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Memorandum

To: All Ice Hockey Officials, Coaches and Athletic Directors
From: Tony Maselli, Chief Operating Officer
Date: November 8, 2023
Re: Protective Equipment

As we prepare for the beginning of the new season, the NJSIAA wishes to remind everyone of the importance we place on ensuring player safety and the need to enforce the protective equipment rules as written by the NFHS and where applicable, modified by the NJSIAA. The game of Ice Hockey is extremely fast and physical, all while being played in an unforgiving, contained space. We have a collective responsibility to one another to take all reasonable precautions for player safety and these precautions are directly related to our efforts to have our players properly equipped. To be clear, protective equipment enforcement is a **collaborative effort between the teams (player, coaches, and administrators) and the on-ice officials.**

The NFHS rules concerning protective equipment are quite explicit and the NJSIAA expects that these rules are being conveyed and compliance monitored regularly by the coaches with their players and that the players come prepared to play each game, properly equipped.

The rules clearly state, and I would like to reinforce, that protective equipment is required at all times during the contest, starting with the pregame warmups. There is no excuse for players not to know what is expected from them when they are participating in any NJSIAA contest, nor should the coaches allow players to shirk their obligations.

The required pre-game meeting between the officials and the teams establishes the certification by the coaches to the officials that players are properly equipped. We fully expect that coaches are educating their players on their obligations, that players are being held accountable by the teams to come prepared, and that the required affirmation to the official to begin the game is based upon direct knowledge of player readiness.

This year, the NJSIAA is instituting a new conduct reporting system. It is our hope that by reinforcing a clear message to both the teams/players and officials that NJSIAA insists upon participants being properly equipped, we can reduce/eliminate disruptions in game flow related to protective equipment enforcement. Rather than having to remove players from the ice or handing out penalties and potentially impacting the outcome of a match, we would rather see the reasons for these potential disruptions eliminated. However, when non-compliance becomes excessive, there should be no recourse but to penalize according to the rules and to report the situation through the conduct system for follow-up by the NJSIAA.

Over the last number of years, the NJSIAA has modified several rules regarding players equipment. Please see safety equipment rules below and remember NO modifications to protective equipment is permitted.

- **Mouthpieces**: ALL players, INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS, must have a mouthpiece inserted in their mouth during play in accordance with NFHS Rule 3-4-4. The mouthpieces can either have a strap or no strap but must be in the players mouth during play.
 - Penalty: See NFHS Rule 3-4-4.

- **Neck Guards**: ALL players, INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS, must wear neck guards that are CLEARLY VISIBLE TO THE OFFICIALS. All neck guards must be **BNQ CERTIFIED**. For the 2023-24 season It is recommended that the neck guard be a standalone guard however turtlenecks that are BNQ certified will be acceptable. For the 2024-25 season a standalone neck guard will be mandatory.
 - Penalty: First Violation – Team Warning – Offending player (excluding goalkeeper) will be removed from play and may not return until properly equipped. An offending goalkeeper shall be immediately provided with a neck guard before play can continue. All subsequent violations will result in a misconduct penalty.

- **Goalkeepers**: All goalkeepers must wear separate, commercially manufactured flapper style neck protection attached to their helmets. These helmets MUST conform to current HECC guidelines specified by the NFHS. All goalkeepers must wear HECC certified goalie masks attached to the helmet. Pay particular attention to the cat eye style masks, not all are HECC certified.
 - Penalty: See NFHS Rule 3-3-1.

- **Helmets**: All helmets must be HECC certified. In specific, helmets MUST have earpieces installed, and all chinstraps MUST be working and connected.
 - Penalty: See NFHS Rule 3-4-5.