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Revised 01/04/22

# **Rhode Island Interscholastic League Covid Information & Guidance 2021-2022**



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# **Return to Education-Based Athletics Practices and Competition**

## **General Safety Guidelines**

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL) has continuously worked in conjunction with the Governor's Task Force, the Rhode Island Departments of Health and Education, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, and other state leaders to plan and prepare for a safe return to education-based athletics. As science, data and health metrics continue to evolve, changes and/or addendums will be made accordingly.

### **OVERVIEW:**

- Drawing on the expertise of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), Department of Education (RIDE), Department of Health (RIDOH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and RIIL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC), the RIIL offers this document as guidance on how RIIL member schools may consider approaching the "Return to Play" for high school athletics in RI.
- While we all remain concerned about the dangers of COVID-19, RIIL believes it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of high school students across the state that efforts be made to return to physical activity and athletic competition where that can occur in a reasonably safe environment. With that goal in mind, RIIL offers these Guidelines for the 2020-2021 school year on "Return to Competition"
- The Guidelines outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure of COVID-19 to a degree that competition can occur. As we continue to gain more information about the virus and receive continued feedback from the Governor's Office, Department of Health, and Department of Education, these documents may be adjusted or even suspended to adapt to an ever-changing environment.
- The RIIL is committed to maximizing the athletic opportunities for student-athletes across the state and will remain flexible in considering that certain sports may be impacted differently. Based on currently known information, the RIIL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee believes that STRICT ADHERENCE by schools and teams to their school-adopted plans and the Governor's School Sports Guidance should provide a reasonably safe environment for student-athletes to participate in interscholastic athletics as currently scheduled.
- Participation in High School sports is voluntary for both the individuals and the schools.

***Protect Yourself, Protect Others, Protect the Season***

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## **RIIL SPORTS MEDICINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROTOCOLS**

### **Social Distancing**

- Social distancing in all venues must be encouraged at all times in accordance with current State Requirements.
- Consider spacing in all indoor venues on-campus.
- Student athletes must observe current social distance requirements in the bench area

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

- When possible, athletes should not share gear and instead use their own personal equipment.
- Each athlete should have his/her own personal defined hydration container that is never to be shared.
- Masks should be worn in accordance with all School District, CDC, and RIDOH guidelines.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available throughout the facility by the school for use before, during, and after workouts, practices and games.

### **Pre-participation Exams**

- All athletes should have a current pre-participation physical on file
- The most recent medical evidence recommends consideration of cardiac testing if a student athlete has previously tested positive for COVID-19. This should be discussed with the school physician on a case-by-case basis.

### **Return to Play (RTP) Procedures After COVID-19 Infection**

- Member Schools should consult their School Physician regarding return to play protocols between asymptomatic and symptomatic cases.
- The RIIL Member Schools should follow the Return-to-Play guidance provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics found here:
  - <https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-interim-guidance-return-to-sports/>

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## **RIIL GUIDANCE FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS**

### **GENERAL FOR ALL SPORTS:**

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Schools are recommended to ensure that your facilities have been properly sanitized and have hand sanitizer and disposable masks readily available for practices and contests.
- Personal Items – It is recommended that each athlete bring their own bag for personal items. All personal items should remain in the bag when not in use. Bags should be placed in a predetermined area six feet apart for the duration of practice or game.
- Indoor or Outdoor team sports may need to extend bench areas to permit social distancing. Indoor sports may need to use bleachers or multiple levels of seating to ensure social distancing. Schools should consider using cones, paint, or tape as a guide for students and coaches.

### **INFORMATION FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES:**

- When possible, students should report to workouts in proper gear and immediately return home to shower, clean clothing, and equipment at the end of every workout. Students are responsible for their own supplies and should not share clothing.
- Individual clothing/equipment/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- Athletes are required to tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well in accordance with school policies or if they have recently been tested and are awaiting results.
- Student-athletes are encouraged to develop healthy habits including, but not limited to, a balanced diet, adequate sleep, and proper hydration.
  - Healthy eating and attention to hydration is especially important for student-athletes to enhance training capacity and reduce the risk of illness and injury.
- Bring and use your own water bottle.
  - High school athletes are at increased risk for dehydration. It is important that you drink enough fluid before, during and after practice and competition.
  - National Athletic Trainer Association (NATA) Resource: Healthy Hydration For Young Athletes  
<https://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/healthy-hydration-for-young-athletes.pdf>

### **INFORMATION FOR COACHES:**

- Athletes must not be penalized for missing tryouts, practices, or games due to COVID symptoms
  - Tryouts must be extended for symptomatic athletes in accordance with athletic department rules
- Every New Coach hired for the 2021-22 school year is required to complete the “COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators” free course on the NFHS Learn Website once in their coaching career.

- Due to strict contact tracing procedures; If rosters need to be submitted for games, it is highly recommended that the official roster published on the RIIL website be used.
- Coaches, administrators, and game administration are the primary parties responsible to enforce all RIIL and RIDOH guidance for the members of their team.
- Communicate guidelines in a clear and consistent manner to students and parents at the state-mandated Preseason Lecture as described in RI General Law Chapter 16-11.1-2.
- Coaches should schedule frequent breaks during practices to allow for a Heat Acclimatization break.
- Keep accurate records of those athletes and staff who attend each practice/game.

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Required to cooperate with all contact tracing and quarantine Guidelines from RIDOH.
- Parents/Guardians should monitor their student-athletes for any symptoms at all times.
  - Inform proper school personnel if your student-athlete has been exposed to someone who is known to have COVID-19 or has tested positive.
  - Student-athletes who are sick or showing symptoms must stay home.
  - When in doubt, athletes with any symptoms should stay home.
- Parents/Guardians should assess levels of risk based on individual athletes on the team who may be at a higher risk for severe illness.
  - Prior to the season, athletes with pre-existing pulmonary issues should be medically cleared to participate in their sport while wearing an approved face covering.
- Provide personal items for your student-athletes and clearly label them.
- Disinfect your student-athlete's personal clothing/equipment/towels after each game or practice.

### **INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS:**

- **Teams and Programs:**
  - Individual school districts have the authority and autonomy to administer their district's athletic programs as they deem appropriate.
  - Schools must make every effort to honor and participate in all scheduled contests.
  - Schools should make every effort to reschedule a postponed contest to the next day.
  - The schools involved in a Covid-related postponement should attempt to reschedule the game once it is safe for both schools to do so. If a game cannot be rescheduled, said game will be declared a no-contest and will not count towards either team's W-L record.
    - League games always take precedence over non-league games.
  - The determination of sub-varsity and varsity teams is made by individual school districts.
- **Guidelines when traveling to a competition**
  - Schools should reference the current RIDE Busing and Student Transportation Guidelines.
  - For contact tracing purposes, assigned seating charts are mandatory for teams utilizing a bus.
  - Make sure to communicate with the host school prior to the competition to discuss plans.

- Follow all policies and guidelines the host school and/or off-campus facility has communicated, including locker room availability.
- Bring your own hand sanitizer, medical supplies and emergency action plans.
- Have a plan in place if someone begins to show symptoms during an away competition.
- **Guidelines when hosting a competition**
  - Host schools will have an event supervisor contact (cell number and email address) for all events who is responsible for reviewing compliance with these guidelines amongst spectators, if present and on field personnel during competition/practice.
  - Communicate ahead of time with the incoming schools and officials about procedures, policies and guidelines at the facility. Examples to be covered include but not limited to, the following:
    - Parking & Where to enter facility
    - What equipment should the visiting team bring including water availability
    - Bench area seating (how many can be accommodated while maintaining social distancing)
    - Locker room/Restroom availability and resources
    - Emergency action plans for the specific facility
    - Ensure facilities have been properly sanitized before visiting team arrives.
    - Have a plan in place if someone begins to show symptoms during the event.

## **INFORMATION FOR MEDIA**

- Due to the changing dynamics affecting gathering size limits, facility Guidelines, and other restrictions, media and other non-essential personnel attendance at competitions is not guaranteed and/or may be limited.
- Media members must obtain approval from a school administrator prior to attending any competition and/or conducting any in-person interviews.
- Designated media areas may be limited.

## **INFORMATION FOR OFFICIALS:**

- Officials are responsible for game management and have the authority to enforce all rules. The monitoring obligation of the sidelines and benches remains with the coaches and school personnel.
- Required to cooperate with all contact tracing and quarantine Guidelines from RIDOH.
- If an official is sent home or unable to officiate for any reason, the game may be played with mutual agreement of the remaining officials and both head coaches.
- **Contact the Host School**
  - Contact shall be made by the official with school athletic administration leading up to the contest to obtain other information that you or the school may want to communicate to each other prior to your arrival.