



**Sports Medicine Advisory Committee
 Considerations for Returning to High School Athletics and Activities
 During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

There is a wealth of advisory documents currently available from governmental and private agencies to help guide schools for the return to athletics and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The FHSAA SMAC strongly recommends our member schools review these documents and meet with state and local health agencies as you begin your school-specific plans to resume athletics and activities in your schools. Because information about COVID-19 is constantly evolving, the FHSAA SMAC recommends member schools edit their plans as updates occur. The decision for any return to activity should be made with safety as the ultimate priority and understand as conditions change, it may require individual schools to make changes to their plan.

General Information:

- All summer workouts are voluntary.
- These considerations represent a minimum standard. When creating individual plans, FHSAA member school districts/schools may be more restrictive as needed.
- Adherence to FHSAA Policies **40** (*Concussions*), **41** (*Exertional Heat Illness including Zachary Martin Act*), **42** (*Sudden Cardiac Arrest*), and **43** (*Emergency Action Plans*) is required throughout the entire calendar year.
- All students shall have required paperwork on file before any participation including, voluntary conditioning, weightlifting or tryouts, this includes: A current EL2 Pre-Participation Physical and EL3 Consent and Release of Liability

Centers for Disease Control	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html
National Federation of High School Sports	https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf
Korey Stringer Institute	https://ksi.uconn.edu/covid-19-return-to-activity/
Florida Department of Health	http://www.floridahealth.gov/index.html

Key components of FHSAA member school plans shall include:

- **INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION AND DISINFECTING PROCEDURAL PLAN**
 This section should include a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities involved in keeping your athletic facilities and equipment clean and sanitary. The plan should highlight cleaning and disinfecting products recommended by the CDC to clean and prevent the transmission or spread of COVID-19. Hand sanitizers should be readily available and suggested educational signage should be visible. According the NFHS document, initial return to play should be done in smaller groups. This protocol allows for schools to include language to outline adequate transition periods between workout groups to allow for cleaning and disinfection as well as to identify drop off and pick up locations. Additionally, this section should include your school's expectation regarding the use of masks or face coverings, the promotion of physical distancing, and the responsibility for students to supply personal towels and water bottles (large water coolers or COWS are advised against).
- **COVID-19 SCREENING, REPORTING AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURE**
 If possible, start times and pick up times should be staggered to prevent congregation of student-athletes and caregivers. The references listed above provide comprehensive guidance and examples of screening procedures and sample documents that schools can use to document student responses to screening questions. Schools shall have appropriate dismissal (recognition, isolation, and disposition) policies and procedures for students who enter campus when ill or exhibit concerning symptoms and respond affirmatively to any of the COVID-19 screening

This document was created to aid FHSAA member schools in preparing for return to athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic. It allows adaptation and respects member schools/districts and the decisions they are facing in regard to their individual COVID-19 pandemic situation and response, the overall safety of students and staff, and the comprehensive guidelines published by trusted national resources.

questions. No athlete or coach should be permitted on campus if symptomatic or answers affirmative to high risk of contact. This dismissal procedure should indicate the reporting responsibility of the coach in these cases.

To aid in the screening process, the SMAC is aware of phone apps available through Apple and Google that may be helpful to schools and those responsible for collecting this important information.

- **PHASED-PLAN OF RETURN TO SPORTS INCLUDING ACCLIMATIZATION, CONDITIONING, WEIGHT LIFTING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

In concordance with the re-opening guidelines from our Governor when opening the State, school athletics and activities should resume in clearly defined phases. These stages begin with small, isolated group workouts allowing for physical distancing and acclimatization. Next, they progress strategically, approximately every two weeks, allowing the groups to expand and activities to increase. A suggested model includes at least a three-phased approach:

Phase 1: Conditioning in small, isolated pods. Do not allow pods to interact for the initial phase.

Phase 2: Larger groups, strength and conditioning; introduction of heat acclimatization.

Phase 3: Full team practice with skill development and continued heat acclimatization.

The FHSAA SMAC strongly recommends reevaluating your school plan before advancing onto the subsequent stage of the program.

- **FACILITY USE PLAN**

The FHSAA SMAC strongly recommends your school's return-to-athletics plan include a facility use plan that identifies specific school facilities available or restricted for use by student-athletes or coaches during the summer work-out schedule. It is anticipated this section of the comprehensive plan also allow for increased access to facilities in a progression similar to the phased activities. This section should detail access or restriction to restroom, locker room, weight room and other parts of your school and athletic field house that may have, in the past, routinely been accessible to your student-athletes and coaches, especially if restrictions are in place early in the plan. Published recommendations highlight facility restrictions early and allow limited access in later phases.

PLEASE NOTE: For lightning, schools shall identify a safer structure to be used in the event of a thunderstorm for the safety of students and staff.

- **SPORTS EQUIPMENT AND HYDRATION**

The FHSAA SMAC endorses the above references regarding a graduated introduction of select sports equipment. No wearable equipment should be shared under any circumstance. Clear expectations shall be included in your school plans regarding the cleaning and disinfection of the gear. Schools should pay particular attention to the published guidelines regarding the use of hydration equipment and prepare students appropriately to bring an identified personal water bottle(s). Due to heightened awareness surrounding the dangers of heat stress and dehydration, coaches shall provide strict oversight to ensure students have access to water at all times and remain compliant with FHSAA Policy 41 including environmental monitoring and the availability and use of cooling zones.

- **EDUCATION**

While the references listed in this document provide detailed and comprehensive strategies for our schools to plan for return to athletics and activities, the FHSAA SMAC strongly recommends our schools and coaches consider this an educational opportunity for student-athletes. The FHSAA SMAC further reinforces this opportunity for coaches to review personal hygiene strategies with their teams. This educational moment can allow coaches to establish expectations and lead by example to reduce the transmission of not only COVID-19, but also other contagions like MRSA and other bacterial or viral conditions that may affect your teams or individual athletes.