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**RETURN TO R.A.I.S.E.**  
**OPERATIONS PLAN FOR MCPS ATHLETICS**  
**June 10, 2022 (subject to change)**

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The MCPS athletics program has returned to full operations, along with the following procedures and protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan aligns with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), and Montgomery County.

1. **Vaccinations** – vaccinations are one of the most effective strategies to protect each individual student-athlete and team.

Student-Athlete Vaccination Requirements

Vaccination for COVID-19 is strongly recommended for student-athletes, but not currently required. This guidance is subject to change, pending the latest guidance from the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics, in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

Coaches & Athletic Department Personnel

Consistent with MCPS requirements for staff members, coaches and athletic department personnel must submit proof of vaccination, unless staff request and are granted an exemption. If a medical/religious exemption is granted, the employee must submit to regular COVID-19 testing as required by MCPS.

Volunteer Coaches

All volunteer coaches are required to complete an additional module via their myMCPS Classroom/Canvas account called COVID-19 Vaccination Attestation in order to volunteer. The module consists of a volunteer a) attesting to being fully vaccinated, b) uploading their Certificate of COVID-19 Vaccination from the Maryland Department of Health, and c) agreeing to specific expectations of masking and social distancing while in MCPS facilities.

2. **Masks/Face Coverings**

The wearing of masks/face coverings is optional for all individuals across the program, including student-athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, and event personnel. Consistent with expectations during the school day, all individuals are expected to respect personal decisions regarding the wearing of masks. This guidance will remain applicable across MCPS Athletics, pending future review and guidance for schools.

3. **Other Counties and non-MCPS Facilities** – MCPS student-athletes, coaches, and operations will comply with the COVID-19 procedures and protocols of host counties and facilities, as appropriate. This includes masks/face coverings, use of locker rooms, and other COVID-19-related restrictions.

4. **Hand Hygiene** – hand hygiene is essential. Regularly washing hands with soap and water removes germs and allows for the safe use of shared items and apparatuses. When stakeholders do not have easy access to soap and water, sanitizer can be used to kill germs. All participants must bring their own hand sanitizer. Restrooms will be stocked with soap and MCPS-approved hand sanitizer will be available onsite.

5. **Hydration & Heat** – all participants shall bring their own water bottle that includes their name clearly labeled. Coaches and student-athletes are required to review and implement MCPS procedures and protocols regarding temperature and heat, including the [MCPS Fall Heat Plan](https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/athletics/health/fall-heat-plan.pdf) and [MCPS Heat & HydratiResources](https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/athletics/health/fall-heat-plan.pdf).<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/athletics/health/fall-heat-plan.pdf>

## Scheduling

To maximize participation opportunities, schedules may be adjusted to accommodate teams impacted by COVID-19. Adjustments must be approved through the Athletics Unit, in compliance with MCPS and MPSSAA regulations.

## Conditioning Activities and Weight Rooms

Conditioning activities and the use of weight rooms are allowed. Coaches must review and implement the [Conditioning Program Recommendations](#), along with MCPS health and safety resources. Only general conditioning may occur; no sport-specific activities may occur (school coaching staffs may work with up to two student-athletes per day). Coaches and student-athletes must comply with the [MCPS-Out of-Season Participation Standards and Regulations](#) and operate in alignment with the [MPSSAA 80% Rule](#) and guidance.

## Required Registration and Documentation

Students must submit all required documentation. Registration is completed electronically through the ParentVue online registration portal for MCPS Athletics. In addition to existing registration forms and documentation, the following items are required due to COVID-19:

1. [Pre-Participation Physical](#) – per state guidelines, all students must complete an annual pre-participation physical examination. The MCPS physical form (SR-8) includes a supplementary page on COVID-19, per recommendations from the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee. This page must be included with the submission of all physicals. The updated form is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Resources are available on the MCPS Athletics webpage regarding [clinics](#) and opportunities for securing physicals, including the [Care for Kids](#) program through Montgomery County.
2. [COVID-19 Parent/Student-Athlete Participation Acknowledgement Statements](#) (pledge statements) – per state guidelines, students and parents/guardians must both acknowledge they have read provided information on the risk of COVID-19, as it relates to participation in interscholastic athletics and activities. This statement also includes acknowledgement of the symptom-free requirements from the CDC for attendance at any activity, gathering or event.
3. [COVID-19 Liability Waiver](#) – this form requires students and parent/guardians to review the liability waivers required in order to participate in interscholastic athletics. This form is completed as part of the online registration process for athletics and is available on the MCPS athletics webpage.

## Participants and Stakeholders

All students who have completed the registration process and are eligible, per MCPS policies and regulations, will be permitted to participate. Additionally, the following considerations apply:

- If parents/guardians think their child is immunocompromised, they should check with the healthcare provider (Physician (MD/DO), Nurse Practitioner (NP), Physician Assistant (PA)) before returning the student to activities.
- It is recommended that students who have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 or multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) have a thorough cardiovascular evaluation or cardiology consultation prior to return.
- Students, coaches, and officials with any of the conditions below are strongly encouraged to consult with their local health care practitioner prior to participation in interscholastic athletics:
  1. Age Greater than 65;
  2. Diabetes;
  3. Chronic lung disease including moderate to severe asthma;
  4. Severe obesity (Body Mass Index >40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>);
  5. Chronic kidney disease treated with dialysis;

6. Chronic liver disease (cirrhosis);
7. Heart conditions (coronary artery disease, hypertension, heart rhythm problems (arrhythmia), and heart defects you are born with (congenital heart defects));
8. Immunocompromised (e.g. any transplant recipient, needing immunosuppressant medications (e.g. steroids, biologics, etc.), patients receiving chemotherapy, etc.);
9. Nursing home resident or long term care resident;
10. Thalassemia or sickle cell disease;
11. **Unvaccinated individuals for COVID-19.**

Additionally, the [CDC identifies other individuals](#) who are at risk for severe illness. Such individuals should also consider delaying their participation in sports and activities.

### **Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19**

Individuals with COVID-19 have experienced a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2–10 days after exposure to the virus. People with [these symptoms](#) may have COVID-19.

### **NFHS Course: COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators**

All coaches, athletics specialists, and athletic department personnel must complete the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) free online course entitled [COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators](#) prior to the start of the season. The completed certificate must be submitted to the athletics specialist; completion will be recorded in the Coach and Athletic Department Certification and Compliance database.

### **Positive Case of COVID-19 Response**

The procedures that govern the MCPS athletics program, when responding to a suspected and/or positive test/case of COVID-19, align with the procedures [outlined by MCPS](#) and include guidance from the CDC. In addition to MCPS procedures:

1. Parents/guardians are expected to notify the coach and athletics specialist (AD) immediately of a suspected and/or positive test/case of COVID-19, per the pledge form completed during the registration process.
2. Athletics specialist informs the principal and director of systemwide athletics of a suspected and/or positive test/case of COVID-19.
3. Follow all [MCPS operating procedures](#) for responding to a positive case. Notifications to parents/guardians will be made in alignment with this process.
4. A student who has tested positive for COVID-19 must complete and submit the [Return to Play Clearance Form: COVID-19 Infection Medical Clearance](#) prior to returning to competition. Students who test positive and are symptomatic must complete the entire form. It is recommended that asymptomatic students also complete the entire form; however, only the parent/legal custodian consent section is required prior to return.
5. The individual may return to activities when all requirements have been satisfied, per MCPS procedures.

### **Team Pauses**

If a team reaches a significant number of positive cases, team activities may need to pause. *A decision on the status of team operations would be determined by an individual analysis of the positive cases in regard to team operations, which would be conducted in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.* Boys/girls and JV/varsity in the same sport are treated as separate teams when calculating the number of positive cases in student-athletes. Teams that pause will transition back to in-person activities starting with at least one day of practice, per the COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics.

## Virtual Resources & Procedures for Team Pauses

The [RAISE Reimagined Plan](#) provides resources for coaches and teams when pauses are necessary to in-person activities. The latest version is always available on the COVID-19 Athletics Information web page.

## Testing Information

Testing information for students and stakeholders is available on the Montgomery County [COVID-19 Information Portal](#). A list of clinics is available on the [information portal](#). Tests are available at each local school, as needed.

## Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics

The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics was established in June 2020. In June 2022, the Task Force transitioned to a standing Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC). The SMAC will serve as the advisory group for all health and safety initiatives for the MCPS interscholastic athletics program. Included in this work will be COVID-19 protocols and procedures. The SMAC reports to Mr. James P. Koutsos, Area Associate Superintendent, and provides recommendations to school system and Montgomery County health officials for review and consideration. The SMAC, led by Dr. Jeffrey Sullivan, director of systemwide athletics, is comprised of the following individuals:

Dr. Jeffrey Sullivan, Director, Systemwide Athletics  
Dr. Patricia Kapunan, Chief Medical Officer, MCPS  
Mr. Clark Beil, Senior Administrator, Licensure and Regulatory Services, DHHS  
Mr. Doug Hollis, Executive Director, Office of Finance and Operations  
Ms. Heather Dublinske, Coordinator, MCPS Systemwide COVID-19 Contact  
Ms. Kathy Green, Systemwide Athletics Specialist  
Ms. Anne Rossiter, Compliance Specialist, Systemwide Athletics  
Mrs. Shella Cherry, Director, Student Leadership and Extracurricular Activities  
Dr. Randy Rumpf, Supervisor, Fine Arts  
Mrs. Danielle Miller, Office of the General Counsel  
Dr. Terry Black, Athletic Trainer and Instructor, MCPS Care and Prevention of Athletic Injuries Course  
Ms. Michelle Valdivia, Mental Health Coordinator, Student & Family Support & Engagement  
Mr. Gary Mosesman, Facilities Manager, Division of Construction  
Ms. Sarah Siddons, Supervisor, Office of Communications  
Mr. Peter Park, Team Leader, Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management  
Ms. Laurie Lyons, Manager, Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management  
Ms. Claudette Eader, Administrator of Business and Finance Support  
Mr. Preston Anderson, ATC Supervisor, Pivot Physical Therapy  
Ms. Katie Brodka, ATC Supervisor, MedStar  
Mr. Nathan Parry, Commissioner, Montgomery Boys' Lacrosse Officials Association  
Mr. Kevin Yates, Principal, Damascus High School  
Ms. Heather Podosek, Athletics Specialist, Paint Branch High School  
Mr. Jeffrey Rabberman, Athletics Specialist, Quince Orchard High School  
Mr. Michael Nesmith, Sport Director, Football