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## MCPS ATHLETICS

### RETURN to R.A.I.S.E.

Update—October 8, 2021

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Dear MCPS Community:

Thank you for your continued efforts to promote the health and safety of our student-athletes, coaches, and program. Following are some reminders regarding vaccination requirements and program operations.

#### **Student-Athlete Vaccination Requirements**

*Beginning Monday, Nov. 15, the start of the winter sports season, all high school and eligible middle school student-athletes will be required to submit proof of full COVID-19 vaccination prior to participation.* This requirement applies to the winter and spring sports seasons, as well as all out-of-season activities conducted through MCPS Athletics.

#### **Student-Athlete Vaccination Exemptions**

Only medical exemptions will be permitted. Religious exemptions will not be permitted. Religious exemptions are not being permitted due to the direct threat of COVID-19 transmission to the health and safety of student-athletes and staff in close-contact sporting events and activities.

Guidance from the CDC recommends that all eligible K-12 students be vaccinated. The CDC specifically recommends that student-athletes be vaccinated due to increased exhalation that occurs during physical activity and the sustained close contact of sports that puts individuals at an increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19. Further, the risk of COVID-19 spread increases the more time athletes, coaches, teachers, staff and spectators spend in close proximity or in indoor group settings. This includes time spent traveling to/from sporting events, meetings, meals, and other settings related to the events. MCPS implemented the student-athlete vaccine mandate in accordance with Maryland Department of Health and State Board of Education joint COVID-19 guidance, which states, "Each local school system, nonpublic school, and childcare program may set their own policies and procedures for their schools, students/ children, teachers and staff."

More information regarding the submission of a medical exemption will be included in next week's communication, in advance of the opening of the registration window for winter sports.

#### **Vaccination FAQs**

[Here](#) are answers to FAQs regarding the vaccination requirements for MCPS Athletics. More information will be provided, as necessary.

## **Testing in Schools**

Free COVID-19 testing is available for all students in every school. Testing is an important strategy for keeping schools open and students and staff safe. With testing, MCPS can minimize the number of students in quarantine and minimize interruptions to program activities. Parents/guardians must give their consent for testing. Families can [fill out the consent form](#), which is available in [multiple languages online](#), or request paper copies from their school.

There are two types of COVID-19 testing available. Rapid tests are used when a student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. Results are available within 15-20 minutes. Screening tests are given weekly to a random sample of students with no COVID-19 symptoms. These results are available in a few days. Read [here](#) for more information.

## **Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan Operations**

The Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan will continue to drive program operations in regard to COVID-19 procedures and protocols. The plan is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics. The latest version is always available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information](#) webpage. The [September 17, 2021](#) update includes updated language regarding vaccinations for volunteer coaches and athletic trainers.

## **Communication and Resources**

Our COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics will continue to evaluate and implement the latest safety measures. Updates and guidance from the Task Force will continue to be provided and are available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information webpage](#).

We appreciate your continued commitment and support. Specific questions should be directed to your school's [athletics specialist \(AD\)](#), [athletic coordinator](#) (AC), or coach.

Montgomery County Public Schools