

Safe Return to Play Guidelines

As we reintroduce sports and extra-curricular activities in the Western Line School District, it is our intent to return to play in the safest manner possible. Our overall goal is to allow our students to enjoy the benefits of MHSAA activities without allowing our teams to be a source of rapid spread of COVID 19 or danger to our communities. To achieve this, 5 broad strategies will be adopted across all sports, these strategies have been compiled by the Mississippi High School Activities Association, in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Stadiums/Gyms

- Attendance policy & quarantine procedure will be determined before team competition begins and at the appropriate time
- No mask no entry
- All game day personnel involved in the athletic event will be screened prior to working the event. Game day personnel include, but are not limited to, chain crew, officials, athletic trainers, timers, judges, scorers, ball boy/girl, etc.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be available
- On duty personnel wear mask/gloves
- Any auxiliary persons (ticket takers, concession stand workers, security, media, and volunteers) will be screened prior to working an athletic event. Method of screening may be determined by host school
- Any auxiliary participant who experiences any symptoms of COVID-19 must follow CDC and MDH guidelines before being allowed to work an event
- Restroom attendant mask/gloves
- Only packaged food and drinks will be served during events
- Only clock operator & PA announcer in the press box
- Have PA announcer broadcast social distance reminders
- Restrict pedestrian flow in common areas
- Create media guidelines and communicate these prior to and at each event

Dressing Rooms

- Sanitize before and after
- Size of facility will be large enough to social distance
- Time spent in dressing room for home/away team must not be excessive

Band & Spirit Teams

- Cheer teams spaced on sidelines for social distancing (stunt with admin approval)
- Dance teams spaced on sidelines for social distancing
- No visiting before/after game or half-time between schools
- These groups should always remain separate from game participants and remain away from the fans or non-group members

Venues

- It is an expectation member schools will comply with CDC, MDH, and local health agencies related to best practices for facilities
- When possible, team bench areas will be arranged so access is for team personnel only. In addition, bench areas will accommodate proper physical distancing. When not feasible, other mitigation methods, such as facial coverings may be implemented.
- Revise team drop-off/pick-up procedures to allow for social distancing
- Eliminate team walks through fan zones
- WLSD will establish designated parking areas for team buses/equipment trucks
- Discourage congregating in parking lots before/after event
- WLSD will communicate prior to an event the local restrictions regarding mitigation of COVID-19 to the visiting team, officials, media, fans, etc.
- Communication between member schools should also include, but is not limited to, information regarding parking, concessions, locker rooms, ticketing, payment methods, entrance/exit gates, band, cheerleaders, etc.
- WLSD post new guidelines on school website & social media throughout the season
- Re-assess current policies for inclement weather during an event

Officials

- WLSD will provide contest officials an area to enter and exit separate from fans when possible. Officials will be provided a dressing and meeting area that has been cleaned and disinfected prior to their arrival that provides for appropriate spacing between individuals
- Officials' table will be limited to essential personnel which includes home team scorer and timer with a recommended distance of 3 to 6 feet between individuals. Visiting team personnel (scorer, statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and may need to find an alternative location. The number allowed at the officials' table is determined by the space available at the table. When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings will be worn.
- Officials will have their own labeled, beverage container, and these should be brought onto the field or court for their use during time outs or breaks.

Transportation

- Local school system and school administration may determine the safest way to travel to and from contests in accordance with CDC, MDH, and their local health department
- When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings will be worn.
- Assigned seating will take place before travel to road games
- Additional buses will be used to ensure for social distancing of players while traveling

Contests

- MHSAA bylaws allow non-traditional students (virtual) to participate in athletics if they have met all other MHSAA eligibility requirements.
- However, local school system(s) may have more restrictive guidelines. If a school or school system prohibits virtual school students from athletic/activity participation, it is a local school decision.
- Before a sports season begins, member schools who choose to participate must agree to abide by the following: In the event any contest is not played during the regular season or playoffs, the game will be a no-contest. For playoff seeding purposes, the game will be considered a forfeited game (loss) by the school team who chooses not to participate. The opponent will receive a "win" for the cancelled game.
- If a school is not able to participate in a contest, the local school principal must notify the MHSAA Executive Director and opposing school in writing.

Mitigation Strategies

- When physical distancing cannot be maintained facial coverings will be worn.
- It is suggested 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.
- Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 (regardless of where the exposure occurred) will follow protocols set forth by the CDC, MDH, and their local health department.
- Any student with a prior confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis must receive a negative COVID-19 test or release by their medical provider before returning.
- Any time physical distancing cannot be maintained by students, coaches, spectators, etc. wearing a facial covering is mandatory. This includes sidelines, benches, etc. for all contest participants.
- Only school personnel, certified coaches, athletic trainers, and student-athletes will be present during practices. Attendance of non-essential personnel is not recommended until further notice.