



**AHSAA**  
ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

# Best Practices

Return to Play for Winter Sports 2020-2021

October 15, 2020



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## **AHSAA Best Practices**

### **Return to Play for Winter Sports 2020-2021**

*Approved by the AHSAA Central Board of Control and Medical Advisory Committee.*

*This document is subject to change by approval of the Central Board as needed.*

*Best practices for championship play, and spring sports will be released as needed.*

***Purpose: To offer AHSAA member schools best practices in order to continue the 2020-21 school year athletic seasons as scheduled and have complete seasons through championship play; to educate our coaches and student-athletes how to safely live with the COVID-19 virus by following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), and Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) guidelines while fostering an educational athletic environment; to develop our student-athletes as physically and safely as possible; to provide best practices for students, coaches, officials, and fans while participating and attending athletic events.***

Local school administration should become familiar with the minimum requirements of the **Current State Health Order** (September 30, 2020) particularly paragraph 11. The document may be found at: <http://alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/index.html>.

In addition, before beginning any athletic activities, the local school (system) should review the most recent guidelines provided by the CDC, ADPH, ALSDE, and local county/city health agencies and decide how best to implement those guidelines. The Alabama Department of Public Health's "Guidelines for Adult and Youth Athletic Activities" are available at <https://alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/assets/cov-sah-athletic-facilities.pdf>.

We recommend that school affiliates, including but not limited to, administrators, coaches, players, officials, and spectators continue to follow the AHSAA "Best Practices Return to Play" document that was released on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and updated September 10, 2020, found at <https://www.ahsaa.com/>. In addition to the "Best Practices Return to Play", the following best practices are suggested for all AHSAA winter sports.

### **General Education:**

- The state health order requires players, coaches, officials, and spectators to refrain from congregating within 6 feet of a person from another household except to the extent necessary for players, coaches, and officials to directly participate in the athletic activity. See paragraph 11.b(i) of the September 30, 2020 ADPH state health order.
  - **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings must be worn.** (See paragraphs 2 and 11.c of the September 30, 2020 state health order.)
- According to the state health order, "organizers of athletic activities shall take reasonable steps, where practicable, to regularly disinfect frequently used items and surfaces." (Based on paragraph 11.d of the September 30, 2020 Current Order of the

State Health Officer). In addition, “*players, coaches, and officials shall not share water coolers, drinking stations, water bottles, cups or other drinking devices*” while participating in an athletic activity.

### **Facilities:**

- In accordance with the **Current State Health Order**, *paragraphs 11.b and 11.c*, spectators may attend athletic events, but attendance at events will be significantly reduced: **“Players, coaches, officials, and spectators shall not congregate within 6 feet of a person from another household except to the extent necessary- and only to the extent necessary- for players, coaches, and officials to directly participate in the athletic activity.”** Furthermore, **“...spectators shall wear a mask or other facial covering that covers his or her nostrils and mouth at all times while within six feet of a person from another household...”** (*Based on the September 30, 2020 Current Order of the State Health Officer*).
- Venues used to host athletic activities are not subject to a specific capacity limit, but capacity will necessarily be limited by the requirement to maintain proper distancing between spectators from different households.
- Member schools are expected to comply with CDC, ADPH and local health agencies related to best practices for facilities. **When physical distancing cannot be maintained in congested areas, such as entrances and exits, facial coverings are required as set out in paragraph 11.c of the September 30, 2020 state health order.**
- All decisions concerning spectators, student sections, seating in indoor facilities, etc., are under the guidance of home or venue management and should be in accordance with the minimum requirements of the state health order (paragraph 11), including the order’s social distancing requirements, as well as CDC, ADPH, and local health guidelines.

### **Rules Modifications**

- 2020-21 NFHS Sports and State Adopted Rules Modifications due to Covid-19 may be found at the following link:  
<https://www.ahsaa.com/2020-Winter-Sports-Rules-Modifications>

### **Best Practices Regarding Contest Officials**

- Host schools should communicate all local restrictions regarding COVID-19 prior to the event.
- Host schools should provide contest officials an area to enter and exit separate from fans when possible. Officials should be provided a dressing and meeting area that has been cleaned and disinfected prior to their arrival that provides for appropriate spacing between individuals.
- Dressing rooms should have hand sanitizer **if soap and water are not readily available.**

- Officials should self-screen every day for COVID-19 symptoms for themselves and family members.
- The officials' table should be limited to essential personnel which includes home team scorer and timer with a recommended distance of six feet between individuals. Visiting team personnel (scorer, statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and may need to find an alternative location. The number allowed at the officials' table is determined by the space available at the table. **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in paragraph 11.c of the state health order.**
- Officials may use an electronic whistle and wear cloth face coverings.
- Officials should have their own labeled, beverage container, and these should be brought onto the court, mat, or track for their use during time outs or breaks.
- During the pregame festivities, remind participants that they should refrain from high fives, handshakes, and other physical contact except to the extent necessary—and only to the extent necessary—for participation in the activity. This is required by paragraph 11.b of the September 30, 2020 state health order.

## **Ticketing**

- If attendance restrictions are in place, **equitable access for visiting fans must be provided.**
- The AHSAA does offer a CONTACTLESS, digital ticketing platform. Instructions may be found at the AHSAA website or at <https://gofan.co/app/school/AHSAA>
- GoFan offers a “CASHLESS” platform. *[Schools using the Cashless platform will be offered a restructured process fee.]*

## **Best Practices for Basketball:**

- **Attendance**

- Attendance to events cannot exceed the current state health order. (See point #1 under General Education above). *Please note, if players waiting to participate or players after participating are seated in the stands, they will count toward the allowed attendance capacity.*
- All decisions concerning spectators, student sections, indoor seating, etc., are under the guidance of home management and should be in accordance with the minimum requirements of the state health order (paragraph 11), including the order's social distancing requirements, as well as CDC, ADPH, and local health guidelines.
- **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in *paragraph 11.c* of the state health order.**

- **Contest Management**

- Any time multiple contests are played on the same day, the game floor, team benches and locker rooms should be cleaned and disinfected between games. This may require more time between games.
- **Pregame Meetings**
  - Separate meetings should be held for coaches and team captains. Officials will meet with head coaches first, then meet with team captains. (Each school is allowed one coach and one captain in pregame meetings.)
  - To ensure physical distance is maintained, the pregame meetings with officials will take place around the center jump circle.
  - All pregame handshakes between officials and players should be avoided.
- **Equipment**
  - The game ball should be cleaned and placed in the official's locker room prior to the start of the game.
  - Game balls should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer. Suggested ball cleaning methods may be found at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3g531et>.
- **Postgame Meetings**
  - Postgame sportsmanship meetings should take place without handshakes.
- **Regular Season Contests**
  - Due to ADPH and CDC sanitization guidelines and limited officials available, the maximum number of games played on the same date and in the same gymnasium should be limited.
- **Area Contests**
  - Regular season area contests should be played as early as possible.

- If an area game is cancelled for any reason, the schools should reschedule as soon as possible but no later than February 2, 2021.
  - If an area game cannot be played before February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the team that cancelled the contest will accept a forfeiture and record a loss for that game.
  - Forfeitures will be calculated for final area standings.
- **Tournaments**
  - Number of teams should be limited unless multiple facilities are used.
  - Entrances and exits should be different for spectators and participants.
- **Locker Rooms**
  - Locker rooms should be cleaned and sanitized before a new team enters the locker room. If possible, all locker rooms should be cleaned as soon as the team exits to start the game, after halftime and upon departure.
  - Avoid using the same locker rooms for another team on the same date unless the area can be cleaned in-between use. i.e. If the girl's team uses the locker room first, it should be cleaned before the boys' team uses it on the same date.
  - Locker rooms should be large enough to maintain social distancing while athletes are dressing. **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings must be worn.**
- **Team Benches**
  - Team benches will need to be extended or modified to accommodate social distancing. Benches may be extended to the baseline and beyond or two rows may be created to stagger seats in order to maintain physical distance between players.
  - Team benches should be cleaned and sanitized between games.
  - Create space between the team benches and spectator seating or place team benches opposite spectator seating.
  - Players, coaches, managers, etc. on team bench should wear facial coverings when not actively participating in the contest.
- **Scorer's Table**
  - The officials' scorer's table should be limited to essential personnel which includes home team scorer and timer with a recommended distance of six feet between individuals. Visiting team personnel (scorer, statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and may need to find an alternative location. The number allowed at the officials' table is determined by the space available at the table. **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in paragraph 11.c of the state health order.**
  - If physical distance can be maintained, the guest scorer may be allowed at the table.

## Best Practices for Bowling:

- Attendance
  - Attendance cannot exceed the current state health order. (See point #1 under General Education above). *Please note, if players waiting to participate or players after participating are seated in the stands, they will count toward the allowed attendance capacity.*
  - The number of participants and spectators will be determined by the local bowling centers and should be in accordance with the minimum requirements of the state health order (paragraph 11), including the order's social distancing requirements, as well as CDC, ADPH, and local health guidelines.
  - Guidelines pertaining to Regional and State tournaments may be found at [www.ahsaaa.com](http://www.ahsaaa.com)
  - **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in paragraph 11.c of the state health order.**
  
- Event Management
  - Bowling format will be 1 traditional and 3 bakers.
  - Teams should not alternate lanes during the match. Once the match begins, teams will remain on the same lane throughout the match.
  - While in the pit area, **when physical distancing cannot be maintained, all coaches and student-athletes should wear facial coverings as required as stated in paragraph 11.c of the state health order.**
  - When possible, leave a lane open between the two lanes being used by the teams.
  - When possible, bowlers are encouraged to use their own personal bowling ball. Community balls from the bowling centers should be used as a last resort.
  - Bowlers will be limited to one ball per contest.
  - Isopropyl alcohol may be used to clean bowling balls during the contest.
  
- Postgame Meetings
  - Postgame sportsmanship meetings should take place without handshakes.



## **Best Practices for Wrestling:**

- **Attendance**
  - Attendance events cannot exceed the current state health order. (See point #1 under General Education above). *Please note, if players waiting to participate or players after participating are seated in the stands, they will count toward the allowed attendance capacity.*
  - All decisions concerning spectators, student sections, indoor seating, etc., are under the guidance of home management and should be in accordance with the minimum requirements of the state health order (paragraph 11), including the order's social distancing requirements, as well as CDC, ADPH, and local health guidelines.
  - **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in *paragraph 11.c* of the state health order.**
  
- **Contest Management**
  - Until further notice from the AHSAA, all events (regular season matches and tournaments) should be limited to a maximum of four teams per event. This allows contact tracing to be more manageable if a wrestler develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 48 hours of the match.
  
- **Event Management**
  - All coaches and wrestlers who are not actively competing in a match, should wear a facial covering.
  - Hand sanitizer should be made available at the scorer's table. All wrestlers should use the sanitizer prior to walking on the mat to begin.
  - Floor access during matches should be limited to those essential to the individual match. Individuals allowed should be limited to:
    - The two wrestlers participating in the match
    - One coach per team
    - Referees
    - Timekeeper/Scorer
    - Medical Staff
  - Individuals non-essential to the match in progress including, but not limited to, players waiting to wrestle, spectators, media, school photographers, etc. are prohibited on the floor or mat  
Failure to abide by this safety protocol will, at the discretion of the meet official, result in loss of team point(s).
  - Mats should be cleaned after each match with appropriate disinfectant if reasonable or practicable.
  - Temperature of all coaches and athletes should be checked before weigh-in.
  - Weigh-in and skin checks should be completed maintaining six-feet between participants and with facial coverings until the face and neck area are checked.
  - When possible, weigh-ins and skin checks should take place as a team per NFHS best practices.

- When possible, athletes should consider showering after each match. When not possible, general cleaning of hands, face and exposed body should be performed before the next match.
- **Postgame Meetings**
  - Postgame sportsmanship meetings should take place without handshakes.
- **Locker Rooms (if used)**
  - Locker rooms should be cleaned and sanitized before a new team enters the locker room. If possible, all locker rooms should be cleaned as soon as the team exits to start the match.
  - Avoid using the same locker rooms for another team on the same date unless the area can be cleaned in-between use.
  - Locker rooms should be large enough to maintain social distancing while athletes are dressing. **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings must be worn.**

## **Indoor Track Considerations:**

- **Attendance**

- Attendance at all events, cannot exceed the current state health order. (See point #1 under General Education above). *Please note, if players waiting to participate or players after participating are seated in the stands, they will count toward the allowed attendance capacity.*
- Attendance limits will be set by the City of Birmingham and the CrossPlex and should be in accordance with the minimum requirements of the state health order (paragraph 11), including the order's social distancing requirement, as well as the CDC and ADPH guidelines.
- Maximum stand attendance currently allowed in the CrossPlex is 950.
- **When physical distancing cannot be maintained, facial coverings are required as stated in paragraph 11.c of the state health order.**

- **Event Management**

- Temperature of all participating athletes and coaches should be checked before the team reports to the event.
- The top 12 qualifiers for each event per class will participate.
- Athletes and coaches not actively participating in an event should be separated from the spectators.
- It is recommended that the spectators use the "visiting" bleachers (maximum 475) while the student-athletes and coaches use the "home" bleachers (maximum 475) totaling 950 attendees.
- Floor access should be limited to essential personnel only. This would include "active" participants, officials and meet personnel.
- Coaching boxes should be limited to one coach per school per box.
- When possible, athletes should warm-up outside of the arena.
- The interior warm-up track should be limited to only athletes who will participate in the next competitive event.
- Athletes should wear a facial covering until they have moved into their lane for the competition or it is their turn for a field event. Immediately upon completion of their race or event, the facial covering should be placed back on the athlete.
- When possible, once an athlete has finished his or her events for the day, he or she should exit the facility for the day.
- All athletes and coaches should have their own labeled beverage container as there should be no shared water coolers or containers.
- Hand sanitizer should be available throughout the facility and used by all athletes before and after touching the starting blocks.