
COVID-19 ADVISORY MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Heads of Independent Schools
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education
Mark A. Levine, M.D., Commissioner of Health
SUBJECT: Indoor Winter Sports
DATE: October 26, 2021

Background

This purpose of this memo is to support local decision making around implementing indoor winter sports programs during the 2021-2022 school year. Outdoor winter sports may be held as normal with individual participants and spectators implementing COVID-19 precautionary measures as a matter of personal choice.

Since it does not appear a state of emergency will be necessary at this time, this memo is advisory only. This means there will be some potential for conflicting approaches when schools engage in competitions. Our recommendation is the hosting or home school should determine the mitigation measures that are implemented.

Sport-Specific Recommendations

We will not be producing sport-specific recommendations this year. All winter sports programs should follow the recommendations outlined in this memo.

Vaccination

We strongly recommend all eligible student athletes get vaccinated. Vaccination is a proven mitigation strategy and will ultimately ensure athletes can stay in school and compete safely throughout the season. It may be helpful to remind athletes and their families that vaccinated individuals will not need to quarantine should an exposure occur.

While participation in a "Test to Stay" program will allow unvaccinated athletes to continue to participate in team-based practices during their quarantine, it will not enable involvement in interscholastic competition (i.e., games, meets or competitions).

Testing

Unvaccinated student athletes and any athlete participating in activities where masks cannot be consistently worn (i.e., wrestling, gymnastics, cheer, dance) should participate in weekly testing.

Masking

Masks should be worn by all student athletes, coaching staff, referees and spectators during indoor practices, competitions and games, regardless of individual vaccination status, except for the following limited circumstances:

- Athletes participating in running events – both practice sessions and meets/competitions – so long as physical distancing is maintained between individuals using staggered starts or other means.
- Athletes participating in wrestling, gymnastics, cheer and dance skills and events that require inversion (i.e., wrestling, tumbling, vaulting, bars, etc.).

Spectators

Spectators may be permitted at indoor winter sports games and competitions if the host school's policies permit them. Spectators are expected to observe all mitigation measures adopted by the school including, but not limited to, those related to masking.

Contact Tracing

Vermont schools will maintain responsibility for internal contact tracing when a student athlete or staff participated in a school-based sports program while infectious; the Vermont Department of Health will undertake contact tracing for any identified close contacts to infectious event spectators.