

Return to Competition: General Considerations for Officials



Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA)
National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)
Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)
Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH)
Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)

OFFICIALS

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These considerations are meant to cover officials in all sports while keeping in mind that protocols may be different in each sport and adjustments may need to be made.

OFFICIALS' GUIDELINES WHEN RETURNING TO OFFICIATE:

Officials are not responsible for monitoring activities on the sidelines, such as social distancing, hand washing, symptoms of illnesses and other such issues. This monitoring obligation remains with the coaching staff and school personnel.

CONTACT THE HOST SCHOOL:

- Contact should be made with school athletic administration leading up to the contest about (1) school expectations, (2) to determine where you should enter the host school's property and (3) to obtain other information that you or the school may want to communicate to each other prior to your arrival.
 - Officiating crews should designate one crew member to contact the host school and provide information to other members of the crew.
- Request separate and secured parking areas away from other participants.
- Request hand sanitizer be available at scorer's table, if applicable, and use it between periods and during time outs. (Officials are encouraged to bring their own in the event none is available.)
- Conversations should occur with the host school administration regarding the size of changing areas or locker rooms to ensure social distancing can occur.
- When possible officials should come to contests fully dressed in uniform.

GENERAL OFFICIAL GUIDELINES:

- Be prepared to have your temperature taken and a health screening conducted upon arrival at school campus.
- You may also be asked to sign a liability waiver by the school. While not a PIAA requirement, it may be a host site requirement. You should inquire the host school before arriving whether that requirement exists and, if so, request an opportunity to review the document in advance. If you are unwilling to sign it, you should decline the engagement. You should not wait until arriving on site to ask to see the waiver or to inform the school that you will not sign it.
- Upon conclusion of the contest, leave the contest area and do not interact with others.
- Officials must pay special attention to playing rules that require distances between players during play.

- Reminders should be issued for situations that involve hygiene (spitting, etc.).
- Maintain distance from players if an altercation occurs and minimize the times you are within 6 feet of others.
- Be aware of the location of medical personnel while you are on school property.
- Limit the exchanging of documents between yourself and others.
- Once the contest begins, avoid conversations within 6 feet with coaches.
- Wash your hands frequently. When in doubt about wearing a mask – put it on.
- Officials’ Uniforms and Equipment.
 - Electronic whistles are permissible.
 - Choose a whistle whose tone will carry outside.
 - Be aware of the increased risk of inadvertent whistles.
 - Face coverings by participants are permitted.
 - Gloves may be worn by contestants.
 - Bring your own towels and hygiene materials. Do not share them with others.
- Individuals are required to wear face coverings in accordance with the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s order on July 1st, 2020, unless they meet the exceptions under Section 3 of this order.
 - Officials are not required to wear face coverings while officiating a contest, but they are permitted. You should seriously consider wearing a face covering when officiating. Coverings must be worn when entering the host site and while inspecting the field/court prior to the contest unless social distancing can be maintained while doing so.
 - There are no color restrictions on face coverings; however face coverings must adhere to the Restriction on Advertisements or Sponsors Names on Uniforms policy, as adopted by the PIAA Board of Directors.

GAME DAY:

- Complete a personal health assessment on the day of your contest. If you feel sick – STAY HOME. Notify the contracted schools, your partner(s) and the assignor to let them know.
- Notify site administrator immediately if your temperature is 100.4 or above.
- “Vulnerable individuals” are defined by CDC as people 65 years and older and others with serious underlying health conditions. Officials fitting this description may wish to seek medical advice prior to returning to officiating.
- Communicate with school athletic administrator frequently during the days leading up to your contest about school expectations.
- Upon arrival at the host site and throughout the contest, wash and sanitize your hands frequently.
- When traveling to contests, considerations should be given to limiting carpooling or traveling with other individuals.
- Do not share uniforms, towels, apparel and equipment.
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times, including while in the locker room and/or on the court/field.
- Bring your own water bottle or rehydration beverages.
- Use a mask when communicating verbally within 6 feet of others.

- In an effort to maintain social distancing, officiating positions may need to be changed in a manner that are not necessarily in conformance with standard officiating mechanics.
- If an official is sent home or unable to officiate for any reason, follow the PIAA policy on “Absence or Withdrawal of Official at Contest”, in the Policies and Procedures section of the PIAA Handbook.

PREGAME CONFERENCE:

- Limit attendees to one official, the head coach from each team, and a single captain from each team, while maintaining social distance.
- Pre-contest official crew meetings should be held outside when possible and where social distancing is more easily accomplished.
- Coin Toss – should involve only the Head Referee (wearing a face covering) and 1 captain and head coach from each team.
- Move the location of the pregame conference to the center of the court/field. All individuals should maintain a social distance of 6 feet.
- No handshakes are permitted.
- Maintain social distancing while performing all pregame responsibilities.
- Encourage bench personnel to observe social distancing of 6 feet.
- Encourage social distancing of 6 feet between substitutes and teammate(s).

OFFICIALS’ TABLE:

- Limit the table to essential personnel, including the home team scorer and timer, with a recommended distance of 6 feet between individuals. Visiting team personnel (scorer, statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and may need to find an alternative location. Space availability at the table is a variable in determining the number of individuals permitted at the officials’ table.

PREGAME AND POSTGAME CEREMONY:

- No shaking hands during introductions.
- Traditional pre-game introductions should be altered to ensure social distancing occurs.
- No postgame shaking hands.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Training
 - Review current and past year rule and case books.
 - Attend online and in-person meetings to review the rules for the coming year.
 - Start physical training using online video or complete skills alone. If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you should be cleared by your medical provider prior to initiating an exercise program.
- Positive COVID-19 Test
 - You should notify the school(s) administration where you officiated and partners of those contests.

UNIFORM OF CONTESTANTS:

- Long sleeves are permissible.
- Long pants are permissible.
- Undergarments are permissible but must be of a similar length for the individual and a solid like color.