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## OHSAA Authority To Mandate COVID-19 Protocols

The OHSAA has received questions about the Association's responsibility and authority to mandate protocols and restrictions during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Unless the mandate is specifically covered in a member-approved bylaw or a Board-approved sports regulation, the OHSAA's authority is strictly limited to an advisory role. An example where the OHSAA DOES have the authority to mandate protocols is Bylaw 3-5-1, which requires all student-athletes to receive a Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE) and be cleared by a medical examiner once every 13 months.

Many health and safety requirements are codified in either administrative code or state law. The OHSAA has always believed it has an obligation to assist member schools in understanding their responsibilities to comply with such mandates, including the concussion education and return to play protocols and, more recently, the sudden cardiac arrest training requirements. The current pandemic has created new health standards as expressed in orders from the government via the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). Again, the OHSAA has endeavored to assist schools in understanding the mandates by posting them, communicating their meaning and developing tools that could be used to comply. The mandate regarding cardiac evaluation and written clearance by a physician for any student testing positive for COVID-19 is an example of an order which compelled the Executive Director's Office to develop a form that schools may choose to use as a tool to facilitate this process.

More recently, some schools, and members of their medical staff, have asked the OHSAA to mandate additional protocols that are not included in current ODH orders. Please be advised that the OHSAA is not responsible to issue health orders or mandates in this regard. We will continue to share information and advise schools to work with their local health departments for guidance. Recently, the ODH has issued a statement, which the department has asked the OHSAA to share, concerning local health department orders which may conflict with ODH orders. The OHSAA advises schools who recognize such a conflict to work with their local health department and ask that local health department to verify such action with the ODH. As ODH has shared in the past, local health departments can mandate more stringent policies but cannot require policies which countermand ODH orders.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has recently communicated a release from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In mid-December, the AAP released an update to their *COVID-19 Interim Guidance on Return to Sports*. [Here](#) is a link to the current AAP guidance, which may be helpful as schools make decisions about managing the pandemic and protecting participants in the interscholastic athletic environment.

Please feel free to contact the OHSAA with any questions or concerns.