

CLIENT NEWS BRIEF

A Return to Sports? California Interscholastic Federation Issues Guidelines for Return to Physical Activity and Training

Among the many questions school districts are struggling with as they prepare for the fall semester, is whether, and to what extent, athletics and other extracurricular activities may resume. The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), the organization that governs high school sports in California, has partially answered that question by issuing its initial "[CIF Guidelines for Return to Physical Activity/Training](#)" ("[Guidance](#)"). CIF also announced the decision about whether competition will move forward in the fall will be made by July 20, 2020. If fall competition cannot begin, given ongoing public health and safety concerns, alternative schedules will be offered. In the meantime, if districts decide to utilize the pre-participation physical examination waiver discussed below, they can plan to agendaize this item for their next board meeting in order to be prepared for the start of school.

Initially, the Guidance encourages school districts to follow their local County guidelines with regard to permissible and impermissible activities and notes the Guidance should be altered in accordance with these guidelines, for example where there are differing limits on group sizes or where there is limited testing available or lack of resources for contact tracing.

Pre-Participation Physical Examination Waiver

Recognizing that obtaining pre-participation physical examinations may be difficult, the Guidance authorizes school district governing boards to waive the requirement that students obtain a physical examination prior to participation for CIF Fall 2020 sports for a maximum of thirty (30) calendar days from a school's first day of practice in that sport. (See CIF Bylaw 503.G). Where a board approves such waivers, students may request a waiver in the following circumstances:

1. Student submits documentation related to prior year examination as follows:
 - o Student has a pre-participation examination on file from 2019-20 school year; or
 - o Student's parent/legal guardian submits a copy of pre-participation physical examination to the District from 2019-2020; or
 - o Student's parent/legal guardian submits a copy of the student's well-check examination (incoming 9th graders only).
2. Student submits a 503.G Waiver and Release of Liability Form signed by the student and parent/guardian.
3. Student submits a health screening form signed by the parent/legal guardian.

Districts will need to decide whether to allow the pre-participation physical examination waiver and, if so, how it will collect and track the required

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As the information contained herein is necessarily general, its application to a particular set of facts and circumstances may vary. For this reason, this News Brief does not constitute legal advice. We recommend that you consult with your counsel prior to acting on the information contained herein.

information. Sample documents will be posted on the CIF website but are not yet posted as of the date of this publication. (See <https://cifstate.org/>).

Practice/Training Considerations

Health Screenings

The Guidance also suggests that pre-screening be conducted of all coaches and students on a daily basis, prior to participation in the athletic event. Where any person has positive symptoms, they are directed not to participate, to self-isolate, and to contact their healthcare provider. The Guidance provides that “written medical clearance will be required to return to the activity.”

Face Coverings

The Guidance provides that State, local or school district guidelines for cloth face coverings should be strictly followed. In the absence of guidelines to the contrary, CIF recommends that cloth face coverings be worn by students during athletics, with the exception of swimming, distance running or other high intensity aerobic activity. However, plastic shields covering the entire face will not be allowed during participation due to the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or others. Further, the Guidance recommends that coaches, officials and other contest personnel wear cloth face coverings at all times and especially when physical distancing is not possible. It suggests artificial noisemakers such as an air horn, electronic whistle, or a timer system with an alarm be used to signal in place of a traditional whistle.

Facilities, Athletic Equipment, & Hygiene Measures

The Guidance provides additional recommendations regarding the cleaning, sanitizing and sharing of equipment and facilities. It also recommends that athletes and coaches practice good hygiene and physical distancing procedures, including avoiding physical contact, and that entrance/exit strategies be developed to limit groups from gathering and to avoid crossover and contact.

Activities Limitation

The Guidance also identifies the activities allowed for specific sports, unless local guidelines permit additional activities. For example, for football, only conditioning and individual drills are authorized. Players should not participate in drills with a single ball that may be handed off or passed to other teammates. Contact with other players is not allowed and there is no sharing of equipment or use of protective equipment.

Financial Hardship Waiver for Transfer Students

Finally, recognizing the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis on many families, CIF may waive eligibility restrictions (CIF Bylaw 207) for students that transfer to a new school during the first semester of the 2020-21 school year. Such restrictions may be waived if there is a demonstrated and verifiable hardship condition due to financial difficulties. This will require submission of evidence of an unforeseeable, unavoidable and uncorrectable act, condition, or event resulting from the COVID-19 crisis that necessitated the student’s transfer, along with specific additional documentary evidence. While this waiver is currently only in effect for the fall semester, CIF stated that it may extend the application period.

If you have any questions regarding CIF’s guidance, or student health and safety laws, please contact the author of this Client News Brief or an attorney at one of our [eight offices](#) located statewide. You can also subscribe to our [podcast](#), follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) or download our [mobile app](#).

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