



MCPS ATHLETICS

RETURN to R.A.I.S.E.

Update—November 19, 2021

Dear MCPS Community:

Thank you for a great first week of winter sports! Following are some key updates and reminders regarding program operations.

Masks/Face Coverings

On Saturday, November 20, 2021, the indoor mask mandate will return in Montgomery County. MCPS applied for a letter of approval requesting that the MCPS athletics program continue with the existing indoor mask guidance in the [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan](#). The request has been provisionally *partially* approved to include that **fully vaccinated student-athletes engaged in the play of basketball are not required to wear face coverings**. The remainder of the MCPS request will be considered on November 24 at the next Montgomery County Board of Health Letter of Approval team meeting. If approved, it will move forward to the full Board of Health for consideration on November 30. As a result, the indoor mask guidance below will be in effect beginning on Saturday, November 20 and will remain in effect, pending the next Board of Health meeting on November 30. Updates as appropriate will be provided at that time, pending the Board of Health's decision.

Indoor Mask Guidance for MCPS Athletics – effective November 20, 2021

MCPS Athletics will return to previous guidance that requires masks to be worn indoors **at all times**, with limited exceptions. The updated guidance is below:

For indoor sports, masks must be worn at all times, except as noted below:

- *Basketball – fully vaccinated student-athletes are not required to wear face coverings*
- *Cheerleading – when actively engaged in stunting/tumbling/flying*
- *Swimming/Diving – in the water, because a wet face mask may be more difficult to breathe through*
- *Wrestling – during wrestling contact, a mask could become a choking hazard and is discouraged unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes.*

Spectators, coaches, and officials must wear masks at all times indoors. All participants shall bring their own mask/face covering; extra masks are available at all activities.

This guidance will remain applicable across MCPS Athletics, pending future Montgomery County Board of Health review. The next meeting is scheduled for November 24, 2021. The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics, which includes representation from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, will review future guidelines and provide updated guidance.

Winter Spectator Guidelines

Spectator guidelines for the winter season are being finalized and will be released during the week of November 29, 2021.

Student-Athlete Vaccination Requirements

Beginning with the start of the winter sports season, Nov. 15 for high school, and Dec. 7 for middle school, all high school and eligible middle school student-athletes will be required to submit proof of full COVID-19 vaccination prior to participation. This requirement applies to the winter and spring sports seasons, as well as all out-of-season activities conducted through MCPS Athletics.

Student-Athlete Vaccination Exemptions

Only medical exemptions will be permitted. [MCPS Form 560-30A: COVID-19 Vaccine Medical Exemption Request for Student-Athletes](#) must be completed by a licensed health care professional and submitted during the registration process for athletics.

Vaccination FAQs

[Here](#) are answers to FAQs regarding the vaccination requirements for MCPS Athletics.

GoFan – Digital Ticketing

Beginning with the second round of the football playoffs, along with state semifinals and finals, tickets for MPSSAA events and football games will be sold exclusively through GoFan. [Links](#) will be provided to participating schools in advance of each game to promote to their communities. There will be no cash sales at the door. MCPS will also utilize GoFan for additional events starting with the upcoming winter sports season. More information is available [here](#).

MPSSAA Playoffs

Region and state playoffs are underway! Be sure to follow your favorite team on their quest for a region and state championship! More information is available on the [MPSSAA State Championship Central](#) website.

Testing in Schools

Free COVID-19 testing is available for all students in every school. Testing is an important strategy for keeping schools open and students and staff safe. With testing, MCPS can minimize the number of students in quarantine and minimize interruptions to program activities. Parents/guardians must give their consent for testing. Families can [fill out the consent form](#), which is available in [multiple languages online](#), or request paper copies from their school.

There are two types of COVID-19 testing available. Rapid tests are used when a student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. Results are available within 15-20 minutes. Screening tests are given weekly to a random sample of students with no COVID-19 symptoms. These results are available in a few days. Read [here](#) for more information.

Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan Operations

The Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan will continue to drive program operations in regard to COVID-19 procedures and protocols. The plan is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics. The latest version is always available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information](#) webpage. The November 12 update includes updated language regarding concessions and indoor face covering/mask guidance.

Communication and Resources

Our COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics will continue to evaluate and implement the latest safety measures. Updates and guidance from the Task Force will continue to be provided and are available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information](#) webpage.

We appreciate your continued commitment and support. Specific questions should be directed to your school's [athletics specialist \(AD\)](#), [athletic coordinator \(AC\)](#), or coach.

Montgomery County Public Schools