

Mississippi High School Activities Association COVID-19 Return to Activity Guidelines

May 21, 2020

Resuming Activity June 1, 2020

The state of Mississippi and local municipalities are progressively decreasing restrictions on gatherings and business openings. With those changes in mind, MHSAA schools and communities are focusing on opportunities for a return to activity during the summer months.

It must be acknowledged that until a vaccine or effective treatment is developed, there is no way to completely eliminate the spread of COVID-19, including the possibility of fatal infection for at-risk individuals. All school administrators, coaches, parents/guardians and students must keep these facts in mind when making return to activity plans.

Local municipalities may put more stringent restrictions in place for crowd size and other preventative measures. Before organized at-school activity may resume, athletic directors and coaches must per these guidelines:

- ***Confirm with their school district administrators that a specific school facility is open and available for use by coaches and students***
- ***Be familiar with any local restrictions in place at the aforementioned facility***

We recognize this is an evolving situation and these recommendations should be viewed as a first step towards a full return to activity. Updated and additional recommendations will be forthcoming as new information develops over the next 4-6 weeks.

General Recommendations:

1. Summer activities should focus, in order, on acclimatization, reintroduction to high level exercise and training in sport-specific activities. All activity resumption must follow national, state, local and MHSAA Covid-19 guidelines. Please note these guidelines may be subject to frequent change. **It is the organizing coach's responsibility to monitor and follow these guidelines.**
2. No student shall be punished or restricted from participation in future and/or current activities due to non-participation in offseason activities as a result of parental/guardian restrictions or personal/medical reasons. School districts, athletic directors and coaches must recognize each student has different circumstances that may create an unreasonable risk for him or her to participate.

3. Distance or virtual workouts and summer development programs remain highly encouraged as this method continues to be the safest way to protect both students and staff during this time of transition.
4. Due to group size restrictions and individual risk factors precluding some athletes from participating at this time, we recommend delaying the resumption of team tryouts until the start of the 2020-21 school year. Tryouts must follow established MHSAA guidelines.

Screening and Care Plan

1. All facilities, both indoors and outdoors, should have highly visible signage stating common COVID-19 symptoms as information and reminders for coaches, students and parents/guardians. **Individuals should not be allowed to enter the facility or workout space if they meet any symptom or have a potential exposure.**
2. Coaches should regularly confirm the availability of access to hand-washing facilities, hand sanitizer and cleaning materials at these locations.
3. Each school must provide its athletic medical staff access to adequate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), including masks, gloves and face shields
4. Each school, working with its athletic medical staff or state/local medical personnel, should develop a response plan for ill and/or suspected COVID-19 student-athletes. A COVID-19 response plan should at minimum include:
 - a. Criteria for testing as well as community resources for testing and evaluation
 - b. Standard quarantine periods ***in the event of a symptomatic patient (with or without a positive test) or an asymptomatic patient with a positive test.*** It is recommended these quarantines follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) guidelines
 - c. These CDC and MSDH guidelines dictate a 14-day quarantine with at least 72 hours symptom-free before returning to activity in the case of a patient with a positive test
 - d. In the case of a person with a fever, a minimum of 72 hours restriction from activity with at least 24 hours of absence of fever is recommended before return to activity. If the athlete, coach or administrator has symptoms after 72 hours they should be retested for COVID-19
5. All coaches, students, athletics healthcare providers and other personnel ***should practice adequate hygiene, including frequent hand washing, frequent cleaning of surfaces and equipment and covering the mouth during coughs and sneezes***

Contact and Competition

1. All athletics and activities should be modified to encourage the reduction and elimination of physical contact.
2. Competition in athletics and activities between or among MHSAA member or non-member schools and/or teams is cancelled until school resumes in the fall.

Acclimatization period

It is recognized that many athletes have attempted to maintain fitness and conditioning during the period when schools were closed, yet lack of supervision and access to facilities may well hamper or prevent these efforts. Therefore, it is safest to assume all athletes returning after this extended layoff are completely deconditioned. Each of the common causes of athlete deaths have deconditioning as a known risk factor. To help lower those risks there is a need for a mandatory period to reacclimate athletes to activity. These guidelines are mandatory and apply to all sports and student activity populations.

1. Acclimatization to heat and transition back to exercise and workouts should occur over a 14-day period.
2. There should be no performance or conditioning testing prior to completing the 14-day acclimatization period
3. During this acclimatization period, the focus should remain on conditioning and returning to physical fitness. **No shared equipment, including balls, should be used without cleaning between use**
4. Days 1-7:
 - a. Athletes may not participate in more than one practice per day. Total practice time should not exceed 2 hours per day.
 - b. As a recommendation, intensity levels of activity should be reduced to 50% of the pre-COVID conditioning levels during the first 7 days.
5. Days 8-14:
 - a. Intensity level may increase to 75% the over the course of Days 8-14 with the intention of reaching full intensity level on Day 14. This includes weight room training and conditioning activities. Testing volume should also follow these reduced amounts.
 - b. Double practice days are allowed beginning on Day 7 **and must not be on consecutive days**. Sessions must be separated by at least three continuous hours in a cool environment. **Double practice times shall not exceed 3 hours total for the day**

6. Weight room training splits between muscle groups should include no more than 3 sessions per week with one to two days of recovery between sessions.
7. Additional and extended rest time between same-day session activities should be provided during this 14-day period.

Extra diligence should be applied to monitoring for exertional heat illness, exertional rhabdomyolysis (muscle breakdown) and cardiorespiratory failure during this return to activity phase due to the unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Cleaning

1. Principals, Athletic Directors and School Districts should ensure adequate supply of appropriate disinfectants are available. Disinfectants should be accessible in all shared athletic and activity spaces.
2. Hand sanitizing stations should be provided and highly visible in all shared athletic and activity spaces.
3. Athletes should be highly encouraged to use personal work out apparel and gear, which the athletes should take home to be laundered
4. If equipment must remain at school, no clothing or towels should be left in lockers overnight. Coaches and training staff must wash all clothing and towels before re-use, utilizing a disinfectant detergent
5. ***Sharing of water bottles, clothing and towels is prohibited.*** Student-athletes are encouraged to bring their own personal water bottle. In the event this does not happen, coaches and training staff should provide disposable cups or bottles that are not to be shared. If reusable bottles must be used, they must be limited to a single individual per session and they must be appropriately cleaned and disinfected after each practice.
6. Minimize shared equipment, including workout bars, balls, musical instruments and other gear. All exercise equipment, musical instruments and other gear must be cleaned with appropriate disinfectant between each individual use. ***Exercise and practice drills without the use of balls or other potentially shared equipment will remain highly recommended even after the 14-day acclimatization period is completed.***
7. Equipment must be spaced 6 feet apart to accommodate distancing guidelines.
8. All shared spaces and surfaces, including enclosed workout spaces, bathrooms, medical rooms and locker rooms must be fully cleaned with appropriate disinfectant prior to a new workout session.

9. All athletics coaches, activities directors and participants must thoroughly wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer prior to and after all training sessions. Frequent hand sanitization is encouraged during activity.

Masks

1. Masks must be worn appropriately for group gatherings and discussions, regardless of distancing.
2. They should not be worn while exercising, during workouts, or during drills due to concerns with airway restriction.

Facilities

1. To facilitate adequate spacing, outdoor activity and workouts are encouraged. The number of participants per workout session should follow current state and local guidelines, and therefore may vary by area or week. Individual spacing and equipment cleaning recommendations still apply to outdoor activity.
2. Indoor and outdoor activities must follow 6 foot spacing between participants at all times.
3. There is ongoing research about appropriate distancing with bodies in motion. Be mindful that these spacing recommendations may increase in distance spacing.

Athletic Training/Medical Coverage

1. Principals, athletic directors and school districts should verify athletic trainer coverage. Medical systems have been stressed and their prior coverage may not be available. Management of training room compliance may be the responsibility of the coaches and athletic director depending on athletic training coverage and employment status.
2. Principals, athletic directors and school districts should verify medical training (CPR and Sports First Aid) is up to date and complete in any recommended COVID-19 updates.
3. Training rooms should be managed to meet distancing guidelines and room occupancy limits.
4. Training rooms should have adequate disinfectants and clean between each individual use and daily use.

Summer Camps/Offseason Activities

1. All summer on-campus school programs and team camps should adhere to national, state and local COVID-19 recommendations
2. All summer on-campus programs and team camps should follow all other recommendations from the MHSAA and the Mississippi State Department of Health pertaining to sanitation, sharing equipment, distancing, non-participation and social distancing
3. School athletics and activities participation in and travel to off-campus summer programs and/or team camps are not allowed

Group Size/Practices

1. All gatherings must follow current state and local guidelines for group size, taking into account both students and coaches. Outdoor workouts are recommended.
2. When indoor workouts are required, for any reason, current state and local gathering guidelines must be followed.
3. Coaches are encouraged to split sports into smaller groups at different time intervals to meet gathering size guidelines.

Updates

1. These guidelines may be updated as further information becomes available
2. Additional information and best practices will be shared at [misshsaa.com](https://www.misshsaa.com) as the 2020-21 school year approaches