



VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VHSL announces mitigation guidelines for return to participation

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – On Thursday, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam signed the fourth amended Executive Order 67 which includes changes to Section 12 related to recreational sports. These changes allow the VHSL Championship + 1 schedule to begin playing in December as scheduled. The VHSL has released its “Guidelines for Return to Participation” for school divisions. This document will provide guidance for our schools to ensure a safe reopening of sports and activities.

“Keeping our student athletes safe is critical during this pandemic,” said Governor Ralph Northam. “I know I join many parents in looking forward to the safe return of school sports. VHSL has been a tremendous partner throughout the COVID crisis, and I appreciate the thoughtfulness and diligence they have put in development of these guidelines for returning to play.”

“This amendment by the Governor clears the way for all of our sports to play,” said VHSL Executive Director Dr. John W. “Billy” Haun. “We appreciate the time, effort, and input staff received while preparing this document. Adherence to these guidelines will offer a safe reopening for our students, coaches, staff, officials, and communities once we start playing in December. Additionally, we appreciate the close collaboration and guidance from the Governor’s office, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).”

The amended Executive Order did not change the number of attendees permitted at a sporting event, which cannot exceed the lesser of 50% of the occupancy load or 250 persons. For sports played on a field, attendees are limited to 250 person per field.

The modifications outlined in “Guidelines for Return to Participation” are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment. Recommendations include cleaning and disinfecting; mask protocols; transportation; and how to run activities safely for individual sports and activities.

Teams conducting out-of-season workouts will continue to abide by Phase 3 Guidelines as established by the VHSL and the Virginia Department of Health, regardless of established adjustments allowed for in-season teams to conduct regular season and postseason events.

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In preparing this document, VHSL staff received input from VHSL and NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committees (SMAC), the NCAA, the Virginia Department of Health, USA Football, USA Field Hockey, US Lacrosse, USA Wrestling, the National Wrestling Coaches Association, VHSL school administrators, and VHSL coaches advisory committees.

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