



The Connecticut Interscholastic Conference
2020-2021 Fall Sports Plan
Updated September 24, 2020

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

(September 23, 2020 Update)

This document has been updated to include CIAC’s most recent guidance from DPH and consultation with the CIAC Sports Medicine Committee. The following points are covered in greater detail throughout this updated document:

- **All fall sports (cross country, swimming, soccer, field hockey, volleyball, and football) may participate in full team low to moderate risk activities unless otherwise advised by the CIAC, a school’s local health department, or district administration.**
- **The CIAC Sports Medicine Committee has updated its position on face masks where it now recommends wearing masks for all low aerobic demand activities, including volleyball, and anaerobic conditioning activities and practices.**
- **The CIAC will monitor COVID metrics daily and provide an update to member schools each Friday on the outlook for the following week.**

In determining the status of interscholastic athletic opportunities for the state or an individual school district, the CIAC will reference the State Department of Education’s Indicators for Consideration of Learning Models (<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Reopening/ddy2-ijgu/>).

Leading and secondary indicators of COVID-19 infection levels

	Leading Indicator	Secondary Indicators		
Risk Level	New COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population per day (7-day average)	Percent test positivity (7-day average)	New COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population per day (7-day average)	Percent COVID-like illness hospital ED visits (7-day average)
Low: Favors more in-person learning	<10	Trending down to flat No statistically significant changes		
Moderate: Favors hybrid learning	10 - <25	Trending flat to upward Any statistically significant changes upward		
High: Favors remote learning	25+	Trending upward Consistent statistically significant changes upward		

When Connecticut as a state is in the “low” category, the CIAC will proceed with offering appropriate risk categories of interscholastic sports. If all school districts in CT reach the “moderate” category, or a significant enough number of member schools fall into this category that maintaining game schedules are no longer possible, then the CIAC will restrict all interscholastic athletic experiences to conditioning and low risk non-contact sport specific skill work, in cohorts no greater than 10, and limited to the school’s campus. If all school districts in CT, or a significant number of member schools, reach the “high” category, then the CIAC will suspend all interscholastic athletic opportunities.

The CIAC’s rationale for these category experiences is based on its belief that maintaining a level of in-person instruction is the primary goal of our member schools and association. The value of structured physical activity is widely supported in research, especially when isolation experiences are increased. As such, when safe, the CIAC will provide the best regional sport experiences possible to our member schools. When regional play is not supported by COVID metrics, the CIAC will seek to allow member schools to

continue engaging their students in low risk, small cohort, school specific activities. Furthermore, when necessary to address spiking COVID metrics, the CIAC will suspend all interscholastic activities for the safety of our students and school communities.

(CIAC Official Fall Sports Plan; Approved July 30, 2020; Last Updated August 26, 2020)

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 20th, 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.

The following guidance and protocols issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education and State Department of Public Health should be utilized when responding to specific COVID scenarios that may occur with school reopening for the 2020-2021 school year. That guidance and protocols can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/Addendum-5-Interim-Guidance-for-Responding-to-COVID-19-Scenarios-in-CT-School-Districts.pdf> If a student tests positive for COVID 19, the school/district must be notified immediately and local DPH must be contacted. The local DPH will direct the appropriate process.

Based on DPH recommendations to allow schools to return to campus for two weeks before beginning play, all conditioning workouts and non-contact sport specific skill work will remain in cohorts of 10 to September 21, 2020. Due to the variety of school start dates, September 21, 2020 was selected as a two-week period after Labor Day. Additionally, the first date of contests will be October 1, 2020. This will allow schools to be on campus for approximately one month prior to beginning regional competition.

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.

The following schedule identifies start dates and contest dates for each fall sport.

A list of CIAC staff responsible for fall sport committees can be found in the CIAC handbook (https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/ciachandbook_2021.pdf).

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Cross Country	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	6-Nov	Nov 7-14
Field Hockey	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Football	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	NA	NA	NA	21-Nov	NA
Soccer	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Swimming	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Volleyball	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21

A cohort of 10 was recommended by DPH for all activities through the first two weeks of school. 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.

The use of any equipment throughout conditioning and the fall season must be maintained and sanitized in accordance with the ReOpen CT sector rules for sport: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Aug-14-updates/CTReopens_Sports_FitnessCenters814.pdf

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 regions for each sport can viewed at <https://www.casciac.org/fallregions/>.

****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 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Cross Country	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	6-Nov	Nov 7-14

Cross Country

Cross country sport packet, which includes additional COVID mitigating strategies:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/xc.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 30: 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.

Oct 1 – Nov 6: Athletes will begin competing in races on October 1, 2020. 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 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Swimming	29-Aug	21-Sep	NA	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21

Swimming

Girls swimming sport packet, which includes additional COVID mitigating strategies:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gswim.pdf>

Aug 29 – Sept 30: 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.

Oct. 1 – Nov 21: Athletes will begin competing in meets on Oct. 1. 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 10	First Practice Date of Full Teams and Full Contact	First Scrimmage Date	First Contest Date	Max. Number of Regular Season Games	Max. Number of Games Per Week	*Last Date to Play	*Tourney Experience will provide all participating teams with additional games (Format TBA)
Field Hockey	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Soccer	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21
Volleyball	29-Aug	21-Sep	26-Sep	1-Oct	12	2	7-Nov	Nov 7-21

Field Hockey, Soccer, and Volleyball

Field hockey sport packet, which includes additional COVID mitigating strategies:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gfh.pdf>

Soccer sport packet, which includes additional COVID mitigating strategies:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/soc.pdf>

Volleyball sport packet, which includes additional COVID mitigating strategies:

<https://www.casciac.org/tp/gvb.pdf>

To further mitigate the risk of volleyball, the CIAC Sports Medicine Committee has updated its position on face masks where it now recommends wearing masks for all low aerobic demand activities, including volleyball, and anaerobic conditioning activities and practices. This modification aligns with the NFHS position that wearing a mask to play indoor volleyball may reduce the risk classification from moderate to low. Volleyball may also take place outdoors as a modification strategy to reduce the risk classification from moderate to low.

Aug 29 – Sept 20 (Cohorts of 10) 1-hour practice 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 21 – Sept 30 (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 18th. Playing time for athletes at game speed during the scrimmage should be managed to reflect the completion of a 3-week conditioning progression.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes' conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis.

Oct 1 – Nov 21 games may be played.

	First Practice Date in Cohorts of 10	First Practice Date of Full Team Low to Moderate Risk Activities	Last Date of Full Team Low to Moderate Risk Activities
Football	27-Aug (Teams may have contact on Sept 14 to teach tackling and blocking if approved)	21-Sep	Nov 21

Football

CIAC reviewed low to moderate risk activities submitted by leagues and individual member school athletic departments can be found here:

<https://www.casciac.or/tp/fb.pdf>

In alignment with recommendations from the State Department of Health, 11 v 11 full contact football will not be sanctioned during the fall sports season (August 27 – November 21). In collaboration with member school leagues and athletic directors, the CIAC will sanction a fall football activities season, ending on November 21st, and provide recommended low to moderate risk activities, as classified by the NFHS and CIAC, it endorses to engage student-athletes in fall football experiences. These activities may include 7 v 7 competition, although the CIAC does not have rules for 7v7 nor does it sanction 7v7 as a championship sport. During the fall season, if a school engages in school-based higher risk activities, it does so against the recommendation of the CIAC and DPH and is recommended that such activities receive approval from the local health department and school/district administration.

August 29 – Sept 13 (Cohorts of 10) 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. While teams are permitted to pass out equipment such as helmets and shoulder pads to begin the heat acclimatization process, schools may elect to delay equipment distribution until necessary due to the significant COVID sanitizing measures required to complete this process.

Sept 14 – Sept 21 (Cohorts of 10) 90-minute practice comprised of 45 minutes of conditioning and 45 minutes of skill work. Additional time can be spent with student-athletes online to review game film, playbooks, etc.

Sept 21 – Nov 21 (Full team) 2-hour practices. Coaches should be aware of student-athletes’ conditioning level and account for additional progressions on an individual basis. CIAC recommends participation in low to moderate risk activities. During this time, a school that engages in higher risk activities does so against the recommendation of the CIAC and DPH, and is encouraged to seek the

approval of its local health department and school/district administration before conducting any such high risk activities.

It is important to note that there has never been a scenario in the sport of football where a student-athlete could have the option of playing for an outside team during the fall season. In every CIAC sanctioned sport an athlete may not participate on a school team and outside team in the same sport during the same season. With the postponement of football until later in the 2020-2021 school year, the CIAC will sanction two football opportunities. The first will be fall season ending November 21st in which teams may participate in low to moderate risk activities. A school team participating in higher risk activities does so against the recommendation of the CIAC and DPH. The CIAC is aware of independent football teams that are forming to offer a limited number of high school aged players a full contact fall league. The CIAC does not endorse play in such in leagues. In the interest of student-athlete safety, the CIAC recommends the following guidance to member schools for players who may participate on an independent football team this fall:

- A school should be aware of the potential for overuse injury if a student-athlete is participating in both school-based low to moderate risk football activities and non-school based independent leagues. The CIAC does not endorse simultaneous participation, however, the ultimate decision of allow dual participation is at the discretion of the school/district. To avoid the potential for overuse injuries a student-athlete should not exceed the training that is experienced during a “normal” fall football season.
 - It is recommended that football experiences not exceed a schedule of 5 practice days per week with a duration of 2 hours per practice, 1 game per week, and one recovery/conditioning day per week. If a student-athlete is participating in both school-based activities and independent experiences, the school should monitor the student’s activities as a preventative measure against overuse injuries.
- Due to CIAC’s postponement of full contact football this fall student-athletes have not participated in the “normal” training progression of heat acclimatization while wearing helmets and pads, nor have they engaged in the “normal” progression of skill work leading up to game speed full contact play. Therefore, it is recommended that student-athletes and their parents be advised that the likelihood of overuse injuries, or at least those to some extent caused by not having had a preseason, occurring this fall are high.

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. **The CIAC position on fan/spectator attendance is that fans should not be allowed at interscholastic contests or practices.** We understand the complexities of individual districts who use public fields and that the ultimate decision rests with the district, however, the CIAC believes that prohibiting fan/spectator attendance aligns best with the goals of education-based athletics. 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) and current CDC guidance. The CIAC supports the plans established by school districts that direct the presence of adults on campus at this time. Notwithstanding the above, permissible spectator/fan attendance will be governed by local districts’ current operating plan.

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 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 COVID symptoms must notify school personnel, be removed from participation, 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, approved by local DPHs and school districts, should be worn when sitting on the bench, during chalk talk, interacting with an athletic trainer, etc.
- ii. **Wearing masks for all low aerobic demand activities, including volleyball, and anaerobic conditioning activities and practices.**
- iii. 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)
- iv. Officials should wear face coverings whenever possible.
- v. 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>). Ventilation in locker rooms is critical to providing a safe environment. Schools should explore efforts that may increase ventilation and decrease exposure to wet environments in locker room settings. When locker rooms are used, consideration of greater social distance (12 feet) should be applied. To minimize exposure, a schedule should be developed when locker rooms are used. 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.

Athletic Training Rooms – Athletic training rooms are essential to providing care to our student-athletes. Athletic trainers will work with athletic directors to establish protocols for the training room, including a schedule for visits by athletes.

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 must 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.

Game Officials – The CIAC has suspended the regulation of providing a room for officials for the fall season. Officials should come contests dressed for contests, whenever possible.

Appendix I
COVID-19 Advisory Committee

Building Principal (or designee):

School Physician:

Athletic Trainer:

Superintendent (or designee):

Athletic Director:

School Nurse:

Coach:

