

Ready to Return. Reconnect. Learn.

# COVID-19 Guidance for Athletics



September 2021

Hawai'i State  
Department of Education



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Requirements for Student-Athletes, Athletic Staff and Volunteers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General Guidance for Athletics</b>	<b>5</b>
Assessing risk	5
Return to play following exposure to COVID-19	5
Return to play after testing positive for COVID-19	6
Travel for Athletics	6
<b>Core Essential Strategies to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19</b>	<b>8</b>
Promoting Vaccination	8
Stay Home when Sick	8
Masks	9
Hand Hygiene (Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette)	10
<b>Additional Mitigation Strategies to Maintain Healthy Operations and Environments</b>	<b>12</b>
‘Ohana Bubbles or Cohorting	12
Ventilation	12
Physical Distancing	12
HIDOE-Approved Modes of Transportation	12
Screening Testing	13
Cleaning and Disinfecting	13
<b>Additional Considerations for Athletics</b>	<b>14</b>
Visitors, Spectators, Fan Attendance	14
Records	14
Drop-off and Arrival Times at Athletic Facilities	14
Communications	14
<b>Resources</b>	<b>15</b>

## Introduction

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) is committed to supporting our students as they pursue their goals for their future through their interests and passion. To ensure safe athletic seasons for our student-athletes, we must do what we can to limit exposure to COVID-19 for those who represent their schools in athletic competition as well as those who support student-athletes. The season includes all activities associated with each sport – practice, workouts, competition and travel.

We believe it is in the best interest of the athlete and team to do what is possible to keep everyone healthy and safe. The HIDOE COVID-19 guidance for schools is intentionally layered, flexible, and aligned with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. Each school is different, and not every strategy outlined in this guidance can be practically implemented at every school. Therefore, multiple mitigation strategies are described. The HIDOE has identified some mitigation strategies as **core essential strategies**. Core essential strategies are so effective that in-person education requires these strategies be implemented in every situation.

### Core Essential Strategies

<b>WASH YOUR HANDS</b> 	<b>STAY HOME IF UNWELL</b> 	<b>WEAR A FACE MASK</b> 	<b>GET VACCINATED</b> 
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# Requirements for Student-Athletes, Athletic Staff and Volunteers

**Effective September 24, 2021**, all student-athletes and athletic staff and volunteers are required to provide proof of vaccination prior to participation in all school-sanctioned athletic activities. For the 2021-22 school year, student-athletes, athletic staff and volunteers participating in all school-sanctioned athletic activities shall be vaccinated by September 24, 2021.

**By August 20, 2021**, proof of full vaccination<sup>1</sup> or receipt of the first and/or second vaccination dose must be submitted to the school in order to initially qualify to participate in school-sanctioned athletic activities.

**By September 24, 2021**, proof of full vaccination must be submitted to the school. All individuals who are not fully vaccinated, subject to the exemptions described below, by this date will not be allowed to participate in any team activities. An individual may resume participation in team activities after proof of full vaccination is provided to the school.

Mask wearing will not be required for outdoor activities unless there is close and prolonged interaction between individuals. Wearing a mask during play (i.e. during vigorous physical activity) when outdoors is not required. Wearing a mask is required when not engaged in vigorous activity such as during transportation to the event, in the locker room, or while waiting to play.

If the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) determines a cluster of COVID-19 cases, teams will follow DOH directions to contain the spread of infection. According to DOH, a disease cluster refers to multiple cases of disease occurring at one time in one geographic location or among people with the same or similar shared exposure.

Vaccination cards will be collected by the school and a copy will be made to keep in the student's health record. Copies of vaccination cards shall be treated as confidential health information and protected as such.

Students and adults may seek exemption from COVID-19 vaccination requirements for religious or medical reasons, with proper documentation. For religious reasons, parents are asked to fill out and submit the request for a [religious exemption form](#). Medical exemptions shall be verified in writing by a licensed physician. Parents are asked to fill out and submit the request for a [medical exemption form](#). If an exemption is granted, the individual is allowed to participate in team activities but is required to take a COVID-19 test two times a week, with a minimum of 72 hours between tests. The results must be negative and submitted to the schools before further

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<sup>1</sup> Full vaccination is defined as two weeks after a second dose in a two-dose series, such as Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Oxford Uni-AstraZeneca, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine. If you do not meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are not fully vaccinated.

participation. To fulfill COVID-19 test requirement, an antigen or PCR test taken through a CLIA-certified laboratory or under an approved CLIA Certificate of Waiver will be accepted. Home-based COVID-19 test results will not be accepted. Individual schools are authorized to impose more stringent testing protocols, including but not limited to testing unvaccinated students and adults more than two times a week, including testing all students and adults regardless of vaccination status prior to the start of the season, and testing unvaccinated students and adults before games.

# General Guidance for Athletics

## Assessing risk

Athletics should consider the available data on levels of local transmission and the capacity to implement appropriate mitigation measures. Specifically, all activities should follow state and local ordinances, including mask wearing and limits on gathering sizes.

## Return to play following exposure to COVID-19

### Communication

**Staff and families should self-report to the school if they or their student-athletes have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive COVID-19 test, or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.**

[See Home Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for Schools.](#)

Close Contacts in Athletics: is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period. An infected person can spread SARS-COV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms.

### What to Do If You Are NOT Fully Vaccinated and Considered a Close Contact

1. Stay home for 10 days after your last contact\* with the person with COVID-19.
2. Get tested immediately for COVID-19, even if you don't have symptoms. You must remain at home in quarantine for 10 days, even if you test negative.
  - a. If your test is negative:
    - Get tested again 5-7 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
    - Immediately self-isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
    - Stay away from others in your home, especially those who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.
    - If you must be around others, wear a mask.
    - Watch for symptoms for 14 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
    - If you develop symptoms, immediately self-isolate and get tested.

\*If you have ongoing close contact with a person with COVID-19 because you live in the same house, you must stay home in quarantine for 10 days after the person with COVID-19 is released from isolation.

Students and staff can return to athletics when both of the following conditions are met:

- 10 days have passed since last close contact with the person with COVID-19
- No symptoms



### What to Do If You Are Fully Vaccinated and Considered a Close Contact

1. If you do not have symptoms, you do not need to be quarantined.
2. Get tested 3–5 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19, even if you don't have symptoms.
3. Watch for symptoms for 14 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19. If you develop symptoms, immediately self-isolate and get tested.

### **Return to play after testing positive for COVID-19**

All athletes who test positive for COVID-19, require a minimum 10-day isolation period from the onset of symptoms or the date of positive test, whichever happens last. The athlete must also be fever-free for 24 hours and **asymptomatic** before returning to athletic team activities.

Athletes who have recovered from COVID-19 must be cleared to return to sports by their physician and undergo further evaluation if they sustained any cardiac symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, palpitations or syncope. (see references below)

A positive cardiac screen or other concerning findings should prompt an electrocardiogram (ECG) and potential referral to a pediatric cardiologist for clearance.

Those with severe COVID-19 symptoms (ICU stay and/or intubation) or multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), should be restricted from exercise for a duration of three to six months. These athletes must be cleared to resume participation by their primary care physician and obtain a cardiology clearance.

For all athletes, a graduated return-to-play protocol over the course of a seven-day minimum is required. Consideration for extending the progression should be given to athletes who experienced more severe COVID-19 symptoms as outlined below.

- Review and follow the latest American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports](#)
- See [Graduated Return to Play Guidance Following COVID-19 Infection](#), British Journal of Sports Medicine, Oct. 2020, Vol. 54, No. 19.
- [Cardiopulmonary Considerations for High School Athletes During COVID-19 Pandemic NFHS-ACSSM Guidance Statement](#), Sports Health Journal, July 9, 2020, Vol. 12 issue 5, [pages](#) 459-461.
- [Return to play medical referral form for COVID-19.](#)

### **Travel for Athletics**

Teams will follow the school transportation guidelines for ground transportation. When flying interisland, the school must consider all routines of travel including overnight stays, possible quarantine or isolation at destination if exposed to COVID-19, and adult supervision at all times. Any individual who is not fully vaccinated must receive approval from the school principal and

Complex Area Superintendent to travel. Protocols must be put in place to ensure the individual is healthy and safe to travel with the team, and can meet the learning expectations, if not able to participate in school instruction **in the event they must quarantine or isolate at travel destination**. At this time, no out-of-state travel will be approved if anyone on the team or adults in the traveling group are not fully vaccinated.



# Core Essential Strategies to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

## Promoting Vaccination

People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. Evidence shows that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 also are less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated.

- COVID-19 vaccination is the most important core essential strategy.
- Everyone who is eligible should get fully vaccinated for COVID-19.
- All teachers, staff, and families, including extended family members who have frequent contact with students, should get vaccinated as soon as possible.
- People who are fully vaccinated do *not* need to quarantine if they are exposed to COVID-19 and are asymptomatic, which increases in-person education.
- See the [State of Hawai'i COVID-19 Portal](#) for vaccine information, including where to get vaccinated.
- Schools can help increase vaccine uptake among students, families, and staff by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, promoting vaccination, and establishing supportive policies and practices that make it easy and convenient for eligible students, staff, and others to get vaccinated.
- Students or adults who need exemptions for religious or medical reasons must show a negative test result taken within the last 48 hours, twice a week, between four days. For religious reasons, parents will use the request for a [religious exemption form](#). Medical exemptions shall be verified by a licensed physician.

## Stay Home when Sick

Staying home when sick is a core essential strategy to keep COVID-19 infection from spreading in schools and to protect others. All HIDOE staff, contracted service providers, visitors and students should complete a wellness check each morning before going to school or the office. If the answer is “yes” to any of the questions below, stay home and follow the [Return to School/Work Criteria](#) before returning to campus or participating in athletics. Please report any illness or COVID-19 exposure to the school.

### STEP 1: Check for Symptoms of Illness

Do you or your child have any of these symptoms? If yes, **do not go to school.**

- Fever (higher than 100°F or hot to the touch)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness, weakness)
- Muscle or body aches

- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Students and staff who have symptoms of any infectious illness or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should **not** attend school and should get [tested](#) as it will help with rapid contact tracing and prevent spread in schools. Encourage staff and students to monitor themselves for signs of infectious illness including COVID-19 **every day**. A [printable Wellness Check visual](#) has been created for awareness to help keep our schools safe.

Universal symptom screening is not required upon arrival at school or practice but symptom screening can be conducted for anyone who is showing signs of illness at school. Screening must be performed in a safe and respectful manner. Any designated adult can perform the screening.

If any symptoms are present, the person (staff member or student athlete) should be sent home immediately. If it is a student athlete, their parent or legal guardian will be contacted. The student athlete will be picked up or will be sent home if they drove themselves to school. If someone who is ill needs to wait for pick-up, he/she will be isolated in a supervised area away from those who are well. Be sure the school has updated contact information in the event that your student athlete needs to be sent home.

### **STEP 2: Check for Recent COVID-19 Exposure**

Do any of the following apply? If yes, **do not go to school**.

- Are sick or recently tested positive for COVID-19.
- Are **not fully vaccinated** and have had recent **close contact** with a person with COVID-19.
  - Close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period. An infected person can spread SARS-COV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms.

### **Masks**

Correct and consistent mask use is a core essential strategy to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 in schools and the community. When people wear a mask correctly and consistently, they protect others as well as themselves.

- Indoor settings

- Masks must always be worn correctly and consistently by all students and staff when indoors.
- The only exception is for eating and drinking.
- Outdoor settings
  - Everyone will be required to wear a face mask on a HIDEOE school campus when outdoors. When not wearing a face mask, other mitigation strategies should be implemented to the greatest extent possible due to the increased risk for transmission of infection.
  - The only exceptions are:**
    - When eating/drinking
    - During vigorous physical activity (such as during physical education class and athletics).
- Suitable cloth masks should have two layers of cloth and should fit snugly, covering both mouth and nose.
- Teach and reinforce the correct and consistent use of masks by students and staff.
- All students should learn about proper mask wearing.
- Students and staff should be frequently reminded not to touch their mask and to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.

## **Hand Hygiene (Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette)**

Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) is a core essential strategy to keep from getting and spreading respiratory illnesses including COVID-19.

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
  - Hand sanitizers should be stored up, away, and out of sight of young children and should be used only with adult supervision for children less than 6 years of age.
- Provide frequent reminders to wash hands and assist young children with handwashing.
- Players, staff, coaches, officials and all participants should wash or sanitize hands:
  - Before and after practice and games.
  - During games and practices with shared equipment or facilities, especially when balls or equipment are touched by more than one person
  - Have hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or other sanitizing materials readily available at entrances, exits, benches, dugouts and any other area prone to gathering or high traffic.
- Monitor to ensure adherence among students and staff.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth and mask.
- Encourage staff and students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
  - Throw used tissues in the trash and wash hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

### Adequate Hygiene Supplies

- Support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including masks, soap and water, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and no-touch or foot pedal trash cans.

### Signs and Messages

- Post signs that promote everyday protective measures in highly visible locations.
- Use simple, clear, and effective language about behaviors that prevent COVID-19 spread when communicating with staff and families.
- Translate materials into common languages spoken by students, faculty and staff in the school community.
- Consider using the following resources:
  - [DOH Guidance for schools](#)
  - [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
  - [CDC Wash your Hands!](#)
  - [COVID-19 Protective Hand-washing](#)

# **Additional Mitigation Strategies to Maintain Healthy Operations and Environments**

The following strategies should be applied in combination to the greatest extent possible.

## **‘Ohana Bubbles or Cohorting**

‘Ohana bubbles or cohorting means keeping students and staff together in a small group and having each group stay together. ‘Ohana bubbles or cohorting can be used to limit the number of students and staff who interact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing. This is a strategy schools may use to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

## **Ventilation**

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of SARS-CoV-2 virus particles in the air. Bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside.

- Prioritize outdoor as opposed to indoor practice and play.
- Ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly.
- Circulate air from outside to inside as much as possible.

## **Physical Distancing**

Schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible.

- Physical Guides: Use signage to promote preventative measures (i.e. mask use, physical distancing spacing).
- Communal Spaces: Discourage use of confined shared spaces as much as possible (i.e. locker rooms).
- Food/Meals: Layer mitigation strategies during eating and drinking, such as cohorting, assigning seats, or having students and staff sit facing the same direction.

## **HIDOE-Approved Modes of Transportation**

- The CDC issued an order on January 29, 2021, requiring the wearing of masks by people on public transportation conveyances, including school buses, to prevent spread of COVID-19.
- Drivers and passengers must wear a mask on HIDOE-approved modes of transportation.
- Have spare masks available to ensure all students wear masks on HIDOE-approved modes of transportation.
- No eating or drinking.
- Keep vehicle windows open when it does not create a safety or health hazard.

- More open windows are better; opening a few windows even a few inches is better than keeping all windows closed when possible.
- Sanitize hands before students get on the HIDOE-approved modes of transportation, when possible.
- Have household members sit together, when possible.
- Load HIDOE-approved modes of transportation back to front, and unload front to back to limit students standing in the aisles next to those seated, as practical.
- Create physical distance between students on HIDOE-approved modes of transportation, when possible.
- Assign seats in order to facilitate cohorting.
  - Assigned seating will assist in identifying close contacts if there is a person with COVID-19 infection.
  - Only unvaccinated persons identified as close contacts (within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 infection for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) will be required to quarantine.

## Screening Testing

Screening testing identifies people infected with COVID-19, including those without symptoms or before symptoms develop, early to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. A positive screening test should be **followed-up with a diagnostic. If there is no confirmatory test, actions will be based on the positive screening test.** If clusters of persons infected with COVID-19 are identified through screening testing, DOH will provide support to schools.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and disinfection are part of a broad approach to prevent infectious diseases, including COVID-19, in schools.

- In most situations, the risk of infection from touching surfaces is low.
- Cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential viruses that may be on playing surfaces.
- Prioritize high-touch surfaces for more frequent cleaning.
- The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer.
- If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in a space within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space.
- Use a disinfectant product from the [Environmental Protection Agency's List N](#) that is effective against COVID-19.
- All players should bring their own water bottles and are responsible for cleaning them on a daily basis.
- Discourage sharing of items, when possible. Encourage athletes to use their own equipment when possible.

## **Additional Considerations for Athletics**

### **Visitors, Spectators, Fan Attendance**

While community sports complexes are utilized primarily for sports competition or recreation, school facilities are used for multi-purposes aligned with the instructional program and school operations. It is difficult to determine universal guidance for all venues for sports activities.

Entrance into sporting events sponsored by the Department schools will be determined by the venue capacity, and the ability to apply the core essential strategies and layering of mitigation strategies safely. In addition, adherence to the current DOH and local county guidance is expected. Therefore, the number of spectators and seating will be determined by the host school. All visitors/spectators shall wear appropriate face masks following state, HIDOE and county guidelines.

### **Records**

Have everyone sign in and keep a roster of everyone present to assist with contact tracing in the event of a possible COVID-19 exposure.

### **Drop-off and Arrival Times at Athletic Facilities**

When possible, stagger arrival and drop off times between sports that share facilities, to minimize overcrowding and close contact.

### **Communications**

Staff and families should self-report to the school if they or their students have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive COVID-19 test, or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Notify staff, families and the public of school closures and any restrictions to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).



## Resources

- [HIDOE COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2021-22](#)
- [DOH COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfecting your facility](#)
- [Home Isolation and Quarantine Guidance](#)