



RETURN TO R.A.I.S.E. OPERATIONS PLAN FOR MCPS ATHLETICS July 2023 (subject to change)

The *Return to R.A.I.S.E. Plan* incorporates guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), and Montgomery County. This guidance is subject to change, pending the latest guidance from the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics, in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

1. **Vaccinations** – vaccinations are one of the most effective strategies to protect each individual student-athlete, coach, and team. Vaccination for COVID-19 is strongly encouraged for student-athletes and athletic department personnel, including volunteers.
2. **Masks/Face Coverings** – consistent with expectations during the school day, all individuals are expected to respect personal decisions regarding the wearing of masks. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are expected to comply with protocols outlined in the *Positive Case of COVID-19 Response* section of this document.
3. **Other Counties and non-MCPS Facilities** – MCPS student-athletes, coaches, and operations will comply with the COVID-19 procedures and protocols of host counties and facilities, as appropriate. This includes masks/face coverings, use of locker rooms, and other COVID-19-related restrictions.
4. **Hand Hygiene** – Hand hygiene is essential. Regularly washing hands with soap and water removes germs and allows for the safe use of shared items and apparatuses. When stakeholders do not have easy access to soap and water, sanitizer can be used to kill germs.
5. **Hydration & Heat** – all participants shall bring their own water bottle that includes their name clearly labeled. Coaches and student-athletes are required to review and implement MCPS procedures and protocols regarding temperature and heat, including the [MCPS Fall Heat Plan](#) and [Heat and Hydration Resources](#).

Scheduling

To maximize participation opportunities, schedules may be adjusted to accommodate teams impacted by COVID-19 or other contagious illness. Adjustments must be approved through the Department of Athletics, in compliance with MCPS and MPSSAA regulations.

Participants and Stakeholders

All students who have completed the registration process and are eligible, per MCPS policies and regulations, will be permitted to participate. Additionally, the following considerations apply:

- It is recommended that students who have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 or multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) have a thorough cardiovascular evaluation or cardiology consultation prior to return.
- Students, coaches, and officials are strongly encouraged to consider personal health risks prior to participation in interscholastic athletics, if any of the following apply, due to an increased risk of severe

health outcomes from COVID-19 infection, and the potential for higher risk situations for exposure when participating in or supporting athletics:

1. Age Greater than 65;
2. Unvaccinated individuals for COVID-19;
3. Immunocompromised health status (e.g., immune system conditions, transplant recipients, on immunosuppressive medications like steroid therapy or chemotherapy);
4. Pregnancy;
5. Certain medical conditions including diabetes, moderate or severe asthma, coronary heart disease, and high blood pressure (for the most updated list of higher-risk health conditions identified by the CDC, please refer to this [link](#).)

Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

Individuals with COVID-19 have experienced a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2–10 days after exposure to the virus. People with [these symptoms](#) may have COVID-19 and should be promptly tested. Individuals should follow the procedures below for a suspected and/or positive case of COVID-19.

Positive Case of COVID-19 Response

The procedures that govern the MCPS athletics program, when responding to a suspected and/or positive test/case of COVID-19, align with the procedures outlined by MCPS and include guidance from the CDC. In addition to MCPS procedures:

1. Parents/guardians are expected to notify the coach and athletics specialist (AD) immediately of a suspected and/or positive test/case of COVID-19.
2. The individual may return to activities when all requirements have been satisfied, per MCPS procedures, after a minimum [5 day isolation period](#).
3. In alignment with MCPS protocols, students who test positive for COVID-19, may return to school after day 5, provided they can mask indoors while at school days 6-10, with the following exceptions:
 - Basketball – when actively engaged in contests
 - Cheerleading – when actively engaged in stunting/tumbling/flying
 - Swimming/Diving – in the water, because a wet face mask may be more difficult to breathe through
 - Wrestling – during wrestling contact, a mask could become a choking hazard and is discouraged unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes.

Test-out option – student-athletes who test negative for COVID-19 are not required to mask while actively engaged in any team activities following the five day isolation period (days 6-10). After 10 days, there are no masking requirements.

Outbreak Reporting

Per state requirements, outbreaks must be reported through MCPS protocols. An outbreak is defined as three or more cases on a team in a 14 day period. In such instances, the athletics specialist shall notify the MCPS Department of Athletics and will submit the team roster, including names of coaches. This information will be shared with the Chief Medical Officer for MCPS, with indication of individuals who tested positive. Depending on the situation, additional steps may be taken, including a pausing of team activities. Parents/guardians will be notified if a confirmed outbreak occurs.

Testing Information

Testing information for students and stakeholders is available on the Montgomery County [COVID-19 Information Portal](#). A list of clinics is available on the [information portal](#). Tests are available at each local school, as needed.

Team Pauses

If a team reaches a significant number of positive cases, team activities may need to pause. *A decision on the status of team operations would be determined by an individual analysis of the positive cases in regard to team operations, which would be conducted in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.* Boys/girls and JV/varsity in the same sport are treated as separate teams when calculating the number of positive cases in student-athletes. Teams that pause will transition back to in-person activities starting with at least one day of practice, per the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics.

Virtual Resources & Procedures for Team Pauses

The [RAISE Reimagined Plan](#) provides resources for coaches and teams when pauses are necessary to in-person activities. The latest version is always available on the COVID-19 Athletics Information web page.

Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics

The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics was established in June 2020. In June 2022, the Task Force transitioned to a standing Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC). The SMAC serves as the advisory group for all health and safety initiatives for the MCPS interscholastic athletics program. Included in this work are COVID-19 protocols and procedures. The SMAC provides recommendations to school system and Montgomery County health officials for review and consideration. The SMAC is chaired by Mr. Shawn Hendi, health and safety coordinator for systemwide athletics, and reports to Dr. Jeffrey Sullivan, director of systemwide athletics.