



# Clinton County Health Department

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“Working Together for a Healthier Community”

www.clintonhealth.org



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## MEMO

**To: High Risk Sport Participants – Non School Related Activities**

**From: John M. Kanoza, P.E., P.G., Director of Public Health**

**Date: February 3, 2021**

**Re: Health Advisory: Supplemental Guidance for High Risk Sports**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governor Cuomo recently announced that effective February 1, 2021, participants in higher-risk sports may participate in individual or distanced group training and organized no/low-contact group training and other types of play, including competitions and tournaments, if permitted by local health authorities.

Counties in the Capital Region, North Country and Mohawk Valley have consulted with subject matter experts from local health departments (LHDs), healthcare providers, and healthcare facilities to unify their approach and allow higher-risk sports to resume. The resumption of these activities does not mean that they are safe or without risk. Participants must meet sport-specific minimum requirements and communities must meet COVID-19 metrics.

Effective February 15, 2021, high risk sports in Clinton County may resume with the requirements set forth in this document. All school related sports must follow the *Health Advisory: Supplemental Guidance for High Risk School Sports dated January 28, 2021*.

#### **The minimum requirements include:**

- The requirements listed in the Interim Guidance For Sports And Recreation During The Covid-19 Public Health Emergency must be followed.
- If applicable, each parent/guardian must sign an informed consent.
- Each student-athlete must have medical clearance from their healthcare provider.
- All participants and organizers (i.e, youth hockey, Town sports, etc.) must agree to fully cooperate with case investigations and contact elicitation and to adhere to isolation and quarantine orders.
- Each facility or organizer must establish a confidential phone number and email address to allow athletes, parents, or others to report concerns and complaints.

#### **The community COVID-19 metrics include:**

- The 7-day rolling average percent positivity in the county (evaluation of increasing or decreasing trends).
- The region’s hospital capacity (percent of hospital beds available) must be above 15%, as calculated by NYSDOH.



“Persons who have any physical mobility or other needs, call the telephone number above to arrange for accommodations”

- The region's rate of hospital admissions must not be unacceptably high or require additional interventions to control the rate of growth, as determined by NYSDOH.
- The absence of other emerging epidemiological data, information or factors as determined or identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) or the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) that impact COVID-19 control or mitigation.

**Clinton County will conduct unannounced audits regarding adherence to the requirements. Failure to comply will result in enforcement action with possible fines.**

While the Governor's announcement created a road for higher-risk sports to occur, this unified approach installs the guidelines and metrics that are needed for safety. This approach is consistent with CDC guidance, which recommends that high-contact athletic activities be postponed during periods with substantial or high levels of COVID-19 transmission in the community.

## **BACKGROUND**

New York State's Interim Guidance For Sports And Recreation During The Covid-19 Public Health Emergency categorizes sports and recreation activities as lower risk, moderate risk, and higher-risk. Wrestling, football, ice hockey, basketball, contact lacrosse, competitive cheer/dance and volleyball are among the sports categorized as higher-risk. The information contained in this document is specific to these higher-risk sports. On January 22, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced that effective February 1, 2021, participants in higher-risk sports and recreation activities may partake in individual or distanced group training and organized no/low-contact group training and may partake in other types of play, including competitions and tournaments, only as permitted by their local health authority.

## **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH-RISK ORGANIZED SPORTS**

Effective February 1, 2021, and until otherwise indicated, participants are permitted to participate in high-risk sports, provided that the requirements below are met. **Local Health Departments and NYSDOH monitor and evaluate COVID-19 data daily and if indicated, the ability for high-risk sports to occur may be suspended.**

- Each sport organizer (i.e., youth hockey, baseball, Town sports, etc.) must oversee the creation of a sport-specific Preparedness Plan that delineates:
  - A plan administrator, who is responsible for communicating the plan to athletes, coaches, parents, trainers, referees/officials, etc.,
  - A plan coordinator, who will serve as a point of contact, should any cases be identified. The coordinator must facilitate and assist with case investigation and contact elicitation and notification. A daily system to ensure that no one associated with the practice or competition is ill, including; players, coaches, managers, and referees/officials.
    - The message should not be to play through an illness, but to stay home to protect others.
    - Temperatures should be taken prior to practices and games/contests.
  - A system for logging attendance by all individuals associated with the practice or competition, including referees/officials. The system must capture names, phone numbers and email addresses.
  - How practice and game times can be staggered to avoid crowding and congestion when participants and referees/officials are arriving, playing, and leaving.
  - If feasible, how pods can be created to limit the potential for transmission in the event of an exposure. A pod is a group of student-athletes who only practice/play with members of their own pod.
    - Pods should either practice in physically separate rooms, facilities or areas or steps taken to ensure that pods are appropriately distanced.
    - Teams should avoid reassigning athletes to different pods to the maximum extent possible.
    - The smaller the pod size, the more the team can minimize potential transmission.
  - How sharing of objects and equipment (e.g., water bottles, towels, and snacks) will be avoided and the use of dedicated personal equipment encouraged.
    - When not avoidable, how shared objects and equipment will be cleaned and disinfected between uses.

- How frequently touched surfaces on the field, court, or play surface will be cleaned and disinfected at least daily, or between uses as much as possible.
- If feasible, how practices or competitions can be held outdoors. If indoors, how large and well-ventilated spaces for play will be used and time spent indoors minimized.
- How locker rooms and facility shower use will be avoided. The use of locker rooms is strongly discouraged.
  - If locker rooms are used, they must be cleaned/disinfected as per NYSDOH guidance.
- How carpooling will be discouraged to the extent possible.
- How travel by buses will include applicable safety measures that conform to NYS requirements.
- How congregate dining, including team dinners, will be avoided, but when necessary, how NYS regulations related to dining and gatherings will be met.
- How other methods of prevention (e.g., hand washing) will be emphasized.
- How unnecessary physical contact among individuals (e.g., handshakes, high-fives) will be avoided.
- How overnight travel will be avoided.
- Each parent/guardian, athlete, coach, manager, referee/official must sign an agreement that a condition of ongoing participation includes full cooperation with case investigations and contact elicitation and adherence to isolation and quarantine orders.
- Each parent/guardian must sign a COVID-19 informed consent. While the content of the informed consent must be determined by organizer, factors to be considered include but are not limited to:
  - Participation in the sport may expose the student-athlete to COVID-19.
  - Symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals can spread the virus.
  - Masking, distancing, and other mitigation measures reduce, but do not eliminate risk.
  - At present, it cannot be predicted who will become severely ill if infected.
  - COVID-19 can lead to serious medical conditions and death for people of all ages.
  - The long-term effects of COVID-19 are, at present, unknown; even people with mild cases may experience long-term complications.
  - There is a significant risk of transmission to those in the home of infected student-athletes.
  - Older people and people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk of serious disease.
- Each sport organization must obtain a medical clearance from the participants healthcare provider.<sup>1\*</sup>
- Cloth face coverings/masks that conform to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) must be worn at all times by all athletes, coaches, managers, referees/officials, individuals dropping off or picking up athletes, etc.
  - It is important that the cloth face covering/mask fits the individual well and is worn over the nose and below the chin at all times when in use.
  - If the cloth face covering/mask is removed for a break, the individual should remain at least 6 feet away from all other individuals.
  - Coaches, managers, and other employees should monitor proper use of cloth face coverings/masks and correct improper use, when indicated.
  - The AAP has indicated that cloth face coverings have been shown to be well tolerated by the majority of individuals who wear them for exercise but acknowledges that the coverings may need to be removed under certain circumstances.
    - Individuals with a medical condition that would be complicated by wearing a cloth face covering/mask can apply to their health care provider for an exemption by providing appropriate documentation that the condition will be present throughout the length of the sports season.
- Facilities will not allow more than 2 spectators per participant at high-risk sports events, games, or matches so as to minimize the risk of transmission.
- Vaccination status does not alter any requirements.
- Each participant, organizer, and facility agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the County, its directors, officers, employees and agents from and against any and all claims, actions or liabilities of any nature that may be asserted against them by third

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\*A physical is not required to be performed as part of the medical clearance, but can be done if indicated by their healthcare provider.

parties in connection with participation in higher-risk sports.

- All other guidance in NYS's Interim Guidance For Sports And Recreation During The Covid-19 Public Health Emergency must be followed wherever games and practices are held.

### **COMMUNITY COVID-19 METRICS (Used to Determine High-Risk Sports Continuation or Pause)**

- The 7-day rolling average percent positivity in Clinton County, as defined and as calculated by the NYSDOH, must be at OR lower than the previous 7-day rolling average percent positivity. If the latest/current 7-day rolling average percent positivity in Clinton County is higher than the previous 7-day rolling average percent positivity, then sports activities must be restricted to individual or distanced group training or organized no/low-contact group training.
- The region's hospital capacity (percent of hospital beds available) is above 15%, as calculated by NYSDOH.
- The region's rate of hospital admissions must not be unacceptably high or require additional interventions to control the rate of growth, as determined by NYSDOH.
- The absence of other epidemiological data, information or factors as determined or identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) or the CCHD that impact COVID-19 control or mitigation.

### **ONGOING REQUIREMENTS**

- If a Covid-19 positive case (coach, manager or student-athlete) is identified for a specific venue or sport team, said team must pause all practices and games for a minimum 14-days from report of the positive case.
- Sports organizers (i.e., youth hockey, Town sports, etc.) must communicate the name/contact information of teams/players with the Health Department and work with the Health Department regarding sports related case and contact investigations.
- Travel for sporting events, games, and matches outside of North Country counties including Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties is prohibited.
- Sport organizers (i.e., youth hockey) are responsible for ensuring that no one associated with their team is known to be ill or currently infected with COVID-19 prior to their team traveling to and/or competing with another team to participate in a practice or competition.
- Monitoring and enforcement of New York Forward requirements are expected to be performed by the sports organization, manager, or coach, as limited public health resources are focused on vaccination efforts, case investigation and contact tracing.
- Failure to comply will result in approval being rescinded for the given facility or organization from participating in high risk sports.
- Having additional cloth face coverings/masks on hand in case a student-athlete player forgets or needs to replace one is strongly recommended.