

**Caroline County Public Schools Return to Play Committee  
(Revised September 2020)**

Caroline County Public Schools is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for student-athletes, coaches, staff, officials, spectators, and others who engage in high school sports. CCPS has created a Return to Play committee to develop plans to re-engage our student-athletes utilizing resources from the CDC, Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), as well as other reputable sources. The committee will continue to refine its plans based on available guidance from the above-mentioned entities.

**Caroline County Public Schools Phased Recovery Plan with Return to Play Levels:**

CCPS Phase	Return to Play Level (MPSSAA Roadmap)
Phase 1	Lowest Risk - Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
Phase 2	Lowest Risk - Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
Phase 3	Increasing Risk to More Risk - school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings, to in-season team-based practices moving toward within-team competition. Specific sport-based modifications may be necessary based on the risk levels associated with COVID-19.
Phase 4	
Phase 5	
Phase 6	Even More Risk to Highest Risk - Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area moving toward full competition between teams from different geographic areas. Specific sport-based modifications may be necessary based on the risk levels associated with COVID-19.

Any decision to move in and out of a *Return to Play Level* will be made by the Superintendent of Schools based on the health and safety of our students. For that reason, CCPS has linked the *Return to Play Levels* to the *Phased Recovery Plan* for the school system.

**Preparation:**

Health Related Items:

- PreParticipation Physicals
  - All students participating during preseason, and the sports season will be required to have a current pre-participation physical completed. Students will register and complete their required paperwork through FormRelief. The CCPS approved physical form and participation packet will be utilized.

- CCPS will coordinate with Choptank Community Health to facilitate sports physical completion.
- **The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee Recommends:**
  - If parents think their child is immunocompromised, please check with your child's healthcare provider (Physician (MD/DO), Nurse Practitioner (NP), Physician Assistant (PA)) before returning them to sports.
  - Athletes who have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 or multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) should have a thorough cardiovascular evaluation or cardiology consultation prior to return.
  - Athletes, coaches, and officials who should consider delaying their participation in sports and activities are those with any of the following:
    - Age greater than 65;
    - Diabetes;
    - Chronic lung disease including moderate to severe asthma;
    - Severe obesity (Body Mass Index >40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>);
    - Chronic kidney disease treated with dialysis;
    - Chronic liver disease (cirrhosis);
    - Heart conditions (coronary artery disease, hypertension, heart rhythm problems (arrhythmia), and heart defects you are born with (congenital heart defects));
    - Immunocompromised (e.g. any transplant recipient, needing immunosuppressant medications (e.g. steroids, biologics, etc.), patients receiving chemotherapy, etc.);
    - Nursing home resident or long term care resident;
    - Thalassemia or sickle cell disease.
- COVID19 Risk Acknowledgement
  - Included among pre-participation forms, CCPS will implement a sign off acknowledging both parent/guardian and student athlete has read provided information on the risk of COVID-19 as it relates to their participation in interscholastic athletics and activities. This form also includes acknowledgement of the symptom-free requirements from the CDC for attendance at any gathering or event.
- Attendance Procedures for contact tracing
  - All coaches will complete attendance tracking for each preseason and season event. Attendance tracking will include the names of all individuals (students and staff) present. Tracking forms will be maintained by the school athletic director for contact tracing purposes. Forms will be maintained for a minimum of one month.
- Communication Plan:
  - School athletic directors will communicate with coaches, parents, and student-athletes regarding any requirements associated with participation and engagement. Information provided will include:
    - Pre-participation physical requirement
    - Drop-off/pick-up procedures for in-person events

- Any limitations on group size and grouping of students into cohorts
  - The necessity of screening the student-athlete at home and keeping their student-athlete home if ill
  - The importance of communicating with the coach if the student-athlete is ill with potential COVID-19 symptoms
- Responding to Positive Cases or Students with COVID-19 like symptoms:
  - The response protocol for quarantine and isolation established for all CCPS students and staff will be followed.

## **Operational Guidelines**

### *General Guidelines*

#### **Facility Assessment, Preparation, and Equipment Needs**

- CCPS will ensure compliance with CDC guidelines regarding the cleaning, and disinfecting of all equipment and facilities.
- CCPS will provide disinfectant/cleaning supplies and protocols to maintain a safe environment.
- Coaches will be trained on appropriate procedures for disinfecting and cleaning.

#### **Entrance/Exit Strategies**

- Practice or games times should be spaced out to decrease the number of individuals coming and going at the same time and facilitate social distancing.
- Limit spectators allowed at any workouts or practices. Parents/caregivers can remain in their cars during this time. No congregating should be allowed in the parking lot or fields. A drop-off line for practices is recommended to avoid unnecessary exposure.
- Carpooling should not be allowed unless only members of immediate family

#### **Limitations on Gatherings**

- Follow most recent state ordered guidance on the size of gatherings.
- During competitions, spectators should practice social distancing as permissible and spectators should wear masks/face covering. Limits on the number of spectators should be determined by organizations and schools based on multiple factors (i.e. gym size, indoor/outdoor) to promote social distancing. The maximum number of spectators should be posted at all gates, along with reminders of 6 ft. social distancing.
- Only essential individuals should be present on the field for games. Schools should limit the presence of managers and student assistants to on-field exposure.

#### **Face Coverings**

- All participants will follow the latest Governor's Order regarding face coverings.
- The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee recommends any participants wearing a face mask cover should:
  - Be aware of the face mask will increase CO2 retention;
  - Be aware of increased concerns of heat illness;
  - Be disinfected daily by the user;
  - Take additional water and rest breaks;
  - Find social distancing areas of six or more feet from other participants during recovery; and,
  - Designate a set area for intermittent removal and storage.

### **Hygiene Practices**

- Hand hygiene is essential. Organizations and facilities need to promote frequent and effective, hand hygiene with ample hand sanitizer (>60% ethanol or >70% isopropanol) dispensers and areas with soap and water in many different locations. Families may be asked to provide their own.

### **Hydration and Nutrition**

- No sharing of water bottles. An individual athlete should use their own clearly marked bottle.
- Coolers, which should be limited in use, should be properly sanitized after each use, and a new cooler should be used for each team or group. [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed.](#)
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) are not recommended. If used, they should be utilized only for the refilling of personal water bottles and must be cleaned after every practice/contest.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing food and utensils. Offer hand sanitizer or encourage hand washing
- Ice towels should be marked for individual use only, then discarded or washed properly.
- No whirlpool or cold/hot tubs should be used during any of the listed phases. Best practice for emergency use still applies.

### **Locker Rooms and Training Areas**

- The use of locker rooms is not recommended during these stages. Proper area for equipment storage and cleaning is recommended as well as appropriately spaced individual areas for athletes to store their personal belongings during activity.

### **Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment**

- No handshakes or fist bumps should take place.
- No team huddles.
- No spitting or sunflower seeds
- Any equipment used during activities should be disinfected with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified products as able.
- Any jerseys used during these workouts should be washed daily and not switched to different players during workout. No sharing of pennies should be permitted.

### **Return to Exercise, Conditioning, and Weight Training**

- Athletes have had a prolonged break from organized sports and conditioning. Although some athletes may have continued independent strength and conditioning and cardiovascular training, some athletes may return deconditioned. Coaches need to reassess the physical conditioning status of all athletes on their return and plan for a graduated return in duration, frequency, and intensity of athletics. Please reference the National Federation of High Schools joint statement with other appropriate health and sport national organizations on the [Return to Sports and Exercise during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance for High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs](#).
- All policies of the [MPSSAA regarding heat acclimatization and heat related illnesses](#) must be followed. Duration and heat indexes must be monitored during non-season conditioning sessions.

### **Accommodations for students with special needs**

- Exceptions may be needed for some of these conditions based on circumstances.
- Showers may be needed after practice in some circumstances (eg. working after practice, homeless). Coaches and administrators can make these exceptions. Social distancing should be maximized and proper cleaning should occur.
- Water bottles that can be clearly marked for individuals should be made available. Daily cleaning should occur after an individual uses them.
- For parents/caregivers that rely on public transportation or walk, an area away from practice should be set aside that allows for social distancing.
- Schools and organizations should attempt to have extra masks/face coverings available. These should be washed after each use if cloth-based.
- For athletes not able to wash workout clothes attempts should be made by the school and organizations to help in providing this for them.

- Additional situations may arise based on social vulnerabilities. Schools and organizations should attempt to think of these situations and develop solutions that continue to practice the key elements of preventing COVID-19 transmission.

### **Pre-Season:**

The preseason timeframe focuses on the re-engagement of students and coaches throughout the first three CDC described risk assessments.

- Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- Increasing Risk: Team-based practice.
- More Risk: Within-team competition.

### **Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.**

**Goals:** Re-engagement of student-athletes and the reintroduction of athletics and activities for the betterment of the social, emotional, and physical well-being.

### **LSS Recommendations:**

- School systems operating during the lowest risk are recommended to reframe any form of in-person contact with students.
- Regarding the well-being of students during the global pandemic, schools and coaches are recommended to virtually engage students through controlled and safe measures put into place by the LSS.
  - Virtual sessions may be for student check ins, virtual conditioning workouts for students on their own time,
  - Virtual sessions may not be considered as a prerequisite for team tryouts and voluntary.
  - Any virtual contact with students must occur on approved platforms through the LSS.
  - LSS are recommended to have a submitted parent permission and have a current physical on file for any conditioning instructions of students.
- Coaches may not conduct virtual team sport-specific practices or in-person practices.

- School coaching staffs may meet virtually regarding sport-specific instruction with up to two returning student-athletes per day, per MPSSAA regulations.
- Any virtual engagement by coaches with students must be communicated to athletic directors.

**Increasing Risk: Out-of-season school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings/In-Season Team Based Practices**

**Goals:** The resocialization of sport to increased physical activity and practice while being mindful of the health and safety of our youth and high school athletes, coaches/personnel, parents/caregivers and spectators.

**LSS Recommendations:** LSS may be operating in the Increasing Risk category during Summer out-of-season timeframe through school-based open conditioning, exercise, weight training, and non-sport specific student gatherings or in-season through team based practices. The following recommendations apply to both in and out-of-season student and coach contact.

General concept: Get in, Get out and complete essential training.

- In-Season
  - Practices must be in compliance with heat acclimatization policies.
  - Minimal protective equipment (i.e. helmets only for football) should be used during initial stages and gradually increase.
  - Team drills can occur where players are less than 6 feet apart, but this should be minimized to brief one-on-one drills. LSS may choose to allow certain sports to begin based on the individual risk of each sport.
  - No two teams should be in the same location at one time. If the same field or gym will be used back to back, allow ample time between sessions to clean the area between teams. Half field use is permitted. Be sure that there is no interaction between teams.

*Outdoor Workouts/Practices:*

- Facility Assessment, Preparation, and Equipment Needs
  - Equipment should be limited to items that the student athletes will not need to touch. This may include agility ladders, cones, etc.
  - For equipment that will be touched, it should be disinfected between each individual use.

- Coach/AD will consult with principal to determine safe indoor space in the event of an emergency (lightening, etc.). This indoor safe space should allow for social distancing and be close to where students will be conditioning. Conditioning is not to occur indoors.
- Entrance/Exit Strategies
  - Coaches will establish entrance and exit strategies that limit the opportunity for students to be in proximity of those outside of their work-out group.
- Limitations on Gatherings
  - No more than 20 individuals (including coaches) can attend at a time. Coaches should establish cohorts based on student-athletes who will be attending. The coach and student groups are not to change as this increases the risk of spread.
  - There are to be no spectators, or others present.
  - Carpooling amongst students is discouraged unless the students/coaches are immediate family members.
- Coach Responsibilities
  - Coaches will be responsible for tracking attendance at each session. Attendance records will be kept for a minimum of 1 month.
  - Coaches are responsible for following disinfect/cleaning protocols established by CCPS.
  - Coaches will follow all MPSSAA guidelines regarding out-of-season practices, etc.
- Face Coverings
  - All individuals will wear a face covering when social distancing of at least 6 ft. cannot be maintained.
  - CCPS will follow guidance and recommendations provided by the CDC and MD Department of Health.
  - Schools should have extra face coverings available if needed.
  - The MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee recommends any participants wearing a face mask cover should:
    - Be aware of the face mask will increase CO2 retention;
    - Be aware of increased concerns of heat illness;
    - Be disinfected daily by the user;
    - Take additional water and rest breaks;
    - Find social distancing areas of six or more feet from other participants during recovery; and,
    - Designate a set area for intermittent removal and storage.
- Hygiene Practices
  - Hand hygiene is essential. Organizations and facilities need to promote frequent and effective, hand hygiene with ample hand sanitizer (>60% ethanol or >70% isopropanol) dispensers and areas with soap and water in many different locations.



- Student-athletes are to be reminded wash hands and/or use appropriate hand sanitizer through engagements. Additionally, student-athletes are to be reminded to limit touching their face without first disinfecting their hands.
- Athletic directors will determine alternate methods to provide access to soap and water while outdoors.
- Hydration and Nutrition
  - Students will not share water bottles, or utilize a group water cooler/container. Individuals should have clearly marked containers for their water.
  - Coolers, which should be limited in use, should be properly sanitized after each use, and a new cooler should be used for each team or group. [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed.](#)
  - Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) are not recommended. If used, they should be utilized only for the refilling of personal water bottles and must be cleaned after every practice/contest.
  - Ice towels, if used, should be marked for individual use only.
  - Ice packs will be available for emergency use.
- Locker Rooms and Training Areas
  - No student use during the pre-season and Semester 1 phase.
  - Proper area for equipment storage and cleaning is recommended as well as appropriately spaced individual areas for athletes to store their personal belongings during activity.
- Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment
  - Disinfect equipment between use according to CCPS procedures
  - No group use of equipment that requires student contact without disinfecting between use by different students
  - No handshakes/fist bumps/ physical contact
  - No team huddles
  - No spitting or sunflower seeds
- Return to Exercise, Conditioning, and Weight Training
  - Athletes have had a prolonged break from organized sports and conditioning. Although some athletes may have continued independent strength and conditioning and cardiovascular training, some athletes may return deconditioned. Coaches need to reassess the physical conditioning status of all athletes on their return and plan for a graduated return in duration, frequency, and intensity of athletics. Please reference the National Federation of High Schools joint statement with other appropriate health and sport national organizations on the [Return to Sports and Exercise during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance for High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs.](#)

- All policies of the [MPSSAA regarding heat acclimatization and heat related illnesses](#) must be followed. Duration and heat indexes must be monitored during non-season conditioning sessions.
- Accommodations for students with special needs
  - Exceptions may be needed for some of these conditions based on circumstances.
  - Showers may be needed after practice in some circumstances (eg. working after practice, homeless). Coaches and administrators can make these exceptions. Social distancing should be maximized and proper cleaning should occur.
  - Water bottles that can be clearly marked for individuals should be made available. Daily cleaning should occur after an individual uses them.
  - For parents/caregivers that rely on public transportation or walk, an area away from practice should be set aside that allows for social distancing.
  - Schools should attempt to have extra masks/face coverings available. These should be washed after each use if cloth-based.
  - For athletes not able to wash workout clothes, attempts should be made by the school and organizations to help in providing this for them.
  - Additional situations may arise based on social vulnerabilities. Schools and organizations should attempt to think of these situations and develop solutions that continue to practice the key elements of preventing COVID-19 transmission.

*Indoor Practices/Weight Room Conditioning (when allowed)*

- Facility Assessment, Preparation, and Equipment Needs
  - CCPS will provide disinfectant/cleaning supplies and protocols to maintain a safe environment.
  - Coaches will be trained on appropriate procedures for disinfecting and cleaning.
- Entrance/Exit Strategies
  - Coaches will establish entrance and exit strategies that limit the opportunity for students to be in proximity of those outside of their work-out group.
- Limitations on Gatherings
  - No more than 15 individuals (including coaches) can attend at a time. Coaches should establish cohorts based on student-athletes who will be attending. The coach and student groups are not to change as this increases the risk of spread.
  - Social distancing of at least 6 feet is to be maintained as much as possible. Current CDC quarantine guidance is contingent upon maintaining this social distancing.
  - There are to be no spectators, or others present.

- Coach Responsibilities
  - Coaches will be responsible for tracking attendance at each session. Attendance records will be kept for a minimum of 1 month.
  - Coaches are responsible for following disinfect/cleaning protocols established by CCPS.
  - Coaches will follow all MPSSAA guidelines regarding out-of-season practices, etc.
- Face Coverings
  - All individuals will wear a face covering when indoors. This includes during exercises in the weight room and when serving as a spotter.
  - CCPS will follow guidance and recommendations provided by the CDC and MD Department of Health.
  - Schools should have extra face coverings available if needed.
- Hygiene Practices
  - Coaches will provide access to hand sanitizer.
  - All student athletes will be encouraged to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Hydration and Nutrition
  - Students will not share water bottles, or utilize a group water cooler/container. Individuals should have clearly marked containers for their water.
  - Ice towels, if used, should be marked for individual use only.
- Locker Rooms and training rooms
  - No student use during the pre-season/Semester 1 phase.
- Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment
  - Disinfect equipment between use according to CCPS procedures
  - No group use of equipment that requires student contact without disinfecting between use by different students
  - No handshakes/fist bumps/ physical contact
  - No team huddles
  - No spitting or sunflower seeds
- Return to Exercise, Conditioning, and Weight Training
  - Coaches will follow heat acclimatization procedures as student-athletes have potentially been inactive for a long period of time. For reference purposes, please see the National Federation of High Schools joint statement with other appropriate health and sport national organizations on the [Return to Sports and Exercise during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance for High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs](#).

**More Risk: Within Team Competitions (School and team-based practices)**

**Goals:** The resocialization of sport to increased practice and competition between a larger squad that may incur limited contact while being mindful of the health and safety of our youth and high school athletes, coaches/personnel, parents/caregivers and spectators.

**LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in regards to a positive case.
- LSS should focus on this phase of continuing all precautions in the previous phase with specified game-like simulations that may incur contact based on the nature of the sport to specified times.
- At the conclusion or during breaks of game-like simulations or within team competitions, proper disinfection should be used on all equipment and proper hand hygiene should be used by all participants.
- Participants on the sidelines or taking breaks should continue to use social distancing.
- During competitions, spectators should practice social distancing as permissible.

**PARTICIPATION**

**Even More Risk: Full Competition between teams from the same local geographic area**

**Goal:** To increase competition opportunities for schools through expanding their geographic area to include local schools in competition and scrimmages within a set boundary. Communication between athletic administrators is paramount during this phase.

**LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in regards to a positive case.

- LSS should align transportation decisions with LSS policy for instructional purposes.
- Hosting schools must communicate effectively on their school's facility plan, entrance/exit strategies, and all logistics to schools and officials.
- Number of spectators may be limited based on size of the facility and the promotion of social distancing by organizations and schools.
- Regular Public Address Announcements during the course of competitions.

**Highest Risk: Full Competition between teams from different geographic areas**

**Goals:** The increased competition opportunities for schools through expanding their geographic area to include competition and scrimmages from larger geographic areas. Communication between athletic administrators is paramount during this phase.

**LSS Recommendations:**

- LSS operating during the more risk stage are recommended to have the procedures outlined in the preparation phase in place.
- LSS should have a communication strategy in place to handle determinations of returning to the previous Risk Stages or what to do in regards to a positive case.
- LSS should align transportation decisions with LSS policy for instructional purposes.
- Hosting schools must communicate effectively on their school's facility plan, entrance/exit strategies, and all logistics to schools and officials.
- LSS may incrementally increase the geographic areas of competition allowed during this phase based on local and state health department guidance.
- Number of spectators may be limited based on size of the facility and the promotion of social distancing by organizations and schools.
- Regular Public Address Announcements during the course of competitions.
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**POSTSEASON - MPSSAA STATE TOURNAMENTS AND CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS**

The MPSSAA recognizes the highest risk, according to the CDC, is increased participation opportunities that includes statewide competitions among different geographic areas. This reality places state championships or culminating events in jeopardy depending on the sport. Each

respective sport will be evaluated by the MPSSAA on an individual basis to make calculated and informed decisions dependent on the characteristics of the MPSSAA-administered sport, the number of programs being administered by member schools, and local and state health department guidance on the status quo of statewide participation.