



The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference
COVID Mitigating Strategies Review with DPH
September 11, 2020

The CIAC has been at the forefront of providing the safest interscholastic athletic experiences possible throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As early as March 4th, the CIAC reached out to DPH for consultation on the coronavirus as it was considering actions to cancel winter tournaments. While schools in Connecticut moved to full distance learning, the CIAC continued its work to prepare for a safe return to athletics in the summer and fall. On April 16th, the CIAC again reached out to DPH inquiring about many aspects of reopening strategies and potential considerations for the fall 2020 season. Understandably, there was not much information provided at that time. However, the CIAC continued to research best practices for return to play protocols with its medical and sport experts. The CIAC's Resocialization to Interscholastic Athletics and Activities Programs document was developed based on that research.

CIAC member schools began engaging their student-athletes in structured conditioning activities on July 6th. These activities were guided by CIAC's COVID mitigating protocols. On July 9, the CIAC held its first meeting of the CIAC Fall Sport Committee which was comprised of a diverse professional group that included the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee; the Connecticut Athletic Trainer's Association (CATA); the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE); the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS); the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD); and the Connecticut High School Coaches Association (CHSCA), principals, officials, and legislators. Development of CIAC's Official Fall Sports Plan, which was approved by the CIAC Board of Control on April 30th, included review and consultation from the ReOpen CT Rules Committee on July 24th and DPH staff, including an infectious disease MD, on July 28th. The CIAC Official Fall Sports Plan and the CIAC's Resocialization to Interscholastic Athletics and Activities Programs documents collectively provide significant COVID mitigating strategies for all sports.

[Key Understandings and Education Provided by CIAC's Resocialization Document \(A full version of the document can be found at <https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/CIACResocializationofAthleticsGuidanceUpdated6-29-2020.pdf>](https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/CIACResocializationofAthleticsGuidanceUpdated6-29-2020.pdf)

CAS-CIAC Position on Resocialization

CAS-CIAC believes that is essential to the physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being of Connecticut students/youth to safely re-engage in extracurricular experiences, physical activity, and athletic competition. Returning to play does not mean a return to "normal". While re-socializing to activity we are still responsible for doing our part in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Any consideration of returning to physical activity and athletic competition must adhere to all requirements set forth under the executive orders of Governor Lamont, account for the health and safety of all participants, and equitably provide opportunities for all Connecticut student/youth-athletes.

Interscholastic/Youth Sports and COVID-19

Consideration of a safe return to interscholastic/youth sports must be with an understanding that COVID-19 is born out of a global health pandemic. This is a health issue, not a sport issue, nor an education issue. Sports have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and our student/youth-athletes significantly affected. However, it is our primary responsibility to provide safe physical activity that does

not contribute to the spread of COVID-19. A safe return to interscholastic/youth activity requires a gradual phase-in approach that accounts for participant and community safety.

Deconditioning/Regression

The sudden closure of school and recreational activities left student/youth-athletes without structured physical activity since mid-March. A safe return to interscholastic/youth athletic experiences must account for the deconditioning which may have occurred during this prolonged departure from normal physical conditioning and skill development. Prolonged inactivity can result in decreased cardiovascular function, decreased pulmonary function, muscle atrophy, and skill regression.

In addition, acclimation to the environment should be considered. The last time student/youth-athletes engaged in structured physical activity was during the cool weather month of March. Traditionally, student/youth-athletes progressively acclimate to physical activity in warmer weather over the months of April, May, and June. Returning to game play scenarios in late June or early July without a structured re-conditioning program could be dangerous for our young athletes. Now, perhaps more than ever, the likelihood for overuse injuries due to significant de-conditioning is high.

Face Coverings

In accordance with CDC guidance, “face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease).” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) “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 CIAC, in collaboration with the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee, recommends:

- i. Cloth or disposable face coverings should be worn throughout each phase when not engaging in vigorous activity, such as when 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.
- iii. Face coverings should not be worn when engaging in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic workouts, distance running, or swimming.
- iv. Plastic shields covering the entire face (or attached to a helmet) shall not be allowed during contests. Their use during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates. (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)
- v. Coaches, officials and other contest 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)

COVID-19 Advisory Committee

CAS-CIAC recommends the establishment of a COVID-19 advisory committee within each school/organization which would meet regularly before and during each athletic season. The purpose of such committees would be to maintain constant communication among leadership, address concerns as they arise, and stay informed on COVID-19 best practices around athletics. Recommended members include school physician, athletic trainer, school nurse, athletic director, one coach (appointed by the athletic director, building principal (or designee), and superintendent (or designee). (See Appendix I)

Health Screening

All staff and students are required to self-screen for any observable illness, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. (Rules for Operating Summer Schools during COVID-19, 2020) The coach or activity supervisor must verify that each participant has self-screened, upon arrival. The screening form in Appendix I is a sample checklist that may be used by coaches/activity supervisors to maintain a record of participants self-screening for potential symptoms.

Testing and Contact Tracing

As student/youth-athletes return to physical activity, a system of contact tracing and notification should be established in the event that a participant tests positive for COVID-19. In the event that a student/youth athlete discloses that he/she has tested positive for COVID-19, administration and the local department of health should be immediately notified.

Conduct of Conditioning, Practice Sessions, and Contests

CAS-CIAC guidelines for a resocialization to interscholastic athletics and activities programs align with guidance published by Governor Lamont's Reopen CT committee on youth sports (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Aug-14-updates/CTReopens_Sports_FitnessCenters814.pdf) and the NFHS (NFHS phases are in accordance with guidelines published by the White House and CDC available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>).

Categorization of Sports by Potential Risk Infection (Adopted from 2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities; which modified from United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee – Sports Medicine recommendations.)

- Lower Risk: Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.
 - Examples: Individual running events, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus), individual swimming, golf, weightlifting, alpine skiing, sideline cheer, single sculling, cross country running (with staggered starts).
- Moderate Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.
 - Examples: Volleyball*, baseball*, softball*, soccer, water polo, gymnastics* (if equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), ice hockey, field hockey, tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, girls lacrosse, crew with two or more rowers in shell, 7 on 7 football.

*Could potentially be considered “Lower Risk” with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants.

- Higher Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.
 - Examples: Wrestling, football, basketball, boys lacrosse, competitive cheer, dance.

Transportation

“Schools must consider social distancing requirements when scheduling contests and events for the fall. Social distancing (as required by state or local health department) will need to be maintained during transportation.” (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020) Due to concerns of transportation availability, the CIAC will work with member leagues to consider options that would reduce the strain on busing and cost of transportation. Option may include, but are not limited to, regional play, reduced game scheduled, weekend jamborees, sub-varsity jamborees, parent transportation, etc.

Key COVID Mitigating Strategies Provided In the CIAC’s Official Fall Sports Plan (Reviewed with the ReOpen CT Rules Committee on July 24 and further discussed with DPH on July 28th.)

A major theme of the CIAC’s fall sports plan that it is a fluid document that is frequently updated to reflect the most recent guidance, data, health metrics and sport specific information. The CIAC’s plan is designed to provide a structured progression from low risk small cohort activities, to moderate risk full team activities, to higher risk game competition for teams that ready to play.

COVID health metrics and data in Connecticut will continue to be closely monitored and the appropriateness of holding youth sport and/or interscholastic athletic contests can change at any time. The CIAC will continue to consult with our stakeholders and will adjust offerings as appropriate, including the stop of interscholastic athletics, should the health metrics direct that action. If a student tests positive for COVID 19, the school/district must be notified immediately and local DPH must be contacted. The local DPH will direct the appropriate process. Schools can refer to the guidance and protocols issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education and State Department of Public Health for responding to specific COVID scenarios that may occur with school reopening for the 2020-2021 school year. That guidance and protocols can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/Addendum-5-Interim-Guidance-for-Responding-to-COVID-19-Scenarios-in-CT-School-Districts.pdf>

Based on DPH recommendations to allow schools to return to campus for two weeks before beginning play, all conditioning workouts and non-contact sport specific skill work will remain in cohorts of 10 to September 21, 2020. Due to the variety of school start dates, September 21, 2020 was selected as a two-week period after Labor Day. Additionally, the first date of contests will be October 1, 2020. This will allow schools to be on campus for approximately one month prior to beginning regional competition.

A critical understanding in returning to interscholastic competition is the deconditioning which many of our student-athletes have experienced due to the lack of structured physical activity since March. While many teams have been able to successfully engage students in conditioning, *a number of schools have not been able to afford that opportunity*. As such, a three-week conditioning period is prescribed at the

beginning of each sport season. This progression is designed to provide equitable conditioning time for all schools across Connecticut and ensure a safe return to sport activity for all student-athletes.

The following schedule identifies start dates and contest dates for each fall sport.

A list of CIAC staff responsible for fall sport committees can be found in the CIAC handbook

(https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/ciachandbook_2021.pdf).

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Cross Country	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	6-Nov	Nov 7-14
Field Hockey	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Football	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	6	1	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Soccer	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Swimming	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Volleyball	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21

The use of any equipment throughout conditioning and the fall season must be maintained and sanitized in accordance with the ReOpen CT sector rules for sport: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Aug-14-updates/CTreopens_Sports_FitnessCenters814.pdf

Regional Schedules: All contests will be scheduled regionally to limit transportation needs and maintain play within a geographic region to reduce COVID spread across the state. The CIAC will work with league commissioners to establish as much play within a league as possible. There will be outlier schools who are more regionally located to schools from other conferences. The CIAC will support our leagues and individual schools to develop a balanced regional schedule that provides students with an exceptional education-based athletic experience. The CIAC regions for each sport can viewed at <https://www.casciac.org/fallregions/>.

Individual Sport Mitigating Strategies

Cross Country – The following link contains specific COVID mitigating strategies for cross country: <https://www.casciac.org/tp/xc.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 30: Cross country coaches should design a 3-week conditioning progression that places runners in small cohorts that can maintain 6 feet of social distancing while training.

Oct 1 – Nov 6: Athletes will begin competing in races on October 1, 2020. Coaches should continue to monitor the conditioning progression of their athletes and only enter them into races when they are prepared to run.

Swimming – The following link contains specific COVID mitigating strategies for swimming:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gswim.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 30: Swim coaches should design a 3-week conditioning progression that places swimmers in small cohorts that can maintain 6 feet of social distancing while training.

Oct. 1 – Nov 21: Athletes will begin competing in meets on Oct. 1. Coaches should continue to monitor the conditioning progression of their athletes and only enter them into meets when they are prepared to swim the distance of their event.

Field Hockey – The following link contains specific COVID mitigating strategies for field hockey:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gfh.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 20 (Cohorts of 10) 1-hour practice comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Cohorts of 10) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Full Team) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. In field hockey, skill work should be done in small groups with a short field (i.e. 3v3, 5v5, 7v7). Full field skill work or set play practice should be conducted with the understanding that athletes are still building their conditioning capacity. Playing time for athletes at game speed during the scrimmage should be managed to reflect the completion of a 3-week conditioning progression.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 games may be played.

Soccer – The following link contains specific COVID mitigating strategies for soccer:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/soc.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 20 (Cohorts of 10) 1-hour practice comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Cohorts of 10) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Full Team) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. In soccer, skill work should be done in small groups with a short field (i.e. 3v3, 5v5, 7v7). Full field skill work or set play practice should be conducted with the understanding that athletes are still building their conditioning capacity. In volleyball, while the activity is anaerobic, skill work should still be conducted in a manner that reflects a progression to full speed play. Playing time for athletes at game speed during the scrimmage should be managed to reflect the completion of a 3-week conditioning progression.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 games may be played.

Volleyball – The following link contains specific COVID mitigating strategies for volleyball:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gvb.pdf>

In addition to the mitigating strategies originally presented, the CIAC added the following strategy on August 28, 2020:

The CIAC understands DPH’s qualitative reason for limiting indoor moderate risk sports, volleyball, to be the potential spread of COVID through air droplets resulting from the forceful level of verbal communication among players. In its letter on August 23, 2020, the DPH indicated that gyms may be used for practice activities in compliance with the DECD sector rules. As such, with approval and guidance from CIAC’s medical experts, DPH consideration was sought for the play of indoor volleyball where all participants wear masks as a mitigating strategy that addresses the concern of indoor moderate risk sports.

The DPH has cited the NFHS guidance on multiple occasions. The CIAC believes this mitigating strategy aligns the NFHS May 2020 guidance that states volleyball could potentially be considered “Lower Risk” with use of masks by participants. This strategy further aligns with updated information provided to the CIAC by the NFHS. On August 27, 2020 the NFHS communicated that, “The phase-in approach suggested in the NFHS Guidance has been followed by state associations; small cohorts in conditioning, then moderate risk practice and scrimmage situations; then games between teams that are ready.” Further, the NFHS stated, “State decisions are very aligned with COVID metrics... it seems that Connecticut’s metrics are excellent.”

The CIAC believes that wearing masks while playing volleyball mitigates DPH’s concern of indoor moderate risk sports and aligns with NFHS guidance. Additionally, the CIAC believes this strategy aligns with guidance issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education on August 14, 2020 in Addendum 7 which identifies the use of a gym in consideration for general music, choral, and instrumental instruction. The CIAC believes that DPH’s concern of spreading air droplets via forceful verbal communication would also apply to the playing of musical instruments. If the use of face coverings, as required by Addendum 7, mitigates the risk of instructional activities in a gymnasium, the CIAC believes application of that same mitigating strategy to athletics would apply.

Aug 29 – Sept 20 (Cohorts of 10) 1-hour practice comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Cohorts of 10) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Sept 30 (Full Team) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. In field hockey and soccer, skill work should be done in small groups with a short field (i.e. 3v3, 5v5, 7v7). Full field skill work or set play practice should be conducted with the understanding that athletes are still building their conditioning capacity. In volleyball, while the activity is anaerobic, skill work should still be conducted in a manner that reflects a progression to full speed play. In field hockey,

soccer, and volleyball a full team scrimmage may be scheduled beginning September 18th. Playing time for athletes at game speed during the scrimmage should be managed to reflect the completion of a 3-week conditioning progression.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 games may be played.

Football

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Football	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	6	1	7-Nov	Nov 7-21

While moving forward with the intent to play 11 v 11 football at this time, that decision is subject to change based on changing COVID metrics, additional conversations with DPH, and alignment between recommendations for interscholastic athletics and non-interscholastic sports.

August 29 – Sept 13 (Cohorts of 10) 1-hour practices comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc. While teams are permitted to pass out equipment such as helmets and shoulder pads to begin the heat acclimatization process, schools may elect to delay equipment distribution until necessary due to the significant COVID sanitizing measures required to complete this process.

Sept 14 – Sept 21 (Cohorts of 10) 60-minute practice comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work can involve 15 minutes of contact intended to demonstrate and teach talking and blocking progressions. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – 30 (Full Team) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. Skill work can involve 30 minutes of contact intended to demonstrate and teach tackling and blocking progressions. The remaining 60 minutes of skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc. A full contact scrimmage may take place as of Sept 26.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 Full team 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes’ conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis. Full contact should be limited to the time necessary to teach appropriate tackling and skill specific technique, but in any case, may not exceed 10 minutes per day per athlete.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 games may be played.



2020 Football Rules Considerations

In support of the NFHS Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities, the NFHS Football Editorial Committee offers this document for state associations to consider whether any possible rules could be altered for the 2020 football season. The considerations outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Return to Competition

1. **FOOTBALL RULES CONSIDERATIONS**

- **TEAM BOX (Rule 1-2-3g)**
 - The team box may be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard lines (for players only) in order for more social-distancing space for the teams.
 - Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while in the team box.
 - Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment.
 -
- **BALL (Rule 1-3-2)**
 - The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer.
 - The ball holders should maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times during the contest.
- **FACE MASKS [Rules 1-5-1a, 1-5-3c(4)]**
 - Cloth face coverings are permissible.
 - Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.
- **TOOTH AND MOUTH PROTECTORS [Rule 1-5-1d(5)]**
 - **Still being determined at this time on how to best handle the tooth and mouth protector during the contest. The NFHS SMAC will update the membership as soon as guidance is developed for all sports that require a tooth and mouth protector.
- **GLOVES (Rule 1-5-2b)**
 - Gloves are permissible but still must comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the NOCSAE Standard or the SFIA Specification.
- **STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS (Rule 1-7)**
 - Each state association may adopt other playing/administrative rules for football for the 2020 season that would decrease exposure to respiratory droplets and COVID-19.
- **CHARGED TIME-OUTS AND AUTHORIZED CONFERENCES (Rules 2-6-2, 3-5-3, 3-5-8)**
 - A single charged time-out may be extended to a maximum of two minutes in length.

- The authorized conference for the charged time-out should take place between the 9-yard marks and not at the sideline for social-distancing purposes. (It would be permissible for more than one coach to be involved in this conference and for technology to be used.)
- Each game official and player should have their own beverage container brought out to them on the field.
- **INTERMISSION BETWEEN PERIODS AND AFTER SCORING (Rule 3-5-7I)**
 - The intermission may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick.

2. FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **GAME OFFICIALS UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT**
 - Electronic whistles are permissible (supplies are limited).
 - Choose a whistle whose tone will carry outside.
 - Fox 40 Mini –
 - Fox 40 Unisex Electronic – (3 tone) –
 - Ergo-Guard - (3 tone) – orange
 - Windsor - (3 tone)
 - Check the market for other choices
 - Cloth face coverings are permissible.
 - Gloves are permissible.
 - Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment.
- **PREGAME CONFERENCE, COIN TOSS AND OVERTIME PROCEDURES**
 - For the coin toss, limit attendees to the referee, umpire and one designated representative from each team.
 - Coin toss should take place in the center of the field with designated individuals maintaining social distancing of 6 feet.
 - No handshakes prior to and following the coin toss.
 - Maintain social distancing of 6 feet while performing all pregame responsibilities with all officiating crew members, game administration staff, line-to-gain crew, clock operators, individuals handling the balls during the game and team personnel.
 - For the overtime procedure, please use the same procedure as used at the start of the contest for the coin toss.

3. PRE AND POST GAME CONSIDERATIONS

- Suspend pregame protocol of shaking hands during introductions.
- Suspend postgame protocol of shaking hands.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOTBALL

- Before, during and after the contest, players, coaches, game officials, team personnel and game administration officials should wash and sanitize their hands as often as possible.

- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while on the sidelines and on the field of play when possible.
- Everyone should have their own beverage container that is not shared.
- Cloth face coverings are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Try and limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on the field level throughout the contest.
- If available, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use social-distancing protocols and should be properly cleaned and sanitized prior to their arrival.

****Final as of June 19, 2020**

Additional COVID Mitigating Strategies (Applies to All Sports)

Spectator/Fan Attendance – As an education-based experience, CIAC sports must consider the primary goal of maximizing on-campus learning for all students. Sport complexes and recreation athletic facilities are primarily utilized for sport contests. Conversely, school facilities are used as instructional areas when games are not being played. Due to the variety of fields used for interscholastic athletic competition, it is difficult to develop a one size fits all regulation. **The CIAC position on fan/spectator attendance is that fans should not be allowed at interscholastic contests or practices.** We understand the complexities of individual districts who use public fields and that the ultimate decision rests with the district, however, the CIAC believes that prohibiting fan/spectator attendance aligns best with the goals of education-based athletics. Any allowance for spectators/fans should provide well marked areas that maintain social distancing and follow capacity guidelines established in Connecticut’s Phase 2 reopening plan (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Phase-2/0723Sports_FitnessCenters-C2_V5.pdf) and current CDC guidance. The CIAC supports the plans established by school districts that direct the presence of adults on campus at this time. Notwithstanding the above, permissible spectator/fan attendance will be governed by local districts’ current operating plan.

Gathering Limitations – During practice/conditioning, athletes should remain grouped in smaller cohorts for purposes of spread mitigation and contact tracing strategy. Competition schedules should be scheduled within a region to mitigate potential spread and maximize contact tracing capability. When not directly participating in practices or contests, care should be taken to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for athletes and coaches. Vulnerable individuals should not supervise or participate in any workouts.

Facilities - Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities. 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, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.). Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place. Consider strategies to prevent groups from gathering at entrances/exits to facilities to limit crossover and contact, including staggering starting/ending times.

Screening - All staff and students are required to self-screen for any observable illness, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The coach or activity supervisor must confirm self-screening by all activity participants, upon arrival. Records of self-screening for each person should be recorded and stored (see sample Appendix I). Officials, medical staff, and media should self-screen prior to attending an event. Any person with COVID symptoms must notify school personnel, be removed from participation, self-isolate, and contact their primary care provider or other health-care professional.

Face Coverings – In accordance with CDC guidance, “face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease).” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) “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 CIAC, in collaboration with the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee, recommends:

- i. Cloth or disposable face coverings, approved by local DPHs and school districts, should be worn when not engaging in vigorous activity, such as when sitting on the bench, during chalk talk, interacting with an athletic trainer, etc.
- ii. Face coverings should not be worn when engaging in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic workouts, distance running, or swimming.
- iii. Plastic shields covering the entire face (or attached to a helmet) must be approved by CIAC. (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)
- iv. Officials should wear face coverings whenever possible.
- v. Coaches and other contest personnel must 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)

Hygiene Practices - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces. Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place. Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow. Avoid touching your face. Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces. Athletes must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home. There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing, or shoes between students. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible. Athletes should take their equipment home with them and disinfect that equipment each night. Athletes should arrive at practice and games prepared to participate without the need to use a locker room, to the extent possible.

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

Weight Rooms - Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment. Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered. Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces. 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.

Locker Rooms – Locker rooms should be used as little as possible. Sanitation of locker rooms should follow CDC guideline (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>). Ventilation in locker rooms is critical to providing a safe environment. Schools should explore efforts that may increase ventilation and decrease exposure to wet environments in locker room settings. When locker rooms are used, consideration of greater social distance (12 feet) should be applied. To minimize exposure, a schedule should be developed when locker rooms are used. When students must use a locker room to change for a practice or game, supervision should be provided to ensure social distancing is maintained and masks are worn. Capacity limits of locker rooms should be established to limit the number of athletes using a facility at any one time and to optimize social distancing.

Indoor sports such as volleyball and swimming should encourage visiting teams to arrive in uniform to limit the use of locker rooms. However, a designated bathroom or locker room should be provided for the visiting team. Schools should follow CDC sanitation guidelines to clean that designated area after the contest.

Athletic Training Rooms – Athletic training rooms are essential to providing care to our student-athletes. Athletic trainers will work with athletic directors to establish protocols for the training room, including a schedule for visits by athletes.

Preparticipation Physical Exams - In accordance with CIAC bylaws, sport physicals are valid for 13 months. In collaborating with the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee, we feel it is appropriate to extend the validation of physicals to 15-months for fall sport athletes only, due to the high demand of medical appointments. Yearly sport physicals to assess injury risk and receive health guidance from doctors are critically important. Again, the coronavirus is a health pandemic and students should receive a physical within the 13-month standard when possible.

COVID-19 Advisory Committee - CAS-CIAC recommends the establishment of a COVID-19 advisory committee within each school/organization which would meet regularly before and during each athletic season. The purpose of such committees would be to maintain constant communication among leadership, address concerns as they arise, and stay informed on COVID-19 best practices around athletics. Recommended members include school physician, athletic trainer, school nurse, athletic director, one coach (appointed by the athletic director, building principal (or designee), and superintendent (or designee). (See Appendix I)

Contact Tracing - As student/youth-athletes return to physical activity, a system of contact tracing and notification should be established in the event that a participant tests positive for COVID-19. In the event that a student/youth athlete tests positive for COVID-19, administration and the local department of health must be immediately notified. The school, athletic team, and student(s) must follow the direction of the local department of health.

Transportation - “Schools must consider social distancing requirements when scheduling contests and events for the fall. Social distancing (as required by state or local health department) will need to be maintained during transportation (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)” and should follow transportation guidelines issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education (<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>) and established by local school districts. The CIAC believes that regional play and modified sub-varsity experiences will assist in elevating some transportation issues and make it more feasible for parents to transport their child.

Game Officials – The CIAC has suspended the regulation of providing a room for officials for the fall season. Officials should come contests dressed for contests, whenever possible.

Appendix I

COVID-19 Advisory Committee

Building Principal (or designee):

School Physician:

Athletic Trainer:

Superintendent (or designee):

Athletic Director:

School Nurse:

Coach:

Additional COVID Mitigating Strategies Presented at 9/11/2020 Meeting

Minimizing Droplet Spread during play

1. Players will wear a grill mask or face shield on their helmets during play. Coaches will wear tightly fitting cloth masks. Coaches and players will wear tightly fitting masks at all time when not engaged in contact activities.



2. Each player will have a designated 'station' where they will keep their own personal water, sanitizer and equipment required for play. Stations will be appropriately socially distanced and will remain for that player throughout the game.
3. The sideline box for coaches and players will be extended to the 10-yard line to provide additional room for social distancing for players not on the field (this was previously reviewed in the NFHS document).
4. Mouthguards are to remain in the mouth for the duration of the time that a player is on the field. The use of masks provides an added benefit as they will help to ensure that this occurs. Players may remove their mouthguards and masks in their designated station and are required to use sanitizer for their hands/gloves after replacing. The mouthguard protocol is assumed to be expected for all sports that require or have common use of mouthguards, such as soccer, field hockey, etc.
5. The maximum number of coaches on the sidelines will be 10 and the maximum number of players allowed will be 45. These numbers must be reduced if adequate spacing of at least 6 feet cannot be provided on the sideline.
6. Huddles will be set further back and require approximately 3 feet between each player, minimized, or eliminated. To compensate for this, additional time will be allowed in between plays to enable coach-to-player and player-to-player communication. 'No huddle' offenses are common among many teams and while not compulsory today, can be instituted for the 2020 season.
7. During the coin toss at the start of play or for overtime, only one captain from each team and 1 referee will be allowed to join this ritual. The coin toss will take place with all parties 6ft apart, at minimum.
8. Everyone but QB will be encouraged to wear receiver gloves that will be sprayed with disinfectant at start of the 1st and 3rd Quarter.
9. School monitors to clear stadium immediately after a game.
10. If media is allowed, post-game guidelines will be set regarding interviews.
11. Leagues will hold a weekly meeting with its AD and/or coaches to review adherence to all strategies and discuss potential improvements.

Player Return After Testing Positive

If a player tests positive for COVID, in addition to the procedures outlined in the State Department of Education Addendum 5, a player must receive medical clearance from a physician to return. This is a precautionary step due to unknown effects of COVID recovery. It is likely that student-athlete who tests positive for COVID during a season, may not return to activity in that season.

Alternative Low to Moderate Risk Football Activities Under Consideration

The following alternative low to moderate risk football activities were developed by the Ledyard High School athletic director and the Eastern Connecticut Conference.

ECC Alternative Football (2020)

- All teams that declare they will participate will begin a contest schedule on Friday September 25. All contests will be played on Fridays. Lineman Challenges will begin at 4:30pm at host site while skill contests will begin at 6:00pm. Saturday times at discretion of host site for teams without lights. We will remain regionalized for scheduling purposes. Football equipment (ex: helmets, shoulder pads) **will not** be worn. Attire is cleats, shorts or sweatpants, jersey. All participants must wear a facial covering. All ECC policies and protocols will remain in place. If both teams scheduled to play each other wish to schedule a second contest that week (due to maximum number of 40 players), they can do so at their convenience (ex: Thursday or Saturday).
- Contests involving both the lineman challenge and skill contests will be scheduled on September 25, October 2, October 9, October 16 and October 23. (*Saturday morning or Thursday afternoon for those schools hosting without lights*)
- Potential for a Skill Shoot Out, Lineman Combine and Senior Showcase on October 30/31 (TBA)

Lineman Challenge Activities

- Tug of War (OL/DL)
- Move the Mountain (OL/DL)
- 1 man sled Drive (time/distance) (OL)
- 5 man sled Drive (time/distance) (OL)
- Long Trap Drill (time) (OL)
- Seal Block (time) (OL)
- Kick Slide Drill (time) (OL)
- Figure 8's (time) (DL)
- Pursuit Drill (time) (DL)
- Heavy Bag Carry (individual and team) for (time/distance) (OL/DL)
- Tire Flip (individual and team) for (time/distance) (OL/DL)
- Agile bags or obstacle course (individual/team) for time (OL/DL)

Skill Contests will involve:

- Coin Flip to begin the contest
- Contests will be played on a full 100 yard regulation football field

- Kickoffs (kicker only) to begin contest. Receiving team will be allowed two (2) returners to catch the ball. Ball will be placed 10 yards from the catch or from controlled possession by the receiving team.
- Each team will be allowed seven (7) players per side (offense will have a center, QB, and 5 eligible receivers). Defense will utilize seven (7) players as they see fit. Defensive players must line up at a minimum of 3 yards off the ball and a maximum of 12 yards off the ball.
- 4 downs to get 10 yards
- No running plays are allowed
- 1 hand touch to end the offensive play
- QB has 4 seconds to release ball (time will be counted off by official)
- Teams may punt on 4th down (long snapper and punter only for offense). Defense will put back two (2) returners for a fair catch. Ball spotted at catch point or at spot of controlled possession
- Teams will kick PAT's after a touchdown (short snapper, holder and place kicker) uncontested from the 3 yard line or go for 2 point conversion from the 5 yard line
- Kickoffs will occur after each score as well as to begin the contest
- Each contest will consist of 4 periods of 25 minutes running time per period. There will be a 2 min break between each period

Host sites will hire ECFO officials (3 per site), provide a chain gang, line the field appropriately and have all necessary field markers for the contests. Scoreboard should be in operation for the skill contest. Rosters with participants names, jersey numbers as well as a PA announcer are highly recommended for the skill contests. The combined contests should not exceed 3.5 hours.

Considerations for DPH Support in Football

- The DPH and CIAC recognize that full contact football is a high-risk sport. The DPH recognizes that the CIAC's plan to play high-risk full contact football includes COVID mitigating modifications and strategies that seek to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets.
- The DPH supports the CIAC's plan to recommend low to moderate risk football skill experiences as an alternative fall experience for districts that choose not to play full contact football in accordance with their local public health department.
- The DPH recognizes that CIAC's plan is structured to progress from lower risk activities, to moderate risk activities, to higher risk activities based on continuous evaluation of CT COVID data. The CIAC has a proven track record, as evidenced in March 2020, to immediately stop any and all interscholastic athletic events when COVID science informs such decisions.

DPH has consistently cited NFHS guidance in its recommendations. The following email from NFHS Executive Director, Dr. Karissa Niehoff that clarifies her federation's guidance informs CIAC's request for DPH support:

NFHS Guidance

Karissa Niehoff

Aug 27,
2020, 5:28
PM

to me

Good evening Glenn,

I hope this email finds you well. As you know, we have been in touch with multiple media representatives regarding return to activity decisions in state associations. I had a conversation with someone this week regarding Connecticut's consideration of 7v7 football vs. 11-player football, the NFHS Guidance document that was released months ago, and what was happening in other states.

In the event that you are contacted by folks asking similar questions, this is a summary of the information I have shared most recently:

-The NFHS Guidance for Returning To Activity document that was shared with state associations **suggested** three tiers of "risk" and examples of sports that might be placed in each category. 7 v 7 football was listed as an example in the "moderate risk" category. **The NFHS was not suggesting that states should play 7v7 football instead of 11-player football.** It was only listed an example of an activity that occurs in some states at the high school level. **The NFHS does not write rules for 7v7 football, and there are no NFHS member state championships for 7v7 football. No other state association is playing 7v7 football as a championship program.**

-There have been no state cancellations of any sport for the 20-21 school year. 37 states have made modifications to their sport schedules; 17 have moved football to the spring; 14 have made no modifications.

-The phase-in approach suggested in the NFHS Guidance has been followed by state associations; small cohorts in conditioning, then moderate risk practice and scrimmage situations; then games between teams that are ready.

-Multiple states have staged interscholastic contests in football with precautionary measures in place. Reports to us thus far have been positive.

-State decisions are very aligned with COVID metrics. (Glenn, it seems that Connecticut's metrics are excellent- fingers crossed that they remain low or non-existent!)

I wish Connecticut and the CIAC well. Let's stay in touch-

Karissa

Karissa Niehoff, EdD

Executive Director

National Federation of State High School Associations

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CIAC's Questions for DPH

- Is there any scientific research that suggests sports causes a person to obtain COVID-19?
- When the State Department of Health makes a recommendation, are local health departments expected to follow that recommendation, or do they have autonomy to determine what is appropriate in their regions?
- What are DPH's suggestions and/or recommendations to further mitigate the spread of respiratory droplets during athletic activities.
- DPH has suggested that football be rescheduled to the spring. What is DPH's definition of spring (time of year)? What is DPH's expectation for CT COVID metrics at the time versus now? Has DPH considered potential injury risk to athletes associated with outdoor field and playing conditions, if football is moved to early 2021?
- Have other private sport associations provided DPH with COVID mitigating strategies and/or modifications that allows them to play high risk sports in CT now, both indoors and outdoors? (If so, this would assist the CIAC in learning from our sport colleagues who are successfully playing high risk sports.)
- As requested in our August 28th letter, does DPH support the mitigating strategy of volleyball players wearing a mask to reduce respiratory spread as a modification that reclassifies that sport to low risk, in accordance with NFHS guidance?