

**GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
OPENING SPORTS/ACTIVITIES  
North Dakota High School Activities Association  
(NDHSAA)**



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**Purpose:** The COVID-19 pandemic presents state high school associations with a myriad of challenges. The NDHSAA Board of Directors offers this document as guidance on how member schools can consider approaching the many components of “opening up” sports and activities in preparation for the fall seasons, and beyond.

**Benefit of Sports/Activities:** The physical and psychosocial benefits of education-based activity participation are numerous. Students who participate in school activities learn life lessons in an environment that cannot be duplicated. The academic achievements, social and leadership skills, as well as overall mental health are known to be greatly enhanced in students who participate in a school activity compared to those who do not. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in thousands of North Dakota students missing out on these life-shaping educational experiences over the past several months.

**Acknowledgement of Infection Risks: The risk of COVID-19 transmission will still be present as school activities begin in August and likely through the 2020-2021 school year.** 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 activity 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. The primary means of COVID-19 transmission is through respiratory droplets and potentially through aerosolization. Risk mitigation strategies should be aimed at reducing the likelihood of a person’s respiratory droplets coming into contact with another person. Every school is different and every activity is different. Certain mitigation strategies may be feasible in one school or for one activity, but not another.

**Guidance may be rescinded, modified, or made mandatory at any time, based on current conditions.**

**Local school districts may choose to implement specific mitigation protocols that are more stringent than what is included in these guidelines.**

As indicated in [North Dakota’s K-12 Smart Restart Plan](#) member schools shall designate one person or a small team to plan and implement COVID-19 prevention measures.

**Students/coaches/directors that test positive for COVID-19 or are considered a close contact will be reported to the member school’s COVID-19 designee. Isolation of the infected individual should begin immediately. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) process for [isolation](#) and [quarantine](#) will be followed.**

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### Checklist of Considerations Prior to First Practice

- Daily Attendance Logs - REQUIRED
  - The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) recommends monitoring and checking the health of athletes before every practice and game.
  - Daily attendance logs at practice/contests/other gatherings for each team (varsity, junior varsity, junior high, etc.) are required. This requirement is an effort to prevent spread of COVID-19 and to aid in contact tracing in the event of any positive tests within the team.
  - Daily logs should indicate groups that were in close contact (within six feet of each other for a period of 15 minutes or longer) and if individuals were masked.
- Locker Room Guidelines
  - Recommendations from the NDDoH include:
    - Stagger schedules for locker rooms to avoid crowding.
    - Encourage athletes to shower at home after practices and games.
- Transportation, if applicable (cooperative sponsorships)
  - Recommendations from the NDDoH include:
    - Space seating so people are 6 feet apart.
      - If not possible, cohort into small groups and keep groups separated.
    - If possible, practical or feasible, keep windows open.
    - Assign seating and ensure that people stay in their assigned seats.
    - Consider using multiple vehicles.

### Checklist of Considerations Prior to First Contest

- Transportation - see above
- Video streaming: Member schools are encouraged to offer live streaming of games/contests that have restricted attendance.
- Digital ticketing: Member schools are encouraged to consider cashless transactions at admission entrances. Ticket takers and other event workers should be offered protective equipment such as masks and gloves.
- Concession stands: Should comply with [ND Smart Restart Restaurant](#) and Universal Standard Protocols.
- Policy for overnight trips/hotel rooms.
- Crowd limitations: [ND Smart Restart Large Gathering Protocols](#) shall be followed.
  - The NDHSAA encourages conferences, districts, and/or regions of schools to consider agreeing to similar attendance policies across the conference/district/region to avoid confusion from fans.

- The NDHSAA Board of Directors has approved [playing rule modifications](#) for 2020 Fall Sports.
- Masks or face coverings are recommended for all table/sideline personnel during contests (and may be required by the local school district or local health unit).
- [Media Guidance](#)
  - Members of the media wishing to provide coverage of regular season contests involving NDHSAA member schools are encouraged to contact local school administrators in advance of any event to get full details on what may be required of them in order to attend the contest.

### NDHSAA Board of Directors Requirements for Sport and Activity

- Daily attendance logs at practice/contests/other gatherings for each team (varsity, junior varsity, junior high, etc.) are required. This requirement is an effort to prevent spread of COVID-19 and to aid in contact tracing in the event of any positive tests within the team.
- [Playing rule modifications](#).
- Cancellation process for regular season games.
  - The NDDoH recommends suspending all practices and games if a school closes due to COVID-19. If a school is forced to cancel a contest due to NDDoH policies, the contest will be declared a “no contest” for both teams.
  - If a school decides on their own, without a school/district closure, to not play a conference contest, the contest will be declared a “forfeit”. The term “non-conference” refers to the district or region level, depending on the sport or activity.
  - Any postseason contests that are unable to be played will be considered a forfeit with the non-forfeiting team receiving a bye.
- NDHSAA By-Law and Board Regulation Adjustments - 2020-21 School Year
  - [Article XII, Section I: Pre-participation Physical Evaluations \(PPE\) \(Physicals\)](#)
    - Preparticipation Physical Evaluations (PPE) completed for the 2019-20 school year may be accepted during the 2020-21 school year upon submission of a parent and athlete signed waiver (previously known as Form B). Students who did not have a PPE completed for the 2019-20 school year and all first-time seventh graders must complete a PPE for the 2020-21 school year. **Member schools may choose to make PPEs mandatory for their student-athletes.**
  - Article XIV, Section I
    - Attendance rules regarding eligibility will be determined at the local school level.

- Article XIV, Section IV, Q. 11
  - Member schools may determine instructional delivery. Students who are enrolled, attend per school policy, and are eligible in all regards, may participate in sponsored athletics and activities.
  - Home educated students may continue to participate according to [Century Code](#) and [2014 Attorney General Opinion](#).
- Article III, Section XI
  - Any current cooperative agreements that include out-of-state schools may be reviewed by the NDHSAA Board of Directors at any time on a case-by-case basis.
- Article III, Section I
  - The NDDoH recommends competing only with teams in the general geographic area, if possible. Member schools will not be penalized for the cancellation of any non-conference contests. The term “non-conference” refers to the district or region level, depending on the sport or activity.
  - Member schools will not be required to reimburse game officials for any contracted contests canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Schools may accept online AED/CPR and First Aid courses to be used toward coach permit certification.

### **Recommendations for Return to Sport and Activity Due To COVID-19**

- Member schools should consider limiting the number of participating schools at regular season events. All events in moderate or higher risk sports as defined by the NFHS (lower risk sports in the Fall include cross country, golf, swimming & diving, and tennis) involving more than two member schools should receive prior approval from the host school’s local health unit. [ND Local Health Unit Map](#)
- Masks or face coverings are recommended for participants, coaches/directors and officials/adjudicators any time they are not doing strenuous activity.
- Member schools are encouraged to offer live streaming of games/contests that have restricted attendance.
- Member schools are encouraged to consider cashless transactions at admission entrances. Ticket takers and other event workers should be offered protective equipment such as masks and gloves.
- Awards ceremonies during regular season tournaments should be canceled.

### **NDHSAA Postseason Tournaments**

- Traditional tournament formats and sites may be altered by the NDHSAA Board of Directors.

- The NDHSAA Board of Directors, through cooperation with [local health units](#), will determine which tiers will be allowed to attend postseason tournaments:
  - Tier I (Essential): Participants, Coaches/Directors, Officials/Adjudicators, Event Staff, Medical Staff, Security, School Administrators
  - Tier IIa (Preferred): Media partners
  - Tier IIb (Preferred): Non-contracted media professionals
  - Tier IIIa (Non-essential): Parents
  - Tier IIIb (Non-essential): Spectators, vendors
- Unless allowed in sport specific regulations, teams/individuals that are unable to participate in postseason tournaments due to COVID-19 will not be replaced and their next opponent will receive a bye.
- NDHSAA awards ceremony procedures will be adjusted.
- NDHSAA will sponsor the traditional schedule of fine arts contests and determine declaration timelines for possible COVID-19 format changes should they be needed.

## Cleaning

CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

## References

### North Dakota K-12 Smart Restart Guidance:

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/sites/www/files/documents/Covid-19/NDK12restartguide.pdf>

### NFHS Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities:

[https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15\\_2020-final.pdf](https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf)

### CDC Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

## NDHSAA Guidelines and Recommendations

These NDHSAA Guidelines and Recommendations are provided to promote public awareness of certain health and safety-related issues. Such information is neither exhaustive nor necessarily applicable to all circumstances or individuals and is no substitute for consultation with appropriate health-care professionals. Statutes, codes or environmental conditions may be relevant. These NDHSAA Guidelines and Recommendations should be considered in conjunction with other pertinent materials when taking action or planning care.