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## IHSA COVID Competitive Cheer Guidelines 2020-21

This document is intended to provide guidance for schools conducting competitive practices, hosting competitions live or virtual asynchronous and synchronous during the 2020-2021 IHSA competitive Cheerleading season. The guidelines explained in this document are intended to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets and potential for illness through safe practices such as social distancing, proper hygiene, and appropriate protective equipment. This is not an exhaustive list, and school officials may take additional measures based on requirements set forth by their school district and/or local health officials. Please understand that even with this guidance, there is still risk of transmitting illness at events such as cheer practices and competitions. Additionally, with the changing nature of the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, these guidelines may change.

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/sports-safety-guidance>

### Modified Season:

- On January 28, 2021, the IHSA Board of Directors modified the IHSA Competitive Cheer season along with all other sport seasons in response to the circumstances surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The modified IHSA Competitive Cheer season is as follows:
  - **Season: Starting immediately, competitive cheer tryouts and practice may begin**
  - **First Contest: May be held 7 days from the start of a team's first practice**
  - **Competitive Cheer Entries: Entries are Open from 1/28/21 - 2/5/21**
    - **Note: Schools will be invoiced a \$100. entry fee**
  - **Withdrawal without \$ penalty: 2/12/21**
  - **List of Participants Due to IHSA: 2/12/21-3/1/21**
  - **Virtual Sectionals: 3/6/21 – \*Video upload 3/4/21**
  - **Virtual State: 3/13/21 – \*Video upload 3/11/21**
    - **\*Specific direction and details regarding competition video upload will be sent to entered teams before 3/1/21**
  - **End of Season: 3/13/21**
- Currently, the State Series events are **Virtual** to ensure that the events can be conducted safely and in accordance with the Governor's Restore Illinois Guidelines.
- The competitive cheerleading menu page on IHSA.org will feature additional specific post season contest information if applicable. Additionally, addendums to the terms and conditions will be posted on that site as well.
- Currently, per IDPH guidelines, competition is limited to the allowances provided by IDPH mitigations. <https://www.ihsa.org/Resources/COVID-19>



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COVID-19 Health Regions:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:37ae0de3-609b-4853-8622-b3b9c6d41781>

- Competitive Cheer Teams still must follow IHSA By-law 5.342 Contest Limitations [https://www.ihsa.org/documents/forms/current/IHSA\\_Section5.pdf](https://www.ihsa.org/documents/forms/current/IHSA_Section5.pdf) and are limited to participating in no more than **six (6) contest dates** (both virtual and in-person count toward the six) exclusive of the State Series.

### **For IHSA Competitive Cheer Low Risk Classification, the following Sideline Spirit Mitigations must be followed for Sideline and Competitive Cheer:**

**Competitive Cheer - Minimize contact between participants by maintaining at least 6 feet of distancing on the floor during routines, including when changing formations, and by prohibiting lifts, stunts, pyramids, and tosses as well as shared equipment (e.g., signs, flags, poms)**

<http://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/All%20Sports%20Policy%20-%20Updated%20Jan.%2021%2C%202021.pdf>

To comply with the IDPH Mitigation plan for Cheer to be Low Risk, the current IHSA scoresheet can be used omitting Pyramids/Tosses and Partner Stunts. Those areas will automatically receive 10 points so the tech scoresheets proportions are not disrupted.

<https://www.ihsa.org/documents/chc/Scoresheet.pdf>

Routines will consist of the typical 3-minute performance time with 2-minutes allowed for music.

There will be no penalties for masks or social distancing. Like uniforms, face coverings must be school approved. Under the current IDPH mitigations, social distancing of 6-feet and face coverings for student-athletes must be adhered to at all times. The intent of this statement (There will be no penalties for masks or social distancing. Like uniforms, face coverings must be school approved.) is for the unintended situation where an athlete might bump into another athlete or a face covering slips below the nose/off the mouth during the performance. Choreography should ensure social distancing can be met throughout the performance.

Additionally, schools can also conduct a Game Day division that would include a band chant, situational sideline, crowd leading cheer and fight song – following Varsity/UCA guidelines <https://www.varsity.com/uca/school/competitions/game-day/> – excluding: participant contact-stunts) for invitational contests. **Please NOTE: Philosophy of Game Day - Game Day is intended for schools that currently do not compete but will have a modified sideline SPIRIT season due to COVID-19.**

Game Day Information Contact: [JGraham@varsity.com](mailto:JGraham@varsity.com) – 806-290-1849



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## Requirements and Considerations

### In-Person (Live Event) If allowed by local COVID-19 regions

#### General Guidelines

- All guidelines of IHSA Return to Play Phase 4 must be followed.
- Local school districts COVID-19 policies and procedures may be followed.
- Competition Capacity – A cheerleading team, coaches, judges, competition personnel, athletic trainer(s), and contest managers, are allowed to be combined inside of a given area (i.e. gymnasiums, field houses, all-purpose rooms).
- Spectators - If competition hosts allow spectators, they must always wear masks and maintain 6-feet social distancing throughout the entire event as outlined above and in the IHSA Return to Play Phase 4 Guidelines and IDPH guidance and are limited as part of the allowed 50 individuals throughout the entire event as outlined above and in the IHSA Return to Play Phase 4 Guidelines and IDPH guidance. NOTE: Some sites may not permit spectators.
- Social distancing between individuals of at least 6 feet must always be maintained. Handshakes, hugs, fist bumps, etc. are prohibited.
- Small events are most effective in maintaining fewer competitors, school personnel, officials, and spectators. Smaller invitational events make it easier to space out competitors to ensure for appropriate social distancing. Small contests must adhere to the event capacity guidelines outlined in IHSA Return to Play Phase 4, IDPH as well as those outlined in this document.
- Hosts can have multiple waves at an invitational provided the waves are completely spaced out so that they do not intermingle or wait in common areas.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and meet equipment.
- Have sanitation materials (disinfecting wipes, sprays, hand sanitizer, etc.) in prime locations for attendees.

#### General Practice Requirements and Considerations for Coaches:

- Coaches must wear face coverings at all practices and competitions.
- Always require use of facial coverings on students.
- Communicate practice and all competition guidelines and COVID-19 safety protocols in a clear manner to student participants and their parents.



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- For live practices, consider conducting workouts in “pods” of same students who are always training and rotating together. This will 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.
- Always have a plan to maintain social distancing amongst the team and coaching staff.
- Educate student athletes on proper hygiene techniques: hand washing and sanitation.
- Following IDPH guidance, coaches can spot tumbling.
- If possible, electronic, or virtual team meetings are encouraged.

### **Requirements and Considerations for Host Managers:**

#### **Prior to the Event**

- Host can use Tourney wire – an online scoring platform:  
<https://www.tourneywire.com/cheer-index.php>
- Email all event information in advance to participating schools or host virtual coaches’ meetings to disseminate contest information in lieu of traditional in-person coaches’ meeting.
  - Electronic or virtual meetings are encouraged if possible.
  - If live meetings occur, utilize methods to keep coaches socially distanced during live coaches’ meetings. Eliminate or minimize the use of handouts/paper.
  - Face coverings for all contest personnel, contest officials and coaches are required at live coaches’ meetings.
  - If a live meeting is being conducted, coaches/directors must still have the option to attend virtually if they are not comfortable meeting in person.

#### **Arrival/Warm-Up**

- Establish firm arrival times for participants. Participants who arrive early must stay in their vehicle until the appointed time. Hosts may designate a home room waiting area for participants, so student athletes do not have to wait on the bus longer than necessary and are not congregating in the open areas.
- Warm-up Spaces - For invitationals, auxiliary spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, field houses, all-purpose rooms, etc.) can be used as holding areas for student participants, meet personnel, spectators, etc. as long as all auxiliary spaces allow for social distancing and are kept at 50 people or less.



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## Competition

- Competition Rotation - Once one group of student-athletes, coaches, competition personnel, spectators, and media for a combined total of 50 people completely vacate a space, once sanitized, a new group of 50 can occupy that area. Time schedules should be spaced to reflect the necessary time to take the appropriate COVID-19 sanitation procedures in these areas.
- Awards - Live awards ceremonies should not be conducted. Consider using an online platform for leader boards, results, and awards announcements.
- Streaming – Competitions can be streamed. Schools may use their preferred streaming service. It is the responsibility of the host and the competing schools to secure all appropriate copyrights necessary for streaming and performing. The Association is not responsible for copyright. For additional information on streaming contact the NFHS Network - <https://www.nfhsnetwork.com/> - [customersupport@nfhsnetwork.com](mailto:customersupport@nfhsnetwork.com) or [mkoski@nfhsnetwork.com](mailto:mkoski@nfhsnetwork.com)

## Requirements and Considerations for Coaches at Events:

- Coaches are responsible for educating all attendees and ensuring social distancing is maintained between student athletes. This means additional spacing between student athletes while competing, coaching, or changing locations so that student athletes remain spaced out, and no congregating of student athletes occur. Always have a plan to maintain social distancing amongst the team and coaching staff.
- Require student athletes to arrive at the competition venue already in competitive attire.

## Requirements and Consideration for Officials:

- Communicate the format and protocols in the officials' contracts.
- Adjustments to the number of cheer officials may be made due to the size of the competition and the COVID-19 mitigation protocols (i.e.: Number of tech. officials due to no stunting, tosses, pyramids).
- Face coverings are always required.
- Officials should be spaced 6-feet apart.
- Officials should bring personal items such as ink pens, tissue, hand sanitizer, etc. and wash hands frequently. Refrain from shaking hands.
- Do not share equipment.
- Follow social distancing guidelines.



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- Communication with coaches, participants, invitational managers, or other judges must be done at the appropriate social distance.

#### **Transportation:**

- Follow ISBE Guidelines. For transportation to events, schools must consider social distancing requirements. Social distancing (as required by state or local health department) will need to be maintained on all transportation. If a team must return to the bus, there needs to be distancing for possible prolonged periods. Masks must always be worn while on the bus.

#### **Eating and Drinking:**

- Ask student athletes to bring their own water and have their own plan for retrieving water after competition.
- Ensure 6-feet of distance whenever student athletes are eating or drinking.
- Replace face coverings immediately after eating or drinking.

### **Virtual Contest - Synchronous and Asynchronous**

#### **General Virtual Guidelines**

Synchronous - Virtual competition occurring at the same time (like a live event where teams log in to perform at a specified time).

Asynchronous - Virtual competitions where teams performances are pre-recorded and submitted at a specified time.

Schools can elect to conduct and/or compete in synchronous and asynchronous virtual competitions. Virtual contests can be conducted with school from across the state.

Hosts can determine the platforms and technology standards that they wish to conduct their competition. Some online platforms may include but are not limited to: NFHS Network, Zoom, Google Meet, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, and/or YouTube, Google Drive, Dropbox etc.... to name a few. Hybrids of both synchronous and asynchronous competitions may also occur.

Host schools can utilize panels of cheer officials/judges as they deem necessary for their specific platform. Multiple panels can be used virtually based on the size of the competition.

Below is a sample of an asynchronous prerecorded contest:





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Individual contest hosts can establish a timeline for their invitational. As an option: hosts can establish a “keyword” for their contest. Keywords may be used at beginning and end of the video to ensure a “live” performance. Below is a sample.

\*To avoid concerns about team members in quarantine or out due to COVID-19, keywords can be omitted.

**Sample Virtual Asynchronous Timeline: Note: Dependent on the Size of the Competition**

- Friday 3:00pm - Contest hosts email competing teams a keyword.
- Friday 3:30pm - 5:30pm Teams must hold the key word on the screen and then immediately record their routine.
- Friday 5:30pm - All routines submitted into a Google Drive folder or alternative platform.
- Saturday 9:00am - Judges will begin scoring virtually (from their homes or from the host school (masked and socially distanced if from the host school site)).
- Saturday - Competition host can combine all videos into a YouTube Live or Zoom Link platform. All competition videos can be shown through a school’s choice of platform: YouTube Live, Zoom, NFHS Network, etc....
- Invite hosts can utilize announcers and add additional audience features.
- 5:00pm – Virtually announce awards.

**Sample Virtual Synchronous Timeline: Note: Dependent on the Size of the Competition**

- Friday 3:00pm - Contest host sends out competition times and links for live synchronous performances.
- Saturday 9:00am - Judges will begin scoring virtually (from their homes or from the host school, masked and socially distanced if from the host school site).
- Saturday - Competition host can combine all videos into a YouTube Live or Zoom Link platform to publish for all competing schools. Designate a time where all competition videos can be shown through a school’s choice of platform: YouTube Live, Zoom, NFHS Network, etc....
- Invite hosts can utilize announcers and add additional audience features.
- 5:00pm – Virtually announce awards.

NOTE: Flexibility and contingency plans need to be made to deal with technology issues.



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### **Virtual Competition Guidelines – Suggested Standards and Norms**

- Filming should be on an iPhone, iPad, or basic video camera.
- No professional cameras or operators can be used.
- Video must be taken full front from a team’s high school gym with appropriate matting.
- No special lighting can be used. Full house lighting must be used.
- Video should be taken elevated so formations can be visible to the judges.
- Video should not be edited, cut, or altered in any way. Multiple videos and camera angles cannot be edited together. No sound editing can occur. Entries must be one unedited recording from start to finish.
- No special effects can be added. No side or back angles should be on the videotaped.
- No fans or piped in fan cheers can be added.
- Fans/spectators cannot be present during the recording.
- If used, keyword must be visible at beginning and end of the video.

### **Virtual Officiating/Judging**

- Tourney wire online scoring platform can be used.  
<https://www.tourneywire.com/cheer-index.php>
- Varsity TV platform may also be used – The IHSA scoresheet can be uploaded into this platform.
- Judges can score from home or the contest site. Contest managers need to clearly communicate the expectations to the judges via their contract.
- Judges will access the videos from the platform indicated by the competition host.
- If the judges officiate virtually (remotely/from home), the head officials should conduct a virtual meeting to review the contest protocols with the host and contest officials. Officials are expected to virtually collaborate on scores and deductions as a team - as typically done at contests.
- It is at the discretion of local competition management/rules if judges should only watch a video once. (\*This includes the tech judge(s)).
- It is recommended that contest hosts give officials at least 24 hours to critique and score the virtual contest from home before announcing their awards if officials will not be gathering to score at the host school.
- In the event the virtual contest is “live scored”, it is recommended that an appropriate time allotment shall be given between each “live scoring” virtual performance.
- Contest hosts can collaborate with the head judge to confirm contest results.
- Judges must not share routine video.





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### **General Requirements and Considerations for Student Athletes:**

- Student athletes should be responsible for their own supplies such as a water bottle.
- Students should wear their own appropriate practice clothing and not share clothing or uniforms with anyone. All equipment and attire should be washed immediately upon returning home.
- Hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer should be frequent at all practices and competitions.
- Athletes should tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well.
- Face coverings are always required.

### **General Requirements and Considerations for Parents:**

- Make sure student athletes and immediate household members are free from illness before participating in practice and competition (if there is any doubt, stay home).
- Provide clearly labeled personal items for student athletes.
- Help make sure that the student athlete is washing/cleaning clothing and personal items after each use.
- Know facility/venue limitations on capacity/attendance prior to attending a competition. Always maintain social distance and wear a face covering while in attendance at an event.

### **Questions:**

- Questions may be addressed to IHSA Cheer Administrator, Susie Knoblauch (sknoblauch@ihsa.org).

### **Resources:**

[IDPH Sport Safety Guidance](#)

[IDPH COVID-19 EMS-Regions Map](#)

[IHSA COVID-19 Information](#)

[USA Cheer](#)

[Game Day](#) - Carrie Nichols - Varsity Spirit Cheer - Illinois State Director - 636.357.3049 - [cnichols@varsity.com](mailto:cnichols@varsity.com) and [JGraham@varsity.com](mailto:JGraham@varsity.com) – 806-290-1849

[Understanding Copyright and Compliance Course](#)

*Updated 1/28/21*