

Guidelines for Return of High School Sponsored Team Sports

These guidelines are intended for application in non-health care 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 have to determine how best to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace as well as in their community. In order to reopen and successfully remain open for business, 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 lids),
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 children under two years old, 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 Sports:

Prepared by the South Carolina High School League (SCHSL)

In addition to the above referenced general guidelines, the recommendations 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.

Students, 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 SCHSL taskforce is proposing a three-phased approach to begin when group academic activities are permitted in the districts and/or schools. This document outlines the requirements of Phase 1. Future revisions will include Phases 2 and 3. Movement through these phases is contingent upon successfully meeting the challenges of each prior phase. The overarching goal of ALL phases is minimizing or eliminating the number of COVID-19 cases that can be attributed to time spent in organized sports activities. To be successful in moving forward through the phases, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS, COACHES AND STAFF CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES WHILE AWAY FROM SPORTING ACTIVITIES AS WELL.



PHASE 1 Guidelines include all of those listed above, PLUS:

1. Maintain minimum physical distancing of six feet between participants at all times.
2. Daily health screening of athletes, coaches, and staff by a health care professional or designated fulltime 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?
3. Temperature screening will be done on each athlete, coach and staff daily by a health care professional or designated fulltime district/school employee. If temperature is equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, then that individual will not be allowed to stay on site.
4. Face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth are required for everyone.
 - a. Athletes
 - i. Must 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. Must wear a face covering at all times while on site.
5. Athletes, coaches and staff should come dressed for participation.
6. Use of locker rooms and/or offices is prohibited during Phase 1.
7. Bathroom access will be limited to every other stall, with no more people allowed inside than the number of stalls in use.
8. Alcohol based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol or adequate hand washing facilities should be provided for all participants.
9. Weight rooms, restrooms, meeting rooms and other multi-use facilities that include high touch surfaces should be sanitized frequently during each event. Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected in between each user.
10. Individuals should bring a personal water bottle to each workout and not share this bottle with anyone. Disposable cups should be used for those that do not have access to their own water bottle. Use of communal water fountains is not recommended.
11. Personal contact should be avoided at all times. This includes, but is not limited to: huddles, high-fives, handshaking, fist-bumping, and chest-bumping.
12. Times for starting and ending workouts should be staggered among multiple sports teams to avoid having large numbers of athletes in the same location at the same time.

13. Signs must be posted at the front entrance to alert athletes, coaches and staff not to enter the facility if they have had known exposure to someone with Covid-19 in the past 14 days or have symptoms such as cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell.
14. 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.
15. No spitting of sunflower seeds, tobacco or sputum is allowed on site.
16. If spectators are permitted to attend, they should remain in an area that provides a reduced opportunity for transmission of any illness while providing an opportunity to observe. Maintain 6 ft. social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Face coverings should be worn in spectator area if at all possible.

Heat Stress & Acclimatization

With the suspension of normal school activities, student athletes have obviously been limited in their ability to condition and workout. With the temperatures rising in South Carolina it is imperative that coaches ease into conditioning and workout activities to prevent incidents of exertional heat illness, sickle cell, heat syncope, and minimize acute musculoskeletal injuries. It is recommended that coaches prioritize strength and conditioning workouts over skill development upon returning. In addition to:

- Following the Wet Bulb Globe thermometer guidelines
- Having Emergency Action Plans in place for all activities.

Sports (Individual and Team)

- Team competition is prohibited.
- Conditioning and Sports Specific Skill Development may occur if the following conditions are implemented, in addition to the General Guidelines:
 - Group size should be limited to 10 persons per facility including athletes, coaches and staff whenever in an indoor or outdoor space.
 - No balls or sports equipment for first 10 days of workouts or 14 calendar days to minimize common contact points. Beginning with 11th day of workouts or 15th calendar day, properly cleaned and sanitized balls and sports equipment may be used. Must maintain 6ft. social distancing.
 - When using weight rooms, practicing calisthenics, running, or other conditioning training where vigorous exercise occurs, proper spacing from others must be maintained by working out with 12 feet minimum between each person. (This may require closing or moving some equipment).
 - Stunting would not meet social distancing guidelines, therefore would not be allowed during Phase 1.

The above guidelines will be in place until further notice. The guidelines for Phase 2 and 3 will supersede the above-mentioned requirements. Phase 2 will include less restrictive measures such as allowing sports to conduct modified competition. Phase 3 will include returning to normal operations.

Other Considerations:

- Consider the use of a digital thermometer to check temperature 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 only be used for immediate care or emergencies.
- Student Athletes should remain with their assigned groups during each workout and during daily workouts to limit the number of people they come in contact with.
- Appropriate time 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 should be sanitized thoroughly prior to re-use. Best practice is for athletes to bring their own water.
- Priority of facilities should be given to fall sports athletes if at all possible.
- 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. Building occupancy should not exceed 20% of the number of people allowed by the fire marshal.
- Create and request athletes, coaches and/or staff to sign “Assumption of Risk” form prior to participation.

Definitions:

Facility: Single Field, Single Gym, Weight Room, Single Classroom. Example: 2 gyms = 2 facilities

Sports Equipment: To include but not limited to: Balls, Sleds, Dummies, Chutes, Helmets, Bats, Gloves, Sticks, Rackets, Hurdles, Landing pits, etc.

Social Distancing: Minimum 6 ft. separation.

Staff: Student Assistants/helpers, Managers, Health Care Professionals, etc.

Spectator: Anyone who is not included in the 10 people involved in the workout.

Note: Detailed guidelines for spectators are not addressed in these recommendations. Those guidelines should be addressed by Executive Order of the Governor and DHEC.

SCHSL Return of High School Sponsored Team Sports Guidelines

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| Objective | This document is intended to provide guidance for schools to consider with their stakeholders in designing return-to-activity protocols in accordance with state and county restrictions. It allows for a coordinated reopening following the initial stay at home orders and may also be used if conditions dictate the need for increased restrictions in the future. | | |
| Foundational Statements | <p>The SCHSL believes it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of students to return to physical activity and athletic competition.</p> <p>The SCHSL recognizes that all South Carolina students may be unable to return to – and sustain – athletic activity at the same time across the state. There will also likely be variation in what sports activities are allowed over the next 9 to 12 months.</p> <p>While recognizing that county-by-county reopening may lead to inequities, the SCHSL advocates for returning students to school-based athletics to operate in any and all situations where it can be done safely.</p> <p>Prior to allowing use of facilities, schools should review facility use agreements, especially in the areas of sanitation requirements and liability.</p> | | |
| Points of Emphasis | <p>Limited testing availability, lack of resources for contact tracing, and expanding knowledge of COVID-19 transmission could all result in significant changes to this guidance. The SCHSL will disseminate more information as it becomes available.</p> <p>Administrators and coaches must emphasize the need for all coaches and participants who have signs or symptoms of illness to stay home when ill to decrease risk of viral transmission. “Vulnerable individuals” are defined as people age 60 years and older and others with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.</p> <p>Current pre-season conditioning and acclimatization models assume that athletes have deconditioned during the stay at home orders. The current pandemic may result in students being deconditioned for several months. The intensity and duration of training should be moderated upon return.</p> <p>Due to the possibility of recurrent outbreaks in the coming months, schools be prepared for the possibility of some teams having to quarantine for two or more weeks while in-season. Development of policies is recommended regarding practice and/or competition during temporary school closures, the cancellation of contests during the regular season, and parameters for the cancellation or premature ending to post-season events/competitions.</p> | | |
| | Phase One | Phase Two | Phase Three |
| Facilities Cleaning | <p>Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities.</p> <p>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.).</p> <p>Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap or hand sanitizer before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.</p> <p>Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.</p> <p>Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces.</p> <p>Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.</p> <p>Athletes must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Entrance/Exit Strategies | Consider strategies to prevent groups from gathering at entrances/exits to facilities to limit crossover and contact, including staggering starting/ending times. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |

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| Limitations on Gatherings | <p>No gathering of more than 10 people to include athletes, coaches, and staff at a time (inside or outside).</p> <p>Workouts should be conducted in “groups” of athletes with the same athletes working out together weekly to limit overall exposures. Consider smaller groups for weight training.</p> <p>Groups are to be separated by facilities (one group per facility).</p> <p>There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times. If this is not possible in enclosed areas, then the maximum number of individuals in the room must be decreased to obtain a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Pre-Workout Screening | <p>All athletes, coaches, and staff should be screened daily for signs / symptoms of COVID-19 prior to participating, including a temperature check. Anyone with a temperature of greater than 100.3 degrees should not participate and be sent home.</p> <p>Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored.</p> <p>Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to participate, should self-isolate, contact their primary care provider or other health-care professional and not be allowed to return until tested for the COVID-19 virus and receive a result of NEGATIVE or have been cleared by a healthcare provider other than an athletics trainer.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Face Coverings | <p>State, local or school district guidelines for face coverings should be strictly followed.</p> <p>In the absence of guidelines to the contrary, we recommend that:</p> <p>Face coverings be worn by athletes when not participating in the sports activity.</p> <p>Coaches and staff, officials should wear cloth face coverings at all times during the workout sessions. (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.)</p> <p>Plastic shields covering the entire face will not be allowed during participation due to the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or others.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Hygiene Practices | <p>Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.</p> <p>Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow. Avoid touching your face.</p> <p>Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.</p> <p>Strongly consider using face coverings while in public, and particularly when using mass transit</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Hydration/Food | <p>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.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Travel | <p>Keep it local and avoid cross county travel when possible, especially if counties are in different phases. Consider limiting the number of riders on a bus or van to address social distancing and/or encourage athletes to ride with family members to venues.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Locker Rooms and Athletic Training Areas | <p>Locker rooms should not be utilized during Phase 1. Students should report in appropriate attire and immediately return home to shower after participation. No students allowed in training area unless Athletics Trainer is present.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |

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| Weight Rooms | <p>Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.</p> <p>Resistance training should be emphasized as body weight, weight machines, and free weights that do not require a spotter.</p> <p>Free weight exercises that require a spotter cannot be conducted while honoring physical distancing norms. Safety measures in all forms must be strictly enforced in the weight room.</p> <p>Weight rooms should follow physical distancing guidelines. Athletes should be separated by 12ft.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment | <p>There should be no shared athletic equipment (towels, clothing, shoes, or sports specific equipment) between students.</p> <p>Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing). Individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned at home after every workout.</p> <p>No balls or sports equipment for first 10 days of workouts or 14 calendar days to minimize common contact points. Beginning with 11th day of workouts or 15th calendar day, properly cleaned and sanitized balls and sports equipment may be used. Must maintain 6ft. social distancing.</p> <p>When permissible to use, all athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned after each individual use and prior to the next workout.</p> <p>Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.</p> | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| General Activity Description | Individual Skill Development and Workouts Maintain Physical Distancing; No Contact with Others No Sharing of Equipment; No Grouping | | |
| Lower Infection Risk Activities | <p>Activities that can be done with physical distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.</p> <p>SCHSL Activities: cross country (with staggered starts), track and field*, swimming*, golf, and tennis</p> <p>Notes: In swimming, relays need to maintain social distance. In track and field, any field event with an implement needs to be cleaned after each use by participants.</p> | | |
| Cross Country | Runners should maintain at least 6 feet of distancing between individuals, no grouping (i.e. starts and finishes). | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Track & Field | Runners should maintain at least 6 feet of distancing between individuals, no grouping (i.e. starts and finishes). No sharing of implements / equipment. Padded equipment should be cleaned between uses. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Swimming | Swimmers should maintain at least 6 feet of distancing between individuals, no grouping (i.e. starts and finishes). | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Golf | Maintain appropriate physical distancing 6 feet apart. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Tennis | Conditioning, no sharing of balls, each player may use own can of balls to serve and uses racket to pass other balls (singles only), ball machine use by individuals only. Players may do individual drills, wall volleys and serves. Wipe down rackets and balls after. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |

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| Moderate Infection Risk Activities | Activities 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. SCHSL Activities: volleyball, soccer, baseball, softball, and basketball | | |
| Volleyball | Conditioning, individual ball handling drills, each player has own ball. A player should not use a single ball that others touch or hit in any manner. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Soccer | Conditioning, individual ball skill drills, each player has own ball, feet only (no heading/use of hands), no contact. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Baseball | Conditioning and tee work. Players should not share gloves or bats or throw a single ball that will be tossed among the team. A single player may hit in cages, throw batting practice (with netting as backstop, no catcher). Prior to another athlete using the same balls, they should be collected and cleaned individually. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Softball | Conditioning and tee work. Players should not share gloves or bats or throw a single ball that will be tossed among the team. A single player may hit in cages, throw batting practice (with netting as backstop, no catcher). Prior to another athlete using the same balls, they should be collected and cleaned individually. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Basketball | Conditioning, individual ball skill drills, no contact or sharing of balls. A player may shoot with a ball(s), but a team should not practice/pass a single ball among the team where multiple players touch the same ball. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Higher Infection Risk Activities | Activities that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants. SCHSL Activities: football, wrestling, competitive cheerleading, and lacrosse. | | |
| Football | Conditioning and individual drills. A player should not participate in drills with a single ball that will be handed off or passed to other teammates. Contact with other players is not allowed, and when permitted, there should be no sharing of sports equipment. Protective equipment prohibited. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Wrestling | Conditioning, mirror drills with spacing, no contact. Wrestlers may skill and drill without touching a teammate (as long as physical distancing is adhered to). | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Competitive Cheer | Conditioning and individual technique/choreography work. Students may not practice/perform partner or group stunts. Chants, jumps, dance, tumbling without contact are permissible as long as physical distancing is adhered to. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |
| Lacrosse | Conditioning and individual drills. Contact with other players is not allowed, and when permitted, there should be no sharing of sports equipment. Protective equipment prohibited. | To Be Determined | To Be Determined |