



## **COVID-19 IMPORTANT UPDATES**

To: NJSIAA Member Schools

From: Colleen Maguire, Chief Operating Officer

Date: June 12, 2020

RE: NJSIAA Summer Communication Series – “Return to Play”

At the June 3, 2020 Executive Committee meeting, Larry White announced his retirement. Larry’s last day as Executive Director will be June 30, 2020, after which he will be available in an advisory capacity until his formal retirement on December 31, 2020. At this same meeting, I was installed as the NJSIAA Chief Operating Officer and, effective immediately, will serve with all of the powers and duties of the executive director. I am honored for the opportunity to serve NJ’s high school student athletes, and I look forward to continuing to work with our member schools.

As we progress during the summer, I will be posting regular updates from both the Medical Advisory Task Force and the Sports Advisory Task Force, as well as other pertinent updates related to the COVID-19 impact on NJSIAA matters. So, this is the first communication in a series of updates that you can expect to receive on a regular basis during the summer entitled “Return to Play.”

### **General Update:**

The NJSIAA has established direct communication with the governor’s office, the NJ Department of Health (DOH), the NJ Department of Education (DOE), as well as other state associations that are in similar situations regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regular communications with these state decision makers will keep the NJSIAA up to date on all matters potentially impacting the return of high school athletics.

### **Summer Recess Period Update:**

The governor’s Executive Order 149 specifies that high school sports activities may not start before June 30<sup>th</sup>. The governor’s office is leaving it to the NJSIAA to determine if, and when, the summer recess period will begin, but such determination will be made in consultation with the NJ DOH. In Executive Order 149, Governor Murphy said that the NJ DOH will issue guidelines to “impose health and safety standards regarding sporting activities.” It is anticipated that the NJ DOH guidelines specific to sports activities will be issued very soon.

While the NJSIAA has yet to announce the official start date of the summer recess period, member schools can expect additional guidelines from the Medical Advisory Task Force. Such guidelines will be in compliance with NJ DOH and CDC guidelines specific to sports activities and must be adhered to for any school-based sports activities during the summer recess period. We expect that these guidelines will be available to our member schools on or before Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, in an effort to allow plenty of time for member schools to review and implement these guidelines, the earliest the summer recess period will begin is **Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup>**. However, this date is still subject to change, and we will keep all member schools informed in a timely manner.

**Therefore, coaches continue to be limited to virtual contact only with their student-athletes until the start of the summer recess period.** The NJSIAA will confirm the official start date of the summer recess period after consultation with the Medical Advisory Task Force and state decision makers.

### **Coaching Status:**

The NJSIAA staff has received many inquiries regarding what high school coaches can and cannot do after the June 22<sup>nd</sup> date included in Executive Order #149. Please be reminded that a high school coach cannot have in-person contact with any high school student-athlete until the summer recess period begins. Any involvement by a high school coach with a youth or club organization is not under the jurisdiction of the NJSIAA. If any such involvement with a youth or club organization is planned to take place at a member school, then that activity is subject to the school district's approval, as the NJSIAA has no jurisdiction in these situations.

This also applies where a high school coach hosts a youth sports camp. It is up to the school district to determine the potential use of its facilities for such purposes. However, any such camp activity, regardless of location, cannot include high school student-athletes until the NJSIAA determines the start of the summer recess period.

Lastly, should a school district choose to postpone appointments of their 2020 – 2021 coaches until after June 30<sup>th</sup>, then any involvement with high school athletes during the summer recess period is solely at the discretion of the school district. The NJSIAA does not get involved with the contract status of coaches at its member schools.

### **Fall Sports Update:**

As of today, the NJSIAA is not adjusting or moving any start dates for the fall sports season. The NJSIAA and its task forces, in consultation with the NJ DOE and NJ DOH, will continue to evaluate and discuss potential adjustments to start dates that may be necessary in order to coincide with return-to-school plans. We will continue to update our member schools as timely as possible with any potential updates or changes to the start of the fall sports season.

### **COVID-19 Medical Advisory Task Force Update:**

The below statement is submitted by Mary Liz Ivins, Chair of the Medical Advisory Task Force:

The NJSIAA's Medical Advisory Task Force has been working for the past three weeks on drafting recommendations that will allow high school athletes to return safely to practice and play. Critical to the release of the Task Force's final recommendations will be directives and guidance from the Governor's Office, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education. We believe it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of high school students across the state to return to physical activity and athletic

competition in a safe and phased manner. Our guiding principles include the need to screen for symptoms, to promote appropriate social distancing, for hand hygiene and for strategies to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets. Although parents, coaches and school administrators may be finding directives that open high school athletics in other states, the committee cautions that New Jersey is the densest state in the country and ranks second in the country for the highest number of COVID cases. These two factors, among others, make New Jersey unique from other states. Although the Task Force understands that school districts, parents, and students are anxiously awaiting the issuance of guidelines, the Task Force is committed to producing recommendations which are suited for New Jersey high school athletes based on the best available science and consistent with CDC and the National Federation of State High School Association.

### **Pre-Participation Examination (PPE)/Health History Questionnaire (HHQ) Status:**

Proposed legislation to extend the PPE requirements for the 2020-2021 school year was introduced in the Senate on June 4<sup>th</sup> (S2518). The legislation, since amended, would waive the PPE requirement for any student-athlete that received a PPE during the 2019-2020 school year for participation in the fall season, unless certain responses to the HHQ require further evaluation prior to participation. The Assembly introduced its own version of this bill on June 11<sup>th</sup>. We will provide the final bill that will be voted on by both chambers as soon as it is available; however, we do expect that the final bill will be a waiver for fall sports participation only. Therefore, all winter and spring sport athletes may have to submit a PPE prior to participation in either season. All sponsors of the legislation are aware of the importance of the timeliness of this proposal and I will keep you posted as we are updated on the status of this legislation.

There will be an updated HHQ form in place for the 2020-2021 school year. The updated form is currently under final review within the Department of Education and we expect its approval and distribution very soon. The department is also aware of the importance of the timing of their approval of the updated form. I will keep you posted as we receive updates on the status of the updated HHQ form.

### **L&C Officer Meetings:**

The NJSIAA staff has scheduled three additional meetings during the summer months with one representative from each League and Conference. These meeting dates are June 18<sup>th</sup>, July 9<sup>th</sup> and July 25<sup>th</sup>. We encourage all member schools to reach out to the leadership of their L&C with any questions, recommendations or concerns that can in turn be shared with the NJSIAA staff prior to these meetings. The NJSIAA staff will do its best to answer and address any requests from these representatives during the meetings.

### **Fall Sports Classifications Status:**

The classifications will be delayed this summer. The DOE has yet to post the enrollment report from the October 2019 data submission and we have been told by the DOE that the report will be available by the end of June. Typically, by this time of the year the enrollment data has been loaded and I am starting to work on drafts of the classifications for each sport. Just as an FYI, it takes quite a bit of time to update the classification tool with the enrollment data as there is a complicated mapping process involved based on how we receive the information from the DOE. Therefore, I anticipate the final fall sports classifications will not be available until late August, but I am hopeful draft classifications will be available for review in early August. I will keep you posted during the summer on the status of the fall sports classifications.

**Fundamentals of Coaching Update:**

The NJSIAA requires that the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching (blended Version) be taken by all new coaches. This requirement allows for 120 days after a coach is hired to register for the course. The NJSIAA will continue to monitor the current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and adjust requirements accordingly.

**CPR/AED Update:**

The NJSIAA requires all coaches to hold a valid CPR/AED certification. Both American Red Cross and the American Heart Association continue to require in person CPR/AED certification with a final proficiency test. Both associations are currently conducting classes and limiting the group size to protect all participants.

The Red Cross is offering a 120-day extension from the expiration date, but you must register for it. Use the link below to register.

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/classes/120-day-certification-extension/a6R3o0000014Sws.html>

The American Heart Association is also offering a 120-day extension for certifications set to expire between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020. This is an automatic extension and registration is not required.

Online CPR/AED courses do not meet the NJSIAA CPR/AED certification requirement. The NJSIAA will continue to monitor the current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and adjust requirements accordingly.