

Guiding Principles

Per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the following link is recommended: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

Participants

There are a number of actions youth sports organizations [which include the VHSL] can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and reduce the spread during competition and practice. The more people a child or coach interacts with, the closer the physical interaction, the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple players, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Therefore, risk of COVID-19 spread can be different, depending on the type of activity. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth sports settings as follows:

- ❖ **Lowest Risk:** Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- ❖ **Increasing Risk:** Team-based practice.
- ❖ **More Risk:** Within-team competition.
- ❖ **Even More Risk:** Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area.
- ❖ **Highest Risk:** Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.

If organizations are not able to keep in place safety measures during competition (for example, maintaining social distancing by keeping children six feet apart at all times), they may consider dropping down a level and limiting participation to within-team competition only (for example, scrimmages between members of the same team) or team-based practices only. Similarly, if organizations are unable to put in place safety measures during team-based activities, they may choose individual or at-home activities, especially if any members of the team are at risk.

Consider watching sports at home rather than attending in-person sporting events

Please visit [CDC Consideration for Youth Sports](#) for more information regarding how to assess risk, promote behavior that reduces spread, maintain healthy environments, and provides tips to prepare for when/if someone becomes sick.

People who attend a sporting event can take action to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and reduce the spread while attending sporting events. The more people someone interacts with, the closer, the longer, and the more frequent the interaction, and the more contact with frequently touched surfaces, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Indoor events pose a greater risk than outdoor events.

The greater the number of sporting events someone attends, the greater the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 can be different, depending on the type of sporting event someone attends or the way they participate in the sporting event, as well as the number of COVID-19 cases both where they live and where the sporting event is taking place. The risk [for] COVID-19 increases for spectators [and other attendees] in sporting event settings as follows:

Lowest risk

Watching the sporting event on television or online in your home with members of your household

More risk

Tailgating or attending a sporting event in your local community when:

- ❖ The event, including tailgating, is held outdoors
- ❖ All attendees wear masks
- ❖ Attendees are discouraged from yelling, chanting, or singing
- ❖ All attendees stay at least six feet away from people they do not live with
- ❖ Attendees at a community sporting event are from the local area and limited to family and friends of athletes
- ❖ Attendees do not share food or drinks or personal items (e.g., noisemakers) with people they don't live with
- ❖ The sports program has several mitigation strategies (e.g., blocked off seats or rows, visual cues such as floor markings for social distancing, cleaning and disinfection) and messaging in place to prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19

Even More risk

Tailgating or attending a sporting event in a nearby community when:

- ❖ The event is held in an open, well-ventilated indoor space
- ❖ Most attendees wear masks
- ❖ Attendees yell, chant, and sing while wearing masks
- ❖ Most attendees stay at least six feet way from people they do not live with
- ❖ Attendees are from the local community
- ❖ Attendees limit their sharing of food and personal items (e.g., noisemakers) with others
- ❖ The sports program has a couple of mitigation strategies and messaging in place to prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19

Highest risk

Traveling to a different geographic area to attend a sporting event or tailgate when:

- ❖ The event is held in a confined, poorly ventilated indoor space
- ❖ Attendees do not wear masks
- ❖ Attendees yell, chant, and sing without masks
- ❖ Attendees do not stay at least six feet away from people they do not live with
- ❖ Attendees travel from outside the area to attend the event
- ❖ Attendees freely share their food and personal items (e.g., noisemakers) with people they don't live with
- ❖ The sports program has no modifications or messaging in place to prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19

Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Pandemic Metrics

The Virginia Department of Health recommends that schools use the following links to tools and guidance to consider the extent of COVID-19 community transmission: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/key-measures/pandemic-metrics/>

This tool was created, in part, to help guide decisions about school programming. The VHSL and other school sports leagues, since they are connected to these school settings, should consider using this information as well, particularly relating to state team travel or for large state events. The VHSL should be prepared to adjust plans in response to changes in extent of community transmission and/or at the recommendation of public health and school officials if that becomes necessary.

2020-21 Guidance for Return to Participation

Masks and Face Coverings

Participants

- ❖ Should not be required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts or competitions, however, athletes, coaches, and officials should wear masks to the greatest extent possible.
- ❖ Should wear face coverings that are not distracting.
- ❖ Must wear face coverings when on the sideline, in the dugout, not actively involved in the competitions etc., and especially anytime 3-6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained.
- ❖ Must wear face coverings when traveling to and from events using school transportation.
- ❖ In cheer, participants are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings.

Administrative Staff, and Officials

- ❖ Should not be required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in the competition, however, athletes, coaches, and officials should wear masks to the greatest extent possible. (Example – game officials, ticket takers, timers, and scorers).
- ❖ Must wear face coverings when on the field, in the dugout etc., and especially anytime 6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained.
- ❖ Must wear facial coverings when at or interacting with, the table i.e. clock operators, scorers, announcers.
- ❖ Must wear face coverings when working as or interacting with, field personnel i.e. chain crew, ball boys, game supervision.

Fans, Working Event Staff, Non-Competing Participants, and Coaches:

- ❖ Must wear face coverings at all times.

Additional Informational

The American Academy of Pediatrics

In some cases, cloth face coverings may cause safety concerns, and adaptations or alternatives should be considered. The World Health Organization does not recommend use of a cloth face covering during vigorous exercise, and the CDC cautions that some people who are engaged in high-intensity activity may not be able to wear a cloth face covering. When non-vigorous exercise is being performed and physical distancing is not possible, a cloth face mask should be worn. Cloth face coverings should not be worn in water activities (example, swimming, diving) or in activities where they could pose an injury risk as a result of catching on equipment or accidentally impairing vision during performance of sport (example, gymnastics, cheer). Special considerations may be appropriate when there is an increased risk of heat-related illness. Individuals younger than 2 years old should not wear a cloth face covering.

Younger athletes may find wearing a cloth face mask challenging and may need to be reminded and/or assisted by parents/coaches. People should be reminded not to touch the front of the face mask and remove it from the straps whenever possible. Cloth face coverings should be routinely washed daily in hot water and not reused until cleaned.

Evidence for Effectiveness of Masks

Masks are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with from clinical and laboratory studies that shows masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of masks is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain. CDC's recommendations for masks will be updated as new scientific evidence becomes available.

2020-21 Guidance for Return to Participation

Locker Room

Host schools should be responsible for providing a clean environment for all visiting teams to dress and have pre-game meetings. When possible, the area should be large enough to maintain social distancing.

If locker/dressing rooms are not large enough to maintain social distancing, visiting teams may want to consider traveling dressed and/or limiting travel team numbers.

General Guidelines for all Locker Room Situations

- ❖ Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering the locker room, hard surfaces within that locker room should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, training tables, furniture etc.).
- ❖ Any equipment kept in student lockers should be cleaned out nightly by the athlete to allow for proper cleaning and sanitization. i.e. Soft clothing items will be taken home daily. Items such as helmets and shoulder pads may remain.
- ❖ Staff, coaches and student/athletes must wear face coverings while inside locker rooms, meeting rooms and training rooms.
- ❖ Every effort will be made to alternate smaller groups through the locker room to minimize exposure with other athletes. Coaches will devise plans based on the number of athletes and the space available. Entrances will be monitored by coaches.
- ❖ Student athletes are to dress as rapidly as possible to minimize time in the locker room.
- ❖ Social distancing measures will be in effect throughout all locker rooms.
- ❖ Athletes will not be required to wear a mask in the shower area.
- ❖ Hand sanitizing stations must be available.
- ❖ Athletes will leave the locker once cleaned and changed – no congregating.

School Transportation

Phase 2 and 3 School Bus Guidance from the Virginia Department of Education

Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible (e.g. seat children one per seat, every other row and/or staggered, aisles and windows) limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers. If three to six feet of distance cannot be maintained, wearing of face coverings is strongly encouraged and may help reduce disease transmission. Children (such as siblings) living together may sit together on the bus, and assign seating where possible. If possible, given the age of students, weather conditions, etc., consider opening windows to improve ventilation.

VHSL Return to Participation Guidelines

Requirements Applying to Everyone

- ❖ Passengers and driver are required to wear masks at all times while traveling via school transportation.
- ❖ Team parties must follow school health and VDH guidelines with respect to seat occupancy distancing.
- ❖ All passengers will follow any identified entrance and exit plans established in school health plans. It is recommended that loading of the bus should occur from back to front and unloading occur front to back.
- ❖ Team parties may not exceed the maximum number of passengers established within school health and VDH guidelines.
- ❖ All individuals are responsible for keeping individual equipment with them at all times. Community storage of equipment on the bus should be avoided.
- ❖ Passengers must occupy the same seats both going to and returning from an event trip.
- ❖ When possible seats should be sanitized upon arrival at the event and once the bus returns from an event and all passengers and equipment have been removed.
- ❖ At no point should passengers pass around or share food or drink items.

2020-21 Guidance for Return to Participation

The modifications outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Return to Participation

General Considerations Applying to all Participants:

- ❖ Individuals associated with any events should complete a personal health screening daily and should stay home if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or are in close contact with someone with COVID-19. **(A sample screening tool can be found in the Appendix of this document).**
- ❖ Individuals should be educated on the need to thoroughly wash their hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or use at least a 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer before, during and after any activity.
- ❖ Facility staff should ensure that facilities have been properly sanitized and have hand sanitizer and disposable masks available when they host events.
- ❖ Facilities should be cleaned and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and practice/game equipment including balls. Contact equipment manufacturers for specifics on proper cleaning protocols for their equipment (some valuable information regarding some manufacturer requirements may be found later in this document).
- ❖ Social distancing of 6 feet should be maintained, when possible. There should be no hugging, high fives, handshakes or fist bumps. Additionally:
 - Pre and postgame handshakes will be eliminated.
 - Pregame meetings, if necessary and/or required should be limited to essential personnel with every attempt to maintain the social distancing guidelines observed.
 - Postgame award ceremonies should be eliminated.
 - Whenever possible social distancing must be maintained on all sidelines.
 - Outdoor activities may require extending bench areas.
 - Indoor activities may require the use of bleachers or multiple levels of seating.
 - All fans stay at least 6 feet from people they do not live with.
 - Capacity limits will be enforced.
- ❖ Participants and coaches should bring and use their own water bottle. Each group should have a hydration plan and ability to provide water to those within that group in a safe manner should they not have their own water bottle. Host schools should ensure visiting teams have safe access to water for their participants.
- ❖ If a positive COVID-19 case is determined, schools must follow their safety plan as well as adhere to Virginia and local Department of Health guidelines in determining a comprehensive plan of action.
- ❖ Where applicable score sheets/books should be handled only by the scorer.
- ❖ If writing implements are a necessary part of an event, they should be sanitized and not shared with anyone.
- ❖ Prior to and after games, individuals must refrain from congregating in groups.

Considerations Applying to Student Participants/Coaches/Host Administrators:

- ❖ Each student should be responsible for their own equipment/supplies. There should be no sharing of clothing or community laundering of workout supplies. There should be daily cleaning of all workout clothing/towels.
- ❖ All schools, teams and facilities MUST have a well-rehearsed Emergency Action Plan in place for every sport and every venue prior to any event taking place.
- ❖ Hand sanitizer should easily be available in sufficient quantities at all events/practices.
- ❖ Athletes MUST tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well. Additionally, athletes should stay home if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or are in close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- ❖ Student-athletes should keep mouth guards in their mouth throughout the competition. If the mouth guard is taken out, proper disinfection of the mouth guard should be performed prior to reinsertion. Hands should be washed/disinfected before doing so.
- ❖ All participants should bring and use their own water bottle.
- ❖ Coaches/Administrators must communicate all guidelines in a clear manner to students and parents.
- ❖ Coaches should consider, and administrators should strongly encourage, conducting workouts in “pods” of the same students, always training and rotating together in practice to ensure less exposure if someone develops an infection.
- ❖ Coaches must keep accurate records of those athletes and staff who attend each practice in case contact tracing is necessary.
- ❖ Schools should consider limiting game day squad sizes for social distancing purposes.
- ❖ Coaches should make sure the team brings their own medical supplies.
- ❖ Parents/Guardians should inform coaches if the participant has been exposed to someone who is known to have COVID-19.
- ❖ The local health department should be consulted if COVID issues arise in your area.
- ❖ Coaches and school staff should be trained on school specific procedures regarding how to prepare and respond if someone gets sick, as outlined in each school divisions health plan.

General Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfecting Athletic Equipment

The modifications outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Return to Participation

Jerseys, cleats, shin guards, shoulder pads, gear bags...they all harbor germs and bacteria.

It's good to know the same regular bleach that sanitizes your laundry can also clean and disinfect sports equipment. Any equipment with a hard, nonporous surface (think plastic, nylon, and even painted wood and polyurethane coatings) can be wiped down with a bleach and water solution, making it a great choice to kill bacteria, including MRSA.

Materials needed:

- ❖ Regular Bleach
- ❖ Measuring cup
- ❖ Plastic dishpan
- ❖ Gloves
- ❖ Sponge
- ❖ Clean white towels
- ❖ Lingerie bags

Procedure:

1. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bleach, and add it to 1 gallon cool water in a plastic dishpan.
2. Wearing gloves, use the sponge to apply the bleach and water solution to hard, non-porous sports equipment. Reapply as needed to keep the surface wet for 5 minutes.
3. After 5 minutes, rinse with clean water.
4. Hang equipment to air dry; alternately, lay on a clean towel or prop up to air dry.

Here's how to sanitize laundry with regular bleach.

1. For high efficiency clothes washers, add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup bleach along with your favorite detergent; use the bleach dispenser if your clothes washer has one.
2. For traditional deep-fill clothes washers, add $\frac{2}{3}$ cup bleach along with your favorite detergent.
3. Ensure that the bleach contacts the load for 10 minutes.

DO

Wipe mud off of cleats before treating with the disinfecting bleach and water solution.

DON'T

Forget your gym bag—if it's nylon or polyester, it can be machine washed. Just add a few towels along with the bag to help balance the load, and wash as directed above.

2020-2021 Volleyball Recommendations

The modifications outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Return to Competition

Volleyball Rule Adjustments for the 2020-21 School Year

- ❖ Prematch Conference (1-2-4a; 1-6-2; 1-6-3; 2-1-10; 5-4-1h, k; 5-6-1; 7-1-1; 7-1-1 PENALTIES 1; 9-1a; 12-2-3)
 - Limit attendees to one coach from each team, first referee and second referee.
 - Move the location of the prematch conference to behind scorer table. If space is not available, conduct meeting in front of scorer table. All four individuals maintain a social distance of 6 feet.
 - Suspend the use of the coin toss to determine serve/receive. The visiting team will serve first in set 1 and alternate first serve for the remaining non-deciding sets.
 - Suspend roster submission at the prematch conference. Rosters are submitted directly to the officials' table before the 10-minute mark.
- ❖ Team Benches (5-4-4b, 9-1-2, 9-1-2 NOTE, 9-3-3b)
 - Suspend the protocol of teams switching benches between sets.
 - During the coaches meeting, both coaches will be asked if a disadvantage exists to remain on the same playing end. If one coach feels it does, teams will continue to alternate playing ends, while the team bench remains the same, i.e., coach will be coaching opposite their team. If both agree no advantage exists, they will remain through out the match on the end where play began.
 - Limit bench personnel to observe social distancing of 6 feet.
- ❖ Deciding Set Procedures [1-2-4b, 5-4-4c, 5-5-3b(26), 9-2-3c]
 - Move the location of the deciding set coin toss to center court with coaches and the second referee maintaining the appropriate social distance of 6 feet. A coin toss, called by the home team, will decide serve/receive.

Volleyball Rules Recommendations

- ❖ Substitution Procedures (2-1-7, 10-2-1, 10-2-3, 10-2-4)
 - Maintain social distancing of 6 feet between the second referee and the player and substitute by encouraging substitutions to occur within the substitution zone closer to the attack line.
- ❖ Officials Table (3-4)
 - Limit to essential personnel which includes home team scorer, libero tracker, and timer with social distance of 6 feet between individuals.

Volleyball Officials Manual Recommendations

- ❖ Pre and Post Match
 - Establish volleyball specific social distancing match protocols.

Volleyball Rules Interpretations

- ❖ Rule 4-1 Equipment and Accessories
 - Gloves are permissible. (4-1-1)
- ❖ Rule 4-2 Legal Uniform
 - Long sleeves are permissible. (4-2-1)
 - Long pants are permissible. [4-2-1i (1)]
 - Under garments are permissible, but must be unadorned and of a single, solid color similar in color to the predominant color of the uniform top or bottom. [4-2-1h (3), 4-2-1i (2)]