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Covid-19 School Sports and Extra Curricular Activity Guidance

This guidance is prepared by the Rock County Public Health Department to assist local schools in their preparations and planning for potential sports and extra-curricular activities as related to Covid-19 conditions in our community. Sports and extra-curricular activities are viewed as essential to the physical and mental well-being of students, however that benefit must be weighed against the potential for serious Covid-19 health implications to students, staff, family members, and the community in general. This guidance may change as we learn more about the new corona virus and how it relates to our local epidemiological data. It is likely that this guidance is not inclusive of all activities in all schools and therefore schools should consider this as a general framework guidance that can be adjusted to safely fit their individual needs. We encourage utilizing some of the suggested state and national guidance documents listed below along with additional guidance that will likely be forthcoming to prepare your own Covid-19 plan for sports and extra-curricular activities.

The main risk associated with Covid-19 transmission is through exposure to respiratory droplets. These recommendations do not cover every aspect of how transmission can be prevented. These are some of the main mechanisms that prevent transmission and should be considered in all aspects of school activities:

Physical Distancing (Are students and staff far enough apart to prevent spread?)

- **Face Coverings** (reduces respiratory droplet transmission, but not a replacement for physical distancing)
- **Stay at Home if sick, exhibiting any symptoms or exposed to a positive Covid-19 case**

Exposure Time (The longer the time together, the greater the chance of virus transmission)

Cleaning and Disinfection Processes

- **Clean Equipment and Commonly Touched Surfaces frequently**
 - **Wash Hands frequently**
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Collaborating with Community Partners to ensure a healthy, thriving Rock County...

The Rock County Public Health Department has implemented a **Rock County Reopening Phased Plan** ([link](#) is below) that is protective of individuals and the community and is based on data driven gating criteria. As we move through these recovery phases, we must keep in mind that we may need to take precautionary actions within each phase to prevent moving backwards. The main metrics that will also guide recommendations within each phase include:

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- * *Ability of schools to implement mitigation strategies*
 - * *New Covid-19 cases in last 2 weeks per 100,000 population*
 - * *Percent positivity rate in last 2 weeks*
 - * *Percent change in new cases in last 7 days (increasing or decreasing)*
 - * *Average number of tests conducted per day*
 - * *Hospital general bed, intensive care bed and Covid-19 bed availability*
 - * *Hospital and health care supply and staffing availability*
 - * *Number of people receiving hospital in-patient care for Covid-19*
 - * *Student-age Covid-19 trends*
 - * *School absentee rates*
 - * *School staffing and PPE supply shortages*
 - * *Ability to conduct adequate contact tracing in schools and the community*

Rock County Covid-19 Data Dashboard for Schools:

<https://infogram.com/1pgppp5dmkijjri9zyz0jgz3dytwdwmlle1?live>

Individual schools and activities within the schools need to build flexibility into their plans moving forward and prepare for potential resurgence of the virus, positive cases or outbreaks. Rock County will move forward in the phases, however each school activity may need to assess which phase is appropriate for their current situation.

General Guidelines

The following guidelines are recommended by the Rock County Public Health Department and are based on state and national guidance, local health department information, and through consultation with Rock County School Districts. It is recommended that each sport have a written Covid-19 plan to follow that fits their sport and their local system. The plan you prepare should be distributed to all participants and parents in each sport prior to the start of each season.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- During Phase 1, it is highly recommended and essential that students and coaches maintain 6 feet of separation to minimize potential for virus spreading.
- During Phase 2, it is recommended that 6 feet of physical distancing be continued.
- During Phase 3, maintaining physical distancing is recommended when possible.
- Stay at home if sick, exhibiting any symptoms, or exposed to a positive Covid-19 case.
- Physical distancing may not be possible when in competition, however it can still be maintained on benches, sidelines, between events, and during many training activities.

ATTENDANCE AT EVENTS

- Attendance at events, when they resume, may be limited.
 - Participants and event staff are essential if events occur.
 - Fans and vendors are non-essential (consider in Phase 3 only).
 - Gathering capacity limits should be followed to maintain physical distancing.

NOTE: Although State or local capacity limits may be in place, it is essential that physical distancing be followed within those capacity limits. Capacity limits are ineffective without physical distancing.

FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings provide the best protection when everyone is wearing them properly – a well fitted facemask that covers both nose and mouth. Cloth-type face coverings provide protection to both the person wearing the covering as well as those near the person who are also wearing a covering. It should be considered as ‘acceptable practice’ and highly recommended where possible. Face masks should not be viewed as a replacement for recommended physical distancing.

- Face coverings are not recommended for swimming.
 - Note: State or local face covering orders may limit the ability to conduct certain high aerobic sports where face coverings would not be used.
- If a student/parent prefers to wear a mask it should be allowed (may want to consider a waiver).
- Face coverings are recommended for coaches, event staff, fans (if present), and participants.
 - Coaches/Officials may need alternatives to whistles (air horn/electronic whistles?).
- Consider the potential health effects of heat when wearing face coverings.

CLEANING AND SANITIZING

- All facilities and common surfaces need to be cleaned before and after use.
- Frequent hand washing by participants, coaches and officials.
 - Use soap and water and wash for 20 seconds.
 - Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Equipment should not be shared at all in Phase 1.
- Equipment should be sanitized between every individual use before sharing.
- Do not share water bottles or use common hydration stations (water cows, troughs, fountains).
- Wash sports equipment and clothing after each practice or game.

TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS

- In order to maintain physical distancing, larger transport vehicles (bus vs. van) or multiple transport vehicles may be necessary.
 - Face coverings should be worn during transportation.
- Avoid or reschedule long road trips. Minimizing time in a confined space is very important.
- Clean and sanitize transport vehicles between uses.

SYMPTOM SCREENING

- Before any daily practices, contests or activities it is recommended that all participants, including coaches, officials and event staff be screened for Covid-19 symptoms and that anyone exhibiting symptoms be prevented from participating and directed to see their primary health care provider. This screening should be documented in writing.
- Competitive atmosphere could lead to players, parents or coaches ‘wanting to play through’ some minor symptoms that could potentially be Covid-related. All participants need to understand that a single positive could not only have major health implications, but may result in the exclusion of other players, an entire team or even an entire school from future participation.

VULNERABLE PERSONS

- **Players at higher risk of developing serious disease.** Parents, staff and coaches should assess level of risk based on individual players or other participants who may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as individuals who may have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>
- If school sports physicals are conducted, physicians should be monitoring athletes for high-risk conditions as they related to Covid-19.

SMALL GROUPS/PODS/VIRTUAL STUDENT ATHLETES

- Contact tracing to determine who may have been exposed to a positive person is critical to minimizing community spread. Limiting an individual’s ‘contacts’ to as small of groups as possible will allow for less spread, will not overburden school and public health staff, and will allow for potential for schools to remain in-person even with positive cases.
 - It is recommended that participants be in small groups or pods and remain in the same small group of individuals from day to day to minimize the number exposed to a positive individual.
 - Consider elimination or modifications to ‘team meals’ or other special gatherings.
 - Consider that athletes attend school virtually if they participate in moderate or high risk sports during Phase 1 or Phase 2.
 - Those that participate in sports or other organized school activities should go above and beyond to limit exposure to social gathering and activities outside of school.

LOCKER ROOMS

- Use of locker rooms is not recommended in Phase 1 or Phase 2.
 - It is recommended that participants shower and wash clothing immediately at home.
 - Showering at home prior to pool use advised if locker rooms are closed.

PRE-GAME/POST-GAME SPORTSMANSHIP AND CELEBRATIONS

- No shaking hands or fist bumping (consider other ways to recognize sportsmanship).
- Avoid unnecessary contact at practice and games.

PLAN FOR POSITIVE CASES

- Consider these possibilities during the athletic seasons and school year:
 - Potential school closures or reverting to virtual schools due to an outbreak
 - Team isolation or quarantines
 - Cancellation of games or seasons
 - What precautions are your opponents taking?
 - What do you do if there is a positive on an opposing team?

Specific Sport Examples

The following are some examples of specific sports and potential general recommendations related to Covid-19. Please consider these examples in the context that virus conditions are ever changing and individual sports have many aspects from training to practices to competition that may not fall cleanly into these recommendations. See the *Additional Resources* section below for more specific recommendations. Also keep in mind that further guidance will likely be developed as we progress in this pandemic.

NOTE: During Phase 1 and Phase 2, physical distancing during sports and school activities are recommended. This includes not only competition but also practices, pre-competition activities, and post-competition activities. The ability to physically distance during all forms of activities is important and having facilities with enough capacity is essential.

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skill training, no sharing of equipment.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Competition with special precautions.

BASKETBALL (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skills, 1 ball per person (no sharing).
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Consider competition with frequent cleaning of ball, hand washing and physical distancing where possible.

CHEERLEADING/DANCE (low to high risk)

- Phase 1 – Not recommended.
- Phase 2 – With physical distancing
 - No partner activities/stunts/pyramids.
 - Consider increasing physical distancing much more than 6 feet.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – With physical distancing.
 - No partner activities/stunts/pyramids.

FOOTBALL (high risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual training, small groups with physical distancing, no sharing of equipment (balls, sleds, dummy's, etc.) unless equipment disinfected after each use.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – To be determined.

GOLF (low risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Practice and competition possible with modifications.
 - No contact flag stick and cup modifications.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Competition possible.

GYMNASTICS (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – “No contact” practicing or events.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
 - Frequent cleaning of equipment after individual use.
- Phase 3 – Competition allowed with modifications.

HOCKEY (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skills/practices with physical distancing, small groups.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Consider competition with modifications.

SINGING/BAND/PERFORMING ARTS (low to high risk)

- Phase 1 – Not recommended.
- Phase 2 – With physical distancing.
 - Singing and wind instruments not recommended at 6 feet distancing.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – With special precautions.

SOCCER (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skills, 1 ball per person (no sharing).
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Consider competition with frequent cleaning/switching of ball and physical distancing where possible.

SWIMMING/DIVING (low to moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Competition considered, with no contact with others.
 - Per CDC, Covid-19 is not known to spread in pool water.
 - Clean pool deck daily.
 - Check water chemistry before use.
 - Shower at home before swimming (assuming closed locker rooms).
 - Consider available spacing needs for participants in pool deck and waiting areas.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations when not competing.
- Phase 3 – Competition considered.

TENNIS (low to moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skill training only, maintaining physical distancing.
 - Frequent ball replacement.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Competition with precautions.

TRACK/CROSS COUNTRY (low to moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity /gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual running events okay with 6 feet spacing.
 - No sharing of equipment.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Clean shared equipment between uses.

VOLLEYBALL (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – Individual skills, without sharing equipment.
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – Competition with special precautions and frequent cleaning of volleyball and hand washing.
 - Eliminate team gathering/celebrations with contact after points.

WEIGHT TRAINING (moderate risk)

- Phase 1 – Not recommended.
- Phase 2 & 3 – Cleaning before and after all individual equipment use.
 - No use of equipment requiring spotters in Phase 2.
 - Observe physical distancing and capacity limits.
 - Use small work out groups of the same individuals.
 - Require reservations or time slots for each group.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.

WRESTLING (high risk)

- Phase 1 – Team activity/gathering not recommended.
- Phase 2 – “No contact” training/practicing, competition not recommended
 - Physical distancing (>6ft) is essential to minimize spread.
 - Use face coverings consistent with state and local orders or recommendations.
- Phase 3 – To be determined.

Additional Resources

ROCK COUNTY REOPENING PHASED PLAN

- https://www.co.rock.wi.us/images/web_documents/departments/health/Rock_County_Reopening_Phased_Plan-Phase_II_03-02-2021.pdf

ADDITIONAL COVID-19 SPORTS GUIDANCE

- **WIAA Guidelines.**
<https://www.wiaawi.org/Portals/0/PDF/Health/Covid/WIAA-Return-to-Fall-Sports.pdf>
- **CDC Playing Sports.**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/playing-sports.html>
- **CDC Considerations for Youth Sports.**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>
- **Aspen Institute Project Play “Return to Play Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool”.**
<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/return-to-play>
- **National Federation of State High Associations.**
https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf
- **Resocialization of Collegiate Sports: Action Plan Considerations.**
<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/resocialization-collegiate-sport-action-plan-considerations>
- **USA Soccer Recommendations.**
<https://www.ussoccer.com/playon>
- **USA Volleyball.**
<https://usavolleyball.org/usa-volleyballs-covid-19-updates>

SPORTS EQUIPMENT CLEANING

- <https://www.sportsengine.com/return-to-play/tips-cleaning-and-disinfecting-sports-gear>

EXAMPLES: COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING SIGNS/POSTERS

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention-H.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs-11x17-en.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/images/face-covering-checklist.jpg>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/CDC-COVID-19-PSA-Everyday-Prevention-Actions.mp3>