



Best Practices for AISA Athletic Programs and Events

Fall 2020

The following document provides guidelines for all AISA athletic-competing member schools to adhere to during the fall 2020 athletic season. Please understand that this document is subject to change as we receive new guidance from state and federal officials and also as we observe these practices in action. It is important to emphasize that adherence to these guidelines will not eliminate the risk associated with the COVID-19 virus, but we are confident that adherence to these and other guidelines will mitigate exposure and provide an environment for our student-athletes, coaches, officials and fans that is as safe and supportive as possible.

General Information

- *Education* – Schools should make professional development and education a regular practice concerning COVID-19. Local, state and federal guidance should be constantly monitored for changes and updates to their guidelines.
- *Building a safe foundation* – Schools should adhere to best practices for a safe school environment throughout the school day as a foundation for adherence on the field of play.
- *Communication* – Stakeholders and fans should receive clear communication of expectations of attendance at school-sponsored events and activities. Schools should communicate unique rules or circumstances related to local orders or specific on-campus policies for their campus prior to the arrival of the opposing team(s).
- *Environment acclimation* – Coaches should incorporate the practices stated below into their daily routines so that their athletes are accustomed to the measures prior to game play.
- *Forfeiture* – Teams forfeiting games due to COVID-19 related issues on their team will not be subject to fines and will not be automatically eliminated from playoff contention if their circumstance is approved by the AISA Athletic Committee review. The forfeit will count as a loss for the forfeiting team and win for the opponent. Teams forfeiting for COVID-19 related issues will need to provide a detailed summary for athletic committee review. The Athletic Committee will determine an automatic forfeiture policy soon for teams experiencing outbreaks. The policy will likely be a percentage positive policy.

Health and Safety

Health and safety guidelines are designed to shape the behavior of our school communities by “layering” preventative measures to create a safe and healthy environment that extends to school activities.

- The initial line of defense starts at home. Students, teachers, staff members and volunteers must practice self-screening and stay home when appropriate. This will involve proper education and communication from the school as to appropriate practices for self-assessment. Additionally, individuals must act responsibly if they have been in close contact with someone who is positive, or presumed positive, for COVID-19.
- Act early if symptoms or signs are exhibited. Individuals should immediately contact a healthcare professional if they exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19. Delaying action can extend sickness and possibly expose others to the virus.
- Daily screenings before practice should be implemented. Regardless of screening protocols and policies for on-campus learning established by the schools, coaches should establish daily screening protocols that occur prior to practice each day. If students are screened at home, upon arrival to school and prior to practice they should have three layers of screening in a day. Screening may include, but not limited to, temperature checks and observations for signs or symptoms. It should be understood that screenings are not a catch all for COVID-19 positive individuals and many are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. However, this layer of protection may mitigate the spread.
- Frequent handwashing and hand sanitization should be practiced.
- Enhanced cleaning of common areas, equipment and athletic facilities should be a regular occurrence and ongoing practice. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a list of effective disinfectants for use against COVID-19, which is referred to as List N and can be found at this [link](#).
- No sharing of towels or water bottles. When practical, certain equipment should also not be shared among coaches or athletes. Individual water bottles are recommended to further discourage students from sharing water they brought individually or accidentally drinking from someone else’s container.
- Physical distance when possible. Physical distancing has proven to be the most effective way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. While not always practical in sports, physical distancing should be practiced at all times possible.

- Face coverings should be used when possible and in accordance with any local, state or federal mandates. While controversial for some, facial coverings have proven to be effective, particularly when social distancing is not practical. Face covering should be utilized as a tool to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- Critical conversations with students are necessary. Student-athletes should realize that their actions away from the school, team activities and organized workouts, can have negative implications on his or her family, school and teammates. Students should avoid risky situations or environments that are known to contribute to the spread of COVID-19.
- School administrators should pre-identify reliable sources for COVID-19 testing and be prepared to offer referrals when necessary. If you have not already done so, we encourage you to speak with local medical professionals to determine the best course of action should an individual require testing.
- Individuals with COVID-19 positive test results must quarantine. Student-athletes, coaches or officials testing positive with mild symptoms should expect to quarantine for a minimum of 10 days from the onset of symptoms. Those with more severe cases should quarantine for at least 14 days. Every participant should have a signed release from a doctor before resuming activities.
- If an individual test positive, those having had close contact with the individual should be monitored closely, and if the individual had contact with individuals from an opposing team within the previous seven days, the opposing team coach should also be notified so that they can effectively monitor their athletes and coaches.
- Individuals will get sick with contagious illness that are not COVID-19 just as they always have. No student-athlete, coach or official shall return to participation until they have been fever and symptom free without medication for at least 24 hours.

Gameday Practices

- *Communication* – Communication is key! Prior to a contest, participating schools should communicate any specific needs, restrictions or requirements that home or visiting teams should be aware of prior to arrival.
- *Transportation* – When possible, students should be socially distanced during travel to and from away games. Schools may consider family transportation to limit the number of students traveling by bus or other mass transit vehicles. When distancing is not possible, facial coverings are encouraged and assigned seating is also recommended so tracing is more convenient should it become necessary.

- *Pre-game meals* – Pre-game meals should be well-managed and in accordance with all health and safety guidelines for food services. Large gatherings should be avoided if social distancing cannot be accomplished. Take-out or curbside pickup may be most appropriate.
- *Screenings* – Student-athletes should be screened prior to any contest. Ideally, this should occur before they leave campus. Any student exhibiting symptoms or presumed to be positive with COVID-19 should be immediately quarantined and should not participate in any contest until cleared by a medical professional.
- *Facility expectations* – Schools are expected to comply with all local, state and federal guidelines related to facilities. Physical distancing should be practiced within any athletic facility. Visible signage should be present encouraging cooperation with all guidelines. Additionally, AISA may require “notice of risk” signage for all facilities as deemed necessary.
- *Locker/dressing rooms* – Schools should provide visitors with clean dressing rooms and a meeting spaces that are conducive to social distancing. If appropriate space is not available, schools should communicate to their opponents that they may need to partially dress off campus prior to arrival or dress in stages or smaller groups.
- *Ticketing* – If schools plan to only use contactless payment processing, it should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders, including visiting team stakeholders. Onsite payment stations should promote social distancing and schools should consider increasing the number of payment stations to prevent crowds from forming at the gates.
- *Press box and scorers’ table* – Only essential personnel should be permitted in the press box area or scorers’ table, and schools should consider creating additional space for individuals or groups that typically gather in such areas to promote social distancing. Statisticians, media, and broadcast personnel are not deemed essential. Limitations to space should be considered.
- *Essential personnel* – Only personnel essential to the contest is permitted on the sideline or in the player area. This may include, but not limited to, players, coaches, chain crew, athletic trainer(s), scorekeepers, team manager(s), etc. Media, cheerleaders, band, dance teams, etc. may be designated a space on the sideline that is distanced from the team designated areas and distanced from fans. All other non-essential personnel are not permitted on the field before, during or after any contest. This includes, but not limited to, spirit lines, post-game gatherings on the field and individuals not necessary for competition on the sidelines. All essential personnel are subject to screen procedures. More details will be made available prior to season opening.

- *Officials* – Officials should be provided clean and sanitized dressing and meeting spaces with access to clean restroom facilities that include soap and water access. Hand sanitizer should also be made available. Officials should be provided with sealed small bottled water for breaks, which should be brought on the field during timeouts. The bottles should be disposed of following use.
- *Pre-game meetings* – Social distancing measures are required for all pre-game meetings between officials, coaches and players. There should be no handshakes, high-fives or other direct contact except to the extent necessary for play. Team members should be 6 feet apart when gathering.
- *Post-game activities* – The traditional post game handshake will not be permitted. Teams should agree upon post-game procedures prior to the game or should walk down a line more than 6 feet apart to share congratulations. An example for football might be one team walking down the 45 and one walking down the 50 yard lines. Only team members and coaches should participate in this activity. No spectators or non-essential personnel should enter the field area following the game and players and coaches should exit quickly to prevent those non-essential personnel from gathering on the field. Post-game talks with players should take place in the locker room or some other designated area absent non-essential personnel. We understand that this along with the absence of “spirit lines” prior to the game will be a significant departure from tradition and it should be effectively communicated prior to the games to prevent confusion.
- *Departure* – Visiting teams should actively work to remove as much trash as possible from their sideline and dressing area to assist home teams with the implementation of enhanced cleaning measures.

Football Rule Modifications

The modifications below are specific to football and in addition to any policy stated above that applies to all sporting activities.

- Cloth face coverings are permissible as are face shields that are clear, free of tint and integrated into the face mask.
- Charged timeouts will be extended to a maximum of two minutes in length.
- Intermission between periods as well as the time period following a try, successful field goal or safety and prior to the succeeding free kick will also be extended to a maximum of two minutes.
- Halftime will be twenty minutes in length until further notice.

- We will consider extending sideline restrictions should we determine that teams are unable to maintain social distance on the sideline. As of now, we do not determine an extension to be necessary.

Volleyball Rule Modifications

The modifications below are specific to volleyball and in addition to any policy stated above that applies to all sporting activities.

- The coin toss to determine serve/receiver will be suspended. The visiting team will serve first in set 1 and alternate first serve for the remainder of the non-deciding sets.
- Rosters should be submitted directly to the officials' table before the 10-minute mark.
- Benches should allow for participants to social distance at least 3-6 feet apart.
- The deciding set coin toss will take place at center court with the home team calling the toss.

Cross Country Modifications

The modifications below are specific to cross country and in addition to any policy stated above that applies to all sporting activities. *Note: This is AISA's first year offering cross country and additional changes may be necessary.*

- The course should be no less than 6 feet at its narrowest point.
- Electronic timing should be used to prevent congestion at the finish area and to allow for staggered starts to prevent congestion at the starting point.
- Spectators should maintain a safe distance of at least 6 feet from the course at all times and not congregate around the finish area or awards area.