



Guidance for Sports Activities

November 11, 2020

Executive Order No. 149, issued on May 29, 2020, permitted sporting activities, including organized sports, to resume on June 22, 2020. Permissible sporting activities were required to take place in outdoor settings only in a manner that did not involve person-to-person contact or routinely entail individuals interacting within six feet of one another. Executive Order No. 168, issued on July 20, 2020, stated that practices and competitions for Low Risk sports and no-contact practices for Medium and High Risk sports are permitted in outdoor and indoor settings. Contact practices and competitions for Medium and High Risk sports were permitted in outdoor settings only. Executive Order No. 187, issued on October 12, 2020, permitted contact competitions and practices for Medium and High Risk sports in indoor settings to resume. Executive Order No. 194, issued on November 10, 2020, suspended interstate youth sports competitions in New Jersey, prohibited New Jersey teams, leagues and schools from hosting interstate youth sports competitions outside of New Jersey, and prohibited indoor youth sports competitions outside of New Jersey that would require New Jersey teams to travel to another state, effective November 12, 2020.

This “Guidance for Sports Activities” published by the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is intended to guide organizations that oversee sports activities as they resume operations to ensure the health and safety of staff, participants, and their families. The Guidance address skill-building drills and team-based practices as described in the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Guidance on Youth Sports](#).

This guidance document does not apply to professional sports activities or US national team activities.

High school sporting activities under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) must abide by NJSIAA protocols, which shall consider NJDOH guidance. Per Executive Order No. 149 (2020), NJSIAA activities may not resume before June 30, 2020.

As a reminder, youth sports summer camps that were permitted to open on or after July 6, 2020, must follow all applicable summer camp guidance, in addition to these Standards for Sports Activities.

Practices, inter-team games, scrimmages, and tournaments, both contact and non-contact, are permitted for Low, Medium and High Risk Sports in indoor and outdoor settings. Effective November 12, 2020, indoor interstate youth sports competitions – including those operated by school-based, club, and recreational programs —are suspended in New Jersey. The suspension applies to sports across all risk levels. “Indoor interstate youth sports competition” includes any sports game, scrimmage, tournament, or similar competition that is conducted indoors with opposing teams or individuals from different states competing against each other and which would require an opposing team or individual to travel from a state outside of New Jersey.

Indoor practices and competitions are subject to the current indoor gathering limit, which currently limits attendance to 25% of the capacity of the room or 25 persons maximum, whichever number is lower. However, if the number of individuals who are necessary for practice or competition, such as athletes, coaches, and referees, is more than 25, the practice or competition may proceed if spectators and other unnecessary persons are prohibited. Even if this exception applies, the number of individuals at the practice or competition cannot exceed 25% of the capacity of the room, and such limit cannot exceed 150 persons.

The public health data on which this document is based can and do change frequently. Organizers should check back frequently for updates. NJDOH also encourages organizers to keep informed of



guidance from the CDC, which may change regularly.

Sports program operators must abide by the following risk assessment chart:

<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Permissible Activities</u>	<u>Prohibited Activities</u>
High risk - Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants	Rugby, boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, wrestling, pair figure skating, football, group dance, group cheer.	No-contact and contact practices in indoor and outdoor settings	Indoor interstate youth sports competitions in NJ
Medium Risk - Sports that involve some close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that cannot be cleaned between participants.	Lacrosse, hockey, multi-person rowing, multi-person kayaking, multi-person canoeing, water polo, swimming relays, fencing, cycling in a group, running in a close group, group sailing, volleyball, soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, short track, gymnastics, sideline cheer.	No-contact and contact practices in indoor and outdoor settings	Indoor interstate youth sports competitions in NJ
Low Risk - Sports that can be done individually, do not involve person-to-person contact and do not routinely entail individuals interacting within six feet of one another	Archery, shooting/clay target, individual running events, individual cycling events, individual swimming, individual rowing, individual diving, equestrian jumping or dressage, golf, individual sailing, weightlifting, skiing, snowboarding, tennis, individual dance, pole vault, high jump, long jump, marathon, triathlon, cross country, track and field, disc golf, badminton	Practices and competitions in indoor and outdoor settings	Indoor interstate youth sports competitions in NJ



Guidance for Operations

Outdoor and Indoor Sports and Athletic Facilities Organizations, businesses, schools, and government entities that operate outdoor and indoor sports facilities, such as athletic fields, courts and other playing surfaces, pools, and sailing and boating facilities that are permitted to reopen their premises and facilities to adult sports and supervised youth sport leagues, summer sports camps, and other athletic activities should follow the safety measures outlined below. As a reminder, municipalities retain the discretion to open or close municipal fields or facilities.

1. Preparing a Sports Program for Practices

- a. Each sports program shall create a plan (“program preparation plan”) to ensure the following:
 - i. Identify adult staff members or volunteers to help remind coaches, players and staff of social distancing. Use of signs, tapes or physical barriers can be used to assist with guiding social distancing requirements.
 - ii. Within the program, consider creating consistent groups of the same staff, volunteers, and athletes, and avoid mixing between groups.
 - iii. Individuals shall remain 6 feet apart from one another whenever possible. This applies to athletes, coaching staff, and referees, as well as parents/guardians and other spectators to the extent they are permitted. Coaching staff must ensure that athletes remain 6 feet apart when not engaged in sports activities, such as when seated on the bench or standing on the sidelines. Staff may, however, bring team members together for brief team meetings (e.g. huddles) if all participants are masked.
 - iv. Coaching staff and parents/guardians must wear cloth or disposable masks. Athletes must wear cloth or disposable masks when not engaging in vigorous activity, such as when sitting on the bench and when interacting with an athletic trainer. Face masks are not required when persons are engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities. Face masks should **not** be worn when engaged in activities that may cause the cloth face covering to become wet, like when swimming, or when doing so may endanger the individual’s health. When face coverings are not worn, efforts should be made to maintain at least 6 feet from others (e.g., space individuals that are participating in non-contact drills six feet apart). Coaching staff should monitor mask wearing while athletes are not actively engaged in high intensity activities.
 - v. Create staggered schedules to limit contact between groups and/or players.
 - vi. All staff should be educated on COVID-19 health and safety protocols prior to the resumption of athletic activities, including:
 1. Revised practice rules and regulations in place during COVID-19;



2. The importance of staying home when experiencing symptoms of COVID- 19 or residing with someone experiencing symptoms of COVID- 19, or in any other instance in which CDC would recommend quarantine;
 3. Social distancing and face coverings;
 4. Proper hand hygiene;
 5. How to address a situation in which an athlete presents with symptoms of COVID-19; and
 6. How do address situations in which social distancing or other necessary requirements are challenged by athletes or parents/guardians/visitors;
 7. When not to allow athletes to practice or compete based upon public health recommendation and/or CDC guidance on quarantine and isolation;
 8. The need to maintain up to date roster lists and contact information for all athletes, coaches, family members and other individuals who will be in contact with the team; and
 9. The need to cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of any cases or outbreaks of COVID-19, including providing the complete list of all relevant individuals and their contact information upon request.
- vii. Educate athletes and coaching staff about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity.
1. Actively encourage sick staff, families, and athletes to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.
 2. [Individuals, including coaches, athletes, and families, should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
 3. Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
 4. All individuals who have been advised to stay home by public health recommendation and/or CDC guidance on quarantine and isolation.
 5. Immediately separate coaches, staff, officials, and athletes with COVID- 19 symptoms at any sports activity. Individuals who have had close contact with a person who has symptoms should be separated and sent home as well, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#).
 6. Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility.
- viii. All athletes, coaches, and staff should bring their own water and drinks to practice activities. Team water coolers for sharing through disposable cups and other types of shared water sources should not be permitted
- ix. Encourage athletes to use their own equipment to the extent possible.



- x. Discourage sharing of equipment as much as possible. If equipment is shared, coaching staff should be aware of the sanitation procedures for team equipment (mats, balls, bats, batons, etc.) and sufficient disinfecting wipes or similar products should be made available. Consult CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection.
- xi. Individually partitioned showers or communal showers with installed barriers/partitions (at least 6 feet apart) are only permitted in facilities with pools (in accordance with the NJAC 8:26, Public Recreational Bathing). Locker room use will otherwise be restricted to hand washing and restroom use – all other uses should be limited wherever possible. If facility showers are to be used, ensure signage is in place to reminding athletes to maintain proper physical distancing of 6 feet.
- xii. Teams should avoid gathering in rooms that do not allow them to maintain six feet of distance (e.g., locker rooms) during half-time or other breaks in activity to the maximum extent possible.
- b. Communicate applicable details of the plan to parents/guardians and/or participants before commencing practices.
- c. Organizers should further consult and implement, as appropriate, recommendations listed in the CDC guidance regarding assessing risk, promoting healthy behaviors, and maintaining a healthy environment during youth sports.

2. Preparing an Indoor or Outdoor Facility for Sports Practices

- a. Each facility that will be used for practices must:
 - i. Post signage in highly visible locations with reminders regarding social distancing protocols, face covering requirements, and good hygiene practices (e.g., hand hygiene, covering coughs);
 - ii. Reduced crowding and enforce proper social distancing around entrances, exits, and other high-traffic areas of the facility;
 - iii. Ensure routine and frequent cleaning and disinfecting, particularly of high-touch surfaces in accordance with CDC recommendations;
 - iv. Limit occupancy in restrooms that remain open to avoid over-crowding, maintain social distancing through signage and, where practicable, utilize attendants to monitor capacity; and
 - v. Have hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or other sanitizing materials readily available at entrances, exits, benches, dugouts, and any other area prone to gathering or high traffic.
 - vi. On any given field or space, there must be sufficient space between designated groups to prevent any interaction between the groups.
- b. Indoor facilities should ensure appropriate indoor air/ventilation by:
 - i. Keeping doors and windows open where possible and utilize fans to improve ventilation.
 - ii. Inspecting and evaluating the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) unit to ensure that the system is operating within its design specifications.



- iii. Conducting routine maintenance as recommended by the manufacturer or HVAC professional.
- iv. Within the design specification of the HVAC unit:
 1. Increasing the volume of outdoor air to the maximum capacity while the gym is occupied.
 2. Reducing the volume of recirculated air being returned to the indoor spaces
 3. Increasing the volume of air being delivered to the indoor spaces to the maximum capacity
 4. Selecting maximum filtration levels for the HVAC unit.
 5. Ensuring that the HVAC unit runs continuously while the facility is occupied.
 6. Ensuring that the HVAC unit runs for at least two hours before and two hours after the facility is occupied.
 7. Considering installing portable air cleaners equipped with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to increase the amount of clean air within the facility.
 8. Reviewing and following the latest CDC guidance for ventilation requirements.

3. Conducting Sports Practices

- a. All athletes, coaches, staff and others participating in practices and competitions must be screened, via temperature check and/or health questionnaire, at the beginning of each session. Players, coaches, staff, and volunteers showing symptoms of COVID-19 **shall not** be permitted to participate. If any individual develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the activity, they should promptly inform organizers and **must** be removed from the activity and instructed to return home.
- b. Athletes (or their parents/guardians), coaches, staff and others may participate in practices and competitions if:
 - i. When diagnosed or suspected to have had COVID-19, they are outside of the required isolation period as defined by CDC at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>, that they do not currently have symptoms of COVID-19 as defined at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>,
 - ii. They have not been in close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 as defined at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>, and
 - iii. They have not otherwise been advised by any public health official to isolate or quarantine.
- c. Coaches, staff, visitors and athletes will be required to abide by the gatherings limitations outlined in Executive Order Nos. 156 (2020), 161 (2020), and 187 (2020), or the Order in effect at the time of competition.
- d. Encourage practice activities that do not involve sustained person-to-person



contact between athletes and/or coaching staff, and limit such activities in indoor settings. For example, focus on individual skill-building activities.

- e. Adhere to precautions outlined in the program preparation plan.
- f. Ensure that athletes and coaches adhere to social distancing and mask wearing while not actively involved in practice activities (on the bench, in the dugout, etc.). Assign coaching staff to ensure sideline social distancing and mask wearing requirements are followed.
- g. If any equipment is provided by the operator, operators must minimize equipment sharing and clean and disinfect shared equipment at the end of a practice session using a product from the list of disinfectants meeting EPA criteria for use against the novel coronavirus. Do not permit athletes to share food, beverages, water bottles, towels, pinnies, gloves, helmets or any other equipment or materials that is involved in direct bodily contact.
- h. Consider dividing larger teams into smaller groups and staggering practices at different times or across different days.
- i. Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, staff, volunteers, vendors, members of the media, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible. Visitors and spectators should wear face masks at all times, unless the individual is under the age of two. Spectators will not be permitted at an indoor practice or competition when the number of participants, coaches, referees and other necessary persons exceeds 25, in accordance with Executive Order No. 187.
- j. Where they are permitted, operators are encouraged to mark off spectator/chaperone viewing sites to allow for social distancing. Spectators not part of a family or other grouping shall sit at least 6 feet apart.
- k. Visitors showing symptoms of COVID-19 shall not be permitted to attend.
- l. Individuals who meet criteria listed in 1.vii above shall not be allowed to attend as spectators.
- m. Restrict spitting, handshakes, high-fives, team huddles, and any other close-contacting activities.

4. Preparing for games and tournaments

Competitions, tournaments, invitationals, and other activities or events that involve interaction between athletes from the same team or between teams, while permitted, carry [significant risks](#) that operators, towns, coaches, parents and others should carefully consider before proceeding. If participating in or organizing a competition, tournament, or invitational:

- a. Follow protocols listed above under “conducting sports practices.” All protocols in place for practices must be observed during games, tournaments, and invitationals. This includes enforcement of wearing mask when not actively playing, social distancing among players and spectators, cleaning of high-touch surfaces and hand hygiene.
- b. Coaches, staff, visitors and athletes will be required to abide by the gatherings limitations in effect at the time of competition.
- a. Spectators shall be allowed if the following requirements are met:
 - i. The facility does not exceed the capacity limit for indoor gatherings as outlined in Executive Order No. 187 and any subsequent orders;



- ii. The facility is large enough to ensure a minimum of 6 feet of physical distance between spectators/groups of spectators (household groups may sit together);
- iii. The facility/league has protocols in place to enforce the spectator rule and ensure that spectators comply with requirements; and
- iv. Signage is posted at entrance advising all spectators that:
 1. Those with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should not enter;
 2. Those who have been advised to isolate or quarantine should not enter;
 3. Spectators need to follow social distancing requirements (6 feet between household group); and
 4. Spectators must remain masked.
- b. Concession stands should meet the requirements for indoor and outdoor dining outlined in the applicable Executive Orders and Executive Directives.
- c. Consider social distancing requirements when scheduling contests and events. Social distancing will need to be maintained on buses/vans. Thus, multiple buses/vans and/or individual parent/guardian transportation will likely be required. Games must be scheduled at intervals that allow for proper sanitation of facilities and equipment following each game.
- d. Teams must prepare a roster of all players including phone number and other contact information, in the event of a COVID-19 exposure as a result of participation in the game or tournament. This roster must be provided to the local health department in the event of a public health investigation. Roster must be updated for each game.
- e. Any athlete, coach, parent, or other individual may not participate/attend a game, tournament, invitational if they have been told to quarantine and the game, tournament, invitational is during the quarantine timeframe.
- f. Facility operators, leagues, and coaches should report COVID-19 positive individuals to the local health department as soon as their status is known.
- g. Facility operators, leagues, and coaches must participate in contact tracing, assist the local health department, as needed, to complete the public health investigation, and agree to adopt and reinforce player quarantine requirements

*****As noted above, effective Thursday, November 12, 2020, indoor interstate youth sport competitions will not be permitted in indoor facilities in New Jersey.***

Additional notes:

- Programs that are governed by formal league rules or other binding agreements or affiliations should comply with any COVID-19 and other health and safety rules applicable under those authorities but must abide by the timeline regarding permitted practice activities and competition dates.
- Operators, coaches, participants, and others engaging in sports activities are required to cooperate with local health departments (LHDs) on contact tracing. Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who have come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice and is an integral function of LHDs.



- Given that club sports teams and recreational sports teams are comprised of students enrolled in local school districts, it will be necessary for both club/recreational youth sports staff and school district staff, including but not limited to administrators, school nurses, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school district, to collaborate and assist LHDs with contact tracing in the event of illness of a player, coach, referee, athletic trainer, and/or anyone else involved with a sports team/group. Additionally, all school districts and club/recreational youth sports staff should collaborate with LHDs to develop contact tracing policies and procedures, as well as identify the best methods to educate the broader school and youth sports community on the importance of contact tracing.
- Athletes, coaches, parents, and others who test positive for COVID-19 and/or were told to quarantine after a COVID-19 exposure must follow instructions from the local public health department.