

2020-2021 Ave Maria Academy Athletics Health and Safety Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented several unique challenges to sports worldwide. COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that primarily attacks the upper respiratory system and can infect people of all ages. While data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and other entities indicates that while children are infected with COVID-19, few children are hospitalized. However, in rare occurrences, severe outcomes have been reported in children. A child who is even mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic can spread the virus to others. While it is not possible to eliminate COVID-19, scientific research does suggest that schools can take steps to help reduce the risk to students, coaches, and their families. To minimize the risk, Ave Maria Academy will take the necessary precautions based on recommendations from the federal, local, and state governments, CDC, National Federation of State High School Associations ([NFHS](#)), and the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association ([PIAA](#)). Ave Maria Academy realizes that best practices regarding COVID-19 are in a constant state of change as new information and treatments become available. The Board will review these guidelines and updated them, if necessary, to reflect current information in an effort to decrease the risk of exposure for our students, staff, and families.

Participating in interscholastic athletics is a privilege at Ave Maria Academy and it is of the utmost importance that everyone involved; student athletes, parents, coaches, and administrators work together to help adhere to the guidelines outlined in this document. It is the responsibility of the participating interscholastic student athletes, parents, coaches, and administrators to follow these guidelines while in season and out. Failure to follow these safety measures will jeopardize everyone's ability to participate.

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Practice social distancing whenever possible (6 feet at a minimum). Practice social distancing in all common areas such as locker rooms, classrooms, meeting rooms, and gyms.
- b. Coaching staffs are limited to essential personnel only. The Athletic Director will maintain a list of essential personnel.
- c. Consider the capacity of rooms and the quality of ventilation in rooms and spaces. Hold smaller group meetings in areas like the gym, a classroom or even outside on the field where proper social distancing can take place.
- d. Large indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged – if possible, use a virtual meeting instead.
- e. Team meals should be pre-packaged and served “grab-and-go” style. Food provided for student athletes must adhere to the [Guidance for Businesses in the Restaurant Industry](#).
- f. When at a practice or a competition, student athletes, coaches, and other essential personnel should avoid handshakes, high-fives, fist pumps and all other forms of contact with one another.
- g. No outside groups or speakers are allowed in the facilities.
- h. Student athletes should be six feet apart when not actively taking part in a drill or physical activity.
- i. Activities that increase the risk of exposure to saliva droplets are not allowed, including chewing gum, spitting, etc.
- j. When holding multiple games in the same facility, schedule adequate time between contests to allow for cleaning and disinfecting the facilities, and to minimize interactions between student athletes.
- k. Booster run concession stands and other food provided for student athletes must adhere to the [Guidance for Businesses in the Restaurant Industry](#).

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2. SANITATION

- a. Clean ALL personal athletic equipment daily. Student athletes should take their personal equipment home daily for cleaning.
- b. Student athletes CANNOT share personal athletic equipment and MUST use any issued equipment.
- c. Properly disinfect ALL shared equipment between users.
- d. Student athletes must always wear shirts and shoes in the locker rooms.
- e. Each athlete MUST have their OWN personally identified water bottle that is never shared. Mark the athletics name prominently on the bottle.
- f. Provide hand sanitizers and wipes throughout the facilities and activity areas.
- g. Maintenance will set a daily cleaning and disinfecting schedule of all high traffic areas, such as the locker rooms.
- h. Student athletes will shower at home.
- i. Student athletes will use the gym lobby restrooms.

3. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- a. Student athletes, coaches and staff must wear masks in all indoor spaces. This includes gymnasiums and school buildings.
- b. During any “down time” situations, coaches and student athletes should be wearing masks.
- c. Athletes must wear masks during all drills and competitions.
- d. Cloth face coverings are considered adequate (surgical or N95 masks are not necessary).
- e. The garment should cover the nose and mouth and allow for continued unlabored breathing.
- f. A full list with references for mask specifications and maintenance is on the [CDC website](#).
- g. Wearing gloves has not been shown to decrease transmission of the virus. Current recommendations are for frequent handwashing and to avoid touching one’s face.

4. DAILY SCREENING

- a. There will be daily screening of student athletes, coaches, and other essential staff with no-touch temperature checks and a questionnaire.
- b. Attendance will be recorded for contact tracing reasons.
- c. Screening questions will include:
 - Have you had any new onset cough or shortness of breath?
 - Have you had any known exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19?
- d. ANY student athlete, coach, or other essential staff, who shows a temperature of >100.4 or if any of the above questions has a positive response, the individual will not be granted access to the facility and that individual will be sent home. In the case of a minor, notify their parent or guardian of the documented concern of illness and/or fever.
- e. If a parent/guardian is dropping a student athlete off for practice, the parent/guardian should remain on campus in their vehicle until the student athlete has passed their daily screening.

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5. POSITIVE CASES AND COACHES, STAFF, OR STUDENT ATHLETE SHOWING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

a. What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The symptoms may range from mild to severe (see this [CDC Fact Sheet](#)).
- Symptoms may include:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea

b. What to do if you are ill?

- If you are ill or think you are infected with the COVID-19 virus, STAY AT HOME.
- It is essential that you take steps to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home or community.
- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.
- Notify the school immediately (principal, Athletic Director, school nurse, or coach).
- It will be determined if others who may have been exposed (students, coaches, staff) need to be notified, isolated, or monitored for symptoms.
- If a positive case of COVID-19 is diagnosed, contact tracing will be implemented with the aid of local health professionals, the CDC, and the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#).

c. What to do if a student or staff becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms during practice, an event, or during transportation to or from an event?

- Make every effort to isolate the ill individual from others, until the student or staff member can leave the school or event.
- The student athlete's parent/guardian will be contacted at once, and arrangements will be made for the student to be picked up.
- The ill individual or their parent/guardian will be asked to contact their physician or healthcare professional for direction.
- All affected facilities will need to be disinfected immediately.

d. Return of student or staff to athletics following a COVID-19 diagnosis?

- Student athletes or staff must provide written medical clearance from their medical doctor or Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP) before being allowed back to practice/conditioning.
- Return to athletics can begin once the individual is cleared by a medical doctor or CRNP and is determined to be non-contagious, fever free (without fever-reducing medicine), has vast improvement in respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), and experiences no vomiting or diarrhea.

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6. ACCLIMATIZATION PHASES

- a. **PHASE ONE:** The coaches should separate the team into groups of no more than 10 student athletes. These groups should remain consistent for the next two weeks. During this period, the students will be allowed to participate in non-contact workouts in their small groups. Conditioning practices should be broken into groups of 10, with a coach in charge of each group, emphasizing all social distancing practices.
- b. **PHASE TWO:** After 14 days of small groups (10 or less) and a community disease load that is not rising, the teams of 10 may be merged into groups of no more than 50 student athletes who can now practice together as a group. Maintain social distancing at all other times, such as in the locker rooms.
- c. **PHASE THREE:** After four weeks and if the disease load in the community is declining, teams may then combine to the total group for full practices and competition. Social distancing protocols should remain in place at all other times.

7. STUDENT ATHLETE RESPONSIBILITIES

Ave Maria Academy requires that its student athletes aid in following these guidelines to help support a safe and healthy environment for all. Failure to adhere to these guidelines provided by the athletic department could result in the student athlete's exclusion from participation in interscholastic athletics.

- a. **Always wear a protective mask during practices and competitions.**
- b. Practice social distancing.
- c. Mandatory yearly PIAA pre-participation physical examinations are required prior to participation in the Ave Maria Academy athletic program.
- d. During any offseason workouts, no athlete will be allowed to maintain a locker in any athletic facility.
- e. In season student athletes must maintain a clean and neat locker.
- f. Avoid touching your face as much as possible.
- g. Wash your clothes as often as possible – preferably daily.
- h. Do not leave any clothing in the athletic facility overnight.
- i. No sharing of towels or any other personal hygiene items.
- j. Wash hands as often as possible and use hand sanitizer when available.
- k. Bring a personal water bottle **with your name on it** to all practices and events. There will be no shareable water bottles available. Student athletes who report without a water bottle are not allowed to practice on that day.
- l. Help coaches and custodial staff in disinfecting all athletic equipment used during a workout.
- m. Take part in the daily health screenings outlined in this document.

8. COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Coaches will model the behavior they expect of student athletes.
- b. **Always wear a protective mask during practices and competitions.** If a member of a coaching staff has a pre-existing medical condition and cannot wear a mask, they will need a recent doctor's note. Coaches must maintain recommended social distancing guidelines.
- c. Practice social distancing.

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- d. Coaches will screen and monitor student athletes for symptoms prior to the start of all games and practices. This includes a daily temperature check. Results will be shared with the Athletic Director. This will be a daily occurrence until the CDC or state/federal government mandates that they are no longer necessary.
- e. Coaching staffs should create small groups of students to attend offseason workouts. These groups must be submitted to the Athletic Director in the event that contact tracing needs to be enacted.
- f. If a large team meeting is needed, the preferred method is to do it remotely via an electronic platform such as ZOOM.
- g. Coaches are responsible for monitoring the number of student athletes in the locker rooms and gymnasium during the season to ensure everyone is following social distancing guidelines. This may include limiting access to the building before or after events.
- h. Coaches should help in the cleaning of all athletic equipment before, during, and after athletic practices, events, and workouts.
- i. Coaches should wash and sanitize their hands regularly.

9. CUSTODIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Practice social distancing.
- b. Clean athletic facilities on a schedule developed in conjunction with the school administration or Athletic Director. Clean high touch areas as often as possible throughout the day. These areas include but are not limited to door handles, restrooms, locker rooms, concession stands, officials locker room, and water fountains.
- c. Post additional signage obtained by the school administration or Board for all restrooms and locker rooms on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., proper handwashing and hygiene practices).
- d. Ensure custodial coverage to thoroughly clean all athletic areas for events occurring on weekends.
- e. Provide additional hand sanitizer in locker rooms, public areas, and concession stands.
- f. Provide additional cleaning supplies for coaching staffs to sanitize equipment before, during, and after athletic practices, games, or workouts. Whenever possible, equipment and other personal items should be separated and not shared. Properly disinfect shared equipment between users.

10. COMPETITION AND TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

- a. The Coach should contact the opposing team's coach or Athletic Director prior to traveling to their facilities to obtain information about spectator limitations.
- b. Both schools must be willing to share information about potential cases and exposures and agree to hold all ill student athletes from participation no matter the circumstances.
- c. **All coaches, athletes and spectators must wear a protective mask while at the other schools' facilities.**
- d. Maintain social distancing.

11. ATHLETIC PRACTICE/EVENT ATTENDANCE

- a. The Board will continue to monitor and evaluate guidance provided as it relates to spectators attending school athletic events. As stated below, the following people are grouped into tiers, from essential to non-essential. This is to determine who will be allowed to attend an event when there are restrictions on event attendance from the Diocese, state or local governments.

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- **Tier 1 (Essential)** – Student athletes, coaches, officials, event staff, medical staff, security, administrators
 - **Tier 2 (Preferred)** – Media
 - **Tier 3 (Non-Essential)** – Spectators and boosters
- b. Only Tier 1 and Tier 2 personnel can attend events when the Diocese, state or local governments has restrictions on mass gatherings.
 - c. Seating areas, including bleachers, will adhere to social distancing requirements of at least 6 feet for spacing for anyone not in the same household when spectators are allowed. To help with this, areas will be properly and clearly marked.
 - d. **All spectators must wear masks.**
 - e. As always, caregivers or spectators are prohibited from entering the field of play, gym floor or bench areas.
 - f. Parents/guardians are strongly discouraged from attending athletic team practices.
 - g. Parents/guardians should arrive no more than 10 minutes prior to the scheduled end of the athletic event or practice for picking up their children.
 - h. Special considerations will be made if a student athlete suffers an injury or medical emergency during the athletic practice or event. These considerations will be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Athletic Director, and/or school nurse.

12. RESOURCES

- a. [Allegheny County Health Department \(ACHD\)](#)
- b. [Allegheny Health Network \(AHN\)](#)
- c. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- d. [Governor's Office](#)
- e. [National Athletic Trainers' Association \(NATA\)](#)
- f. [National Federation of State High School Associations \(NFHS\)](#)
- g. [PA Catholic Conference](#)
- h. [PA Department of Education](#)
- i. [PA Department of Health](#)
- j. [PIAA](#)
- k. [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- l. [UPMC](#)
- m. [WPIAL](#)