

MIAA Sports Medicine Recommendation to MIAA COVID Task Force

Fall 2020 – Return to Play

Updated Sept. 18, 2020

The following guidance has been created by the MIAA Sports Medicine Committee to allow for thoughtful planning and implementation of protocols to support the safe return to play for MIAA student-athletes.

Face Coverings

In accordance with CDC guidance the use of face coverings will be required “to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 **from** the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of the disease).” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) There is also evidence that the use of a face covering will also provide protection **to** the wearer. “Face coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports.” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) “Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020).

Recognizing the benefits and potential concerns of using face coverings during conditioning and physical activity, the MIAA BOD, in collaboration with the MIAA Sports Medicine Committee, recommends:

- i. Cloth or disposable face coverings should be worn throughout each phase when not engaging in vigorous activity, unless required by a sport rule modification. This would include sitting on the bench, during chalk talk, interacting with an athletic trainer, etc.
- ii. Medical grade face coverings are not necessary. Cloth or disposable face coverings are acceptable. Face coverings should be multi-layered.
- iii. Coach and other contest administrative personnel should always wear cloth face coverings. (Artificial noisemakers such as an air horn or a timer system with an alarm can be used to signal in place of a traditional whistle.) (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)

Quarantine and COVID-19 Action Plans

All schools should incorporate quarantine procedures and required COVID-19 response plans in their documented Emergency Action Plans. These plans should be known to all coaches and medical staff and should be practiced. The plans should cover how to deal with visiting teams, game officials and spectators.

Activity Type and Phases

The Phase Structure within this document is intended to align with phasing protocols and guidelines of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA).

Risk Level: Sports and recreation activities are categorized as “Lower Risk,” “Moderate Risk,” and “Higher Risk.”

Lower Risk sports and recreation activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities that can be done with social distancing and no physical contact
- Sports or activities that can be done individually

Examples: Batting cages, tennis, swimming, golf, no contact exercise classes, gymnastics, cross country

Moderate Risk sports and recreation activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental physical contact but with protective equipment or mitigating measures in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants (e.g., wearing masks, modifying play)

Examples: Baseball, softball, track and field, running clubs, team swimming, volleyball, field hockey, no-contact lacrosse, soccer

Higher Risk sports and recreation activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities for which there is a requirement or substantial likelihood of routine close and or sustained proximity or deliberate physical contact between participants and a high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: Football, wrestling, rugby, basketball, lacrosse, ice-hockey, competitive cheer

Phase 2:

Phase 2 is recommended for beginning a return to sports. If there is an increase in cases within the region or organization, it is recommended to return back to the previous phase and potentially will need to stop sports. Dates are subject to change per this recommendation at any time based on local health department guidance.

During this phase, individual workouts are allowed to begin on campus or at the organization's facility. However, **no more than 10 individuals, including coaches, are recommended in a space.** The space should be separated by a barrier or large enough distance that individuals can maximize social distancing and no players/coaches should be within 6 feet of each other. There should no interaction between groups of 10 during this phase. All machines or equipment should be wiped down with disinfectant after each use. Gathering limitations and cleaning to be enforced by school administration in collaboration with the athletic trainer.

Athletes should not be interacting with anyone outside the area where their individual workout is located.

Pre-workout Screening:

- All coaches and students should be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. Temperature screenings would need to be done in accordance with local regulations and guidance.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored so there is a record of everyone present in case a student develops COVID-19 (see COVID-19 Athlete/Coach Monitoring Form at the end of this document)
- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- High risk individuals (coaches, staff and/or student athletes should not oversee or participate in any workouts during Phase 2.
- It is recommended that every student with a prior diagnosis of COVID-19, symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, or a "close exposure" to someone with COVID-19 should contact their medical provider to determine if further evaluation is warranted prior to returning to sports.

- A medical evaluation is strongly recommended for students with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- All students with prior COVID-19 should be screened for ongoing symptoms of chest pain/pressure with exercise, difficulty breathing or dizziness with exercise, or decreased exercise tolerance.

Limitations on Gatherings: (aligned with EEA guidance)

- No gathering of more than 10 people at a time (inside or outside).
- Locker rooms should not be utilized during Phase 2. Students should report to workouts in proper gear and immediately return home to shower at end of the workout.
- Workouts should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same 5-10 students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times. If this is not possible indoors, then the maximum number of individuals in the room must be decreased until proper social distancing can occur.
- Groups must be 20 ft apart
- Activities performed during this phase cannot include any contact.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, staff, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible
- Facility managers must set, post, and monitor occupancy limits for bathrooms based on the ability to maintain six-foot social distancing

Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment:

- There should be no shared athletic equipment (towels, clothing, shoes, or sports specific equipment) between students. Based on DESE guidance for school reopening, temperature checks will not be required. However, a school district may opt to consider the practice and it may be required by the school’s local Board of Health.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing) individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned after each use and prior to the next workout.
- Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.
- Resistance training should be emphasized as body weight, sub-maximal lifts and use of resistance bands. • Free weight exercises that require a spotter cannot be conducted while honoring social distancing norms. Safety measures in all forms must be strictly enforced in the weight room.

Examples (including by not limited to):

- A basketball player can shoot with a ball(s), but a team should not practice/pass a single ball among the team where multiple players touch the same ball.
- A football player should not participate in team drills with a single ball that will be handed off or passed to other teammates. Contact with other players is not allowed, and there should be no sharing of tackling dummies/donuts/sleds.
- A volleyball player should not use a single ball that others touch or hit in any manner.
- Softball and baseball players should not share gloves, bats, or throw a single ball that will be tossed among the team. A single player may hit in cages, throw batting practice (with netting

as backstop, no catcher). Prior to another athlete using the same balls, they should be collected and cleaned individually

- Wrestlers may skill and drill without touching a teammate.
- Tennis players may do individual drills, wall volleys and serves.
- Runners should maintain the recommended 6 feet of distancing between individuals

Hydration:

- All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

Facilities Cleaning:

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.

Phase 3:

During this phase, team workouts, practices, and competitions (with some restrictions and/or modifications) are allowed to begin on campus or at facilities. Team drills can occur where players are less than 6 feet apart, but this should be minimized to brief one-on-one drills if the practice is conducted using the cohort/pod model. Most of the practice should utilize social distancing.

No two teams should be in the same location at one time. If the same field or gym will be used back to back, allow ample time between sessions to clean area between teams. Half field use is permitted. Be sure there is no interaction between teams. Gathering limitations and cleaning to be enforced by school administration in collaboration with the athletic trainer.

Any equipment used should be disinfected between individual uses (i.e. helmets, bat, stick etc.). Social distancing should apply as much as possible during these team workouts and practices.

Pre-Workout/Contest Screening:

- All coaches and students should be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. Based on DESE guidance for school reopening, temperature checks will not be required. However, a school district may opt to consider the practice and it may be required by the school's local Board of Health.

- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case a student develops COVID-19 (see Appendix II for sample Monitoring Form).
- Attendance and “cohort” groups should be documented daily
- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- High risk individuals (coaches, staff and/or student athletes) should not oversee or participate in any workouts during Phase 3.
- It is recommended that every student with a prior diagnosis of COVID-19, symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, or a “close exposure” to someone with COVID-19 should contact their medical provider to determine if further evaluation is warranted prior to returning to sports.
- A medical evaluation is strongly recommended for students with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- All students with prior COVID-19 should be screened for ongoing symptoms of chest pain/pressure with exercise, difficulty breathing or dizziness with exercise, or decreased exercise tolerance.

Limitations on Gatherings: (aligned with EEA guidance)

- Reference [EEA Guidance](#) for detail on outdoor and indoor capacity guidance
- If locker rooms or meeting rooms are used, they may only operate at 50% capacity and there must be a min of 6ft distance between individuals. Showers are closed, unless required for public pool operation.
- Workouts should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same 5-10 students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- Team drills can occur where players are less than 6 feet apart, but this should be minimized to brief one-on-one drills. Most of the practice should utilize social distancing. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and coaches. All practices and team activities should follow social distancing guidelines, wearing face coverings and follow MIAA sport modifications.

Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment:

- Lower risk sports practices and competitions may resume. Modifications may be necessary. (see Sport Classification list at the beginning of this document and published [MIAA Sport Modifications](#))
- Moderate risk sports practices and competitions may resume with modifications.
- Higher risk sports modifications will be updated and developed when those sports are approved for participation.
- There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing or shoes between students.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned intermittently during practices and contests.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all contests and practices. Its use should be required upon entrance and exiting game play and before leaving the facility if hand washing is not possible.

- Maximum lifts should be limited and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar. Face coverings are required for participants.

Hydration:

- All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

Facilities Cleaning:

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.

Phase 4: When EEA guidance is developed for phase 4 this guidance will be updated.

