



COVID-19 RETURN TO R.A.I.S.E. OUT-OF-SEASON PROCEDURES FOR MCPS ATHLETICS Update – July 1, 2020

The purpose of this communication is to provide the scheduled update regarding out-of-season 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:

1. Promoting our core values of equity and access to allow for the participation for ALL students.
2. Ensuring the gradual, safe return of student-athletes to in-person participation in interscholastic athletic activities.
3. Maximizing participation opportunities, including the timely implementation and incremental transition to new phases.
4. 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 June 23, 2020, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) issued a memorandum outlining a series of waivers that were granted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regarding athletic regulations for the 2020-2021 school year. These waivers will allow flexibility for the MPSSAA, Montgomery County, and other local school systems when reimagining the administration of athletics across Maryland. Montgomery County will await guidance from the MPSSAA and MSDE regarding sports seasons and the overall administration of sports across the state and will communicate next steps regarding the start date of the fall season.
- Guidance regarding the opening of schools, including interscholastic athletics, is included in the June 2020 updated *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*. As stated in the *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*, under the direction of the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE), the MPSSAA will be providing guidance regarding the safe return of in-person operations appropriate for interscholastic athletic programs. The MPSSAA strongly recommends that local school systems incorporate this guidance into any summer out-of-season operations plans. The guidance will include considerations and recommendations from the CDC, NFHS, MSDE, and the Maryland Department of Health and is expected to be released in the near future.

MCPS Update

- MCPS has convened a **COVID-19 Task Force**, aimed to provide recommendations to drive the safe return of the MCPS athletics program. The task force has met twice and will be meeting again on July 8, 2020 to discuss next steps and recommendations.
- MCPS is awaiting the aforementioned final guidance from the MPSSAA regarding the safe return of in-person operations for interscholastic athletics programs. When released, per state recommendations, MCPS will incorporate this guidance into Phase 2 of the Return to R.A.I.S.E. strategic plan. In the meantime, **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.
- 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 MCPS out-of-season activities is scheduled for July 15-17, 2020.**
- A subgroup of the task force is working on guidance for coaches and student-athletes regarding best practices for the reconditioning of student-athletes, in the wake of months of inactivity.
- **Students are encouraged to pursue getting physicals for the upcoming school year.** MCPS is working collaboratively with the vendors for certified athletic trainers to brainstorm ideas for conducting clinics for sports physicals.
- 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

- During the coming weeks, as MCPS awaits guidance from the MPSSAA and confirms compliance with Montgomery County health recommendations, 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.