

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DECEMBER 8, 2020

SUBJECT:

Participation in Interscholastic Athletic Competition During Pandemic

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

At its regular meeting on November 17, 2020, the Board directed the superintendent and the board chair to include as an agenda item a discussion as to whether athletics should be postponed.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

Interscholastic athletic competition falls under the governance of the South Carolina High School League (SCHSL). The SCHSL issued its plan for fall sports on July 15, 2020. That plan was amended on August 28, 2020. The SCHSL provided similar guidance for winter sports on November 2, 2020. Up to now ACPSD has adhered to the league's guidelines. While a number of contests have been postponed or cancelled due to positive Covid cases and/or quarantines, under the league's guidelines student athletes have been able to compete in at least a partial season.

RECOMMENDATION:

Continue to follow the guidelines for interscholastic athletic competition issued by the South Carolina High School League.

ATTACHMENT:

SCHSL Winter Sports Guidelines

PREPARED BY:

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BEST PRACTICES

Return to Play Winter Sports

2020-21 School Year

This document is subject to change by approval of the SCHSL Executive Committee as needed.

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Purpose

- To offer SCHSL member schools best practices in order to commence the 2020-21 school year athletic Winter sports seasons as scheduled and have complete seasons through championship play;
- To educate our coaches and student-athletes how to safely live with the COVID-19 virus by following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and the South Carolina State Department of Education (SDE) guidelines while fostering an educational athletic environment;
- To develop our student-athletes as physically and safely as possible; and
- To provide best practices for students, coaches, officials, and fans while participating and attending athletic events.

The following best practices are suggested for all SCHSL athletic Winter sports for the 2020-21 school year.

Education

- Before beginning any athletic activities, the local school (system) should review the most recent guidelines provided by the CDC, DHEC, SDE, and local county/city health agencies and decide how best to implement those guidelines.
- Local school administration should communicate to coaches, student-athletes, and parents CDC, DHEC, and SCHSL guidelines and best practices regarding COVID-19 and discuss all safety and cleanliness expectations.

Effective Strategies to Mitigate COVID-19 Spread

- It is expected that students avoid close contact with others and maintain a physical distance of six feet or greater.
- Close contact is considered being within 6 feet for 15 minutes cumulatively. When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings should be worn.
- Practice individual hygiene such as hand washing, coughing/sneezing etiquette, avoid touching face, etc.
- Athletes and coaches are expected to be closely monitored for any symptoms. Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 (regardless of where the exposure occurred) are expected to follow protocols set forth by the CDC, DHEC, and the local health department.

Additional Mitigation Strategies

Any athlete with a prior confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis is expected to undergo an evaluation by their medical provider. Written medical clearance is recommended before participation. Once cleared and before returning to the sport, a gradual return to activity is advised, and any athlete showing abnormal health issues is expected to be evaluated and cleared by a physician before a return to sports activities. As much as possible, practices, training, workouts, meetings, etc. should be held in well-ventilated areas.

Proposed Winter Sports Calendar

Sport	First Practice	First Scrimmage	First Contest	Playoffs	Finals	Ind. Qualifiers/ Finals
Basketball	Nov. 2	Nov. 12	Nov. 30	Feb. 15	March 5-6	N/A
Wrestling	Nov. 9 <i>**See Note**</i>	Nov. 30	Dec. 14	Feb. 13	Feb.20	Feb. 26-27/ March 5-6

SCHSL Winter Sports Plan Proposal Notes

The Winter Sports season should use a phased-in approach with Basketball starting regular-season play first, followed by Wrestling regular-season play two weeks later. In addition, to address conditioning and weight certification concerns, Wrestling should use a phased-in approach for return to play.

Winter Sports will be allowed two scrimmages for varsity and one for sub-varsity teams. No Jamborees will be permitted. There shall be a minimum of 5 days between scrimmages.

There should be a minimum of two days between regular-season contests excluding tournaments.

Tournaments for basketball shall not mix spectators from more than two communities/schools at one time in the same gym. Gyms should be cleared and cleaned thoroughly after each contest prior to any additional teams or communities/schools entering the building.

Dual Tournaments, Tri-matches or Quad Matches in wrestling shall not mix spectators from more than two communities/schools at one time. Gyms should be cleared and cleaned thoroughly after each match prior to any additional communities/schools entering the building. The only exception would be teams involved in a Tri or Quad Match can remain in a designated area inside the gym when they are not wrestling.

Individual Tournaments in Wrestling may be held provided no spectators are allowed in the building at any time during the event.

Sub-Varsity and Middle School teams will follow the same dates as the high school calendar for Winter Sports.

There are no current changes to the Spring Sports Season. However, SCHSL Spring Calendars may be modified to accommodate moving a winter sport into the athletic calendar in the event the sport is unable to hold their season in the winter due to COVID-19 conditions.

Closed Season for Winter and Spring Sports: Began with the first day of practice for fall sports, August 17, 2020, and is currently closed.

Open Season Spring Sports: Recommend that we cancel Open Season for Spring Sports for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

****Wrestling Notes:**

Schools will be allowed to start November 9th in Phase 1.5

- Activities with player-to-player contact are not allowed. Conditioning, Skills and Drills without touching a partner provided that physical distancing is adhered to. Mats and other equipment need to be wiped down and sanitized after each use.

Regular Practice: November 16th.

First Scrimmage: November 30th.

Championship Notes:

Basketball and Wrestling will be reduced to a maximum of four rounds of playoffs.

Safety Guidelines for Athletes, Coaches, and Staff

Note: Any time physical distancing cannot be maintained by athletes, coaches and staff, etc. wearing a facial covering is expected. This includes sidelines, benches, etc. for all contest participants.

Only school personnel, certified coaches, athletic trainers, and student-athletes should be present during practices. Attendance of non-essential personnel is not recommended.

Equipment is expected to be cleaned and sanitized daily after each use. Equipment is expected to not be shared without following cleaning protocols.

Individuals having or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms should follow CDC and DHEC guidelines listed at www.cdc.gov or www.dhec.sc.gov before being allowed to participate or attend.

These guidelines are intended for application in non-healthcare related places of employment. The foundation guidelines for businesses and employers remain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

All organizations must determine how best to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace as well as in their community. To successfully remain open for activities, everyone individually and collectively must actively participate in the core recommendations:

1. Self-isolation – if you are sick, stay home.
2. Practice social distancing of at least six feet distance to the greatest extent possible.
3. Wash hands frequently (20 seconds with soap and water or use of a sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol).
4. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects (e.g., keyboards, phones) and surfaces (e.g., handrails, workstations, sinks) or remove unnecessary frequently touched surfaces (e.g., trash can lid).
5. Avoid touching of eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
6. Strongly consider wearing a cloth face covering when in public (do not use on people with difficulty breathing or people who cannot remove the mask themselves).
7. Cover mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and throw used tissues away immediately after use.
8. Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment when possible, or disinfect them before and after use.
9. Minimize the use of soft surfaces like cloth-covered chairs or area rugs that are more difficult to clean or disinfect.

Guidelines Specifically for High School and Middle School Sports

In addition to the above referenced general guidelines, the requirements below are designed to further reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 during athletic workouts, training, or competition. ***Following these guidelines does not guarantee that transmission of the virus will not occur. Participating in organized sport comes with a risk of contracting COVID-19, other illnesses, or injuries.***

While not required, consider having athletes, coaches and staff tested before the season, and routinely, if exposed to multiple settings, communities, and/or counties throughout the season. The following links on the DHEC website provide information regarding test frequency and free testing sites:

<https://scdhec.gov/covid19/who-should-get-tested-covid-19>

<https://scdhec.gov/covid19/covid-19-testing-locations>

Athletes, coaches, or staff who either 1) have pre-existing medical conditions that place them at higher risk of infection, or 2) those who do not want to risk contracting COVID-19 should refrain from participating in high school sports. The overarching goal is to minimize or eliminate the number of COVID-19 cases that can be attributed to time spent in organized sports activities. To be successful in moving forward, ***IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS, COACHES AND STAFF CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES WHILE AWAY FROM SPORTING ACTIVITIES AS WELL.***

Guidelines include all of those listed above, PLUS

1. Maintain minimum physical distancing of six feet between participants when possible.
2. Daily health screening of athletes, coaches, and staff by a health care professional or designated full-time district/school employee. If an individual answer YES to any of these questions, then they cannot participate on that day.
 - a. Fever at 100.4 or higher in the past 72 hours?
 - b. Cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea?
 - c. Contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19 with the previous 14 days?
 - d. Compromised immune system or chronic diseases that could be affected by the virus?
3. Temperature screening will be done on each athlete, coach, and staff daily by a health care professional or designated full-time district/school employee. If temperature is 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, then that individual should not be allowed to stay on site.

4. Face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth are required for everyone.
 - a. Athletes
 - i. Should wear a face covering when not actively participating in the sports activity.
 - ii. Face covering or masks should be worn in sports where the covering is not inhibitory.
 - iii. Face coverings should not be shared. Non-disposable face coverings should be cleaned and disinfected daily.
 - b. Coaches and Staff
 - i. Should always wear a face covering while on site.
5. Use of locker rooms should be coordinated to allow for physical distancing when using the lockers.
6. Bathroom access should be limited to every other stall, with no more people allowed inside than the number of stalls in use.
7. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol or adequate handwashing facilities are expected to be provided for all participants.
8. Weight rooms, restrooms, meeting rooms and other multi-use facilities that include high touch surfaces are expected to be sanitized frequently during each event. Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected in between each user.
9. Individuals are expected to bring a personal water bottle and not share this bottle with anyone. Disposable cups are expected to be used for those that do not have access to their own water bottle. Use of communal water fountains is not recommended.
10. When possible, personal contact should always be avoided. This includes, but is not limited to high-fives, handshaking, fist-bumping, and chest-bumping.
11. Signs must be posted at all building entrances advising the public that they may wish to refrain from entering if they are 65 years of age or older or have underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity, asthma or weakened immunity.

Heat Stress & Acclimatization

It is imperative that coaches ease into conditioning, workouts, and practice activities to prevent incidents of exertional heat illness, sickle cell, heat syncope, and minimize acute musculoskeletal injuries. In addition to:

- Having Emergency Action Plans in place for all activities.

Other Considerations:

- Consider the use of a digital thermometer to check temperature of athletes, coaches, and staff. If a touch thermometer is used, it must be disinfected between individuals.
- Consider COVID-19 testing for any athlete, coach, and/or staff that fails the screening process not to return until tested negative or a note from a health care provider other than an athletic trainer.
- Athletic Training Rooms should be arranged to accommodate social distancing and an appropriate PPE should be worn while in these facilities.
- When applicable, athletes, coaches and staff should remain with their assigned groups during daily workouts to limit the number of people they come in contact with.
- Appropriate time is expected to be given between use of facilities to allow for thorough sanitation of the facility and equipment.
- Use of communal water devices is not recommended and any non-disposable water bottles or cups are expected to be sanitized thoroughly before re-use. Best practice is for athletes to bring their own water.
- Consideration should be given to the number of athletes, coaches and staff allowed on campus each day to ensure that the facility can be cleaned thoroughly, and risk of transmission is reduced.

All coaches and administrators are required to complete the free NFHS online course “COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators,” before the first contest (preferably as soon as possible). Additionally, administrators with athletic responsibilities are also encouraged to complete the course. The link to access the course is here: <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/covid-19-for-coaches-and-administrators>.

General Guidelines for Winter Sports

Contracts:

Schools should amend or create contracts to include verbiage regarding outbreak situations including, but not limited to, state-mandated closures, local school closures, vacated contests, etc. that prohibit a school from participation. Suggestions, whether two or one-year contracts include but are not limited to, adding forfeiture fees, reversing the home and home sites, playing on an alternate date, playing at a neutral site, splitting the gate 50/50, etc. Contractual amendments should be resolved between the two schools involved.

Region Planning:

- Regions should meet prior to the start of the winter sports season to plan for how each region will handle situations that arise during the season. Potential situations include but are not limited to, if there is an interruption in play that prohibits all region members from finishing a full region schedule, single-gender games only if one gender cannot play, region tiebreakers for order of finish, etc.

Contingency Plans for Winter Sports:

- Schools should create schedules that allow for flexibility at the end of your season for making up region contests and determining playoff and/or individual qualifiers. All required dates for the regular season and playoffs are listed in the 2020-21 Updated Sports Calendar (available at www.schsl.org).

Transportation:

- The local school system and school administration may determine the safest way to travel to and from contests in accordance with the CDC, DHEC, and SDE guidelines.
- When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings should be worn.
- To avoid quarantining the whole team, assigned seating is suggested.

Spectator Attendance at Contests

The South Carolina High School League applied to the South Carolina Department of Commerce for an exception to the current Executive Order issued by Governor McMaster limiting spectator capacity at an athletic contest to 50% of the overall capacity or 250 persons, whichever is lower. The purpose of this application was to establish a minimum set of requirements that a member school will need to follow in order to exceed the current limit established by the Governor's Executive Order.

On August 27, 2020, the League received notice from the Department of Commerce that the exception had been **GRANTED**. A copy of this communication can be found here: [SCHSL Spectator/Facility Requirements for Venue Use](#)

Please note that the SCHSL Spectator / Facility Requirements for Venue Use only sets forth the minimum requirements for a member school to host an SCHSL-sanctioned athletic contest in excess of the current standard (50% of overall capacity or 250 persons, whichever is lower). A member school may impose stricter requirements should your school or district believe it to be necessary. However, a member school may not host an event that does not comply with the SCHSL Spectator / Facility Requirements, unless it remains within the limit established by Governor McMaster's Executive Order.

Additionally, although the League submitted these requirements for approval, the responsibility for enforcing these requirements at each event lies with the member schools and local school districts. If your school does not believe it can comply with SCHSL Spectator / Facility Requirements for Venue Use, you will either need to (a) submit your own application to the Department of Commerce for an exception to the current capacity limits established by Executive Order; or (b) limit attendance at your events to 50% of the overall capacity or 250 persons, whichever is lower.

Sports Administrative Rules Modifications/Considerations

In addition to these regulations, SCHSL has developed the accompanying rules modifications and guidelines for returning to competition generally and for the specific winter sports. Those rules modifications and guidelines, like these regulations, do not guarantee the safety of participants and fans but are designed to encourage the member schools to engage in safe practices. The knowledge base related to COVID-19 is evolving. SCHSL may modify the regulations, rules modifications, and guidelines as more about COVID-19 is learned. All coaches and administrators are encouraged to check the SCHSL website regularly for any modifications to these regulations, rules modifications, or guidelines.

2020-21 Basketball Considerations

Pre-Game Considerations:

- If an administrator's meeting is required, social distancing should be used at all times and face coverings should be worn.
- The area where the team(s) and officials come onto the floor from their locker room(s) should have a minimum of 6ft separation from spectators.
- Pre-game Protocol – Limit participants to 1 captain from each team with each captain standing on the center circle on each side of the division line.
- Suspend handshakes before and following the pre-game conference.
- Pre-Game Ceremonies – Officials should stand at the division line across from team benches during pre-game ceremonies and player introductions.
- Player introductions – As the players are introduced, they should refrain from shaking hands with the officials and go to the area directly in front of their team bench.
- Officials should not wear jackets onto the gym floor during warm-ups or any other pre-game activity.

Playing Modifications for Officials Mechanics:

- Officials may stand 6ft or greater away from the player making the throw-in and bounce the ball to that player on a frontcourt throw-in.
- The lead official shall stand on the end line and bounce the ball to the free thrower.

Officials Table:

- The host should sanitize the table before the game and at the half.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at the table before during and after a contest.
- Limit seats at the table to the following: home scorer, timer, and announcer. (Visiting scorer can sit on visiting bench or in a designated area behind the scorer's table that allows for 6ft social distancing)
- Coaches should maintain 6ft separation from the officials' table. When this is not possible, coaches should wear a face covering when coming to the officials' table for any reason.
- Minimum of 6ft separation between spectator seating and the officials' table.
- Face coverings are required at all times for table personnel.

Team Benches:

- Limit the number of bench personnel.
- Only coaches, players in uniform, and medical personnel are allowed on the bench.
- Minimum of 6ft separation between the team bench and spectators seating behind the bench.

Post Game:

- Suspend post-game protocol of shaking hands with the opposing teams.
- Players and coaches should leave the floor when the contest is over.
- The area for teams and officials to exit the floor should have a minimum of 6ft of separation from spectators.
- If teams are both exiting the same door, consider staggering the exit times to allow for 6ft separation.
- Spectators are to remain off the playing area once the event is over.

Dressing Rooms for Officials and Teams

- 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 and between use.
- If dressing facilities do not provide adequate space for social distancing, host schools need to make their opponents and the officials aware of this as early in the game week as possible so they can make the necessary adjustments for arrival time, dress and pre-game meetings.
- Visiting teams should consider coming dressed for the contest when possible.

Other Considerations

- The ball should be sanitized frequently throughout the contest.
- Consider using multiple game balls throughout the contest.
- Visiting schools should bring their own basketballs for warm-ups.
- Consider not scheduling any contests for the week following Christmas Day.
- Schools should consider scheduling the same opponent inside the same week prior to playing against another school. (Ex. School A plays School B on Tuesday and Friday and plays no one in between.)
- Coaches, players, officials and table personnel should wash and sanitize their hands as frequently as possible before, during and after a game.
- Players, coaches, and game officials should wear face coverings at all times when they are not actively on the basketball court.
- Players, coaches, and game officials are not required to wear face coverings while actively on the basketball court.
- Cloth face coverings are permissible during active play. (Solid Color or contains school or manufacturers logo.)
- Officials may wear protective gloves during the contest.
- Each game official and player should have their own beverage container for use during the contest.
- Coaches should maintain social distancing of 6 feet when seeking clarification from an official.
- If megaphones are used by cheerleaders, the opening (large end) should be covered with cloth like material to mitigate the exposure of droplets/vapors projected from the device.
- 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.

2020-21 Wrestling Considerations

Pre-Match

- If a game administrator's meeting is required, social distancing and mask/face covering are recommended.
- Weigh-ins should be done one team at a time.
- During weigh-ins, team members should remain 6ft apart at all times.
- Wrestlers should wear a face covering at all times during weigh-in's, EXCEPT when they step onto the scale.
- Officials, trainers, coaches and any other staff involved in weigh-ins should wear face coverings at all times during the weigh-ins.
- COVID-19 screenings should be conducted at weigh-ins on all wrestlers.
- Wrestler's introductions – each wrestler should go to an area in front of their team bench. There shall not be any contact with the officials or opposing team.
- Captain's meeting – only one wrestler from each team and the official will be present. (social distance and mask or face covering suggested)

In-Match Modifications:

- Wrestlers should check in at the scorer's table while maintaining 6ft social distance.
- Eliminate all handshakes not required by NFHS rule.
- Disinfect mats before any competition.
- During a Dual, mats should be sanitized before each individual weight class match.
- Consider using multiple mats (minimum of 2) for duals.
- During an individual tournament, sanitize mats before each individual match.
- Officials shall forgo the traditional end-of-match procedure of raising the winning wrestler's hand and declare the winner by raising his/her armband that corresponds to the assigned color of the winning wrestler.

Scorer's Table:

- The host school should sanitize the table(s) before each match in a dual match and anytime the table personnel change.
- The host school should sanitize the table(s) before the first match of an individual tournament and anytime the table personnel change.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at the table(s).
- Limit the seats at the table to the following: Official timekeeper, announcer, and head scorer. (Visiting team scorer should sit either on the visiting team bench or in a designated area near the scorer's table that is allowed for 6ft. social distancing).
- Coaches should maintain 6ft social distancing from the scorer's table. When this is not possible, coaches should wear a face covering when coming to the scorer's table for any reason.
- Minimum 6ft separation between spectator seating and the scorer's table.
- Face coverings should be worn by all table personnel at all times.

Team Benches:

- Limit the number of bench personnel to coaches, wrestlers, trainers, and/or scorers.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at the table before during and after a contest.
- Consider limiting the size of the team for dual matches to limit the number of people in the bench area.
- Minimum 6ft separation between the team bench(es) and spectators seating.

- Personnel not on the mat should adhere to any required local face-covering requirements.

Post Match:

- Suspend post-match protocol of opposing teams shaking hands.
- If teams are both exiting the same door, consider staggering the exit times to allow for 6ft separation.
- Wrestlers and coaches should leave the facility when the match is over.
- Spectators are to remain off the playing area once the event is over.

Dressing Rooms for Officials and Teams

- 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 and between use.
- If dressing facilities do not provide adequate space for social distancing, host schools need to make their opponents and the officials aware of this as early in the game week as possible so they can make the necessary adjustments for arrival time, dress and pre-game meetings.
- Visiting teams should consider coming dressed for the contest when possible.

Other Considerations:

- Wrestlers and officials should wear face coverings at all times when they are not actively on the wrestling mat.
- Officials are not required to wear face coverings while actively on the wrestling mat.
- Officials may wear protective gloves during the match.
- Coaches and Wrestlers should wear a face covering when in the team bench area.
- Coaches, Wrestlers, Officials and table personnel should wash and sanitize their hands before, during and after a match as often as possible.
- Each official and wrestler should have their own beverage container for use during the contest.
- Coaches should maintain social distancing of 6 feet when seeking clarification from an official.
- 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.
- Eliminate handshakes post-match.
- Limit the size of groups that interact with each other during practice.
- Consider keeping groups together for the duration of practice during the season.
- Consider not scheduling any matches for the week following Christmas Day.

Considerations for Parents

(A family's role in maintaining safety guidelines for themselves and others):

- Make sure your child and immediate household members are free from illness before participating in practice and competition (if there is doubt stay home),
- Provide personal items for your child and clearly label them.
- Disinfect your students' personal equipment after each game or practice.