



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Friday, January 8, 2021

Administrator Update

TO: Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators
FR: OHSAA Executive Director's Office

We hope this update finds you healthy and safe and you were able to recharge during the holidays with your family and loved ones. As has been done since the COVID-19 pandemic began, these updates have been prepared to provide you with the latest information related to the OHSAA and our tournaments. Member school superintendents, principals and athletic administrators receive these updates electronically, but feel free to share these with other interested administrators and coaches on your staff.

OHSAA Financial Update

The OHSAA shared an Association financial update in the September 3 Administrator Update, and Executive Director Doug Ute also discussed OHSAA finances in the November 3 Administrator Update. Those two updates can be found here:

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/BulletinBoard/20200903AdministratorUpdate.pdf>

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Memos/20201103AdministratorUpdate.pdf>

In the latter update, it was noted that work continues on the OHSAA Strategic Plan that was approved by the Board of Directors on September 19, 2019. One of the key initiatives of that plan is to “establish a budget and operational strategies to ensure the long-term financial health of the Association.” While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major financial impact on all of us, the Board recognized in the strategic plan that the OHSAA’s past financial model is not sustainable, and work began prior to the pandemic and continues today on major changes within the Association that includes significant financial and operational policy and procedure modifications within the OHSAA Office and District Athletic Boards and reduction measures that have directly impacted our staff.

While we were encouraged by the final revenue and expense numbers of the fall tournaments, we entered the 2020-21 academic year projecting a loss of \$1.3 million, and it is highly unlikely that winter tournaments – with limited spectator capacity – will generate much revenue. The Board of Directors, executive director, chief operating officer and our finance team continue to explore additional financial options for the Association, and we obviously will keep you informed of any changes. As said previously, our No. 1 goal remains the same – to provide high quality services to our member schools and enrich interscholastic opportunities for students.

OHSAA Authority to Mandate COVID-19 Protocols

The OHSAA continues to receive questions about the Association’s responsibility and authority to mandate protocols and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the health standards during the pandemic are expressed in orders from the government via the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), our role is simply to assist member schools in understanding their general responsibilities to comply with such mandates. OHSAA member schools are advised to work with their local health department when specific questions regarding orders and mandates arise. Should the local health department have questions, they should contact ODH for clarification. To read the OHSAA’s position on our authority, go to:

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/2020/COVIDStatementMandateProtocols.pdf>

Student-Athlete Quarantine Guidance

OHSAA member school administrators and coaches should be aware that Governor DeWine announced December 30 that Ohio is changing its guidance regarding quarantines following an in-classroom exposure in K-12 schools. Moving forward, students and teachers exposed to a COVID-positive person in school are no longer required to quarantine as long as the exposure occurred in a classroom setting and all students/teachers were wearing masks and following other appropriate protocols. However, schools should continue to require quarantines for exposed students in situations where masking and distancing protocols were not followed. **The updated quarantine guidance does NOT apply to after-school activities, including sports.** For more information, go to: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/resources/news-releases-news-you-can-use/covid-19-update-12-30-20>

In addition, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has asked the OHSAA to share its guidance for student-athletes who ARE returning from quarantine, now that the timeframe for quarantine for the general population has been shortened. Here is the question and answer (note that many local and county health departments have faced this question, so the ODH has asked the OHSAA to share its guidance):

- Q. If a student-athlete ends a quarantine in a shortened timeframe of seven or 10 days, is she/he permitted to resume sports activities?**

- A. **To minimize the risk of coronavirus transmission, student-athletes should wait until 14 days of symptom monitoring have passed since they would not be able to social distance or wear a mask during active practice or play. Such student-athletes ARE permitted to return to class sooner since they can social distance (at least six feet) and wear a mask when around others in class.**

Compliance Reminders

The compliance department has created a “January Compliance Reminders” video with an update on department personnel changes and some reminders about the modifications which have been made to the transfer and scholarship bylaws. We encourage building-level administrators to review this five-minute YouTube video at your convenience: https://youtu.be/ivF3GnWr_iQ

Winter Sports General Update

While understanding that our focus is on the health, safety and well-being of our student-athletes and all participants in the interscholastic environment and that the decision for schools to move forward with their winter sports seasons is strictly a local decision, **at this point we have no plans to change the dates for our upcoming winter tournaments.** However, we will continue to study the data on COVID-19 and continue in discussions with the Governor’s Office to determine if we need to make any changes. If we do, we believe we have flexibility that would allow us to look at implementing other models for our winter and/or spring seasons and tournaments.

We also want to reemphasize that administrators should **do all that you can to keep crowds to a minimum**, even going below the Ohio Health Director’s Sports Order that limits spectators to the lesser of 15 percent permanent, fixed seats or 300. **Our recommendation is that you limit your crowds to parents and immediate family members.** By not being cautious and reducing the number of spectators, we are putting our student-athletes at risk of not only contracting and/or spreading COVID-19 but also risking the possibility of losing the winter sports seasons.

Winter Sports Ideas to Consider

Please see the December 4 OHSAA Administrator Update for some ideas for administrators to consider when hosting contests. These are merely ideas and an attempt to help mitigate exposure (**and we want to emphasize that these are strictly local school decisions and the OHSAA will not penalize schools that do not follow these suggestions**). That update can be found here: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/BulletinBoard/20201204administratorupdate.pdf>

Observer’s Program Continues with Winter Sports

The OHSAA Observer’s Program is continuing this winter, and observers are attending OHSAA contests each week. These designated individuals are attending contests throughout the state to ensure mandates in the Ohio Health Director’s Sports Order are being followed. Here is a link to the checklist that the observers will be using for winter sports: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/2020/ObserverChecklist-WinterSports.pdf>

All mandates in the Ohio Department of Health Director’s Sports Order must continue to be followed for winter sports. Here are some helpful links:

Health Director’s Sports Order:

<https://bit.ly/2RWa1jh>

Health Department’s Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Youth-Collegiate-Amateur-Club-Pro-Sports.pdf>

Health Department’s Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports venues:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Sports-Venues.pdf>

Administrators are reminded of these mandates within the ODH Director’s Sports Order **(please share these with your coaches)**:

- Participants not in the contest **ARE REQUIRED** to wear facial coverings on the sidelines.
- Participants not in the contest and on the sidelines **ARE REQUIRED** to be socially distanced (as close to six feet apart as possible).
- Outside of game play, players are **NOT PERMITTED** to have physical contact with their teammates (such as high-fives and handshakes). Coaches and other team personnel are also not permitted to have physical contact with players.
- Players (and cheerleaders) whose level of participation is upcoming or has been completed **ARE REQUIRED** to be socially distanced and wear facial coverings wherever they sit before or after their contest.
- Any spectators in attendance **ARE REQUIRED** to wear facial coverings and to be socially distanced.
- Disinfect and clean competition and high contact areas frequently.

Winter Sports Requirements, Recommendations and Modifications

The OHSAA staff has developed sport-specific requirements, recommendations and modifications for schools when conducting interscholastic competition in winter sports. Links to the sport-specific requirements, recommendations and modifications for winter sports are available here (please note that the OHSAA sport management staff sends periodic sport-specific memos to coaches and/or athletic administrators with additional updates):

Basketball: <http://bit.ly/BKRecs>
Ice Hockey: <http://bit.ly/IHRecs>

Bowling: <http://bit.ly/BORecs>
Swimming & Diving: <http://bit.ly/SDRecs>

Gymnastics: <http://bit.ly/GYMRecs>
Wrestling: <http://bit.ly/WRRecs>

Governor's Curfew Order

The Ohio curfew Order, extended by Governor DeWine on December 30, does not mean schools must be home from their competitions strictly at 10:00 p.m., but venues/gyms need to be vacated by 10:00 followed by transportation back home. While consideration by schools and conferences/leagues should be given to move starting times for contests earlier, the Order DOES mean it is imperative that administrators work with student-athletes and coaches to emphasize that, **once the contest ends or participants and coaches return from road trips, everyone should go home and not congregate at someone's house or a local restaurant.** Those types of gatherings have proven to help spread the virus and may play a major role in pausing a school's season.

OHSAA Provides School Form for Students Returning to Play from COVID-19

As a reminder, the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order says that a student-athlete who tests positive for COVID-19, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, shall not return to sports activities until a documented medical exam is performed clearing the individual prior to the individual returning to participate in practice or games. The exam must specifically include an assessment of the cardiac/heart of high intensity exercise due to the potential of myocarditis in COVID-19 patients. To assist the membership, the OHSAA has developed a form that schools are welcome to utilize for students who have had the medical exam to verify that the student can or cannot return to practices or games. The OHSAA form is not a requirement, **but it is required that a student who has tested positive be evaluated by a physician and cleared in writing before being permitted to return to participation.** If a student's physician is reticent to issue this clearance, please advise parents to seek a second opinion from another physician. This physician is not required to be a cardiologist but could be any qualified physician who is willing to conduct this evaluation. The form is also for use by the student and schools only and is not to be returned to the OHSAA. Administrators can access the form here: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/2020/RTPCoronavirus.pdf>

Winter Sports State Online Rules Meetings in myOHSAA

2020-21 OHSAA state rules meetings for each winter sport (basketball, bowling, gymnastics, ice hockey, swimming & diving and wrestling) have been available through the Rules Meeting icon in myOHSAA since October 14. The head coach, an assistant coach or the athletic administrator is required to complete the meeting prior to the final meeting date for each sport which coincides with that sport's tournament entry/withdraw date (**Jan. 25, 2021:** girls basketball, bowling, swimming & diving, wrestling; **Feb. 1, 2021:** boys basketball, gymnastics, ice hockey). Athletic administrators are encouraged to use the "View State Rules Meeting Attendance" link on the school's myOHSAA account to ensure their school has received credit for these meetings prior to the final meeting dates listed above as completion of the state rules meeting is required for tournament participation. As a reminder, a \$50 late fee will be charged to access each meeting since regular season contests in each winter sport are now permitted. If your school has not received credit for the meeting due to a late hire of the head coach, please contact membershipservices@ohsaa.org regarding the late fee prior to the completion of the meeting or for general assistance.

If someone desires to simply review the rules meeting without receiving credit, a playlist of each meeting can be accessed through this link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFId40HlxWrRNPxrXdZPAx4X7VXXphXzq>

Thank you for your attention to this information and for the service you are providing our student-athletes!