



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Wednesday, July 22, 2020
Athletic Administrator Update

TO: OHSAA Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators
FR: Bob Goldring, Interim Executive Director

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has presented the OHSAA with a myriad of challenges. The Executive Director's Office, with support from its Board of Directors and feedback from the Ohio Joint Advisory Committee on Sports Medicine, the National Federation of State High School Associations and the Ohio Department of Health along with support from the Ohio Lt. Governor's Office, offer a Return to Play document as recommendations on how our member schools can consider approaching the many components of "opening up" sports with the objective of commencing the fall sports seasons on August 1, 2020. The OHSAA fully intends to support its member schools and the student-athletes who desire to compete in interscholastic athletics and will continue to assess all areas as more information becomes available. **We encourage you to especially pay attention to the early pages of the document closely since they indicate that many of the recommendations can ONLY be utilized if mandates from the Ohio Department of Health Director's Order are modified.**

- The OHSAA understands that the physical and mental benefits of participation in education-based interscholastic athletics are numerous and are heightened even more during this pandemic. 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 our 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, and we certainly hope we can return to some type of normalcy as it relates to interscholastic athletics soon. With that being said, in order for interscholastic athletics to occur, we all need to follow the protocols that have been put in place.
- The recommendations within the Return to Play document for the resumption of varsity, non-varsity and 7th-8th grade interscholastic athletic seasons and participation opportunities have been made with the health, safety and well-being of all student-athletes in mind.
- The risk of coronavirus transmission will still be present to some degree as interscholastic athletics activities begin in August and will continue until there is a widely available vaccine or therapeutic care, possibly through the 2020-21 school year. While the science about COVID-19 is evolving, 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 immunocompromised 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.

- Schools should attempt to significantly mitigate exposures by:
 - Maintaining physical distancing while not on the field or court of play;
 - Requiring face coverings while not on the field or court of play;
 - Reducing or greatly eliminating unnecessary travel;
 - Reducing or eliminating sharing of common equipment, and
 - Reducing or eliminating contact frequency with student-athletes from schools and non-interscholastic programs outside of each school's league/conference or normal competition sphere.

As another component to the Return to Play Recommendations document, we are including an educational tool for your student-athletes, an acknowledgement and pledge form that you may strongly consider utilizing.

As a supplement to the Return to Play document, we are also providing sport specific recommendations and/or considerations that our sport management team has developed in conjunction with the National Federation of State High School Associations or a similar governing body. Links to these documents will also be sent to your head coaches. 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.**

Thank you for what you are doing to make preparations with your student-athletes, coaches and communities, and thanks also for your patience with us and your attention to this information!

Here is the link to the OHSAA **Return to Play Recommendations** document: <https://bit.ly/RTPRecs>

Here is the link to the **Student-Athlete Acknowledgement/Pledge Form**: <https://bit.ly/StdntPledge>

Here is the link to **football** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/FBRecs>

Here is the link to **cross country** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidXCRecs>

Here is the link to **field hockey** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/FHRecs>

Here is the link to **golf** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidGORecs>

Here is the link to **soccer** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/SORecs>

Here is the link to **tennis** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/TERecs>

Here is the link to **volleyball** specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidVBRecs>