

Return to Play Protocol (October 24, 2020)

The Governor's Office and Washington State Department of Health issued new guidance for returning to education-based sports and activities, Tuesday, using the statistical benchmarks of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents in a given county as well as the percentage of positive tests. The WIAA has used this guidance from the Department of Health to develop new general, as well as sport-specific, return-to-play guidelines which will replace those previously tied to phasing in the Governor's Safe Start Plan. The Governor's office has informed the WIAA that these guidelines must be followed and neither schools nor community sports programs have the authority to implement more lenient policies.

County benchmarks will be used to determine which sports or activities are recommended to take place based on COVID-19 activity in the county. Each county's status can be found on the [Washington Risk Assessment Dashboard](#) along with communicating directly with local health departments. These benchmarks mirror those issued by the Department of Health to aid schools in their decision-making process for models of in-person/remote learning.

RISK CATEGORIES

For the purposes of this document, sports are defined using the following risk categories:

LOW-RISK SPORTING ACTIVITIES:

Tennis, swimming and diving, golf, cross country, track and field, and sideline/no-contact cheerleading and dance.

MODERATE-RISK SPORTING ACTIVITIES:

Softball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, gymnastics, and bowling.

HIGH-RISK SPORTING ACTIVITIES:

Football, wrestling, cheerleading with contact, dance with contact, and basketball.

EXPOSURE PROTOCOL

- Stay home when sick or if in close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Athletes, coaches, and any paid or volunteer staff should be required to stay home if they feel unwell, show any signs of COVID-19, or have been exposed to a confirmed case or close contact.
- All coaches and students WILL BE SCREENED for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. (Google Form)
- Those who are excluded from training or contests due to [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or because they are [close contacts](#) must follow DOH and local public health isolation and quarantine guidance before returning to training or contests.
- People with underlying health conditions should consult with their medical providers regarding participation in athletic activities.

MASKS

- Masks required for athletes/participants directly before and directly after sporting activities and strongly encouraged whenever not engaged in strenuous activity.
- Coaches, athletic trainers, managers, spotters, and any other paid or volunteer staff must wear face coverings at all times.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Physical distance of 6 feet must be maintained between staff, volunteers with exceptions for athletic training and medical personnel and volunteers performing their medical duties.
- Six feet of distance should be maintained among athletes when not engaged in sporting activities, huddles and team meetings.
- Avoid grouping of athletes at the start and end of practice or during transitions and stagger start times for meetings/workouts when possible.

HYGIENE

- Require athletes, coaches, and any other paid or volunteer staff to practice good hygiene including washing their hands frequently and covering their sneezes and coughs.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after practice, especially after touching shared objects or blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Athletes should not share water bottles, uniforms, equipment (unless properly sanitized), towels, or snacks and should not spit (saliva, sunflower seeds, etc.).
- Players and coaches should use hand sanitizer before entering and exiting the facility/stadium and any time they enter the sideline, bench, or dugout.
- Balls may be passed/shared within the POD, provided students wash their hands before and after the practice/contest.
- Limit the use of locker rooms to handwashing and restroom use only.
- Showers will not be used due to potential spread of aerosolized droplets.
- No locker rooms will be used during the high category
- Stagger entry to the changing area and use of these facilities as appropriate with members of the same team or training cohort only.
- When possible, athletes, and coaches should come dressed appropriately for the contest/practice.

CLEANING

- Clean high-touch surfaces and disinfect shared equipment before and after each use. Ensure restrooms are cleaned and disinfected prior to and after any activity.
- Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.
- Clothing, towels, pads, etc. should be washed and cleaned after every workout or event.
- Schools should be responsible for bringing towels to wipe up sweat from the floor

VENTILATION

- Ventilation is important to have good, indoor air quality.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly.
- Increase air circulation and ventilation as much as possible by opening windows and doors.
- Offer more outside time, open windows often, and adjust the HVAC system to allow the maximum amount of outside air to enter the program space.
- Use of fans for cooling is acceptable. In indoor spaces, fans should only be used when windows or doors are open to the outdoors in order to circulate indoor and outdoor air. They should blow away from people.

TRANSPORTATION

- Limit exposure to those outside the household unit during travel. Encourage only those in the same household to travel together, and if not in the same household, travel in separate vehicles if possible.

RECORDS AND CONTACT TRACING

- Keep a roster of every athlete, staff, and volunteer present at each practice, training session, and contest to assist with contact tracing in the event of a possible exposure.
- Attendance rosters must be kept on file for in the athletic department office or on a google form for seven years.
- Temperature checks prior to each practice are required

COVID-19 ACTIVITY LEVEL

- The risk of COVID-19 spread linked to sporting activities depends on the level of COVID-19 spread in the community. The following COVID-19 activity level classifications are based on the Department of Health's school reopening decision tree recommendations which classify counties based on their current COVID-19 activity level.

HIGH >75 cases/100K/14 days OR >5% positivity

- Team practices and/or training can resume for low, medium, and high-risk sports if players are limited to groups of six in separate parts of the field/court and separated by a buffer zone. Brief, close contact (e.g. 3-on-3 drills) is permitted. It is preferable for the groups of six to be stable over time. Attendance rosters should include group contact information. Each league, organization, or club must publish and follow a "return to play" safety plan. Any practice or training activities that can be done outdoors should be done outdoors.
- Scrimmage and intra-team competitions allowed for low-risk sports, but are discouraged if the school is not conducting some in-person learning.

MODERATE >25-75 cases/100K/14 days AND <5% positivity

- Scrimmage, intra-team competitions, and league games allowed for both low and moderate-risk sporting activities. Scrimmage, intra-team competitions allowed for high-risk sporting activities.

LOW <25 cases/100K/14 days AND <5% positivity

- Scrimmage, intra-team competitions, and league games allowed for low, moderate, and high-risk sporting activities.

A prohibition on tournaments for sporting activities does not include postseason, playoff, regional or state championship competitions sanctioned by a statewide interscholastic activities administrative and rule-making body that oversees competition in all counties in the state.