



SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE FOR ATHLETICS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

As of April 1, 2021

Purpose

This guidance for athletics at higher education institutions during the COVID-19 public health emergency is issued to supplement the New York State Department of Health's (DOH) "[Interim Guidance for Higher Education during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)," issued pursuant to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's [Executive Order 202.45](#), which authorized the resumption of higher education activities and operations. All higher education institutions in New York State are subject to the State's reopening guidance, including DOH's "[Supplemental Guidance for COVID-19 Containment at Higher Education Institutions during the Public Health Emergency](#)."

Higher education institutions that opt to conduct collegiate athletics – either intramural/club sports or intercollegiate sports sanctioned by athletic associations/governing bodies – are required to comply with the provisions of this supplemental guidance in order to conduct such athletic activities – including training, practices, and competitions – during the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

This guidance reflects minimum requirements only and each institution is free to provide additional precautions or increased restrictions. These guidelines are based on the best-known public health practices at the time of issuance, and the documentation upon which these guidelines are based can and does change frequently.

Background

Given the continued risk of COVID-19 spread, higher education institutions in New York must maintain the public health measures and safeguards set forth by DOH to prevent, mitigate, and address any spread of this virus among students, faculty, and staff.

Guidance for Intramural and Club Sports

Intramural and club sports must follow DOH's "[Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)" for the conduct of such athletics that are affiliated with, or hosted by, a higher education institution.

Specifically, lower- and moderate-risk sports (e.g., tennis, soccer, cross country, field hockey, and swimming) may practice and play. Higher-risk sports (e.g., football, wrestling, rugby, hockey, volleyball, basketball) may practice, but not play until authorized by the respective local health authorities (i.e., county health departments).

Interstate travel for practice or play must adhere to the State's travel advisory as set forth in DOH's "[Interim Guidance for Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in New York State Following Out of State Travel](#)."

If an institution is closed for in-person education during the academic year due to an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases, intramural and club sports must be suspended until in-person education is

resumed; provided, however, that this restriction does not apply to institutions that are conducting only remote instruction.

Further, institutions hosting competitive play of intramural and/or club sports must follow the DOH's "[Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)" for the conduct of such allowable sport competitions, including but not limited to, where required, implementing and enforcing rules for appropriate social distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and disinfection, as well as reducing the capacity of any higher education sports venue to 50% of the maximum occupancy for any indoor area or sufficient outdoor space to allow individuals to maintain six feet of separation (except members of the same household or family). Further, higher education sports venues must limit spectators to no more than two spectators per player or the State's social gathering limit, which is 100 or fewer people in indoor non-residential settings and 200 or fewer people in outdoor non-residential settings, as of April 1, 2021. Higher education sports venues may determine which spectator limit – two per player or the social gathering limit – facilitates compliance with health and safety protocols for their specific sports and recreation event.

Effective April 2, 2021, the spectator capacity of higher education sports venues hosting intramural and/or club sports may increase above the social gathering limit to the lesser of 50% of the maximum occupancy of any indoor area/sufficient outdoor space to allow for six feet of separation between individuals (except from members of their household or family) OR 150 spectators indoors or 500 spectators outdoors; provided, however, that all spectators must present a recent negative diagnostic test result or proof of immunization before entering the venue. Specifically, all spectators over the age of two must present: (1) a negative diagnostic test result for COVID-19 using a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or DOH authorized polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or other nucleic acid amplification test (NAATs) of comparable analytical sensitivity that was performed on a specimen (e.g., swab) collected within 72 hours of the event/competition start time, (2) a negative diagnostic test result for COVID-19 using a FDA or DOH authorized antigen test performed on a specimen collected within 6 hours of the event/competition start time, or (3) proof of completed COVID-19 immunization at least 14 days prior to the date of the event/competition.

Guidance for Intercollegiate Sports Sanctioned by Athletic Associations and Governing Bodies

Intercollegiate sports sanctioned by athletic associations or governing bodies must follow DOH's "[Interim Guidance for Professional Sports Training Facilities During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)" and "[Interim Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)," respectively, for the conduct of such athletics that are affiliated with, or hosted by, a higher education institution.

Specifically, intercollegiate sports that are sanctioned by athletic associations or governing bodies (e.g., National Collegiate Athletic Association) may practice and play, as determined by the sport's respective association, conference, and higher education institution. However, higher education institutions must notify and coordinate with their respective local health department on the resumption of intercollegiate sports, including but not limited to, the sharing of any applicable health and safety plans, protocols, or procedures. Additionally, spectators are only authorized to attend an intercollegiate sport competition or training program under one of the following conditions:

- Within the spectator capacity permitted above for intramural and/or club sports at higher education sports venue (i.e., the lesser of 50% maximum capacity indoor/sufficient outdoor space for social distancing OR 100 spectators indoors/200 spectators outdoors, which can increase to 150 spectators

indoors/500 spectators outdoors on April 2, 2021 provided that all spectators over the age of two present a recent negative diagnostic test result or proof of completed immunization); OR

- Within the spectator capacity permitted for professional sports arenas and stadiums, which allows higher education venues with an indoor capacity of 1,500 or more spectators or an outdoor capacity of 2,500 or more to accommodate no more than 10% of the maximum seated capacity for a fixed seating venue or 10% of the maximum occupancy for a flexible seating venue as set by the certificate of occupancy. Effective April 2, 2021, the total number of spectators at intercollegiate sports competitions occurring in outdoor venues must be limited to no more than 20% of the maximum capacity or occupancy, as applicable.
 - However, all spectators over the age of two must present a recent negative diagnostic test result or proof of completed immunization.
 - Further, higher education venues with an indoor or outdoor capacity of 10,000 or more spectators must submit a venue and event plan to DOH, including specific measures and/or resources to meet the standards on testing/immunization/health screening, social distancing, face coverings, controlled movement, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and communication.
 - Higher education venues with an indoor capacity of 1,500 to 9,999 attendees or outdoor capacity of 2,500 to 9,999 attendees must submit a venue and event plan to the respective county health department or local public health authority, including specific measures and/or resources to meet the standards on testing/immunization/health screening, social distancing, face coverings, controlled movement, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and communication.

Interstate travel for practice or play must adhere to the State’s travel advisory as set forth in DOH’s “Interim Guidance for Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in New York State Following Out of State Travel.”

Resources

New York State Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

National Collegiate Athletic Association Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus>