



MERCERSBURG

Outdoor Education

Return to Outdoor Education: Health and Safety Plan Mercersburg Outdoor Education

The guidance provided in the following plan consists of preliminary recommendations and considerations as participants return to outdoor education programming this fall. It is important to note that resources and details are constantly changing and updating on a regular basis. As more public health information becomes available, Mercersburg Outdoor Education, working in collaboration with Storm Watch-Mercersburg's Safe Campus Initiative, along with other campus resources, will work to release further guidance which could impact fall, winter, and spring athletic participation.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented outdoor education across the world with myriad challenges. The COVID-19 virus is a highly contagious illness that primarily attacks the upper respiratory system. The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among others, has found that while high-school age individuals do get infected by COVID-19, relatively few with COVID-19 are hospitalized. However, some severe outcomes have been reported in the younger population, and a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others who may be far more vulnerable. While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, the current science suggests there are many steps schools and outdoor programs can take to reduce the risks to students, instructors, and their families.

Mercersburg Outdoor Education will take necessary precautions and implement recommendations and guidance from the federal, state, and local governments, as well as the CDC, Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Pennsylvania Department of Education (DOE), the American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) and the American Canoe Association (ACA). Mercersburg Academy Outdoor Education recognizes that the knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing as new information and treatments become available. This Return to Outdoor Education Programs: Health and Safety Plan may be adjusted as new information becomes available in order to decrease the risk of exposure of COVID-19 to our staff and participants.

Mercersburg Academy Outdoor Education COVID-19 Planning Team

Members of Mercersburg Outdoor Education, working in conjunction with the Health and Wellness Center medical services, are responsible for the development and implementation of this plan and include:

- Rick Hendrickson, Dean of Experiential Programs, Storm Watch Chair
- Pete Gunkelman, Director of Outdoor Education
- Sarah Bozzi, Assistant Director of Outdoor Education
- Rita Barone, BSN, RN, NCSN, Health and Wellness Center
- Stephanie Comer-Concordia, CRNP, Health and Wellness Center

This planning team meets on an as-needed basis to review the implementation of the following plan and to make any necessary adjustments.

Stages/Transition Time of Outdoor Programs Participation

At this time, Franklin County remains in the Green Phase of operation set forth by the Governor's Plan for Phased Reopening. Official on-campus Outdoor Education activities will begin after the initial arrival plan for students and on-campus quarantine periods are completed. Considerations for each stage are based upon the Governor's Plan, PDE Preliminary Guidance for Reopening, NFHS guidelines, NATA guidelines, and individual activity governing bodies.

Stage 1: At-Home Training

- 7-14 days, longer if possible.
- Participation in individual skills, conditioning, strength training, etc., activities while at home.
- Gain base of conditioning and increase athletic fitness and preparedness.
- Assists with transition to program participation outdoors to satisfy the beginning stage of heat acclimatization.

Stage 2: Return to Campus Activities

- 7 days minimum.
- On-campus outdoor activities commence with some restrictions.
- No gatherings of more than 50 individuals outdoors, including instructors and other staff, at a scheduled location.
- No gatherings of more than 25 individuals indoors, including instructors and other staff, at a scheduled facility.
- Low-risk programs can train normally while maintaining physical distancing.
- Moderate- and high-risk activities will modify their practices to insure physical distancing is maintained throughout activities.
- Stage 2 is important for multiple reasons:
 - Phasing in group activities while slowly returning to campus activities, recognition of physical distancing, limit large grouping, etc.
 - Safely return participants to fitness levels appropriate for more intense activities to come.

Stage 3: Progress to Standard Outdoor Programs and Trips

- 7 days minimum.
- When not participating directly in outdoor programs activities, physical distancing should be considered and followed.
- Lower-risk activities can begin standard programs and trips; staggered starts suggested for activities like biking, climbing, hiking, and paddling.

Recommendations for All Outdoor Programs

1. All participants at Mercersburg Academy will follow the standard school policy set forth for daily COVID-19 procedures. Included within the school policy, participants are required to complete a daily signs and symptoms questionnaire each morning prior to attending school activities. Results of the questionnaire may require further action related to the school policy and procedures for

COVID-19. Students will also report any signs or symptoms experienced throughout the day to the Health and Wellness Center.

- a. Program attendance should be accurately taken daily by instructors.
 - b. Instructors will complete verbal signs and symptoms checks for all participants at the beginning of any activities each day.
 - c. If a participant reports signs and symptoms to an instructor, they will not be permitted to participate in outdoor program activities and will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center for evaluation.
2. All instructors, student assistants, and participants NOT participating in outdoor program activities should wear a face covering at all times while at indoor activities.
 3. Instructors, participants, and spectators should wear a face covering at outdoor program activities if 6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained.
 4. Participants will be required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts and participating in the program activities when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Participants may wear a face covering during all activities, if they desire.
 5. All participants, student assistants, instructors, etc., should thoroughly wash their hands (20 seconds with soap and water) prior to the beginning of practice and immediately following practice activities. Hand sanitizer will also be accessible for participant use as resources allow.
 6. All participants should have and use only their personal water bottle at all times. **Water bottles should not be shared.**
 7. Coaches/leaders should sanitize all used equipment (paddles, bikes, boats, etc.) at the completion of practice activities.
 8. No handshakes/celebrations (high fives, elbow/fist bumps, chest bumps, hugging), etc.
 9. No locker rooms will be available, so participants should dress for practices in their dorm rooms and return directly to their dorm room after practices to shower. Participants should shower immediately following outdoor program activity.
 10. Participants should not engage in close huddles, hand shaking, high fives, etc., during or after outdoor program activity.
 11. Physical distancing will be reinforced through increased spacing, smaller groups, and limited mixing between groups when feasible.
 12. Participants, instructors, and staff will complete education regarding health and safety protocols.
 13. Any person who is sick should report to the Rutherford Health and Wellness Center.

COVID-19 Education

Participants, instructors, parents, and staff will be educated through seasonal meetings, posters, flyers, and emails on the following:

1. The content of the Mercersburg Academy Return to Outdoor Programs: Health and Safety Plan.
2. COVID-19 signs and symptoms.
3. Proper ways to limit exposure to COVID-19 (hand washing, cough into your elbow, disinfecting touched surfaces, social distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose, face, mouth, no spitting, gum chewing, etc.).
4. Any pertinent COVID-19 information released by state/local governments, NFHS, etc.

Positive Case Plan (Students and/or Instructors)

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may range from mild to severe. Symptoms may include:

- Fever (100.4° F. or higher) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

What to do if you are sick?

- If you are sick, stay home or report the Health and Wellness Center immediately. It is essential that all steps are taken to prevent the disease from spreading to others.
- Notify the school immediately.
- It will be determined if others who may have been exposed need to be notified, isolated, and/or monitored for signs and symptoms.

What to do if a participant, instructor, or staff member becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms during practice, an event, or during transportation to or from an event?

- Every effort will be made to isolate the ill individual from others until the participant or staff member can leave the activity.
- The participant, instructor, or staff member will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center immediately to be assessed and monitored.

What is the return of a participant, instructor, or staff member to outdoor programs following COVID-19 diagnosis?

- A participant, instructor, or staff member should have a medical clearance from a physician or healthcare professional.
- The Health and Wellness Center physician and/or staff must also provide clearance.
- Individuals must be/have:
 - Determined to be non-contagious.
 - Fever free without fever-reducing medications.
 - Improvement of respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath).
 - No vomiting or diarrhea.

Resources and References

The following resources/references assisted the Mercersburg Academy Athletics COVID-19 Leadership Team in the development of the Mercersburg Academy Return to Outdoor Programs: Health and Safety Plan.

- [Pennsylvania Guidance for All Sports](#)
- [NFHS: Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)
- Pennsylvania Department of Health Website
 - [Department of Health](#)
 - “Coronavirus Symptoms”
 - “Phased Reopening Plan by Governor Wolf”