession staff, such as a popcorn, hamburgers, hot dogs etc. as long as they are safely handled prior to packaging.

**Spectator Seating** (Updated 10/19/20)

**Q. Will spectators be allowed to attend sporting events? (Spectators should always observe social distancing and mask/face covering requirements)**

- A. Yes, but it will be at the discretion of the host school with guidance from local health officials and in accordance with the [governor's stage 5](#). Organizers of events with more than 500 people in attendance will be required to submit a plan to the local health department that outlines measures to mitigate COVID-19.

**Practice Rules** (Updated 8/24/20)

**Q. Will the IHSAA waive its practice rules during the pandemic?**

- A. IHSAA by-laws 9-14 (Practice Attendance Required to Participate in a Contest) and 50-1/101-1 (Pre-Participation Practice) will remain in effect.

Please know we understand the challenges schools face in the desire to help student-athletes return to activity during the COVID public health crisis. As an Association, we have reviewed, both medically and legally, the option of allowing virtual practices to count in the requisite number of practices needed for competition. Overwhelmingly, our information suggests that virtual practices do not meet the same standard (facilities, environmental conditions, concussive events, heat-related illness, cardiac arrest, and all other immediate care events) as acclimation practices in the presence of a coach or coaches. Repeatedly, the IHSAA has entertained many suggestions/requests to modify the health and safety by-laws associated with acclimation practices. Each time, the IHSAA Staff, Board, and Medical Professionals have elected to not reduce the standards of health and safety as they relate to the number of acclimation practices required to participate in a contest or returning from a period of not practicing (vacation, injury, illness, etc.) with the team. Even if a By-Law change is proposed for consideration, we do not believe it prudent to suggest a change in our standards in the midst of this current pandemic.