

The South Carolina Independent School Association

Road Map for the Return of Fall Sports

Assumption of Risk: Informed Consent to Participate

The South Carolina Independent School Association continues to monitor the ever changing high school activities landscape in South Carolina and across America. SCISA respects the rights of families, students, teachers, volunteers, and coaches to make informed decisions. This includes the right to assume the risk associated with athletic participation. Those “risks” associated with education-based athletic programs are listed and described in addendum #1 attached to this document.

SCISA acknowledges that:

- attendance in an independent school is a choice and made voluntarily by a family; and
- participation in athletics is a choice and made voluntarily by a student and supported by his or her family; and
- the student and family have been warned of the inherent risk of athletic participation; and
- the school and SCISA will establish guidelines that are designed to enhance the safety of athletic participation but the “risks” cannot be eliminated in each activity.

SCISA acknowledges and respects the rights of parents and students to choose to participate in athletics and assume the risks associated with athletic participation. SCISA also respects a family’s right to choose not to participate in athletics.

Attendance at an athletic event is also voluntary. Those who choose to attend a public event knowingly assume the risk of being exposed to an infectious disease including COVID-19.

Best Practices for Student-Athlete Health and Safety

These health and safety guidelines are designed to shape the behavior of our school communities with the concept of “layering” preventative measures to create an environment of responsible on-campus instruction and activities.

1. The initial line of defense starts at home. If a student, teacher, staff member or volunteer feels bad and/or exhibits symptoms he or she must stay at home. Everyone must practice self-assessments.
2. Early self-referral to a doctor when exhibiting signs and symptoms.
3. Identify “at risk” teachers, staff members, volunteers, and students. Once identified, follow protocols to minimize exposure. Consideration must be given for these “at risk” individuals not to participate or attend events.
4. Daily screening before practice.

Note: a student should be “screened” at home to determine if he or she can go to school. The school will do some level of screening upon the student’s arrival to school. A coach, staff member or athletic trainer will do a screening before practice. That means a student-athlete should be medically “screened” at least three times daily. If parents check on their son or daughter each night after practice that would make four times!

5. Frequent handwashing.
6. Enhanced cleaning of common areas, equipment, and athletic facilities.
7. No sharing of towels or water bottles.
8. Physical distancing as possible.
9. Face coverings.
10. Follow good hygiene practices.

* Critical conversation with student-athletes:

Student-athletes need to realize that their actions and behaviors away from school and organized workouts can have an impact on his or her family, school and team.

Independent Schools

A SCISA member school may elect to:

- start practice on or after the established first practice date by SCISA.
- delay, reschedule (if possible), or cancel a contest due to the local, in-school impact of COVID-19.

A member school should share practices which they have found effective in enhancing the health and safety of students, fans, and athletes.

Communication has never been more important. Communication within your school family and with member schools.

We are all in this together! Our student-athletes have the opportunity to serve as leaders and role models on your school campus. Our athletes should be setting the example of frequent handwashing, distancing as possible, face coverings, and good personal hygiene. Remind your athletes that they have the most to lose.

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Road Map for the Return of Fall Sports

SCISA has approved the following calendar in our “road map” for the return of fall sports. The schedule calls for an opening 10-day “dead or closed” period to allow our student-athletes to pause, practice good behaviors, and start practice clean or healthy. The official first day of practice has moved back to August 3rd for all sports to allow for this closed-period.

July 24 - August 2	Dead Period: (no weight room or conditioning)
August 3	1 st Day of Practice for all Fall Sports <i>Football Phase 1: Helmets only</i>
August 10	<i>Football Phase 2: Helmets & Shoulders Pads</i>
August 17	<i>Football Phase 3: Full Pads</i> <i>XC, Swim, Golf, Tennis & Volleyball may starting playing this week</i> <i>Football Guidelines: No scrimmages or jamborees</i>
August 28	Football Game Day: Week #1 Games

Notes:

- ♦ Sport specific guidelines will be sent next week for any rule changes, sport modifications, or recommended best practices.
- ♦ Please share any practices, products or ideas that you have found effective in enhancing your team’s health and safety. This is a time when we are truly in this together. We need for each school, team, coach and player to get it right.
- ♦ *1st practice shared by a 2A Football Coach: this coach has ordered facemasks for every player with their school logo & the player’s jersey #. There are many times before, during or after a practice when the use of a mask may be appropriate.*
- ♦ Thank you for how well summer workouts have gone. We have not experienced flare-ups or clusters and when a positive case has occurred you have been prepared and addressed it appropriately and not panicked. Be prepared for that positive case in your athletic program. Prepared means:

1. *A notification ready for parents. It should be positive in nature and describe the school’s well-thought out plan, highlighting daily screening and monitoring.*
2. *Many school plans will treat a positive case as the flu. That student should remain at home for the prescribed time, parents notified, and team members monitored and screened daily (at home and school).*
3. *Be vigilant and do not grow tired of the layered preventive measures that your school has in place.*

Addendum #1

Assessment of Risk

SCISA acknowledges that many of the activities associated with athletic participation also carries the risk of exposure to COVID-19. The elimination of the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is not possible. SCISA also acknowledges the following assessments of risk:

- Participation in athletics has always carried the inherent risk of injury and illness. Participants and parents are warned that these risks can range from minor to serious and even death. Injuries can and do occur in every activity. Players can wear properly fitting equipment, play by the rules, and use proper technique and still suffer an injury ranging from minor to serious in nature. This risk of injury can never be eliminated.
- A concussion or traumatic brain injury is a risk of athletic participation that cannot be eliminated. Rule changes, education, improvements in equipment and emphasis in teaching proper techniques can mitigate or minimize the risk, but nothing can eliminate the possibility of a concussions or traumatic brain injury.
- Participation in “team” activities have always included the possibility of exposure to infectious diseases such as influenza, mononucleosis, staph/mercer, and now COVID-19. The risk of exposure cannot be eliminated in any team or social setting. Measures can be taken to reduce the risk, but the risk of exposure cannot be eliminated.
- Athletic participation has a measurable positive influence on the emotional and mental well-being of young people. Many studies have indicated that many young people experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress during the recent school closures and lost of activities. There exist “risks” to the emotional and mental health of young people if in-person educational instruction and school activities are lost again.
- Coaches are prepared to address the dangers of heat and humidity on athletic participation. Wet bulb readings initiate protocols which are designed to minimize the risk of heat illness and heat stroke. The risk cannot be eliminated only mitigated.
- Education-based athletics is essential in the development of the “whole child”. The life lessons rooted in education-based athletics is foundational in personal development. Teamwork, commitment, sacrifice, goal-setting, leadership, endurance, persistence, integrity, respect, and work ethic are just a small part of the values instilled through education-based athletics. Testimonials often refer to the importance of relationships established, nurtured and developed through participation in athletics. The window of opportunity for this personal growth is only several months (cumulatively) over the career of a student-athlete. The “risk” is real in that this lost time can never be replaced for the student-athlete. Distance or online learning may continue the academic process but cannot continue these foundational opportunities of personal growth and development.
- Recent studies indicate that children, after the closing of schools, experienced a decrease in physical activity. Physical activity is important for the over-all physical health of a child.
- Student-athletes have a select and narrow widow of opportunity for training and skill development with their high school coaches and teams. This past spring showed that lost opportunities cannot be made up.
- Independent schools did an outstanding job of providing online academic services to their students this past spring. Troubling reports from the South Carolina Department of Education stated that some 16,000-24,000 public school students did not check-in or engage in virtual or online school in the public sector. This is troubling for all educators. The “risk” is real that this situation will continue if in-person education is delayed this fall.
- As educators and professionals who share a passion for children, the national reports indicating that over 55% of child abuse cases went unreported with the closing of schools is unacceptable. We pray that this behavior is not prevalent in our independent schools nonetheless this behavior is not acceptable for children in any educational organization. This is a real “risk” if in-person instruction and extracurricular activities do not resume.
- In-person educational instruction is the most effective model of instruction. Collaboration and interaction with students are essential. The relationship building, interaction, and nonverbal modes of communication complement and supplement the education process. Online education is a more limited environment that cannot reproduce the same depth of interactions that occur face-to-face. Students risk stunting the development of their public speaking skills, argumentation and debate, and interpersonal communication skills.
- High school athletics can be a unifying force in building community relations. Athletics has the power to bring together families, individuals, and groups from all walks of life.