



## MEMO

**TO:** NYSPHSAA Section Executive Directors  
**FR:** Dr. Robert J. Zayas, NYSPHSAA Executive Director  
**RE:** High-Risk Sports Authorization  
**DATE:** January 25, 2021

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On January 22, 2021, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation during the COVID 19 Public Health Emergency (“*Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Sports and Recreation*”). The guidance was created to provide owners and operators of sports and recreation businesses, leagues, organizations, and their employees, as well as patrons, players and spectators with precautions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

In response to this guidance, I want to provide the information below:

- **HIGH-RISK SPORTS APPROVAL:** Schools can only participate in high-risk sports (contact practice, games, competitions, etc.) if approval is provided by local health authorities (i.e., County Department of Health).

The January 22<sup>nd</sup> NYSDOH guidance states:

*“Effective February 1, 2021, participants in higher risk sports and recreation activities may partake in individual or distanced group training and organized no/low-contact group training and, further, may partake in other types of play, including competitions and tournaments, only as permitted by the respective local health authorities (i.e., county health departments).”*

- **TRAVEL:** For all low, moderate, and high-risk sports, travel for practice or play is prohibited outside of the region or contiguous counties/regions. Interstate travel for practice or play is strongly discouraged by NYSDOH and, if undertaken, must strictly adhere to the requirements of the State's travel advisory. The “regions” refers to the New York State COVID Regions.
- **SEASON END DATES:** As a result of authorization provided by the NYSDOH, the winter high-risk season may start on February 1<sup>st</sup>. NYSPHSAA determined Fall Season II sports may begin on March 1<sup>st</sup> and Spring on April 19<sup>th</sup>. Sections have the autonomy to determine the length of the season and season end dates.
- **SEVEN CONSECUTIVE DAY RULE:** On January 24, 2021, the NYSPHSAA Officers, with authority granted within the NYSPHSAA Handbook, waived the seven consecutive day rule for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year to permit teams to practice/ compete on seven consecutive days. It is important to note school districts can be more restrictive and practicing/ competing on seven consecutive days should involve great consideration and examination.
- **PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS:** Students must participate in six practices before representing their school in a scrimmage or a contest; 10 practices for baseball, football, gymnastics and wrestling.

Virtual practices and off-season conditioning workouts do not count towards the required number of practices.

- **MAXIMUM NUMBER OF GAMES:** No revisions have been made to the NYSPHSAA maximum number of games/ contest restrictions.
- **SPRING CHAMPIONSHIPS:** NYSPHSAA continues to examine the feasibility and interest in hosting the Spring 2021 State Championship events. The January 22, 2021 NYSDOH guidance prohibits a team from traveling outside of their region or contiguous counties/regions; unless this guidance is revised, hosting a state championship would not be possible. Furthermore, NYSPHSAA is closely monitoring the status of the June Regents Exam as a determining factor for the Spring 2021 State Championships. No decision has been rendered on the Spring 2021 State Championships as of the release of this memo.
- **RESOURCE DOCUMENT:** NYSPHSAA will release an updated edition of the *Return To Interscholastic Athletics* resource document after consulting with NYSPHSAA sport coordinators and receiving approval from NYSPHSAA officers for required rule changes. This updated document will include individual sport considerations for Fall Season II and Winter High-Risk sports.