

IHSA DEVELOPS STAGE 2 RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

The Illinois High School Association (“IHSA”) has developed Stage 2 guidelines for student-athletes to begin participating in athletics. These guidelines, developed by the IHSA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, are awaiting approval by the Illinois Department of Public Health and include the specific requirements schools need to implement moving forward.

As of June 6, 2020, the IHSA’s Stage 1 [Return to Play Guidelines](#) permit student-athletes to participate in voluntary strength and conditioning sessions. The Stage 1 guidelines encouraged outdoor versus indoor workouts, whenever possible, were developed to help student-athletes begin to reacclimate their bodies to athletics and are not sport-specific. As stated by IHSA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee member Dr. Cynthia R. LeBella, the Stage 1 guidelines were designed “to focus solely on strength and conditioning so that kids can gradually rebuild their fitness levels in small peer groups with coach guidance. This will get kids moving again with their peers in the safest way possible, which will have a huge positive impact on their physical and emotional well-being.”

The IHSA-proposed Stage 2 guidelines are similar and would continue to open the sessions and permit sport-specific actions and the possibility of contests. Under the proposed Stage 2 guidelines, the following apply:

- Schools should display information regarding symptoms and transmission of COVID-19;
- Summer contact days begin when a school’s region reaches Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan (which is currently anticipated to be this Friday, June 26, 2020 for the entire State);
- Athletes should follow the acclimatization schedule for their sports once summer contact days begin;
- Sessions are limited to five hours per day;
- Schools must continue to track which student-athletes are participating and log any symptoms that are shown;
- Gatherings of up to 50 individuals are allowed, but thirty feet of space must be maintained between each group of 50 and areas for each group must be clearly delineated;
- When student-athletes are not participating in a drill, practice, or contest, they should maintain social distance;
- If locker rooms are required, capacity should be limited to ensure that all individuals can maintain social distance;
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash all clothing used during the workouts immediately upon returning home;
- Cleaning schedules should be developed to mitigate the spread of any communicable disease;
- Prior to an individual or group using a facility, all hard surfaces should be wiped down and sanitized;
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals;

- All weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after each use;
- No shared towels, clothing or shoes;
- Shared equipment should be cleaned frequently during practice or competitions;
- Most equipment should be utilized by only one individual and not shared; any equipment that must be shared should be cleaned between uses;
- Spotters for weightlifting are permitted, but lifting requiring spotters should be done in cages with spotters located at either end of the bar;
- Student-athletes are to utilize their own water bottles, but hydration stations may be used to fill each water bottle, providing the station is cleaned after every practice or contest;
- For any athletic contest, group sizes should be limited to 50 total participants (players, coaches, referees), with additional team members located on the sidelines at a social distance from each other;
- If spectators are permitted at a contest, there must be a specially designated area with capacity limited to 20% of the total capacity;
- Visual markers should be utilized at queuing points to help maintain social distance;
- Concession stands may be open, but must utilize restaurant businesses physical workspace guidelines;
- Spectators should be encouraged to bring their own seats;
- No handshakes, high-fives, etc. may occur pre- or post-match;
- No spitting or blowing of the nose without the use of a tissue;
- All participants may choose to wear a mask;
- Officials may wear a mask and use an electronic whistle;

Districts are encouraged to work with the IDPH and their local health departments prior to beginning any sessions to develop appropriate school/sport-specific guidelines.

The IHSA has indicated that, as Illinois moves through the Restore Illinois Plan, it may revisit these requirements. Our firm will continue to monitor these developments. As the IHSA sets out new guidelines and requirements, we will update you. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of our attorneys regarding this matter.