



Michigan Consensus Statement & Beliefs for Youth Football

Preamble:

The above organizations recognize and appreciate the efforts of youth football coaches and program volunteers throughout the state of Michigan. Providing a positive football experience prior to high school is optimal for the young people that play this great game. The delivery of that positive experience with the right philosophy behind the introduction of age-appropriate skill development is at the core of a quality program. The Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA), Michigan High School Football Coaches Association (MHSFCA) and Michigan Athletic Trainers Society (MATS) all agree on the following core principles that should be part of all youth football programs in Michigan.

Core Principles:

- Youth football should start no earlier than mid-August and should conclude prior to Nov. 1 of each year. No youth football program should have a longer season than any varsity or subvarsity high school program.
- Flag football programs are strongly encouraged for all children in grades K-4 with beginning tackle or modified tackle programs being introduced to students no earlier than in grades 5 and 6.
- No youth football early season practice (before the first game) should exceed more than two hours in length with a maximum of four practices per week, and teams should never practice more than once per day. In-season practice (a week of practice that includes a game) sessions should be reduced to a maximum of three practices per week with no practice session exceeding more than two hours in length.
- All youth practices should focus on motor and fundamental skill development. All players should learn multiple positions on offense and defense and should be given the opportunity to play those positions during games prior to grade 7.
- Youth football programs should adopt contact limitations that are patterned after the MHSAA Football Practice Policies. This includes the following guidelines using these two definitions:
 - Collision Contact: Contact that is at game speed, executing full tackles at a competitive pace, taking players to the ground.
 - Thud: Full speed, contact above the waist only, with no player being taken to the ground. Each player is responsible to ensure that a teammate with whom he engages is not taken to the ground. There is no winner or loser, predetermined or otherwise. Coaches are not grading physical domination in thud. Teammates are merely trying to give each other a simulation of full-speed game action. Thud is not collision contact and is an alternative to live/full contact and is not limited by the time limitations below.

OVER

➤ Early Season Practice- Before First Contest:

Collision contact is limited to no more than 2 hours in a week (Monday-Sunday). Inter-squad scrimmages will calculate collision contact based on ½ of the total time (2-hour scrimmage = 1 hour of collision contact).

In-Season (Game Week):

A maximum of 45 minutes of **collision contact** is allowed during an in-season week (Monday-Sunday).

- Youth football should be viewed as developmental in all ways and teams should be limited to a maximum of eight (8) games in the fall season including any type of culminating event(s).
- Youth football coaches should be strongly encouraged to pursue educational opportunities through the MHSAA's Coaches Advancement Program (CAP) and online learning through the National Federation and USA Football coaching education programs.
- All youth football programs shall use coaches who have passed all required background checks, have completed the Michigan Concussion Law requirements, been educated in the participation philosophy and skill development of youth football, and have been trained in basic first aid for the safety of all participants.
- Youth football programs should have adopted emergency action plans and should have medical support personnel available when possible. Contact the MHSAA for emergency plan resources.
- Youth football programs using school facilities should be able to provide adequate insurance coverage to reduce the potential for increased liability.

Closing Thought:

The ultimate goal is to build cooperation between MHSAA member schools and local youth football programs to grow the game of football in our state and enhance the experience of young people, families, schools and communities. Leaders in high school sports, such as football coaches and administrators, should help influence youth football programs within their communities to adopt these principles and put them into practice for the wellbeing of all participants. Member schools should consider only extending their facilities and cooperation to programs that follow these core principles.

Resources / Additional Information:

MHSAA - www.mhsaa.com

MIAAA - www.miaaa.com

MATS - www.MichiganATSociety.org

MHSFCA - www.mhsfca.com