



## The Connecticut Interscholastic Conference 2020-2021 Fall Sports Plan

*This plan is a fluid document and will be updated as more data, health metrics, and sport specific information becomes available.*

The CIAC has collaborated with a multitude of stakeholders since the decision to stop interscholastic athletics this past March. Throughout this challenging time, CIAC has maintained that when the time is right, Connecticut will play again. The COVID health metrics in Connecticut, and the playing of youth sports in our state since June 20<sup>th</sup>, support that a return to in-person instruction, education-based interscholastic athletics, and other cocurricular activities that are critical to the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and mental health of our students. . While the health and safety of our school communities remain our top priority, we must recognize that the cessation of on-campus learning and education-based cocurricular endeavors has negatively impacted our students. Through consultation with the Connecticut State Medical Society Sports Medicine Committee, the State Department of Education, the Department of Public Health, the Connecticut Athletic Trainers Association, the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors, the Connecticut High School Coaches Association, superintendents, principals, officials, and legislators, the CIAC provides the following fall sports plan intended to engage students in structured interscholastic athletics, while accounting for COVID mitigating strategies.

**The CIAC emphasizes that this plan is fluid and in a perpetual state of evaluation. COVID health metrics and data in Connecticut will continue to be closely monitored and the appropriateness of holding youth sport and/or interscholastic athletic contests can change at any time. The CIAC will continue to consult with our stakeholders and will adjust offerings as appropriate, including the stop of interscholastic athletics, should the health metrics direct that action.**

In advance of the start dates for practice, school may continue conditioning in small cohorts. Conditioning cohorts may be increased to 15 students beginning on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. However, it is recommended that schools who currently have cohorts of 10 working successfully remain in that structure until skill work and practice begins. Teams may also work in cohorts smaller than 15.

A critical understanding in returning to interscholastic competition is the deconditioning which many of our student-athletes have experienced due to the lack of structured physical activity since March. While many teams have been able to successfully engage students in conditioning, a number of schools have not been able to afford that opportunity. As such, a three-week conditioning period is prescribed at the beginning of each sport season. This progression is designed to provide equitable conditioning time for all schools across Connecticut and ensure a safe return to sport activity for all student-athletes.

All contests will be scheduled regionally. The CIAC will support our member leagues and individual schools over the next few weeks to develop regional schedules. Regional play will limit travel and mitigate the potential spread of any positive cases across the state. Additionally, regional play will support what is anticipated to be a challenging transportation period for our member schools.

Over the next few weeks, CIAC sport specific committees will meet to provide further detail on individual sport mitigating strategies. For example, volleyball will not be switching sides after each set and teams will not be meeting in locker rooms at halftime. With the sport specific details forthcoming, the follow schedule identifies start dates and contest dates for each fall sport.

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 15	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	*Max. Number of Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience (Format TBA)
Cross Country	27-Aug	11-Sep	NA	24-Sep	14	2	29-Oct	31-Oct to 8-Nov
Field Hockey	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Football	17-Aug	11-Sep	11-Sep	24-Sep	8	1	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Soccer	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Swimming	27-Aug	11-Sep	NA	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Volleyball	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov

***A cohort of 15 was determined to be a reasonable number of student-athletes for coaches to work conditioning and skill progressions with while schools return to in-person instruction. There will be a three-week progression designed to slowly reacclimate student-athletes to the physical and skill conditioning level appropriate for interscholastic athletics given the extended layoff that athletes may have experienced since last March.***

***All contests will be scheduled regionally to limit transportation needs and maintain play within a geographic region to reduce COVID spread across the state. The CIAC will work with league commissioners to establish as much play within a league as possible. There will be outlier schools who are more regionally located to schools from other conferences. The CIAC will support our leagues and individual schools to develop a balanced regional schedule that provides students with an exceptional education-based athletic experience.***

***\*The CIAC will collaborate with league commissioners, athletic directors, and coaches to develop a tournament experience during the last two weeks of the fall season. No team will be eliminated from competition during this experience to maximize the number of games each team will be able to play through the fall season.***

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 15	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	*Max. Number of Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience (Format TBA)
Cross Country	27-Aug	11-Sep	NA	24-Sep	14	2	29-Oct	31-Oct to 8-Nov

### **Cross Country**

Aug 27 – Sept 23: Cross country coaches should design a 3-week conditioning progression that places runners in small cohorts that can maintain 6 feet of social distancing while training.

Sept 24 – Nov 8: Athletes will begin competing in races on Sept 24. Coaches should continue to monitor the conditioning progression of their athletes and only enter them into races when they are prepared to run.

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 15	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	*Max. Number of Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience (Format TBA)
Swimming	27-Aug	11-Sep	NA	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov

### **Swimming**

Aug 27 – Sept 23: Swim coaches should design a 3-week conditioning progression that places swimmers in small cohorts that can maintain 6 feet of social distancing while training.

Sept 24 – Nov 8: Athletes will begin competing in meets on Sept 24. Coaches should continue to monitor the conditioning progression of their athletes and only enter them into meets when they are prepared to swim the distance of their event.

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 15	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	*Max. Number of Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience (Format TBA)
Field Hockey	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Soccer	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov
Volleyball	27-Aug	11-Sep	17-Sep	24-Sep	14	2	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov

### **Field Hockey, Soccer, and Volleyball**

Aug 27 – Sept 2 (Cohorts of 15) 1-hour practices comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 3 – Sept 10 (Cohorts of 15) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 11 – Sept 23 (Full Team) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. In field hockey and soccer, skill work should be done in small groups with a short field (i.e. 3v3, 5v5, 7v7). Full field skill work or set play practice should be conducted with the understanding that athletes are still building their conditioning capacity. In volleyball, while the activity is anaerobic, skill work should still be conducted in a manner that reflects a progression to full speed play. In field hockey, soccer, and volleyball a full team scrimmage may be scheduled beginning September 17<sup>th</sup>. Playing time for athletes at game speed during the scrimmage should be managed to reflect the completion of a 3-week conditioning progression.

Sept 24 – Nov 15 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis.

Sept 24 – Nov 15 games may be played.

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 15	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	*Max. Number of Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience (Format TBA)
Football	17-Aug	11-Sep	11-Sep	24-Sep	8	1	30-Oct	2-Nov to 15-Nov

## **Football**

August 17 – 22 (Cohorts of 15) Coaches are permitted to hold organized team activities (OTA) on August 17, 18, and 19. OTA days allow coaches an opportunity to distribute equipment, review play books, discuss safety and locker room procedures, etc. Please refer to the football packet for a full description of what is, and what is not, allowed on OTA days. Any OTA experience must maintain proper social distancing and all participants (student-athletes and coaches) must wear masks during these non-exertional activities. During the week of August 17 – 22 conditioning may continue as it is currently occurring. Additionally, from August 17 forward, football coaches are permitted to schedule online/virtual meetings with student-athletes to review game film, playbooks, or teach skill specific content.

August 24 – 29 (Cohorts of 15) 1-hour practices comprised of 30 minutes of conditioning and 30 minutes of skill work. Skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

August 31 – Sept 5 (Cohorts of 15) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Skill work can involve 15 minutes of contact intended to demonstrate and teach talking and blocking progressions. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 7 – 12 (Cohorts of 15 through September 10<sup>th</sup>; full team may gather on Sept 11; a scrimmage in full speed to contact may take place on Sept. 11 or 12) 2-hour practices comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 75 minutes of skill work. Skill work can involve 30 minutes of contact intended to demonstrate and teach tackling and blocking progressions. The remaining 60 minutes of skill work is non-contact and maintains a social distance of 6 feet for all participants. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 14 – Nov 15 (Full team; a full contact scrimmage may take place the week of Sept 14.) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis. Full contact should be limited to the time necessary to teach appropriate tackling and skill specific technique, but in any case, may not exceed 10 minutes per day per athlete.

Sept 24 – Nov 15 games may be played.

## **Additional Considerations for a Fall Sports Season**

**Spectator/Fan Attendance** – As an education-based experience, CIAC sports must consider the primary goal of maximizing on-campus learning for all students. Sport complexes and recreation athletic facilities are primarily utilized for sport contests. Conversely, school facilities are used as instructional areas when games are not being played. Due to the variety of fields used for interscholastic athletic competition, it is difficult to develop a one size fits all regulation. Therefore, it is CIAC’s recommendation that each school and district consider how their athletic fields will be used throughout the school year and determine the appropriateness of spectator/fan attendance at your school. The CIAC understands that playing games without fans may be appropriate for some schools but not logistically possible for others. Any allowance for spectators/fans should provide well marked areas that maintain social distancing and follow capacity guidelines established in Connecticut’s Phase 2 reopening plan ([https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid\\_Business\\_Recovery-Phase-2/0723Sports\\_FitnessCenters- C2\\_V5.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Phase-2/0723Sports_FitnessCenters- C2_V5.pdf)), which reads, in part, that *“Sports, sport clubs and complexes, gyms, fitness centers, and pools can open in Phase 2. Each outdoor sporting event field will be limited to two teams, officials, and limited family members. Indoor sporting events will be limited to 50% of building capacity or 25 people (whichever is smaller) per field, court, pool, rink, etc. For indoor sporting events, capacity limits can be exceeded but only to include one parent/guardian per athlete.”*

**Gathering Limitations** – During practice/conditioning, athletes should remain grouped in smaller cohorts for purposes of spread mitigation and contact tracing strategy. Competition schedules should be scheduled within a region of the 10 closest schools to mitigate potential spread and maximize contact tracing capability. When not directly participating in practices or contests, care should be taken to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for athletes and coaches. Vulnerable individuals should not supervise or participate in any workouts.

**Facilities** - Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities. Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.). Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place. Consider strategies to prevent groups from gathering at entrances/exits to facilities to limit crossover and contact, including staggering starting/ending times.

**Screening** - All staff and students are required to self-screen for any observable illness, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The coach or activity supervisor must confirm self-screening by all activity participants, upon arrival. Records of self-screening for each person should be recorded and stored (see sample Appendix I). Officials, medical staff, and media should self-screen prior to attending an event. Any person with positive symptoms reported should not be allowed to participate, should self-isolate, and contact their primary care provider or other health-care professional.

**Face Coverings** – In accordance with CDC guidance, “face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease).” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) “Face coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports.” (CDC

Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020) “Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.” (CDC Consideration for Youth Sports, 2020)

Recognizing the benefits and potential concerns of using face coverings during conditioning and physical activity, the CIAC, in collaboration with the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee, recommends:

- i. Cloth or disposable face coverings should be worn throughout each phase when not engaging in vigorous activity, such as when sitting on the bench, during chalk talk, interacting with an athletic trainer, etc.
- ii. Medical grade face coverings are not necessary. Cloth or disposable face coverings are acceptable.
- iii. Face coverings should not be worn when engaging in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic workouts, distance running, or swimming.
- iv. Plastic shields covering the entire face (or attached to a helmet) must be approved by CIAC. (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)
- v. Officials should wear face coverings whenever possible.
- vi. Coaches and other contest personnel must wear cloth face coverings. (Artificial noisemakers such as an air horn or a timer system with an alarm can be used to signal in place of a traditional whistle.) (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)

**Hygiene Practices** - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces. Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place. Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow. Avoid touching your face. Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces. Athletes must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing immediately upon returning to home. There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing, or shoes between students. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible. Athletes should take their equipment home with them and disinfect that equipment each night. Athletes should arrive at practice and games prepared to participate without the need to use a locker room, to the extent possible.

**Hydration/Food** - All students must bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared. Food should not be shared. Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized, except for water bottle refill stations.

**Weight Rooms** - Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual’s use of equipment. Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered. Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment/surfaces. Maximum lifts should be limited, and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar.

**Locker Rooms** – Locker rooms should be used a little as possible. Sanitation of locker rooms should follow CDC guideline (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>). When students must use a locker room to change for a practice or game, supervision should be provided to ensure social distancing is maintained and masks are worn. Capacity



limits of locker rooms should be established to limit the number of athletes using a facility at any one time and to optimize social distancing.

Indoor sports such as volleyball and swimming should encourage visiting teams to arrive in uniform to limit the use of locker rooms. However, a designated bathroom or locker room should be provided for the visiting team. Schools should follow CDC sanitation guidelines to clean that designated area after the contest.

**Preparticipation Physical Exams** - In accordance with CIAC bylaws, sport physicals are valid for 13 months. In collaborating with the Connecticut State Medical Society, Sports Medicine Committee, we feel it is appropriate to extend the validation of physicals to 15 months for fall sport athletes only, due to the high demand of medical appointments. Yearly sport physicals to assess injury risk and receive health guidance from doctors are critically important. Again, the coronavirus is a health pandemic and students should receive a physical within the 13 month standard when possible.

**COVID-19 Advisory Committee** - CAS-CIAC recommends the establishment of a COVID-19 advisory committee within each school/organization which would meet regularly before and during each athletic season. The purpose of such committees would be to maintain constant communication among leadership, address concerns as they arise, and stay informed on COVID-19 best practices around athletics. Recommended members include school physician, athletic trainer, school nurse, athletic director, one coach (appointed by the athletic director, building principal (or designee), and superintendent (or designee). (See Appendix I)

**Contact Tracing** - As student/youth-athletes return to physical activity, a system of contact tracing and notification should be established in the event that a participant tests positive for COVID-19. In the event that a student/youth athlete tests positive for COVID-19, administration and the local department of health should be immediately notified. The school, athletic team, and student(s) must follow the direction of the local department of health.

**Transportation** - "Schools must consider social distancing requirements when scheduling contests and events for the fall. Social distancing (as required by state or local health department) will need to be maintained during transportation (2020 NFHS Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities, 2020)" and should follow transportation guidelines issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education (<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>) and established by local school districts. The CIAC believes that regional play and modified sub-varsity experiences will assist in elevating some transportation issues and make it more feasible for parents to transport their child.

**Appendix I**

**COVID-19 Advisory Committee**

**Building Principal (or designee):**

**School Physician:**

**Athletic Trainer:**

**Superintendent (or designee):**

**Athletic Director:**

**School Nurse:**

**Coach:**

