

SOUTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



RETURN to PLAY
Athletics Plan
2020-2021

COVID-19 Re-Socialization of Sports



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Preface The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), White House Guidelines for [Opening Up America Again](#), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) along with other resources listed in our Important Reads Section form the basis of the recommendations to follow. These guidelines propose state or regional gating criteria and preparedness responsibilities in an effort to phase back into daily life, business openings, and large gatherings. The nature of how COVID-19 spreads also dictates how there may be regional differences in the phasing in of re-socialization. The purpose of this gradual phasing is to minimize disease spread as best as possible. The gating criteria to be used based upon the Opening Up America Again guidelines are:

1. Stable or downward trajectory of influenza-like illness reported within a 14-day period AND a downward trajectory of COVID-like syndrome cases reported within a 14-day period.
2. Stable or downward trajectory of documented cases of COVID-19 within a 14-day period or a downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period.
3. Hospitals can treat all patients without crisis care and there is a robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody testing.

The recommendations discussed below are meant as general guidelines, in the context of federal, state, and local county recommendations. These guidelines are focused on recommendations to be utilized in Pennsylvania's yellow and green phases. Further information will need to be obtained from federal, state, and local government entities to make recommendations past Pennsylvania's green phase. All federal, state, and local health department orders/recommendations as related to sports must be followed. Additionally, schools may place stricter criteria than what is listed.



Introduction The goal of this document is to provide recommendations for the re-socialization of sport with regard to practice and competition, keeping in mind the health and safety of our secondary school athletes, coaches/personnel, parents/caregivers and spectators.

■ **Benefits of Sport:** Participation in sport has known health benefits, including promoting physical fitness and mental wellness. Sports provide a social construct and interaction which is necessary in a time of uncertainty for our athletes. It is widely recognized that physical activity, performed for the right amount of time and intensity can provide benefits to the immune system. In addition, sports can provide a template for young athletes to learn concepts of teamwork, leadership, work ethic and integrity.

■ **Inherent Risk of Sport:** Participation in athletics involves unavoidable exposure to an inherent risk of injury. It is important to recognize that rule books, safety guidelines and equipment standards, while helpful means of promoting safe athletics participation, are themselves insufficient to accomplish this goal. To effectively minimize the risks of injury from athletics participation, everyone involved in athletics must understand and respect the intent and objectives of applicable rules, guidelines, and standards.

■ **Return to Activity Following Inactivity:** A thoughtful approach to exercise gives athletes a chance to acclimatize to the temperature and the intensity/duration of practices. This slow ramp up of exercise can decrease the risk of injury and heat illness. Since practices and competitions have been halted, many athletes are deconditioned, putting the athlete at much higher risk for injury if pushed too quickly with high volumes and high intensity. Overtraining, defined as prolonged or excessive repetitive activity or workouts in efforts to “catch up,” does not allow the body to adjust and recover, which can lead to decreased performance and/or increased risk of injury. Please refer to the Important Reads Section for resources such as the [National Strength and Conditioning Association \(NSCA\) COVID-19 Return to Training](#) and CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods: Safe Return to Training Following Inactivity.

■ This guidance is preliminary; as more public health information is available, the state of Pennsylvania may work with relevant entities to release further guidance which could impact fall, winter, and/or spring seasons. These considerations are meant to supplement – not replace – any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which schools must comply.

■ The information re: SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing the COVID-19 illness, is changing rapidly nationally and within our communities. This document is created based on information available to date. Be sure to request the most up to date version of this document if you believe your version is outdated.



Decision Making Process

- Should you consider opening?
 - Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
 - Is the school ready to protect children and staff at higher risk for severe illness?
 - Are you able to screen athletes and staff upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?
 - Are you able to obtain adequate supplies for recommended cleaning procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE) for health screening and other recommended usage?

- Are recommended health and safety actions in place?
 - Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing and staff wearing a mask or face covering. ▪ Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation.
 - Follow social distancing guidelines through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixing between groups according to recommendations.
 - Train all staff on health and safety protocols.
 - The school must designate a primary point of contact for all questions related to COVID-19, and all parents, athletes, officials, and coaches must be provided the person's contact information.

- Is ongoing monitoring in place?
 - Develop and implement procedures to check for signs and symptoms of athletes and staff daily upon arrival.
 - Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home.



- Do you have a plan for if athletes or staff get sick?
- Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, staff, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures.
- Monitor athlete and staff absences and have flexible leave policies and practices.
- Establish communication procedure for athletes and staff to self-report COVID-19
- Establish a notification procedure when you have a suspected or diagnosed case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#), the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), and other applicable laws and regulations.
- Create a contingency staffing plan.
- Be ready to consult with local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area.

Preparing for Re-Entry

- Building Preparations
 - Create protocols to limit entrance and exit traffic, designating specific entry to and exits from facilities.
 - **The athletic entrance (near the athletic office) will be used for “Entrance Only”. The training room doors (near the training room) will be used for “Exit Only”.**
 - If a building has remained dormant for an extended period, we recommend you review CDC guidance on maintaining water system safety when buildings are dormant ([CDC - Building Water System](#)) and apply this guidance as appropriate. Consideration should be given to water lines in regard to ice machines, water sources, and hand washing.
 - Review and implement CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfection ([CDC - Cleaning and Disinfecting](#))
 - Ensure custodial and environmental services are regular and/or increased to meet CDC guidelines.
- Staff Training
 - Staff will need to be trained specifically on the protocols outlined in this document and the practices adopted by their school. May consider virtual training. Social distancing is recommended until CDC, state and local authorities declare otherwise.



- Reinforcement of safety protocols and requirements associated with but not limited to CPR/AED training and Emergency Action Plans.
- Require Sick Athletes and Staff to Stay Home
- Provide education to advise individuals on what to do if they are sick ([CDC - What to do if you are sick](#))
- Establish procedures to ensure athletes and staff that become sick onsite or arrive onsite sick are sent home as soon as possible.
 - **Room 313 in the HS will be used as an isolation room for students and staff who do not pass the daily screening process. In the case of a student-athlete, a parent/guardian will be contacted to come pick them up. They will be provided with resources if a primary care provider is unavailable.**
- Create a plan to isolate those who are sick until they can leave. Plan to have areas where a sick person can be isolated from well athletes and staff until they can leave the school.
- Share resources with the school community to help families understand when to keep children home. This guidance, not specific to COVID-19, from the American Academy of Pediatrics [When to Keep Your Child Home](#) can be helpful for families.
- Positive COVID-19 Case
- Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, have coaches, staff, umpires/officials, and families of athletes (as feasible) self-report to the school if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing [regulations](#) for COVID-19, and other applicable laws and regulations.
- All those who had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 (within 48 hours prior to symptom onset) should be advised to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and be advised to follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. Individuals with close contacts should be excluded from practice for 14 days. Close contact is defined as having close (within 6ft) and prolonged (≥30 minutes) contact with the COVID-19 patient.
- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfecting [products](#), including storing them securely away from children.



- Develop a notification system (e.g., letter) schools can use to notify health officials and close contacts of cases of COVID-19.
- Be prepared for possibility of temporary closures and team isolations in the event of recurrent outbreaks and its implications.
- Create a system to notify staff, officials, families, and the public of facility closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).
- Schools are not responsible for testing for COVID-19 but will screen for symptoms of COVID-19.

Prior to Resuming Physical Activity

- Special Considerations for Athletes and Staff at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19
 - Athletes and staff who should consider delaying their participation in sports and activities are those with any of the following:
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic Lung Disease including Asthma
 - Severe obesity (Body Mass Index >40)
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Heart conditions
 - Immunocompromised (e.g. any transplant recipient, needing immunosuppressant medications (e.g. steroids, biologics, etc.), patients receiving chemotherapy, etc.)
 - Age 65 or older
 - If there is a concern that someone is immunocompromised or has any concern regarding their risk in terms of participation in sports and activities, they should consult their health care provider prior to returning to sports.
- Pre-Participation Physical Examination Considerations
 - Dependent on governing body or state association
 - If there is a deviation from the standard frequency requirement (i.e. annually) prior to COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to emphasize to parents/guardians that a deviation from standard of care has occurred.



- Returning to sports following COVID-19 diagnosis
- An individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19 may return when all four of the following criteria are met:
 - At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - Individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - At least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared
 - Written documentation of clearance from a health care provider (MD, DO, NP, PA)
 - **Written documentation is always required for any student-athlete who's returning to play from an injury or sickness that requires medical care.**

Promote Wellness and Hygiene

- The potential for pre-symptomatic transmission is why the use of face coverings and social distancing, including the avoidance of congregate settings, is imperative to reduce COVID-19 spread. ▪ Staying Home when Appropriate
 - Education and Promotion on Self Screening for Signs and Symptoms ([CDC - If You Are Sick](#))
- Hand hygiene is essential. Schools 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. Hand washing or use of hand sanitizer should take place pre- and post-activity. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer should be made available during activity.
 - **Hand sanitizer stations will be set up in high volume areas**
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- Activities that increase the risk of exposure to saliva must not be allowed; including chewing gum, spitting, licking fingers, and eating sunflower seeds.
- Avoid any unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
- No team huddles should take place.



▪ Face Coverings

- All adult staff (coaches, athletic trainers, etc.) must wear masks or face coverings at all times unless doing so jeopardizes their health.
- Athletes must wear masks or face coverings when they arrive onsite for health screening and when not actively participating in activity and social distancing is challenging (sidelines, dugouts, athletic training room, etc.).
- Athletes must wear masks or face coverings during activity if contact is closer than 6 ft for a period of time longer than 15 minutes. If athletes are separated by more than 6ft, then no mask is required.
- Allow athletes to wear PPE items at all times if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of the athlete or others participating in activity.
- Social distancing is still required until CDC, state and local authorities declare otherwise.
- It is important to be aware of the potential negative impact that a crisis can have on our mental and physical health. Athletes and staff should be provided resources associated with seeking support. See additional resources for coping and resiliency support on page 19.
- Provide signage, resources and handouts regarding infectious disease prevention education.
- **The tennis courts located at the high school and middle school will be opened back up for public use as of the adoption of this plan.**
 - **All guidelines set forth by the PA Department of Health and the CDC must be followed while using this facility.**

Health Screening Procedure

1. Athletes and staff are required to be screened when they arrive onsite where the sporting activity will occur. Athletes are to wear a mask or face covering until activity begins. Staff is recommended to wear a mask or face covering at all times.
2. Athletic staff, such as but not limited to an administrator, athletic trainer, coach, and/or nurse should conduct the screening.
 - A mask must be worn by the person conducting the screening. Gloves shall be utilized by the health care provider if any direct contact with a person screened is required.



3. The screening should include the following questions:

- Today or in the past 24 hours have you had any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever (temperature greater than or equal to 100.4°F/38°C)
 - New or worsening cough
 - Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
 - Sore throat, different than your seasonal allergies
 - New loss of smell and/or taste
 - Nausea, diarrhea or vomiting
- Do you have a household member or close contact, who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks?
 - Have you been diagnosed or tested positive for COVID-19? If Yes, have you provided required written clearance from your health care provider to return to physical activity or work?
- Temperature check with a thermometer is required.
 - Temperature threshold is greater than or equal to 100.4°F/38°C.
 - If temperature is above 100.4°F/38°C threshold, two additional measures should be taken to verify initial measure
 - Forehead thermometer/non-contact thermometer is preferable
- Temperature check should take place in a temperature controlled environment whenever possible
 - Person screened should be well rested, i.e. no recent physical activity
 - **All health screenings will be performed directly inside the athletic entrance of the HS**
 - **All health screenings will be performed by athletic staff and athletic trainers**



4. If an athlete or staff has positive findings on their COVID-19 screening they should be sent home immediately.

- If a parent or caregiver is not present, a predetermined staff member should escort them to a designated isolation room (**HS Room 313**) or area away from others and have them wear a mask or face covering. They should then be directed to contact their health care provider for evaluation and potential COVID-19 testing. Those without a health care provider can be directed to a local COVID hotline such as St. Luke's University Health Network 1-866-785-8537 Option 7 or Lehigh Valley Health Network 1-888-402-5846. Positively screened individuals should not return until they have documentation demonstrating the SARS-CoV-2 test was negative or a note from their healthcare provider indicating they do not need to be tested and their symptoms are not due to COVID-19.

- CDC does not recommend isolation of contacts of a person being evaluated for COVID-19 until the diagnosis is confirmed.

5. Documentation of individuals screened must be maintained. Depending on the environment, a system may want to be developed with indicators to ensure clarity that all individuals have been screened (sticker, stamp, wristband, attendance log, etc.).

- **Students and staff will be given a colored wrist band that needs to remain on them while on campus**

6. Create a notification procedure to communicate to appropriate administrators when there is a positive screen.

- **The Southern Lehigh Pandemic Team will be notified immediately.**

When Physical Activity Resumes

- Pre-K to 12 (PK-12) school sports under the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) and the Pennsylvania Independent Schools Athletic Association (PISAA) are permitted to resume in counties designated in the Yellow and Green phases, in alignment with the [PDE Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools](#) and the [CDC for Youth Sports](#).

- The decision to resume sports-related activities, including conditioning, practices, and games, is the discretion of a school's entity's governing body. Each school entity must develop and adopt an Athletics Health and Safety Plan aligning to the [PDE Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools](#) and [Pennsylvania's Guidance for Sports](#) prior to conducting sports-related activities with students. The plan must include the provisions of this guidance, be approved by the local governing body of the school entity, and be posted on the school entity's publicly available website. The plan does not need to be



submitted to the DOH or PDE for approval.

■ Any sports-related activities in Yellow or Green phased counties must adhere to the gathering limitations set forth by the Governor's Plan for Phased Reopening (25 people in yellow, 250 people in green) and the facility as a whole may not exceed 50% of total occupancy permitted by law.

■ During the Yellow and Green phases of reopening, sports-related activities at the PK-12 level are limited to student athletes, coaches, officials, and staff only. The addition of visitors and spectators will be contingent upon future health conditions within the state and local communities.

■ Key Points and Recommendations

▪ Sports-related activities must be modified to comply with social distancing requirements during all phases.

▪ Please consider the Infection Risk by Sport table (page 16) when creating your Athletics Health and Safety Plan.

▪ We recommend phases 1, 2, and 3 described below should last a minimum of 14 days before proceeding to the following phase.

▪ Do not proceed to the following phase unless it meets state and county recommendations regardless of 14 days. (i.e. Phase 3 should not occur unless your county is in PA's Green phase)

Pre-workout Screening

1st 14 Days:

- All athletes & staff must be screened prior to a workout (including temperature checks)
- Refer to health screening procedure recommendations
- Screening responses should be recorded & stored
- Symptomatic people cannot participate & should contact their health care provider
- Vulnerable individuals should consult their health care provider prior to overseeing or participating in sports-related activities



2nd 14 Days:

- Anyone with a fever or cold symptoms in the previous 24 hours should not participate & should contact their health care provider
- Records should be kept of all people present
- Continue health screening of all athletes and staff
- Vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions but should practice social distancing and minimize exposure in social settings where distancing may not be practical

Limitations on Number of Students Participating Together

1st 14 Days:

- Up to 25 people at a time - INDOORS & OUTDOORS
- Locker rooms for changing and meeting rooms may be used - social distancing of 6 ft must be maintained
- Continue to use the same workout "pods" •Continue to keep 6ft apart indoors, if still not possible, continue to limit the number of people
- Social distancing must be maintained on sidelines/benches - consider using tape/paint or other markers as guides

2nd 14 Days:

- Up to 250 people at a time or 50% of facility occupancy, whichever is less - INDOORS & OUTDOORS
- Continue to keep 6 ft apart between people - use tape/paint or other markers as guides



Physical Activity and Usage of Athletic Equipment

1st 14 Days:

- No sharing of athletic towels, clothing or shoes
- Athletic equipment must be cleaned intermittently during practices/games
- Equipment such as bats, batting helmets & catcher's gear should be cleaned between each use
- Limit maximum lifts & use power cages for squats/bench presses
- Spotters should stand at each end of the bar
- Hand sanitizer should be available during all activity

2nd 14 Days:

- No sharing of athletic towels, clothing or shoes
- Equipment such as bats, batting helmets, & catcher's gear must be cleaned between each use
- Other equipment such as football helmets, lacrosse pads, ear guards & eyewear should only be used by one individual and not shared
- Limit maximum lifts and use power cages for squats/bench presses
- Spotters should stand at each end for the bar
- Hand sanitizer should be available during all activity
- All voluntary summer workouts will be done on the Southern Lehigh Campus.
- All voluntary summer workouts will require the approval of a practice plan



- The plan will be submitted to the Athletic Director 24 hours prior to a scheduled workout.
- An approval will be sent to the coach that submitted the plan prior to their scheduled time.
- Coaches will use a Google Form to complete their practice plan.

Individualized Hydration

- All athletes and coaches must bring their own water or drinks to team activities; these cannot be shared.
 - Teams will have access to bottled water for those who run out of water or do not have access to water.
- Ice towels may be used for single use only and discarded or washed properly.
- Team water coolers and disposable cups are not allowed.
- Hydration stations or fixed water fountains should not be used.
- Personal water bottles should be properly identified with an individual's name.

Post-workout Procedure

- Hand washing or hand sanitizing should be utilized after a workout.
- No congregating in groups should occur.
- Clothing should be changed and washed after each workout session.
- All athletes should leave facilities immediately post-workout and return home to shower.
- No whirlpool or hot/cold tubs should be used.
 - Exception would be to use in accordance with our Emergency Action Plan related to heat illness.



Sanitizing Facilities

- Create and implement adequate cleaning and disinfecting schedules for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Refer to EPA list N for appropriate disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2.
- Equipment and tables with holes that expose foam should be covered.
- Hard surfaces should be sanitized prior to people entering the facility.
- Ensure all high touch, high traffic areas are included in cleaning and disinfecting schedules.
- Weight room will be marked with tape to position anyone using that room to promote social distancing.
- **Signage will be placed in the weight room and athletic hallways promoting wellness and hygiene**
- Weight room equipment should be disinfected before and after each person's use.
 - Containers of gym wipes are located in the weight room for athletes and coaches to use.



Important Reads and Source Documents:

- Pennsylvania's Guidance for All Sports Permitted to Operate During the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency to Ensure the Safety and Health of Employees, Athletes, and the Public Published June 10, 2020.

- Pennsylvania Department of Education, Preliminary Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools. Published June 3, 2020, version 1. PDE Preliminary Guidance for Pre-K to 12 Schools

- CDC - Youth Sports Considerations Last reviewed June 8, 2020.

- CDC - Schools Considerations Last reviewed June 1, 2020.

- Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), accessed May 15, 2020

- PIAA Press Release Published June 10, 2020.

- Sports Event Planning Considerations Post-COVID-19, United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee April 28, 2020 – v0.11

- CDC Cleaning and Disinfection Tool. CDC.gov. CDC - Cleaning and Disinfection Decision Tool. Last reviewed May 7, 2020.

- CDC Handwashing Guidelines. CDC.gov. CDC - Handwashing Last reviewed April 2, 2020.

- Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 (Interim Guidance). CDC.gov. CDC - Return to Work Criteria. Last reviewed April 30, 2020.

- State of Missouri Novel Coronavirus Analytics. Health.mo.gov. State of Missouri - Coronavirus Analytics. Published May 5, 2020.

- The resurgence of sport in the wake of COVID-19: cardiac considerations in competitive athletes. BMJ.com. BMJ Blog - Cardiac Considerations in the Wake of



COVID-19 Published April 24, 2020.

■ A Game Plan for the Resumption of Sport and Exercise After Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Infection. JAMA Cardiol. JAMA Cardiology - Game Plan for Resumption of Sports Published online May 13, 2020.

doi:10.1001/jamacardio.2020.2136

■ Korey Stringer Institute's Return to Sports and Exercise during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Guidance for Collegiate and High School Athletics Programs. Published June 6, 2020. KSI Return to Sport and Exercise Guidance

■ COVID-19: NSCA Guidance on Safe Return to Training For Athletes, National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) COVID-19 Return to Training Taskforce. Published May 2020.

■ CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods: Safe Return to Training Following Inactivity; Caterisano, A, Decker, D, Snyder, B, Feigenbaum, M, Glass, R, House, P, Sharp, C, Waller, M, and Witherspoon, Z. 2019. CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods. Strength and Conditioning Journal, 41(3), 1-23.

■ National Athletic Trainers Association: Covid-19 Return-to-Sport Considerations for Secondary School Athletic Trainers. Published May 2020.