



BEST PRACTICES

Winter Sports

2021-22 School Year

Purpose

- To offer SCHSL member schools best practices in order to commence the 2021-22 school year athletic Winter sports seasons as scheduled and have complete seasons through championship play;
- 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 2021-22 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

- 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.

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 recommended. 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 eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
6. Strongly consider wearing a cloth face covering when in public (do not use it on people with difficulty breathing or people who cannot remove the mask themselves).
7. Cover your 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 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.***

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, and/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. Face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth are recommended 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, during indoor activities.

2. Use of locker rooms should be coordinated to allow for physical distancing when using the lockers.
3. Bathroom access should be limited to every other stall, with no more people allowed inside than the number of stalls in use.
4. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol or adequate handwashing facilities should be provided for all participants.
5. 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.
6. Signs should 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.

Other Considerations:

- Consider the use of a digital thermometer to check the 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 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 reuse. Best practice is for athletes to bring their own water.

It is recommended that all coaches and administrators 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 consider amending or creating 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 consider creating 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 2021-22 SCHSL Handbook (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.

Other Considerations for Winter Sports

It is recommended that schools have a minimum of two days between regular-season contests excluding tournaments.

It is recommended that tournaments for winter sports should not mix spectators from more than two communities/schools. If possible schools should designate seating areas if multiple schools/communities will be competing in a tournament at the same time (ex. individual wrestling)

Spectator Attendance at Contests

It is recommended that schools follow any local CDC or DHEC guidelines for social distancing during all indoor athletic contests.

2021-22 Basketball Considerations

Pre-Game Considerations:

- If a game administrator's meeting is required, social distancing and mask/face covering are recommended.
- 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 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 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.
- Face coverings are recommended 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.

Post Game:

- Players and coaches should leave the floor when the contest is over.
- It is recommended the area for teams and officials to exit the floor should have a minimum of 6ft of separation from spectators.
- It is recommended that 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

- 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 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.
- 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 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.

2021-22 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 maintain social distancing at all times.
- Wrestlers should wear a face covering at all times during weigh-ins, 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.
- Wrestler's introductions – each wrestler should go to an area in front of their team bench. There should 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 social distancing.
- Disinfect mats before any competition.
- It is recommended that during a Dual, mats should be sanitized before each individual weight class match.
- It is recommended to consider using multiple mats (minimum of 2) for duals.
- It is recommended that during an individual tournament, sanitize mats before each individual match.
- It is recommended that 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 scorers 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 socially distance 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.
- It is recommended that 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:

- 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 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/or competition (if there is doubt, stay home).
- Provide personal items for your child and clearly label them.
- Disinfect your child wrestler(s) personal equipment after each game or practice.