

Health Department of Northwest Michigan Athletic and Performing Arts Guidance for Schools

SUMMARY

Organized sports, like other activities where participants gather and interact in close proximity across households, pose COVID-19 risks. Organized extracurricular activities such as sports and some performing arts pose higher risk and in some cases it is difficult or impossible to wear a face mask while actively participating. Safer participation in indoor sports and performing arts requires a layered approach of protective measures to avoid exposing participants to unacceptable infection risk and risk of accelerated virus transmission in their communities. The protective measures that make the most difference include:

1. Vaccination
2. Masking
3. Testing
4. Symptom Screening
5. Ventilation
6. Isolation and Quarantine

Health Department of Northwest Michigan has a local Public Health Order in effect requiring universal masking for children and adults in K-12 educational institutions. This document provides additional Guidance regarding limited exceptions for students competing in optional school athletics or participating in performing arts programs. Based on the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#) (MDHHS) and [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) current recommendations for athletics as well as the need for programs for performing arts, the following Guidance is in effect so long as the school is complying with the [Health Department of Northwest Michigan masking order](#). This Guidance also aligns with the [2021-2022 MHSAA Winter Sports Guidance updated November 3, 2021](#).

Health Department of Northwest Michigan Mandatory Provisions

- Health Department of Northwest Michigan Order Regarding Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission in Educational Settings within Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego County, State of Michigan issued August 27, 2021 and the First Amended Order dated November 9, 2021 [requires masks](#) be worn at all times while in a K-12 education setting.
- Based on MDHHS and CDC current recommendations for athletics, as well as the need for continuity of educational programming for performing arts, the following exception may be used by school districts within these counties. The exception only applies if the school district is complying with HDNW Athletic and Performing Arts Guidance for Schools.
- Athletes, Officials/Referees, or those in performing arts may utilize serial testing (2-3x a week recommended with minimum of 1x/week required) to perform without a mask during practice, competition or performances.
 - One of the tests is preferred to be completed the day of and prior to the competition or performance.
 - Athletes and performers may remove masks only while actively practicing, competing (e.g. on the court) or performing and will wear masks for example while on the bench, sidelines, or “behind stage.”

- All others attending the event would continue to be masked per the Public Health Order.

Recommended Practices

1. Masking is strongly recommended wherever possible. Individuals should continue to wear face masks if it does not pose a safety hazard or interfere with the ability to perform.
2. COVID-19 vaccinations are strongly recommended: Individuals who are vaccinated are less likely to get COVID. If they are a close contact to someone with COVID, they will be able to continue playing their sports, and going to school/work, as long as they have no symptoms. If a significant majority of a team is vaccinated, it is likely the team will not need to forfeit competitions as they will probably have enough players to continue playing.
3. Practice Safer Individual Behaviors
 - Wash hands frequently and cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Do not share items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Use separate towels, clothing, or other items used to wipe faces or hands.
 - Individuals should use their own gear/equipment and minimize sharing equipment.
 - Individuals are encouraged to provide their own food, drinks, and/or water.
 - Refrain from handshakes, hugs, fist bumps, high fives or contact celebrations.
 - Refrain from spitting, chewing gum or tobacco in the event areas.
 - For younger participants, it may be beneficial for parents or other household members to monitor their children, make sure they follow social distancing and take other protective actions (e.g., younger children could sit with parents or caregivers instead of in a dugout or group area).
4. Clean and Disinfect Often
 - Ensure enough time between each practice or competition to allow for proper cleaning and disinfection of the facilities and shared equipment.
 - Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene practices for participants, spectators, and employees, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content, paper towels, and tissues.
 - Identify an adult staff member or volunteer to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment, particularly for any shared equipment or frequently touched surfaces.
 - When disinfecting, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 and that are appropriate for the surface. Prior to wiping the surface, allow the disinfectant to sit for the necessary contact time recommended by the manufacturer. Train staff on proper cleaning procedures to ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
 - Provide individual disinfectant wipes in bathrooms.
5. Choose Safer Options for Practices and Competitions
 - Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
 - If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to participants or others using the facility.
 - Avoid areas with poor ventilation (weight rooms, small spaces, locker rooms) where social distancing cannot be implemented.

- Prioritize non-contact activity, like conditioning and drills, where social distancing can be maintained.
 - Small groups may help reduce the risk of team wide COVID-19 outbreaks as they allow for greater social distancing, easier contact tracing, and reducing the number of participants that need to be quarantined.
 - Limit the use of carpools, buses, or other shared transportation between all persons outside the same household. When riding in an automobile to a practice or competition, encourage individuals to ride with persons living in their same household. The Federal Government requires the use of masks by all in planes, trains, buses and other forms of communal transportation.
6. Safer Face Mask Considerations
- Adjusting the level and intensity of physical activity and taking frequent rest breaks can improve toleration of a face mask.
 - Any face mask that becomes saturated with sweat should be changed immediately.
7. MDHHS is available to support testing of your participants and keeping your sports programs safe. Please visit MI Safer Sports Testing Program website for information including enrollment forms, antigen test result reporting, test order surveys, training videos, and FAQs. For additional resources on mitigation measures and resources available to participants and teams, please see the following links:
- [MDHHS COVID-19 Information and Resources for Athletics](#)
 - [K-12 School Opening Guidance](#)
 - [MDHHS Antigen Tests FAQ and Resources](#)
 - [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)
 - [American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance](#)