



Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association

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To: NIAA Member Schools and School Districts

From: Bart Thompson, Executive Director, NIAA

RE: Update 12, **2020-21 NIAA Sports Seasons, Current Restrictions and Requirements**

2020-21 Sports Seasons

On July 23, 2020, the NIAA issued a memorandum, [Update 11, 2020-21 Adjustments to Sports Seasons due to COVID-19 Pandemic](#). That communication informed NIAA member schools and school districts that NIAA sports seasons would be adjusted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant challenges faced by NIAA member schools. Those adjustments are hereby reaffirmed.

By gubernatorial Emergency Directive 022, each school district was directed to “develop plans for re-opening school buildings, providing instruction, and related activities for the 2020-2021 school year...” The Directive required those re-opening plans to be based on *Nevada's Path Forward: A Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School Buildings*. The recommendations included in that document are reflective of restrictions commensurate with the Phase 2 restrictions in [Phased Re-Opening of High School Sports in Nevada](#) which is the guidance issued by the NIAA and to which Emergency Directive 022 and 028 refer. On May 29, 2020, the State of Nevada entered Phase 2 of the *Nevada United: Roadmap to Recovery* plan following consistent downward trends in percentage of positive cases, COVID-19 hospitalizations, and cumulative test positivity rate. Since that time, Nevada has seen an increasing trend of hospitalizations for confirmed COVID-19 cases and of its cumulative test positivity rate. On July 31, 2020, Emergency Directive 029 was issued extending Phase 2 directives and restrictions “for the duration of the current emergency” or until terminated by a subsequent directive. The baseline restrictions in place are Phase 2 restrictions. The strategies laid out to involve county and local governments in targeting problem areas within their jurisdictions in mitigation efforts are designed to preserve Phase 2 rather than revert to more severe Phase 1 restrictions throughout the state. While schools fall under a different criterion for mitigation requirements, the baseline restrictions in place at the move to Phase 2 that were promulgated in Emergency Directive 022 and clarified and expanded upon in Directive 028 are, for the purposes of re-opening sports, Phase 2 requirements. At this time, the Phase 2 restrictions and requirements in the guidance, [Phased Re-Opening of High School Sports in Nevada](#), are in place.

In Phase 2 of the guidance, low transmission risk sports -- in compliance with distancing, face covering, screening, gathering size, workout pods and other requirements (see [guidance issued by NIAA, Update 8](#)) -- may practice and may hold competitions. Moderate transmission risk sports, modifying to comply with Phase 2 requirements, may begin practice but may **not** hold competitions. High transmission risk sports may conduct workouts/conditioning in

compliance with Phase 2 restrictions and requirements but may **not** begin practices nor competition in Phase 2. The following chart shows the level of transmission risk for each of the NIAA sanctioned sports.

Sport transmission risk classification is taken from NFHS SMAC [Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities](#) which relied on U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee -- Sports Medicine recommendations.

Potential Transmission Risk by Sport

| Season | Low Transmission Risk | Moderate with Possibility to be Low Transmission Risk* | Moderate Transmission Risk | High Transmission Risk |
|--------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Fall | G. Golf | Cross Country | Soccer | Football |
| | | Tennis | | |
| | | G. Volleyball | | |
| Winter | Bowling | | Basketball | Wrestling |
| | Skiing | | Flag Football | |
| | | | | |
| Spring | B. Golf | Baseball | | |
| | Diving | Softball | | |
| | | Swimming | | |
| | | Track & Field | | |
| | | B. Volleyball | | |

*Moderate transmission risk, summary of requirements to be considered low risk to allow competition in Phase 2. (see [guidance issued by NIAA, Update 8](#))

- Cross Country: staggered starts that allow for minimum of 6 ft. of distancing throughout the race.
- Tennis: server uses own balls which are distinguished from opponent’s. Hand sanitization at breaks.
- Volleyball: face coverings for players at all times, ball & hand sanitization.
- Baseball: no shared equipment, face coverings for players at all times, ball & hand sanitization.
- Softball: no shared equipment, face coverings for players at all times, ball & hand sanitization.
- Swimming: maintain minimum 6 ft. distance between individual competitors, may preclude relays.
- Track & Field: individual throwing events are low risk if implements are not shared or are sanitized prior to use by another; vertical jumping events require appropriate cleaning of landing pads between competitors; horizontal jumps require face coverings; non-lane races, including relays not run entirely in lanes, require staggered starts and maintenance of minimum of 6 ft. distance; lane races require maintenance of minimum of 6 ft. distance which may require not using some lanes to preserve separation of competitors; relays, in addition to lane considerations, require hand and baton sanitization.

All sports, regardless of transmission risk classification, must adhere to all the restrictions and requirements of the phase in which practice or competition takes place, as well as all state, local and school district directives. These include but are not limited to restrictions, requirements and directives regarding distancing, face covering, screening, gathering size, workout pods, etc.

Emergency Directive 021 issued May 28, 2020, provides for the resumption of sporting events but requires that such events remain closed for public attendance. In allowing for the opening of school athletic facilities, the Governor's office communicated clearly to this office that this restriction applies to high school sports events.

Many options were reviewed, including contesting spring sports in the fall and fall sports in the spring, as well as delaying the fall sports to a later time in the fall of 2020. In light of the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the NIAA, in consultation with league/region presidents and with unanimous approval by the superintendents of the school districts in the state, made the adjustments to the 2020-21 sports seasons. The adjustments were intended to give the most students the best chance of participating in the most sports. While it is hoped that the shortened sports seasons will be able to be held safely as now scheduled beginning in January 2021, there is no guarantee.

What is apparent is that with the current restrictions likely to remain in place, it is extremely likely that at least three fall sports could not hold any competition in the fall of 2020 and that other fall sports would require significant modification to have competition. Additionally, no spectators could be allowed at any of the competitions. Transportation to contests poses another challenge for schools and their school districts as bus capacities are seriously reduced in light of distancing requirements. Further, concerns were raised that contesting the spring season sports this fall ran a high risk of them being suspended again.

At this time, at least five school districts along with a number of charter schools which all together include more than 45 NIAA member schools and over 69% of the students enrolled in NIAA schools, will not begin school with in-person instruction and would not be able to compete even if a season were held this fall, unless those schools opened to in-person instruction. These include schools in all five classifications and in both northern and southern regions.

This office has received inquiries regarding the possibility of starting fall sports in late September or early to mid-October to allow for more competitive weeks for all seasons. Some of the inquiries were from coaches' associations of fall sports which included potential schedules. Inquiries have asked particularly for consideration for classifications and/or regions/leagues in areas of the state experiencing less impact from the pandemic. In consultation with league/region presidents as to whether such a prospect should be considered, the response was mixed with some support and some opposition. In consulting with the superintendents at their meeting the first week in August, the comment was made that it would be preferred not to alter the schedule issued for the January start. Only comments in favor, with none in opposition to that statement were made.

As indicated earlier, the adjusted schedule issued in [Update 11 on July 23](#) is reaffirmed.

Current Restrictions and Requirements

As indicated earlier, at this time, the Phase 2 restrictions and requirements in the guidance, *Phased Re-Opening of High School Sports in Nevada*, are in place. (see [guidance issued by NIAA, Update 8](#)) These Phase 2 restrictions and requirements are part of the re-opening of high school sports in the COVID-19 pandemic.

As is stated in [Update 11](#), "Out of season regulations (regulations traditionally in place during the summer) will be in place through January 1, 2021." This statement refers to NIAA

regulations in place regardless of whether there is a pandemic or not which due to the pandemic and schedule adjustment have been extended through January 1, 2021.

Below is a summary of restrictions and requirements currently in place due to the pandemic:

Governor's Emergency Directive 021, Section 22

Sporting events remain closed for public attendance.

Governor's Emergency Directive 022, Section 7 & Emergency Directive 028, Section 7

Phased Re-Opening of High School Sports in Nevada ([Guidance issued by NIAA, Update 8](#))

Phase 2

Pre-Workout/Contest Screening:

- All coaches and students should be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to a workout. Screening includes a temperature check.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case a student develops COVID-19.
- Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional.
- Vulnerable individuals (over 65, pre-existing health conditions) should not oversee or participate in any workouts during Phase 2.

Limitations on Gatherings:

- County school districts, charter schools, and private schools that re-open school buildings or facilities must ensure that occupancy shall not exceed the lesser of 50% of the listed fire code capacity of a single space within a school site or fifty persons in an appropriately sized space that enables all social distancing requirements to be satisfied. These limits apply to outdoor fields and facilities as well as indoor facilities.
- If locker rooms or meeting rooms are used, there must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between individuals at all times. Efforts should be made to encourage students and coaches to limit the use of locker rooms when at all possible by arriving ready for workouts and showering at private residences.
- Workouts should be conducted in "pods" of students with the same 5-10 students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures limited exposure if an individual develops an infection.
- There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between individuals at all times, whether indoors or outdoors. If this is not possible indoors, then the maximum number of individuals in the room must be decreased until proper social distancing can occur. Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines and benches during practices and competitions. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and coaches.

Facilities Cleaning:

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- 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, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after each individual's use of equipment.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.

Personal & Clothes/Equipment Hygiene:

- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place as well as at all practices and contests.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat transmission onto equipment/surfaces.
- Students should be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home.
- There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing, or shoes between students.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned intermittently during practices and contests.
- Athletic equipment such as bats, batting helmets and catchers gear should be cleaned between each use.

Physical Activity:

- Lower transmission risk sports practices and competitions may resume (see Potential Transmission Risk by Sport above).
- Modified practices may begin for Moderate risk sports. Modifications refer to adherence to Phase 2 restrictions and requirements, including distancing which will likely require significant modification of practice activities.
- Maximum lifts should be limited and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar.

Hydration:

- All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

Governor’s Emergency Directive 028, Section 4

Face Covering

The document, [*Phased Re-Opening of High School Sports in Nevada*](#), states, “State, local or school district guidelines for cloth face coverings should be strictly followed.”

Emergency Directive 028 requires that all students and school staff must wear a cloth face covering while on school buses, in school buildings, or on school campuses unless approved for an exemption.

In conjunction with CDC guidance, which the NIAA guidance reflects, students participating in swimming, while in the pool or immediately prior to entering the pool, are not required to wear a face covering. Students engaged in distance running or other high intensity aerobic activity are not required to wear a face covering while engaged in the activity. When engaged in these activities, and therefore not wearing a face covering, students are to be distanced 6 feet or more from any other person including but not limited to workout partners, teammates, and/or other competitors. If the distancing cannot be maintained at all times and it is inadvisable to wear a face covering due to the nature of the activity, the activity should not be done. In all cases, other than those listed here, face coverings are required to be worn.

None of the restrictions or requirements listed here change previous guidance. This summary is intended simply to reaffirm and clarify previous and recent directives and guidance.