

THE SAFE RETURN OF EDUCATION-BASED ATHLETICS

The RIIL has been continuously working in conjunction with the Governor's Task Force, the Rhode Island Departments of Health and Education, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, and other state leaders to plan and prepare for a return to high school sports when it is safe and appropriate within a school environment.



The RIIIL and the Principals Committee on Athletics recognizes the educational value and benefits that high school sports participation provides to the more than 36,000 student-athletes that compete in our league annually. With a focus on students' mental health and social and emotional well-being, research has shown the benefits of exercise, social interaction, and sense of belonging.



The RIIL emphasizes that this plan is fluid and in a perpetual state of evaluation. Health metrics and data from the RI Department of Health will continue to be closely monitored, as well as feedback from member schools. Guidance and restrictions can change at any time. The RIIL will continue to consult with our stakeholders and will adjust offerings as appropriate should the health metrics direct that action. In the event of a positive COVID-19 case, member schools are mandated to follow all directives from RIDOH. The RIIL will continue to work with its member schools to define the process as more information becomes available.

CHALLENGES FACING RIIL MEMBER SCHOOLS

- ▶ **School Education & Academic Plans: In-school, Hybrid or Total Distance Learning Models**
- ▶ **Compliance with the R.I. Department of Health recommendations**
- ▶ **Length of Season, Schedules, Number of Games & Post Season Tournaments**
- ▶ **Transportation & School Budgets**
- ▶ **Management of Potential Virus Spikes, Outbreaks and Quarantines**
- ▶ **Sport Rule Modifications to minimize risk of spreading the virus**
- ▶ **Education of Administrators, Coaches and Staff**
- ▶ **Spectators**

SCHOOL EDUCATION & ACADEMIC PLANS: IN-SCHOOL, HYBRID OR TOTAL DISTANCE LEARNING MODELS

- ▶ This plan would fit within any academic model chosen by a school.
 - ▶ High School athletics are naturally conducive to maintaining stable groups within each sport.
 - ▶ Research has shown that interscholastic athletics and activities promote the health and well-being of students mentally, emotionally, and physically creating positive psychological and academic outcomes.
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LENGTH OF SEASON, SCHEDULES, NUMBER OF GAMES & POST-SEASON TOURNAMENTS

- ▶ Start Date of Fall Sports will be moved from August 17 to September 14, 2020
 - Rationale: This delay allows schools, families and students to adjust to the unique challenges of reopening schools for education and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The later start date for athletics will also avoid many of the institutional concerns usually attributed to the beginning of athletics prior to the start of the school year.
- ▶ We will extend the coaches contact period with students during the summer through August 31.
- ▶ Reduced season: 6-week regular season and 2-week post-season play
- ▶ Games may begin Friday, October 2 (Scrimmages and Injury Fund contests are allowed as of September 28.)
- ▶ Post-season tournaments will be administered by the RIIIL and adjusted accordingly.
 - The RIIIL will adjust playoff qualification standards for post-season play
- ▶ Recommend one game per week in each sport with flexibility for schools to add additional games at their discretion
- ▶ Utilize weekends for game play (Friday night, Saturday & Sunday)
- ▶ Weekdays can be utilized for practice and skill development to maximize participation opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION

- ▶ The ability to transport students is a major concern to school districts due to the governor's recommendations and budget concerns.
- ▶ Playing games on the weekends will minimize the number of buses necessary to accommodate all sports, will reduce conflicts that occur during the week and provide cost savings.
- ▶ Roster size for travel (away games) may be reduced to accommodate transportation challenges

SCHOOL BUDGETS

- ▶ A cost savings will be realized by reducing the number of games played and the length of the season.
 - Officials fees
 - Transportation costs
 - Game management expenses

SPECTATORS

- ▶ Spectators will be limited to the restrictions outlined by the governor and RIDOH
- ▶ Member schools may decide to further limit spectators at their own discretion.
- ▶ NFHS Network “High School Support Program” is offering up to 2 Free Pixellot automated production units, which will allow schools to livestream games in the event that the number of spectators is limited or not allowed

MANAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL VIRUS SPIKES, OUTBREAKS AND QUARANTINES

- ▶ This plan allows for flexibility for each school to manage their schedule according to their individual situations. Schools can postpone/cancel events as necessary
- ▶ Action Plans for Athletics - Because sports are conducive to stable groups, isolating and mitigating the potential spread is manageable
- ▶ In the event of a positive COVID-19 case, member schools are mandated to follow all directives from RIDOH and local schools and districts.

SPORT RULE MODIFICATIONS TO MINIMIZE RISK OF SPREADING THE VIRUS

- ▶ As recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, sport rule modifications will be implemented in all sports. riil.org/page/5928
- ▶ **Examples**
 - ▶ Proper sanitization methods for Equipment/Balls
 - ▶ Guidance for contest officials (use of electronic whistles so masks can be worn for protection)
 - ▶ Guidance for proper social distancing on sidelines, coin tosses, pre-game and post-game ceremonies, etc.
 - ▶ Masks may be used by all participants and will be mandatory for coaches, staff and players not involved in game play
 - ▶ Clean and disinfect frequently touched areas and equipment
 - ▶ No hugging, shaking hands, high fives or fist bumps as a form of celebration

EDUCATION OF ADMINISTRATORS, COACHES AND STAFF

- ▶ FREE NFHS on-line course: “COVID-19 for Administrators and Coaches”
 - <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/covid-19-for-coaches-and-administrators>
- ▶ Symptom Checker - rSchoolToday Daily Health Screening apppppp
 - <https://rtvbroadcaster.com/archive/video/play/16514>
- ▶ Additional RIIIL guidance and support for schools through athletic director and coaches meetings as well as education of the general public via the RIIIL’s social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, RIIIL Blog & riil.org).
 - RIIIL COVID-19 INFO Page: riil.org/page/5928



Return-to-Athletics Model

Part 1

The following fall sports are currently allowed for team competition based on the Phase 3 guidelines established for the State of R.I.:

- Boys Cross Country
- Girls Cross Country
- Girls Tennis
- Game Day Cheer

Part 2

The RIIA is prepared to make necessary adjustments to offer as many traditional fall sports as possible in the event R.I. moves beyond the current Phase 3 guidelines for school sports:

- Field Hockey
- Volleyball (Girls & Unified)
- Soccer (Boys & Girls)
- Football

Please note that all sports would be offered in accordance with the Governor's Guidelines and the NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities document, with appropriate health and safety sport rule modifications.

Return-to-Athletics Projections

- It is the intention of the RII and the Principals' Committee on Athletics to provide every student-athlete the opportunity to participate in their chosen sport during the 2020-21 school year.
- The RII's goal is to create a framework that is flexible, fluid and provides for maximum participation opportunities.
- Our member schools support providing athletic opportunities where it is safe and appropriate within the Governor's guidelines and phase restrictions.

Return-to-Athletics Projections

Calendar

Contingent upon the finalization of school reopening plans on August 17 & school sports guidance from the Governor's office.

- Season 1: Fall Sports within the Governor's guidelines for school sports permitted (Start Date: Sept. 14)
- Season 2: Winter Sports (Start Date: TBD)
- Season 3: Fall Sports not able to begin Sept. 14 (Start Date: TBD)
- Season 4: Spring Sports (Start Date: TBD)

This return-to-athletics model will permit student-athletes to participate in their chosen sports without conflicts from other seasons.



QUESTIONS?

FEEDBACK

