



# MERCERSBURG

## Athletics

### Return to Sports: Health and Safety Plan Department of Athletics

The guidance provided in the following plan consists of policies, recommendations, and considerations as student-athletes return to athletics 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, the Mercersburg Department of Athletics, 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.

---

#### Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Mercersburg Academy Department of Athletics COVID-19 Planning Team	2
Stages/Transition Time of Athletic Participation	3
Stage 1: At-Home Training	3
Stage 2: Return to Campus Activities	3
Stage 3: Progress to Scrimmaging Activities	3
Stage 4: Return to Competition	4
Recommendations for All Sports	4
Classification of Sports: (based upon NFHS recommendations)	5
Additional Recommendations	5
COVID-19 Education	7
Positive Case Plan (Students and/or Coaches)	7
What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?	7
What to do if you are sick?	8
What to do if a student-athlete, coach or staff member becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms during practice, event or during transportation to or from an event?	8
What is the return of a student-athlete, coach, or staff member to athletics following COVID-19 diagnosis?	8
Resources and References	9

## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented athletics 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 high-school age individuals do get infected by COVID-19, and some severe outcomes have been reported in the younger population. 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 athletic programs can take to reduce the risks to students, coaches, and their families.

Mercersburg Academy Athletics 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), and the National Federation of High School Sports (NFHS). Mercersburg Academy Athletics recognizes that the knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing as new information and treatments become available. This Return to Sports: 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, student-athletes, and spectators.

## **Mercersburg Academy Department of Athletics COVID-19 Team**

Members of the Mercersburg Academy Athletic Leadership Team, 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
- Lauren Hoffman, Associate Director of Athletics
- Paul Sipes, Associate Director of Athletics
- Andrew Myers, Associate Director of Athletics, Athletic Training/S&P
- Leah Daniels, Associate Athletic Trainer
- Dr. Nate Derstine, D.O., School/Team Physician
- Rita Barone, BSN, RN, NCSN, Health and Wellness Center
- Stephanie Comer-Concordia, CRNP, Health and Wellness Center
- Mike Collins, Director of Athletic Facilities

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 Athletic 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 athletic activities 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 sport governing bodies.

Stage 1 (At Home)      Stage 2 (Return to Campus)      Stage 3 (Scrimmage)      Stage 4 (Competitions)



### 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 athletic participation outdoors to satisfy the beginning stage of heat acclimatization.

### Stage 2: Return to Campus Activities

- Approximate start date of September 18
  - Dependent on school sequestration time period and progression
- On-campus athletic activities commence with restrictions.
- No gatherings of more than 50 individuals outdoors, including coaches and other staff, at a scheduled court and/or field.
- No gatherings of more than 25 individuals indoors, including coaches and other staff, at a scheduled court and/or facility.
- Low-risk sports can train normally while maintaining appropriate physical distancing at all times.
- Moderate- and high-risk sports will modify their practices to ensure physical distancing is maintained throughout activities.
- Controlled, non-contact practices only during this stage.
  - Complete sport-specific, individual skills.
  - Gradually increase physical fitness activities and workload demands.
- Stage 2 is important for multiple reasons:
  - Phasing in group activities while slowly returning to campus activities, recognition of social distancing, limit large grouping, etc.
  - Safely return athletes to fitness levels appropriate for more intense activities and competitions to come.
  - Heat acclimatization "preseason" period.

### Stage 3: Progress to Scrimmaging Activities

- Start date to be determined at later time.
- Minimum of 7 days in length
- When not participating directly in athletic activities, physical distancing should be considered and followed.
- Low-risk sports can begin intrasquad scrimmages; staggered starts suggested for sports like cross country and swimming.
- Moderate-risk sports can begin increasing towards normal practice activities, including intrasquad scrimmages.
  - The gradual increase to more intense activities and scrimmaging will allow for safe progression of athletes towards competition levels in Stage 4.
- High-risk sports can begin increasing activities including limited proximity activities (e.g., football 7-on-7) and gradually increasing player-to-player proximity of athletes.

### Stage 4: Return to Competition

- To be determined at a later time.
- Moderate-risk sports can begin competition.
- High-risk sports continue to increase participation with consideration for full activities including competition.

### Recommendations for All Sports

1. All student-athletes at Mercersburg Academy will follow the standard school policy set forth for daily COVID-19 procedures. Included within the school policy, athletes 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. Team attendance should be accurately taken daily by coaches.
  - b. Coaches will complete verbal signs and symptoms checks for all athletes at the beginning of any practice activities each day.
  - c. If an athlete reports signs and symptoms to a coach, they will not be permitted to participate in athletic activities and will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center for evaluation.
2. All coaches, student assistants, and athletes participating in athletic activities should wear a face covering at all times while completing **indoor athletic** activities.
3. Coaches, student assistants, and spectators should wear a face covering at **outdoor athletic** activities if 6 feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.
  - a. All individuals must wear a face covering on the sidelines, in a dugout, etc.
4. Participating athletes will be required to wear face coverings during low-intensity practice activities and when physical distancing cannot occur.
  - a. Outdoor-sport athletes should complete aerobic conditioning while physically distanced so that masks can be removed during the more intense activity.
  - b. Indoor-sport athletes should complete aerobic conditioning activities outdoors so that masks can be removed and athletes can remain physically distanced from each other.

5. All athletes, student assistants, coaches, 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 team use as resources allow.
6. Handwashing stations will also be placed strategically around outdoor playing fields for athletes to utilize before and after each athletic activity.
7. All athletes should have and use only their personal water bottle at all times. **Water bottles should not be shared.**
  - a. Water bottles should be filled prior to arriving to practice fields when possible, using hands-free water filling stations placed in campus areas.
8. Hands-free water-cooler spouts are installed on team water coolers to allow for safe filling of individual water bottles. Water coolers will be cleaned thoroughly after every use.
9. Athletes should avoid removing mouth guards during practice whenever possible. If the mouth guard is removed or replaced, athletes should wash hands immediately afterwards or use hand sanitizer if available and mouth guard should also be sanitized appropriately.
10. Coaches should sanitize all used equipment (balls, sticks, etc.) at the completion of practice activities.
  - a. Limit the sharing of team equipment between players during practice when possible.
11. No general locker rooms will be available within the athletic complex, so athletes should dress for practices in their dorm rooms and return directly to their dorm room after practices to shower. Athletes should shower immediately following athletic activity.
  - a. Limited locker room space will be designated for day student use. The locker room space will be assigned and only available for changing before and after practice, showering, etc. No personal items may be left in the locker room areas overnight.
12. Athletes should not engage in close team huddles, hand shaking, high fives, etc., during or after athletic activity.
13. Athletes should not share personal equipment, clothing, pinnies, and towels; all items should be washed after each use.
14. Physical distancing should be maintained through increased spacing, for athletic activities smaller group athletic sessions, and limited mixing between groups when feasible.
15. Student athletes, coaches, and staff will complete education regarding health and safety protocols.
16. Any person who is sick should report to the Rutherford Health and Wellness Center.

### **Classification of Sports: (Based upon NFHS recommendations)**

#### High Risk:

Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: football, wrestling, boys' lacrosse.

#### Moderate Risk:

Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: boys' and girls' basketball, girls' volleyball, field hockey, baseball, softball, girls' lacrosse, boys' and girls' soccer, boys' and girls' tennis (doubles), track & field (pole vault, high jump, relays), swimming (relays), 7-on-7 football, boys' and girls' squash.

#### Low Risk:

Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between uses by competitors.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: boys' and girls' cross country (staggered starts and individually), track & field (all events not in moderate-risk section and done individually), swimming (individually), diving, golf, weightlifting, boys' and girls' tennis (singles).

*\* High-/moderate-risk sports may move to a low-risk category with non-contact modifications. Team activities should be limited to individual skill development drills that maintain social distancing.*

### **Additional Recommendations**

1. Mercersburg Academy athletic facility staff will create and maintain adequate cleaning schedules for all athletic spaces to mitigate any communicable diseases, including COVID-19.
2. Athletic facilities should be cleaned prior to arrival and post-workouts and team gatherings.
3. High-touch areas should be cleaned more frequently.
4. Face coverings are required within the Goldthorpe Athletic Complex and while working out and transitioning through the complex.
5. Weight room equipment should be cleaned and wiped down after each individual use.
6. Appropriate clothing and shoes should be worn at all times to help minimize sweat transmitting onto equipment surfaces. No sleeveless shirts may be worn.
7. Water coolers must be sanitized and dried after each use by athletic trainers and/or athletic facilities staff.
8. Occupancy limits will be established and maintained in the [Athletic Training Center and in the Fitness Center](#).
  - a. Two athletic training areas will be available to provide services for athletes.
    - i. The Walter Athletic Training Center will remain available for treatment, evaluation, and taping services.
      1. Occupancy of the Walter Athletic Training Center will be limited to five student athletes at one time and staffed by one certified athletic trainer and one student assistant during high-demand times.
    - ii. A second athletic training center will be available in the Davenport Squash Center during high-demand times for evaluation, treatment, taping, and rehab activities.
      1. Occupancy of this area will be determined at a later time.
    - iii. Extra services such as foam rolling, stretching, etc., will not be permitted within the athletic training spaces
    - iv. Athletes who require non-emergent, planned athletic training services before or after practices should communicate with athletic trainers in advance via email. Canvas or another electronic sign up method will be utilized as well if possible.
  - b. Fitness Center equipment has been moved to various locations to allow for more use and to promote physical distancing and gathering of people in one location.
    - i. Cardio equipment moved to the lofts of the Flanagan Pool.
    - ii. Stationary spin bikes moved to the top level of the spectator area of the Flanagan Pool.
    - iii. Medicine balls, yoga mats, and foam rollers moved to the east side of Plantz Courts.

- iv. Medicine balls, boxes, yoga mats, foam rollers, mobile squat racks, some dumbbells, some kettlebells, and hex bars moved to 3 separate sections of the Hale Field House.
9. Transportation
- a. Decisions regarding travel and transportation will be made at a later date.
  - b. Reduce the number of students and coaches in a bus or van.
  - c. Wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer before entering a bus or van.
  - d. Practice physical distancing on the bus when possible.
10. Spectators
- Attendees will be separated into three tiers from essential to non-essential:
- Tier 1:** Essential—Student athletes, coaches, staff, officials, sports medicine staff, event staff, Mercersburg Academy administration, and campus safety
- Tier 2:** Preferred—Media
- Tier 3:** Non-essential—Spectators
- Decisions on spectators will be made at a later date. Changes to seating capacity and social distancing may be necessary for each venue and will be determined as more recommendations are released by local/state governments.
11. Reduction in contact
- a. Team meetings, film sessions, team gatherings, etc., should be conducted virtually or in open areas where physical distancing may be maintained.
  - b. Fall health and safety meetings with athletic trainers will be conducted virtually.
  - c. The all-school concussion meeting should be completed virtually or pre-recorded for students to watch during advisee sessions.

## COVID-19 Education

Student-athletes, coaches, parents, and staff will be educated through seasonal meetings, posters, flyers, the athletic website, and emails on the following:

1. The content of the Mercersburg Academy Return to Sports: 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, no gum chewing, etc.).
4. No handshakes/celebrations (high fives, elbow/fist bumps, chest bumps, hugging, etc.).
5. Any pertinent COVID-19 information released by state/local governments, NFHS, etc.
6. Coaches will be required to complete the “COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators” course, provided by NFHS.
  - a. <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/covid-19-for-coaches-and-administrators>

## Positive Case Plan (Students and/or Coaches)

### 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 of 100° 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 to the Health and Wellness Center immediately. It is essential that all steps are taken to prevent the disease from spreading to others.
- Notify the Health and Wellness Center 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 student-athlete, coach 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 student-athlete or staff member can leave the activity.
- The student-athlete, coach, or staff member will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center immediately to be assessed and monitored.

What is the return of a student-athlete, coach, or staff member to athletics following COVID-19 diagnosis?

- A student-athlete, coach, 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 Sports: Health and Safety Plan.

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