

DISTRICT 3

Midland-Wachusett League/ Worcester County Athletic Conference



COVID Protocols and Guidelines Winter Season 2020-2021

Updated 12/1/2020

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Statement of Purpose:

The Midland-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference and MIAA District 2 and 3 strongly believe that Interscholastic Athletics can play a vital role in re-engaging our students as we seek to get back to school and to some sense of normalcy. A functioning athletic program will aid in the process of rebuilding the interpersonal connections that would fundamentally support the implementation of any of the instructional academic models being proposed. In the quest to educate the whole student, it cannot be overstated enough the role that Interscholastic Athletics can play in fostering deep and positive social and emotional health outcomes in our collective communities.

Through a modified, pod-based, competitive structure, the Midland-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference and Central Mass Districts 2 and 3 seek to creatively reimagine what is possible within the constraints of the new health and safety protocols that have been established in response to the ongoing pandemic. By limiting competition to geographic bubbles, the Midland-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference aims to create a sustainable model for school-sponsored athletics throughout the duration of this pandemic.

Competition Bubble (Pod) Model:

Midland-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference and MIAA District 2 and 3 (Central Mass) would divide all schools into closely located pods for all scheduled contests. The pods will be designed primarily based on geographic proximity. School MAY NOT play other schools outside of their pod.

Seasons:

Due to the pandemic, these sport offerings and timeline are subject to change at any time.

Fall Season I - September 18 - November 20

- Boys' and Girls' Cross Country
- Golf
- Field Hockey
- Boys' and Girls' Soccer

Winter Season - December 14 - February 21

- Boys' and Girls' Basketball
- Boys' and Girls' Ice Hockey
- Alpine Ski
- Nordic Ski
- Gymnastics
- Swim & Dive

Fall Season II - February 22 - April 25

- Cheer
- Football
- Boys' and Girls' Indoor Track
- Girls' Volleyball
- Unified Basketball

Spring Season - April 26 - July 3

- Baseball
- Softball
- Boys' and Girls' Lacrosse
- Boys' and Girls' Tennis
- Boys' and Girls' Outdoor Track
- Unified Track
- Boys' Volleyball
- Wrestling
- Girls' Golf
- Boys' and Girls' Rugby
- Crew

Guiding Principles of Pod Model

- Promotes social and emotional well being of student-athletes
- Creates a sense of normalcy
- Physical Activity
- Controls Social-Distancing
- Engages student-athletes and creates academic accountability. Allows for students to still participate all learning models (in- person, hybrid and remote learning)
- Prevents students from seeking other, less healthy, extracurricular outlets
- Prevents losing student-athletes to Club, Travel, or AAU sports who may not return to high school athletics
- Athletics could serve as a model for other extra-curricular activities such as band or arts
- Pod model may be used in other seasons pending COVID-19 restrictions

MIAA/DESE/EEA Guidelines

All games and practices will be governed by the MIAA, EEA, DESE, DPH, and local Boards of Health. The following are the guidelines from these organizations that were used to make all decisions and protocols in this document.

- [Updated EEA Guidelines as of 11/12](#)
- [DESE and MIAA Joint Statement 8/18](#)
- [Sport Compliance Attestation Form](#)
- [MIAA COVID-19 Task Force Information](#)
- MIAA Winter Sport Modifications - [Statement](#)
 - [Boys' and Girls' Basketball](#)
 - [Boys' and Girls' Ice Hockey](#)
 - [Alpine Ski](#)
 - [Nordic Ski](#)
 - [Gymnastics](#)
 - [Swim & Dive](#)
- MIAA Fall Season II Modifications - TBD
- MIAA Spring Season Modifications - TBD

General Pod Guidelines:

- Schools agree to follow all protocols in this document
- Each sport that sponsors competitions will have unique pods. The goal of these pods is to limit the exposure in any particular sport. Schools will not play outside of their pod in that sport. (See Addendum A: Winter Pods)
- Schools cannot play out of state per state guidelines
- If a school has a positive COVID case on their team (student, coach, support personnel), all schools in the pod will be notified within 24 hours - follow DESE protocols found [HERE](#)
- Competition pods may discuss specific items that pertain to their pod
- Participants will adhere to out of state travel rules to high risk areas
- General rule for all team members and staff; If you don't feel well, stay home!
- Coaches are required to have an accurate roster with contact information
- Coaches are required to have an accurate emergency contact list for each member of the team, including head/assistant coaches and managers
- Participating schools will adhere to tracking team attendance and traveling with contact lists for all team members
- All areas around the team benches and scorers table must be sanitized before and after each event
- Home Team schools to provide disinfectant wipes/cleaning solution to sanitize equipment and game balls throughout the contest

Pre-Season Guidelines (Meetings, Tryouts, Schedule):

Winter sports are scheduled to begin on Monday, December 14th.

- Pre-Season POD/Sport Meetings (All POD Athletic Directors by 12/11/20) will cover the following:
 - Health and Safety Protocols
 - Sport specific protocols and guidelines
 - Transportation
 - Gameday protocols
 - Other
- Coaches Meetings (Local AD and Local Coaches before 12/11/20) will cover the following:
 - Health and Safety Protocols
 - Sport specific protocols and guidelines
 - Transportation
 - Gameday protocols
 - Other

- Tryouts Arrival/Departure Protocols
 - No spectators are allowed at tryouts or inside the facility at any time
 - Start and Stop times are staggered by 15-30 minutes to allow for proper social distancing for arrivals and departures.
- COVID-19 Screening at Tryouts
 - Student athletes will self-certify before entering the tryout facility
 - Coaches will self-certify before entering at the tryout facility
- Tryouts
 - No more than 25 student-athletes per playing surface. A playing surface is defined as one (1) full sized basketball court, (1) full sized hockey rink, swimming pool, etc.
 - Follow EEA Guidelines in reference to cohorts.
- Interscholastic scrimmages are NOT allowed.

Practice Guidelines:

- Arrival/Departure Protocols for practices and games
 - Entrances and exit locations will be clearly communicated and marked
 - Start and stop times are recommended to be staggered by 15-30 minutes to allow for proper social distancing and disinfecting
 - Clearly designated parking locations for parents/guardians pickup/dropoff
 - Parent/guardians must remain in their vehicles while on school grounds
- Follow all State, EEA, DESE and MIAA protocols and guidelines regarding sport modifications and safety protocols
 - Face coverings will be worn by all student-athletes and coaches at all times
 - All athletes will be required to wear a face covering and distance 6 feet apart while not actively competing (bench area, sidelines, etc.)
 - Coaches will provide socially distanced mask breaks throughout practice
 - Teams will enter and exit at different locations where possible
 - Student-athletes should bring personal equipment bags
 - Bags will be placed at least 6 feet apart and will designate the players personal space during games/contests
 - Warm-ups and electronics must be placed in the gym bag before practice/competition begins
 - Recommended supplies for student-athletes personal gym bags:
 - Reusable face masks/gaiters (Recommend 5)
 - Personal bottle of hand sanitizer
 - Disinfectant wipes for personal use
 - Athletic braces, tape, inhaler, other should be stored in gym bag when not in use

- Personal water bottle labeled with athlete's name
 - Additional shoes (Shoes should be stored in a separate compartment or bag inside the gym bag to prevent possible cross contamination with other items)
 - Mouth Guards
 - Gym bags should be disinfected after every practice/competition
 - It is recommended teams will participate a maximum of 5 days per week (practices and competitions)
 - Teams have a maximum of 90 minute practices
 - Social distancing must be enforced as much as possible during drills and conditioning
 - Teams should practice in cohorts according to the EEA/MIAA guidelines
 - Students will bring their own water bottles - there can be NO sharing of water bottles
 - There will be no sharing of personal equipment
 - Hand sanitizer and/or washing stations must be available
 - Student-athletes and coaches must sanitize and/or wash their hands before and after practices
 - All equipment must be disinfected after each practice/competition (JV1, JV2, Varsity)
 - Locker rooms and changing areas must remain closed per EEA Guidance ([EEA Guidance Page 11](#)), except for toilet facilities. For sport activities that occur directly after school, locker rooms may be used for changing only, with no more than 10 users at one time and with social distancing (6 feet between individuals) and face coverings maintained.
 - Bathrooms designated by facility
 - Parent/Guardians must stay in the parking lot and cannot enter the building for pick-up/drop-off
- Out of Season Coaching for Indoor Track (due to season being moved to Fall 2)
 - Coaches can lead up to 10 total sessions
 - It is recommended that sessions be conducted outside
 - Sessions should be no more than 90 minutes
 - Sessions must follow all EEA guidelines regarding the number of participants and cohorts.

Game Day Management:

- Facilities
 - Schools must have a person to greet opposing team
 - Locker rooms are closed
 - Have benches or bleachers marked with X's or chairs distanced apart
 - Option to put basketball benches on the opposite side of the court
 - Hand Sanitizer provided at entrance, no entry without sanitizing
 - Hand Sanitizer provided on the scoring table, away bench, & home bench
 - Signage about social distancing and wearing a mask posted around facility
 - Schools will provide a schematic/picture of the facility (bench area, bathrooms, entrances/exits, halftime areas, etc.)
 - Recommended separate entrance/exit (if possible) for double-headers
- Player Expectations
 - Athletes will come dressed ready to play
 - Athletes will be attended to by their own athletic trainer (if they have one) before boarding the bus
 - Athletes must have extra masks/gaiters (recommend 5) in their bag
 - Athletes will maintain 6 feet of social distance in all bench areas
 - Athletes must bring their own water bottle (recommend 2)
 - Athletes must sanitize after getting off the bus, after warm-up, during halftime, and end of competition
 - Athletes should not partake in celebratory high-fives, hugs, chest bumps, or group celebrations
- Coaches Expectations
 - Coaches will wear masks at all times
 - Coaches will keep bench players 6 feet apart
 - No close huddles with team pre/post game
 - Coaches will assign seats for benches and buses for the duration of the season.
 - Only 3 coaches will be allowed per team's sideline
 - Coaches are responsible for making sure benches are picked up before leaving the facility
 - Coaches will provide a roster to the opposing school AD prior to the season and to the COVID Captain on game day
 - Coaches must have access to emergency contact information with them at all times
 - Coaches are responsible for bringing their own basketballs

- Coaches will sanitize after getting off the bus, after warm-up, during halftime, and at the end of competition
- Coaches will exchange film with opposing coach (when possible)
- Player Sidelines
 - All players on the sidelines will remain 6 feet apart
 - Players personal belongings must be kept 6 feet apart and should be away from the playing surface
 - Players must sit in assigned seat/area throughout the duration of the game and season
 - Varsity/JV1/JV2 will travel separately unless a school can provide a waiting area (pods will make this decision based on respective facilities)
 - In basketball, the gym must be clear of both teams before the next games' teams enter the facility. Visiting teams should not send two teams together.
 - A "holding area" or second gym should be used to "hold" the next games' teams until the prior game is completed and the facility is sanitized. It is recommended that traveling teams stagger their bus departures/arrivals
- Spectators
 - There will be no spectators for winter contests
 - Senior Recognition Games- please see guidance below
- Athletic Trainer
 - ATs will have a designated area on the sideline away from benches
 - ATs will wear a mask at all times.
 - All schools must have a COVID symptom chair away from benches
- Officials
 - Officials will come dressed and ready to officiate. Locker rooms will be closed.
 - Officials will have a spot dedicated behind the scorer's table (or other appropriately socially distanced location)
 - Schools will have hand sanitizer on the scorer's table for officials
 - Officials wear masks at all times
 - Only one captain will be at a pregame meeting and coin flip
 - There will be no team handshakes after contests
- Game Staff
 - Game staff working the game clock, shot clock, and official book will be socially distanced (6 feet apart) at the scorers' table
 - Game staff must wear masks at all times
 - Game staff must sanitize before the game, in between quarters, and at the end of the game
 - Game staff will not eat at the scorers' table

- Game staff should bring their own water bottle/drink
- Game Administrators
 - Responsible for sanitizing equipment before, during, and after the games
 - Will sign in officials
 - Responsible for following guidelines on ball procedures
- COVID Coach (can be ATC)
 - Responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns
 - Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols
- COVID Captain
 - It is required that schools assign a COVID Captain at each game - COVID captains can be your game administrator or Athletic Director designee
 - COVID captains are responsible for:
 - Making sure hand sanitizing stations are set up and filled
 - Sanitizing equipment before, during, and after the event
- COVID Kits
 - It is recommended that each team travel with a COVID Kit that includes:
 - Hand sanitizer (recommend buying the spray instead of gel because it lasts longer)
 - Antibacterial wipes
 - Extra masks
 - Gloves
- Media (Reporters/Photographers)
 - All media must sign in with the COVID Captain
 - Must wear masks at all times and stay socially distanced from bench areas
 - Designated area is recommended
- Senior Recognition
 - Senior recognition will be decided in Pods
 - It is recommended Seniors be recognized at the end of the game after opponents leave the facility
 - Allowing senior parents to attend the senior game, or post game senior ceremony, will be determined by Pods based on individual school protocols and outside facility regulations (where applicable)
 - Recommended to be determined within Pods that we hold “senior games” during one of the first 3 home contests in each of the sports
 - Senior recognition to be done once visiting team, spectators have cleared the venue
- Live Streaming/Recording Competitions
 - Recommended schools live stream competitions if possible
 - Capability determined by Pods

Transportation:

- [All DESE Guidelines will be followed](#)
- When possible, schools should use 77 passenger buses to transport students
- Individual schools will set policy on parents driving students to games
 - Parents of remote students may prefer to drive them
- Schedules should be developed so that only 1-3 buses are needed per day
- Sub Varsity games (either simultaneously played or back to back) will be determined by pods depending on what works best for that pod; factors could include bus availability, facility availability, game managers, officials, etc.

Roster Sizes:

Roster sizes are maximums. Rosters are limited due to travel and participation restrictions.

- **Boys' and Girls' Basketball** - 12
 - Based on MIAA guidelines, the use of swing players is prohibited
- **Boys' and Girls' Ice Hockey** - No more than 25 on the practice ice at a time, Game Roster are 20
- **Alpine Ski** - No more than 25 athletes at practice at any given time. Competition #s will be decided by Ski Ward/Nashoba Valley
- **Nordic Ski** - No more than 25 athletes at practice at any given time.
- **Gymnastics** - No more than 25 athletes at practice at any given time. Meet Roster is 16
- **Swim & Dive** - dependent upon facility

Sub-Varsity Teams:

- Where applicable we will have JV1 and JV2 squads and games
- Pods will meet preseason to agree on the particulars of JV games like how many, when they will be held, etc.

Athletic Trainers/Medical Coverage Information:

The Mid-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference Medical staff have created a list of recommendations for game day medical operations for all schools competing in the Mid-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference for the Winter 2020-2021 athletic season. These recommendations shall not be used as the sole source for game day medical coverage operations, yet, in conjunction with other health organizations such as the Massachusetts Executive office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to aid in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Developing a uniformed system throughout the Mid-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference/Central Mass in which medical coverage is provided will help create a sense of familiarity for our athletes in this unfamiliar time we are all facing together. Below are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as well as the list of recommendations put forth by the Mid-Wachusett League/Worcester County Athletic Conference Sports Medicine Committee.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can present between 2-14 days after infection. Symptoms of this virus can range in severity from person to person, therefore it is imperative that we are educated on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, be proactive in our preparations and respond appropriately when confronted with a potential positive infection case.

- Symptoms of COVID-19:
 - Fever and Chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of Breath
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headaches
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore Throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- Emergency Signs and Symptoms:
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Pain or pressure in chest
 - New Confusion
 - Inability to wake or stay awake
 - Blue lips or face
- Medical Recommendations
 - a. Symptom Screening and Contact Tracing:
 - It is recommended that all programs implement some form of contact tracing as well as symptom screening for athletes, coaching staff, game officials, and spectators
 - Implementation and enforcement shall be at the discretion of the school administration
 - b. Medical Supplies:

- Traveling teams should arrive with appropriate First Aid and infectious disease prevention materials, these materials include and are not limited to:
 - Additional cloth or disposable face masks
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Surface sanitizing product
 - Gloves
 - Additional mouth guards
- c. Hydration Stations:
 - It is each athlete's responsibility to provide adequate fluids to maintain their hydration at any time prior to competition, during regulation game time and/or overtime, as well as any time thereafter
 - The sharing of water bottles between athletes, coaches, and game officials shall be prohibited
- d. Designated quarantine location:
 - A designated quarantine location should be established if an athlete were to present with COVID-19 symptoms once they are at the destination venue
 - The athlete should remain in the designated quarantine location until appropriate transportation accommodations have been arranged
 - Appropriate notifications shall be made to both Home and Away School administration identifying a possible COVID-19 Case
- e. Athletes presenting with COVID-19 Symptoms
 - Under No Circumstances should any athlete presenting with any COVID-19 symptoms travel to, or participate in any practice, home or away competition
 - Any Athlete that has traveled to any state out of the "Low Risk Travel States" designated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) within the 2 weeks prior to the start of or during their season must agree to comply with all current DPH regulations and shall notify their administration
- f. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):
 - All players, coaches, game officials, and staff shall wear appropriate PPE when at all venues as specified per EEA and MIAA guidelines
 - All Medical Staff shall wear an appropriate cloth or disposable mask when interacting with athletes, coaches, officials or staff
 - Universal Precautions and appropriate PPE should be worn when responding to an emergency or possible COVID-19 Case

MIAA COVID Protocols:

For students with symptoms who test negative for COVID-19 infection, they may return to sport once they are approved to return to school (when afebrile for 24 hours and symptomatically improved).

Student-athletes and coaches who are diagnosed with COVID-19 infection should rest and avoid exercise for ten days from symptom onset. They may return to school once they have been afebrile for at least 24 hours and with improvement in their COVID-19 symptoms, and once ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared (or the date of the positive test, if asymptomatic), according to DPH guidelines.

In addition, persons with COVID-19 infection need to receive written clearance from their health care provider and school administrator/designee to return to sport. Return to activity should be slow and graded. An example of a graduated return to play protocol can be found at this [link](#).

Student-athletes, coaches, spectators and any others associated with the athletic program who were exposed to COVID-19 must not participate in practices or games until their 14-day quarantine is completed and must receive written clearance from their school administrator/designee to return to sport.

Out of Season Coaching

The Mid-Wach League Athletic Directors/Worcester County Athletic Conference voted unanimously to prohibit out of season coaching during the winter sports season except for the sport of Indoor Track which was moved to Fall 2 as described in the section above.

Additional Resources:

[NFHS COVID-19 Course](#)

[MIAA COVID-19 Task Force Page](#)

[COVID-19 Athlete/Coach Monitoring Form](#)

[American Medical Society for Sports Medicine - COVID](#)

Sport Specific Information:

- ***Skiing***
 - Schools should expect 1 practice and 1 competition per week. If possible, a 2nd practice will be scheduled.
 - Practice rosters are limited to 25
 - Practices will be 90 minutes- you can use that 90 to split up your squad if you need to.
 - There will be NO access to the lodge. Skiers should arrive dressed and ready to go.
 - The CMSL will be broken into 2 pods. Schools will be grouped for practices and competitions and there will not be crossover between the 2 pods.
 - Schools will be assigned specific practice/competition times. Athletes may not arrive early or stay past your designated time. You must leave promptly after your practice/race.
 - Athletes must remain socially distant at the start and finish areas.
- ***Swimming***
 - Follow all pool protocols in addition to District 3 guidelines
 - No spectators
 - Remote or virtual meets
 - Come dressed ready to compete
 - Abide by facility limitations on participants
- ***Gymnastics***
 - Follow all gym protocols in addition to District 3 guidelines
 - No spectators
 - In person or virtual meets
 - Come dressed ready to compete
- ***Hockey***
 - Follow all rink protocols in addition to District 3 guidelines
 - No spectators
 - No locker rooms
 - Come dressed ready to compete

Addendum A: Winter Pods**Basketball**

<u>POD 5</u>	<u>POD 6</u>	<u>POD 7</u>
AMSA	Fitchburg	Groton-Dunstable
Clinton	Gardner	Littleton
Hudson	Leominster	Lunenburg
Marlboro	Narragansett	North Middlesex
Maynard	Oakmont	St. Bernard's
Nashoba	Quabbin	Tyngsboro
Westboro		

<u>POD 8</u>	<u>POD 9</u>
Algonquin	Ayer-Shirley
Notre Dame Academy	Bromfield
Shepherd Hill	Monty Tech
Shrewsbury	Murdock
St. Paul	South Lancaster Academy
Wachusett	Tahanto
	Trivium
	West Boylston

Boys' Hockey

<u>POD 1</u>	<u>POD 2</u>	<u>POD 3</u>
Algonquin	Fitchburg	Auburn
Hudson	Gardner	Grafton
Marlboro	Groton-Dunstable	Hopedale
Nashoba	Leominster	Northbridge
Shrewsbury	Littleton	Worcester
Wachusett	Lunenburg	
Westboro	North Middlesex	
	Oakmont	
	St. Bernard's	

Girls' Hockey

<u>League</u>	
Algonquin	Oakmont
Auburn	Pope Francis
Leominster	Shrewsbury
Longmeadow	

Gymnastics

<u>League</u>	
Algonquin	Marlboro
Hudson	Shrewsbury
Groton-Dunstable	Westboro

Swimming

<u>League</u> <u>(Will divide into 2 pods)</u>	
Algonquin	Shrewsbury
AMSA	Tantasqua
Bromfield	Wachusett
Gardner	Westboro
Grafton	Worcester
Nashoba	