



THE CONNECTICUT INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

January 14, 2022

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Dear CIAC Member High School Principals,

CAS-CIAC is grateful for the tremendous leadership that building principals have demonstrated throughout the pandemic. Your resilience in the face of adversity has maintained a positive learning environment and motivated staff and students through many changes in COVID-19 mitigating strategies and operating procedures. As CAS-CIAC member schools push through the current COVID-19 surge, we are asking principals to help enforce the proper wearing of a facemask in athletic events.

Current DPH and CIAC guidance for interscholastic athletics requires that student-athletes wear masks at all times while participating in any indoor athletic activities - including during competitions, practices, while sitting in bench areas, while spectating, and during entry and exit - EXCEPT as specified below.

Due to the risk of entanglement and choking, athletes participating in certain athletic activities (e.g., wrestling match, swimming or diving events, indoor track jumping events, cheer/dance/gymnastics stunting) may engage in these contests without a mask regardless of vaccination status.

While mask-wearing is taken seriously by many, photos appear daily in sports media that depict student-athletes wearing the mask below the nose and mouth and, in some instances, making no compliance effort by wearing the mask underneath their chin. CAS-CIAC has met with athletic directors and league commissioners, all of whom have expressed compliance concerns, especially among visiting schools. CAS-CIAC asks principals to address this issue by considering strategies to enforce the current mask requirement for interscholastic athletics. The CIAC Board of Control and league commissioners have found the following methods are effective in maintaining compliance with mask mandates both at home and as the visiting team:

- Principals meet with all coaches and set the standard that a coach will be suspended for a game if valid evidence demonstrates non-compliance with mask requirements by their student-athletes. Principals that have had such conversations with coaches have reported significant improvement in mask-wearing compliance.
- In alignment with standards set in CIAC tournament play, the principal of each participating school or their designee attends all games. The school administrator should identify themselves to the site director. This strategy provides a school administrator to effectively address individual players and spectators from visiting teams in complying with rules and regulations and managing spectator behavior. Also, it provides an opportunity for principals to reach out to their opposing school colleagues when masking wearing is a concern.

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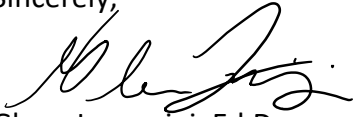
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- Assign an assistant coach the task of monitoring mask-wearing by players in the game and on the bench. This strategy relieves head coaches from monitoring mask-wearing compliance while managing the game and effectively addresses gameplay non-compliance. Football uses a similar method of game management by assigning an assistant coach the responsibility of keeping all players and staff, including the head coach, clear of the official's lane on the sideline.
- Keep a box of masks on each team's bench. This strategy effectively addresses issues of a player's mask becoming loose or worn during a game by providing that athlete with a replacement.
- Coaches and officials set the example by wearing a mask. As adult authority figures at every athletic contest, coaches and officials must lead by example and wear masks properly throughout the game.
- Officials continually inform student-athletes of their compliance expectations by reminding players to wear masks properly at all times during pregame instructions and in-game stoppages of play (e.g., free throws, out-of-bounds, the start of a quarter, etc.).

CAS-CIAC understands the challenges that COVID-19 have presented to education. It is CAS-CIAC's goal to maintain exceptional education-based experiences for the students of our member schools. Hopefully, we are moving closer to a time when this mitigation strategy will no longer be necessary. For now, we thank our principals in advance for committing to improve student-athlete compliance with mask-wearing requirements.

Sincerely,



Glenn Lungarini, Ed.D.

Executive Director

CAS-CIAC