NOTE: Given the current level of COVID-19 transmission in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Office of Higher Education (OHE) strongly recommend that institutes of higher education implement Scenario 4 mitigation efforts. These recommendations can be found in Recommendations for Different Levels of COVID-19 Transmission Among Higher Education Institutions (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/iherecs.pdf).

Under Scenario 4, MDH strongly recommends that sports practices and games for intercollegiate athletics be paused. If a higher education institute chooses to continue intercollegiate athletic programming, athletes must be tested for COVID-19 three times per week even during weeks when there is no competition and there is only practice. At least one test must be by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR). Any coach or staff who is going to have regular interaction with the athletes must also follow these testing recommendations. People who have tested positive by PCR within the previous 90 days are exempt from this routine testing.

At this time, in accordance with Executive Order 20-103 (EO), activities are limited from Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, 11:59 p.m. through Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021, at 11:59 p.m.

- Intramural, club, and other recreational sports are not allowed until Jan. 4, 2021. Updated guidance will be coming soon.
- Multi-team events or tournaments are not allowed at this time (see page 3).

This guidance document outlines prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during sports activities. This document is intended for organizers and participants of college sports.

Clarification of definitions for Institutes of Higher Education

- Indoor social gatherings are limited to groups of up to two household-like pods, up to a maximum of 10. Outdoor social gatherings are limited to up to three household-like pods, up to a maximum of 15. Students studying together should maintain social distancing (be at least 6 feet apart) at all times and should limit to no more than 10 people total.
- Household-like pods: For the purpose of residential campuses household-like pods should be considered as those students living in the same section of housing, such as a floor or independent wing of a dorm or a resident hall.
General requirements under Executive Order 20-103

The requirements of Executive Order 20-103 are effective from Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, 11:59 p.m. through Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. During those three weeks:

- In-person organized sports activities are only allowed for collegiate or university institution teams or athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics. However, multi-team events or tournaments are not allowed through Jan. 10, 2021.
- In-person activities for intramural, club, and other recreational sports are not allowed until at least Jan. 4, 2021. Updated guidance for Youth and Adult Sports on or after Jan. 4, 2021, will be coming soon.
- Gyms, fitness facilities, weight rooms, and field houses can be open up to 25% with no more than 100 individuals for recreational use.
  - Individuals must be spaced at least 12 feet apart.
  - Individuals must wear face coverings at all times.
  - No group classes are allowed, unless part of a course or practicum.
  - Further guidance can be found at Stay Safe Guidance For Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers (https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/gyms-studios-fitness-centers.jsp).

Requirements for holding athletic events

Review your preparedness plan

- COVID-19 Preparedness Plans are required by Executive Orders issued by Governor Tim Walz (mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp). An organization’s COVID-19 Preparedness Plans must address the requirements listed below as well as consider the outlined recommendations listed in this document. The plan should be updated when there are changes to public health official guidelines regarding group gatherings or sports activities.
  - All businesses (sports facilities, gyms, associations, sports clubs/teams, etc.) are required to develop a program-specific plan. Templates for developing a program-specific plan can be found at Stay Safe MN (staysafe.mn.gov).
  - The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan must be available and accessible to participants, volunteers, and employees.
- Maintain a plan administrator for your organization’s COVID-19 plan.
Communicate your COVID-19 plan to officials, umpires, and trainers.

This should include expectations around screening, face coverings, and other prevention efforts.

Plan templates are available at Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

Have protocols that are considerate of coaches, staff, players, volunteers, and participants at highest risk of complications from COVID-19.

- Executive Order 20-55, Protecting the Rights and Health of At Risk Populations during the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency (www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-55.pdf)

Follow physical distancing

Adhere to social distancing requirements. Maintain 6 feet between participants when they are not playing (on the bench, in the dugout, on the sideline, etc.).

During any practice or competition spectators must be at least 12 feet from the closest participant. So at least 12 feet from the field, the bench, or the court, whichever is closest.

Follow guidance for the event setting (e.g., gymnasium, rinks)

Spectators, including family and friends of participants, are not allowed. Only athletes, coaches, and other essential staff are authorized to be present in venues hosting these activities.

Facility and venue guidance is available at Minnesota Stay Safe Guidance (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp), including:

- Stay Safe Guidance for Outdoor Recreation Entities (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/outdoor-recreation.jsp)
- Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp)
- A visual guide to capacity limits can be found here: Minnesota’s Stay Safe Plan (mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp).

Multi-team events or tournament is not allowed through at least Jan. 10, 2021.

Post instructions throughout the venue and at entrances, and inform members of the teams and staff:

- Not to enter if they are experiencing symptoms
- They are required to adhere to hygiene and social distancing instructions, signage and markings; and
- The venue’s requirements involving the use of face-coverings.

Encourage members of teams and staff to review a screening survey that checks for COVID-19 symptoms, close contacts with confirmed cases and quarantined cases, and out of state travel. See MDH’s Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).
Food venues and concessions are not allowed.

Follow face covering requirements

- Face coverings are required for any practice at indoor gyms, recreation centers, or field houses. This includes players, coaches, and other staff. No exemption for levels of exertion are allowed at this time.
- More information about face covering requirements is available at Masks and face coverings (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).

Promote health checks

- Create protocols to maintain health checks and screening of participants and staff/volunteers.
  - Any staff, volunteers, or participants who are sick must stay home.
  - Have policies in place outlining the process for those who become sick while participating in a sport.
  - Be aware that persons can get a positive COVID-19 test even if they do not have symptoms.

Requirements for holding practices

Follow the Requirements for holding athletic events in addition to the following:

Spectator requirements:

- Spectators, including family and friends of participants, are not allowed. Only athletes, coaches, and other essential staff are authorized to be present.

Number of participants allowed:

- Keep practices small in size. Pod sizes cannot exceed 25 people per pod, either inside or outside. Pod count is composed of players and coaches.

Requirements for holding games, scrimmages, and competitions

Spectator requirements:

- Spectators, including family and friends of participants, are not allowed. Only athletes, coaches, and other essential staff are authorized to be present.

Number of participants allowed:

- During a game, scrimmages, or competitions (played indoors or outdoors)
  - Can include all of the people needed to make up the team.
- A team is defined as the total number of players/athletes, coaches, referees, umpires, etc. needed to hold the game or competition as long as the total number of people does not exceed the total number allowed by the venue or facility (check capacity limits). This includes cross country and track teams.

- During a cross country or track event:
  - The “course maximum”—meaning the number of people allowed on the course at one time—is 250 participants or the total square footage of the course divided by 113, whichever is less.
  - Participants must be divided into completely separated participant groups to ensure that the number of participants on the course at one time never exceeds the course maximum.
  - Event participants must be further divided into “pods” and physically distanced (meaning 6 feet of distance is maintained between people from different households) within the pods.
    - For cross country and track team events/competitions, four teams of up to seven athletes constitutes a pod.
    - For all other events, pods may not exceed 25 individuals.
  - Any race events (including run/walk races, triathlons, bicycle races, or cross-country skiing races) that are half-marathon length or longer can only be held in venues that have defined perimeters and clear entrance and exit points (i.e., not on public roadways). This is to ensure that capacity limits are adhered to, that crowding can be controlled, and that social distancing is maintained among spectators.

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### Important risk considerations

### Level of contact in a sport

Before starting games for any sport, consider the risk associated with that sport in terms of COVID-19 being spread between players.

- The more physical or close contact that occurs the greater risk there is in spreading illness.
- A sport or training that takes place indoors is riskier than if the activity is done outdoors.

### Resources for Risk Categorization of Sports:

- [United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee Coronavirus Updates](www.teamusa.org/Coronavirus)
  Under the “Return to Training and Sport Event Planning” tab, select Sport Event Planning.
- [National Federation of State High School Association: Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities](nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf)
Know before you play

There may be an increased risk of COVID-19 when participating in a game and COVID-19 activity may be different in different regions of the state, also contributing to a possible increase in risk.

Traveling out of state to participate in sports activities is strongly discouraged. However, if teams are considering traveling to other regions or states for games, they should be aware of COVID-19 activity to inform their decision.

- For Minnesota:
  - Situation Update for COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html)
  - Governor’s COVID-19 Dashboard (mn.gov/covid19/data/covid-dashboard/index.jsp)

- For the broader United States:
  - Johns Hopkins University of Medicine COVID-19 United States Cases by County (coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map)
  - CDC COVID Data Tracker (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html)

- Also, given the current recommendation for people who travel out of state to quarantine upon return, teams should work with their institution to understand the institution’s travel-related quarantine requirements.

If a member of your team or organization has COVID-19

- If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you, notify MDH by email at both health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us and health.highered.covid19@state.mn.us. MDH will be available to answer questions you have and can provide guidance. MDH also has template notification letters for close contacts or others on the team who may have questions about their risk of COVID-19.

- MDH/LPH will interview the case or parent/guardian, determine the dates when the case was infectious, identify anyone that may have been exposed, and collect contact information for those individuals.

  - People identified as exposed (close contacts) are those who spent at least 15 minutes within 6 feet of the case while the case was infectious or who had direct physical contact with an infected person. See CDC: When to Quarantine (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html).

  - The infectious period starts two days before symptoms start, or two days before the case was tested if they had no symptoms.

  - Exposed persons (close contacts) will need stay home for 14 days from the last contact with the COVID-19 case. Colleges or universities may allow for individuals who have been exposed to quarantine for shorter amounts of time. For more information, see Guidance for Mitigating

- If necessary, MDH may contact your organization for information on close contacts.
- It is important to keep rosters of who was at practices and games each day so we can do contact tracing quickly. For more information on how we do contact tracing, see Contact Tracing COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/tracing.html).
- You can find more information on what contacts need to do at What to Do if You Have Had Close Contact With a Person With COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/contact.pdf).
- Individuals who are sick with COVID-19 will need to stay out for 10 days from symptom onset. You can find most up to date information on these recommendations at If You Are Sick (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).
- In general, you do not need to cancel practice or games once you hear of a case. If such steps are needed, MDH/LPH will reach out to you and work with you to determine next steps.
- If you know you have a case but haven’t heard from MDH or LPH and you still have concerns or need notification resources, please email us at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us.

Guidance development

This document was developed in collaboration with stakeholders in Minnesota – in particular, the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission and the Higher Education Athletic Task Force.

The Minnesota Department of Education continues to partner with the Minnesota State High School League in providing guidance to member schools regarding participation in athletics and activities. School-based activities and athletics are important to our students’ educational experience and more specific guidance will be provided in alignment with the three educational scenarios described in the 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools: Health Considerations for Navigating COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf). This document provides parameters for schools to use in their planning for possible reopening in fall 2020-2021.