



For Immediate Release

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DPH, DECD UPDATE COMPREHENSIVE SPORTS GUIDANCE, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SECTOR RULES FOR WINTER SEASON

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED BY THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS; COVERS SCHOLASTIC AND
PRIVATE ATHLETIC LEAGUES

Hartford –The Department of Public Health (DPH) today released [updated comprehensive sports guidance](#) incorporating sports to be played in the winter season for both interscholastic leagues, recreational, and private leagues for youth and adults. DPH’s recommendations will be codified as part of the updated sector rules on sports from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and do not apply to college level or professional athletics. This revision updates comprehensive sports guidance released on September 25, 2020 and is intended to guide local health departments, municipalities and league organizers in assessing the risk of play, and offer suggestions to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection to players, coaches, parents and spectators. This guidance is based on a risk assessment for COVID-19 conducted by the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee of the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS), a national organization governing high school athletics. The guidance includes a description of the risk categories for sports, breaks down the risks of different activity associated with those sports, and makes recommendations for each of those activities.

“As we get into the winter season, there is a higher level of community spread of COVID-19 than there was a few months ago, and that impacts athletes in all sports, especially those played indoors,” said Acting DPH Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, MD MPH. “It is still important to remain as physically active as possible during the winter and I encourage that. It will be important going forward that sports league or event organizers give their coaches and players the tools to mitigate risks of transmission as much as possible. For our youth, this also clearly applies uniformly to sports played as part of a school-based league and private or recreational leagues. We have seen clusters of cases related to individual teams and sporting events, and this can be very disruptive to schools if youth or anyone else exposed then needs to quarantine due to exposure. Even though the effects of COVID-19 in youth tend to be less significant, children can easily spread infection to more vulnerable members of our community if exposed.”

“Our broader reopening strategy has always been focused on striking the right balance between allowing as much social and economic activity as possible while making sure the appropriate protocols are in place to keep our residents safe. Sports is certainly no exception,” noted DECD commissioner David Lehman. “We know how much these types of activities mean to our overall

quality of life in Connecticut and I feel these new guidelines offer a smart path forward during the critical winter months.”

Below are the risk categorizations for sports and associated activities:

Table 1: Risk Categorizations with Associated Sports, National Federation of State High School Associations, Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, May 2020

HIGHER RISK			
Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.			
<i>Wrestling</i>	<i>11-on-11 Football</i>	<i>Boys Lacrosse</i>	<i>Competitive Cheer</i>
<i>Martial Arts¹</i>	<i>Rugby¹</i>	<i>Boxing¹</i>	<i>Competitive Dance Teams</i>
MODERATE RISK			
Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.			
<i>Basketball</i>	<i>Soccer</i>	<i>Tennis (doubles)</i>	<i>Girls lacrosse</i>
<i>Volleyball</i>	<i>Water polo</i>	<i>Swimming relays</i>	<i>Rowing/Crew</i>
<i>Baseball</i>	<i>Gymnastics</i>	<i>Pole vault</i>	<i>(with two or more rowers in shell)</i>
<i>Softball</i>	<i>Ice hockey</i>	<i>High jump</i>	<i>7-on-7 football</i>
	<i>Field hockey</i>	<i>Long jump</i>	
LOWER RISK			
Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.			
<i>Individual running events</i>	<i>Running/Cross Country (staggered starts)</i>	<i>Weightlifting</i>	<i>Rowing/Crew (single sculling)</i>
<i>Throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus)</i>	<i>Individual swimming</i>	<i>Alpine skiing/snowboarding</i>	<i>Tennis (singles)</i>
	<i>Golf</i>	<i>Sideline cheer</i>	

¹ Identified as “Level 1” risk by United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee: Sports Event Planning Considerations Post-COVID-19, May 7, 2020 – v0.14, <https://www.teamusa.org//media/TeamUSA/Documents/Coronavirus/USOPC-Sports-Event-Planning-Considerations-V1.pdf>

Table 2: Recommendations for the Operation of Interscholastic, Club, and Recreational and Other Amateur Sports Activities

Activities	CT State Current Sports Risk Categories (from Table 1)					
	Lower Risk Sports		Moderate Risk Sports		Higher Risk Sports	
	Indoor*	Outdoor	Indoor*	Outdoor	Indoor*	Outdoor
Tier 1 Small group conditioning and non-contact drills	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing
Tier 2 Team practices, intra-squad scrimmage	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Not recommended	Not recommended
Tier 3 In-state contests between two teams	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Not recommended	Not recommended
Tier 4 In-state multi-team meets or tournaments	Recommended allowing if appropriate modifications are feasible	Recommended allowing	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended
Tier 5 Out-of-state competitions	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended

* In all cases, indoor activities should be limited to group sizes of 10 or less with appropriate mitigation strategies for indoor settings in place (face coverings if practical and safe, 6 ft or more distancing, etc.)

In addition to the recommended general restrictions for individual sports and activity types in Tables 1 and 2, DPH is recommending that athletic club organizers and participants should take the following additional restrictive measures as communities move into and through the various alert levels, particularly as prescribed for “Individuals” and “Organized Group Activities” (which includes group/team athletics).

- Requiring the use of face covering masks that completely cover the nose and mouth by all coaches and players (including during active play)
- Postponing indoor activities and/or moving indoor activities outdoors
- Keeping individuals in small cohorts
- Limiting/eliminating interactions with individuals outside of your household
- Increasing and maintaining distance between participants

- Implementing rule changes that reduce the number, frequency, duration, and/or exertional level of person-to-person physical contact

Prior to making any changes to the equipment or rules of play for their specific sport and age group, DPH recommends that all league organizers consult with their sports medicine advisory committee or other sports medicine professionals to discuss any potential additional safety or health risks that those changes may pose.

The full sports guidance document [can be found online](#) and is meant to be used as a tool to help organizers of athletic leagues for both children and adults.