2021 SOCCER COVID GUIDANCE

This document should be considered as providing recommendations from the IGHSAU for member schools and may be updated before and during the spring 2021 season. Recommendations are from IGHSAU for its member schools and should not supersede guidelines, mandates, requirements, and/or orders put into place by the Iowa Governor’s Office, Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Department of Education, Federal/local/county government entities, Federal/local/county health department or local school districts.

Local rules are at the discretion of the host school and should be clearly communicated to all participants in advance of competition.

PARTICIPATION LEVELS
This guidance is intended for high school varsity, sub-varsity and junior high school activities as overseen by the IGHSAU.

SUPERVISION
It is the responsibility of the home team to provide proper administrative supervision (not the coach) at matches to assure compliance with the guidelines set forth by the Governor’s office, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

POSSIBLE/POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES
The Iowa Department of Public Health has developed guidance for county health departments and schools regarding protocols when a student and/or student-athlete reports COVID-19 symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test result or contact with a person with a positive COVID-19 test result.

Each school should identify a point of contact for athletes, coaches, and other personnel to report to when he/she experiences COVID-19 symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test result or contact with a person with a positive COVID-19 test result. This identified person will be responsible to report such situations to local public health. Each school should develop a communication plan to notify relevant persons (players, coaches, spectators) when contact-tracing indicates the need to.

HEALTH SCREENING
Schools should implement health screening for practices and matches similar to methods used during summer, fall, and winter seasons. Self-screening and reporting to the school representative (AD/Coach/Trainer, etc.) is permissible.

SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDANCE TO CONSIDER
- Players should make every effort to maintain a 6-foot or larger distance from all other teams at all times, except when actively competing.
- No hugging, shaking hands, high fives, or fist bumps for support/encouragement. It is recommended that all coaches and participants wear masks except during competition.

HAND SANITIZING
Student-athletes should be encouraged to frequently sanitize their hands before, during and after practice and competition. Non-touch hand sanitizers may be used. Student-athletes should have their own personal hand sanitizer. Individuals should especially sanitize before touching “common” equipment or other items.

NUMBER OF COMPETING TEAMS
The IGHSAU encourages member schools to schedule competitions in a fashion that allows for social distancing. Example: scheduling duals or triangulars rather than larger multi-team tournaments.
Multi-team tournaments are allowed if the host school follows all local and county health guidelines and are able to provide for an environment in accordance with IGHSAU guidelines.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COACHES
- Cloth face coverings are permitted and encouraged to be worn during practices and contests.
- Communicate your guidelines in a clear manner to students and parents.
- Consider conducting workouts in “pods” of same students always training and rotating together in practice to ensure more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- Keep accurate records of those athletes and staff who attend each practice in case contact tracing is needed.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all practices and contests.
- No hugging, shaking hands, high fives, or fist bumps for support/encouragement.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES
- Cloth face coverings are permitted and encouraged when not actively participating in competition.
- Consider making each student responsible for their own supplies.
- Athletes should bring their own labeled water bottle.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout immediately upon returning home.
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful at all practices and contests.
- Athletes should tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well.
- No hugging, shaking hands, high fives, or fist bumps for support/encouragement.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECTATORS
- Spectators are allowed at contests and should maintain ample distance from all players.
- Masks are recommended for all spectators.
- Spectators should be given guidance to practice social distancing and maintain at least six (6) feet apart from each other unless they are from the same household. If spectators fail to comply with host school they may be asked to leave.
- Schools should implement spectator protocols by following CDC and local department of health guidelines regarding size of gatherings and social distancing.
- Frequent reminders should be made via public address.

CONSIDERATION FOR ADMINISTRATION
- Facility Sanitization – Consideration should be given to which facilities are going to need sanitization, how often will sanitization be needed, who will be doing the sanitizing
- Concession stands may be opened provided they have been inspected and licensed.
- Limit the outside food brought in by teams/spectators.
- Admission may be taken using sanitization practices or a free-will donation container may be used.
- Administration should consider the number of teams participating in the contest and the levels participating in the contest.
- Post-season – Potential options may be considered regarding the state qualifying matches and the state tournament depending upon the status of Covid-19. Further communication will occur as the season progresses.

PRE-MATCH CONFERENCE
- Pre-match conferences should be limited to the head referee or center referee, one head coach from each team and on captain from each team.
• Conferences should be held mid-field (somewhere between the touch line and center circle) away from other players and coaches.
• Attendees for pre-match conference must maintain a social distance of 3 to 6 feet.
• Face coverings are strongly encouraged to be worn by all pre-match conference attendees.
• No handshakes after the meeting.

TEAM BENCH AREA
• It is permissible to extend the team box area an additional 15 yards towards the goalbox to enhance social distancing in this area, however, the area should not be moved any closer to the touchline. The front of the team box area is to remain 10 feet from the touch line.
• It is permissible to place teams on opposite sides of the field to enhance social distancing. It would be permissible to extend the team box area as well.

EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES
• Avoid touching or handling any supplies or equipment that are not your own.
• Any equipment that is shared by student-athletes should be sanitized before and after practice as well as before and after competition.
• Individuals should not share towels. Each individual should bring or be issued her own clean towel at the beginning of practice or competition. Towels should be laundered after each practice and match.
• Cloth face coverings and neck gaiters/buffs are permissible for athletes to wear during play.
• Gloves are permissible to be worn.
• Sanitize cones after each use.
• Recommend assigning bibs or pennies to a specific player to avoid the equipment being worn by multiple players.
• Sanitize soccer balls before and after each match.
• Have multiple game balls available, so if touched by spectators or other non-essential personnel, a new match ball can be used and the old one sanitized.
• Ball chasers are permitted. Review soccer ball sanitation practices with them and ensure they have the proper sanitization supplies available for use before, during and after the match.

LOCKER ROOMS
• Locker rooms may be used and should be sanitized every day and after use by each and every group. Schools should coordinate with their maintenance departments regarding sanitizing.
• All school-issued and personal clothing, equipment and other items should be taken home following practices and/or contests. Locker rooms should not be used as a storage area for clothing and/or equipment.
• Players, coaches and others using locker rooms should maintain 6 feet of social distancing. This may require a rotating schedule for use of locker rooms to avoid congestion. A record of individuals in each rotation should be kept to facilitate contact-tracing if necessary.
• Players, coaches and others using locker rooms are strongly encouraged to wear masks while in the locker room.

TRAINING ROOMS
• Masks are recommended for all individuals utilizing the training room.
• Host site athletic training room should not be available for visiting team pre-match and post-match treatments.
• If a team travels without an athletic trainer, all pre-match taping, bracing, etc., should be completed before departure to the match. Host site athletic trainer should be contacted prior to the trip to plan for any requested accommodations.

PRESS BOX
Individuals in the press box should practice 6 feet social distancing and are recommended to wear masks. This area should be limited to:

- Essential personnel – scoreboard operator, scorer, announcer
- Media (as per guidelines below)

RESTROOMS
- Host schools should take all necessary precautions, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of restrooms at their facility.

WEATHER DELAY
- All delays are going to be heavily dependent on the number of teams, nature of delay and facilities.
- Weather permitting, it may be better to have teams wait in their team bus/vehicles rather than in a confined area.
- Plan to have disposable masks on hand should a need arise to congregate in large numbers in a shelter.
- The timing of delays and restarts may be increased to allow more time for players to return to the contest from safe places (i.e. team bus/vehicle).

POST-MATCH PROTOCOL
- Any award presentation should be brief and social distancing should be maintained.
- All players/teams/spectators should leave the premises once competition/awards are complete.

Contact Lisa Brinkmeyer with questions at Lisa@ighsau.org or 515-401-1835.

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