



COVID-19 RETURN TO R.A.I.S.E. OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR MCPS ATHLETICS Update – July 17, 2020

The purpose of this communication is to provide the scheduled update regarding the operating procedures for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) interscholastic athletics program. This update consists of the following items:

1. Guiding Principles
2. State Updates
3. MCPS Update
4. Recommended Actions and Resources
5. Note Regarding Non-School Teams

Guiding Principles

As MCPS Athletics continues the implementation of the *Return to R.A.I.S.E.* strategic plan, the following guiding principles will drive operations. The guiding principles incorporate the R.A.I.S.E. core values of MCPS Athletics. MCPS Athletics is committed to:

- Promoting our core values of equity and access to allow for the participation for ALL students.
- Ensuring the gradual, safe return of student-athletes to in-person participation in interscholastic athletic activities.
- Maximizing participation opportunities, including the timely implementation and incremental transition to new phases.
- Providing ongoing communication regarding the current operations of the MCPS Athletics program, in alignment with state and local guidelines, considerations, and recommendations.

State Updates

- On July 7, 2020, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) issued the [Roadmap for Return to Interscholastic Athletics](#), which provides guidance for local school systems to use when designing return-to-play strategic plans, which align with national, state, and local health guidelines.
- On July 14, 2020, the MPSSAA provided an update on the status of fall sports. The first allowable practice date for fall sports remains August 12, 2020. Schools are recommended to implement the preparation phase found in the MPSSAA [Roadmap for Return to Interscholastic Athletics](#) in anticipation of the first practice date, which is currently August 12, 2020, as noted in the [State Superintendent's statement](#) on June 11, 2020, and the latest guidance of the [Maryland Health Department](#).
- The MPSSAA Executive Council will continue to meet on a weekly basis to receive updates and take necessary actions leading up to August 12, 2020, and throughout the pandemic as needed.

MCPS Update

- The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics has met four times to discuss the MPSSAA Roadmap and the safe return of the MCPS athletics program. The task force, along with the 25 MCPS high school athletics specialists (ADs) unanimously support the actions that follow.
- **MCPS will continue in Phase 1 of the *Return to R.A.I.S.E.* plan**, which provides guidance for the virtual engagement of out-of-season activities and prohibits in-person activities, **through August 11, 2020. Therefore all in-person all-school conditioning and activities are cancelled through August 11, 2020.**
- An **update** regarding the status of fall sports and program operations on August 12, 2020, and beyond will be provided **by the end of July 2020**. Potential considerations include proceeding with activities on August 12, delaying the start of in-person program operations, allowing program operations for some sports/teams, providing virtual engagement opportunities, or suspending program operations. Decisions will be made in alignment with state and county health guidelines.
- **Students are encouraged to pursue getting physicals for the upcoming school year.** Please note that the [new physical form](#) includes a COVID-19 supplement, which is required for all new physicals after July 20, 2020. MedStar, one of the vendors that supplies certified athletic trainers for MCPS, is offering [free pre-participation physicals](#) for students. In addition, [Care for Kids](#) is a program that may assist students and families, if eligible.
- MCPS Athletics is committed to promoting the safe return of in-person out-of-season activities, incorporating state and local guidelines and recommendations, as soon as possible.

Recommended Actions and Resources

- The latest information and updates regarding the operations of the MCPS interscholastic athletics program are available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information](#) section of the MCPS Athletics webpage. This page will be updated on an ongoing basis, to reflect the latest resources and program operations.
- The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics and the 25 high school athletics specialists (ADs) unanimously recommend that all stipend coaches and athletic department personnel complete the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) free online course [COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators](#). Students and parents/guardians are also encouraged to take the course.
- A summary of [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#) is available on the COVID-19 Athletics Information webpage. This document will continue to be updated on an ongoing basis.
- During the coming weeks, stakeholders are encouraged to review resources regarding the gradual safe return to participation, including the following resources:
 - [Return to Sports and Exercise during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance for High School and Collegiate Athletic Programs](#)
 - [MPSSAA guidance regarding heat acclimatization and heat related illnesses](#)
 - [MCPS Fall Heat Plan](#)
 - [MCPS Heat & Hydration Resources](#)
 - [Conditioning Program Recommendations](#)
- Coaches may continue to support the well-being of students and assist with the gradual return to in-person activities by conducting virtual activities and delivering information as outlined in Phase 1 of the *Return to R.A.I.S.E.* strategic plan.

Note Regarding Non-School Teams

While MCPS does not administer non-school teams, coaches and student-athletes must comply with all regulations and standards listed in the [MCPS Out of-Season Participation Standards and Regulations](#). If outside leagues are able to operate within state and local guidelines, coaches and others are reminded that non-school teams must meet the definition of a non-school team and participation by MCPS coaches and returning players must comply with all regulations and standards. In this regard, any operations and communications for non-school teams may not occur through the MCPS Web Conferencing Center or MCPS platforms.