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**COVID-19 RETURN TO R.A.I.S.E.**  
**PHASE 1**  
**OUT-OF-SEASON PROCEDURES FOR MCPS ATHLETICS**  
**May 29, 2020**

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Following are the operating procedures for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) interscholastic athletics program for Phase 1 of the *Return to R.A.I.S.E.* Strategic Plan, which will guide the safe return of the MCPS interscholastic athletics program, due to COVID-19. This initial phase will apply to the summer 2020 offseason, which begins May 30, 2020 following the Engagement of Activity (EOA) implementation phase. These procedures align with guidance from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Montgomery County health and safety mandates and recommendations.

These operating procedures provide guidance and interpretations of the MCPS Out-of-Season Participation Standards and Regulations that summarize MPSSAA and MCPS standards and regulations regarding out-of-season activities involving school teams and school coaches.

### **Guiding Principles**

For Phase 1 of the Return to R.A.I.S.E. plan, the following guiding principles apply:

1. Under no circumstances may MCPS coaches engage in in-person contact with students.
2. Any virtual contact with students must occur on MCPS-approved platforms through the MCPS Web Conferencing Center.
3. Similar to previous operations in normal conditions, coaches may provide optional recommended conditioning workouts to students, for their use on their own time.
4. Optional all-school virtual conditioning sessions are allowed, per the parameters that follow in this document. In order for students to participate in virtual conditioning sessions, they must have submitted parent permission and have a current physical on file.
5. Coaches may not conduct virtual team-specific practices in-person or virtually. During the summer, no MCPS teams exist and MPSSAA regulations do not allow for offseason practices.
6. School coaching staffs may meet virtually regarding sport-specific instruction with up to two returning student-athletes per day, per MPSSAA regulations.
7. Regarding the well-being of students during the global pandemic, coaches may provide two one-hour virtual sessions per week to check in with students and provide guidance and inspiration. Such sessions may not be team practices or team-specific instruction.
8. Any virtual engagement by coaches with students must be communicated to athletic directors, including the details of the virtual meeting (logistics, ID and password).
9. Coaches must comply with all MCPS policies, regulations, code of conduct, and other previously established expectations when virtually meeting with students. Coaches should not meet one-on-one with students and must use MCPS-approved virtual platforms with their MCPS-issued e-mail accounts.

## **Summer Camps**

All MCPS summer camps are cancelled for the summer. Schools hosting camps will coordinate refunds to families, as needed. This statement refers to all camps hosted by MCPS schools, which were approved through the appropriate process (for students who are neither incoming Grade 9 students nor current high school students as campers). For clarification purposes, schools are reminded that it is always illegal for a school team to attend a camp as a team because school teams may not practice, compete or assemble out-of-season.

## **Conditioning Programs**

In-person conditioning programs and activities of any kind are cancelled until further notice. Under no circumstances may coaches, school personnel, parents/guardians or student-athletes engage in in-person organized conditioning programs or activities.

## **Virtual Optional Conditioning Opportunities**

While in-person conditioning programs and activities are prohibited until further notice, beginning May 30, 2020, certified MCPS athletic coaches or MCPS employees certified in strength and conditioning may offer virtual optional conditioning opportunities under the following requirements:

1. Programs shall not be conducted by outside agencies or individuals representing outside agencies. Programs may only be conducted and delivered by current MCPS employees as noted above.
2. Programs are voluntary and advertised as “all-school” conditioning programs, including the following elements:
  - Programs must be advertised and available to all students in the school.
  - Students shall not be coerced or pressured to participate.
  - Programs must be oriented exclusively toward conditioning of a general nature – not specific sports-related skills.
3. Programs must align with all MCPS, Montgomery County, and Maryland mandates regarding social distancing.
4. All participating students must have a valid physical on file with the school.
5. Coaches conducting conditioning programs must have collected the Student-Parent Participation Contract and Parent Permission Form for each participating student, providing permission for the student to participate in “Virtual Optional Conditioning” for the summer of 2020. Forms can be signed electronically, using the attached *Submitting Electronic Signatures* procedures.
6. Money shall not be collected from students, school booster clubs, or (any) other sources to sponsor or participate in virtual optional conditioning programs.
7. Program plans, including the dates, frequency, and hours shall be approved by the athletic director. Participation is limited to one one-hour session per day. Meeting logistics must be provided to the athletic director.
8. Live virtual conditioning sessions must be conducted through approved MCPS communication platforms during the Continuity of Learning. Zoom is the preferred platform through the MCPS Web Conferencing Center. Live sessions must never be recorded.
9. Resources for students must be provided through MCPS-approved e-mail and communication platforms.

### **Coaching/Instructing Returning Players on an Individual Basis**

Similar to conditioning programs, all in-person contact with returning players and students is strictly prohibited until further notice. As a reminder, MPSSAA regulations do not allow school teams to practice or assemble after the season. School teams are defined as “any school group or team gathering consisting of three or more players that has assembled for the purpose of drilling or instruction.” This includes virtual team gatherings or virtual sessions aimed at providing sports-specific instruction.

### **Coaching/Instructing Returning Players Virtually on an Individual Basis**

While in-person contact is prohibited until further notice, school coaching staffs may meet virtually with a maximum of two returning players per day. Under no circumstance, however, may the total number of players per day exceed two, no matter how many coaches may be involved (this includes engaging with returning players in a virtual setting for team-specific instruction or practices). When engaging with returning players, coaches must comply with the nine requirements listed above when conducting conditioning programs.

### **Supporting the Well-Being of Students**

In order to support the well-being of students during the global pandemic, coaches may provide two one-hour virtual sessions per week to check in with students and provide guidance and inspiration. Such sessions may not be team practices or team-specific instruction. Coaches are expected to uphold the integrity of the MCPS Athletics program when conducting such sessions – these sessions are for supporting the well-being of students, not conducting practice sessions and “gaining an edge.”

### **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 conditions change and outside leagues are able to operate within various 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.

### **Future Updates**

While conditions are ever-changing in regard to COVID-19, updates regarding MCPS out-of-season conditioning activities and coaching/instructing returning players on an individual basis will be provided as available. The next scheduled update regarding summer activities is scheduled for July 15-17, 2020.