



Updated
October 20, 2020

2020-21 Guidance for Officials

The NFHS Officials Advisory Committee offers this guidance for state associations for the 2020-21 school year.

The guidance outlined in this document is 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.

This guidance is meant to cover officials in all sports while keeping in mind that protocols are different in each sport and adjustments may need to be made.

OFFICIALS UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

These requirements are in effect until further notice from the IHSA office.

- **Officials are REQUIRED to use regular whistles (with a cover) or electronic whistles.** This is an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets that come from officials' whistles.

The whistle cover must be solid black with no lettering or logos. The color of an electronic whistle doesn't matter. Officials can use an electronic whistle in any color.

- **Officials are REQUIRED to wear face coverings when they are not actively exercising.** Officials must wear face coverings as they enter and exit the school, gym, or field. The IHSA prefers that officials wear solid black face coverings with no lettering or logos.
- **Officials are allowed to wear gloves and long sleeves.**

RULES CONSIDERATIONS

PREGAME CONFERENCE

- Maintain social distancing while performing all pregame responsibilities.
- Move the pregame conference to the center of the court/field. All individuals maintain a social distance of three to six feet.
- Limit attendees at the pregame conference to one official, the head coach from each team, and a single captain from each team; or speak with the team representatives in a separate meeting.
- Officials, coaches, and captains should not shake hands or bump fists prior to or following the pregame conference.
- If officials use electronic whistles, they should demonstrate the sounds to coaches and captains since the tones from different whistles might vary.

SCORER'S TABLE

- Limit seats to essential personnel which includes the home team's official scorer and scoreboard operator with a recommended distance of three to six feet between individuals.
- Visiting team personnel (scorer, statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and may need to find an alternative location.
- Space available at the scorer's table will vary at each school.
- Scorer's table personnel should follow local and state face covering requirements.

PREGAME & POSTGAME HANDSHAKES

- Teams and officials should not shake hands or bump fists during pregame or postgame ceremonies.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR OFFICIALS

PRESEASON TRAINING

- Attend online clinics and association meetings to review the rules for the coming season.
- Start a physical training routine. If an official has been diagnosed with COVID-19, he/she should be cleared by a medical provider prior to initiating an exercise program.
- Practice NFHS-approved signals while using an electronic whistle.

GAME DAY

- If officials do not feel well and have COVID-19 symptoms, they should notify their assignor, the host school, and crew members. Officials with COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and not officiate.
- Officials can take their temperature in the morning and then again prior to leaving home/work for a contest.
- Officials should notify the site administrator immediately if their temperature is elevated above 100.3 or a level recommended by your local or state health department.
- “Vulnerable individuals” are defined by CDC as people 65 years and older and others with serious underlying health conditions. Officials fitting this description may wish to seek medical advice prior to returning to officiating.
- Schools will likely have different local rules regarding COVID-19. Officials should communicate with school athletic administrators about contest expectations.
- Officials should consider travel arrangements to contest sites with officiating partners.
- Upon arrival at the contest site and throughout the contest, officials should wash and sanitize their hands frequently.
- Officials should maintain social distancing of three to six feet while in the locker room and/or on the court/field.
- Officials should not share uniforms, towels, apparel, and equipment.
- Officials should bring their own water bottles and/or sports drinks.

Officials ARE NOT responsible for monitoring social distancing guidelines on the team benches, sidelines, in the bleachers, or anywhere outside the boundaries of the court/field. Coaches and school personnel are responsible for monitoring their own teams.

SPORT-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Cross Country: Face coverings are required when officials cannot maintain a safe social distance.

Baseball & Softball: Face coverings are required when umpires cannot maintain a safe social distance. If umpires and coaches cannot maintain a safe social distance during the pregame meeting at home plate, umpires are required to wear a face covering.

Plate umpires are not required to wear a face covering when they are actively officiating.

Swimming & Diving: Face coverings are required at all times.

Basketball: Face coverings are required when officials enter the gym and throughout the entire pregame, including the pregame conference.

Face coverings are not required when officials are actively officiating on the court.

Officials may wear gloves and long sleeves. Officials who choose to wear gloves must wear clear or black gloves. If officials wear long sleeves under a short-sleeved official's shirt, the long sleeves must be black.

Pregame Conference

Limit attendees to the referee and the head coach from each team with each coach standing on the center circle on each side of the division line.

Officials should not wear jackets during pre-game court/player observation.

Basketball officiating mechanics changes for the 2020-21 season:

Throw-ins

- Officials should maintain social distance from the thrower.
- The administering official must bounce the ball to the thrower when space allows, even in a backcourt or frontcourt throw-in on the end line.

Free throws

- Officials must maintain social distance from players on the lane.
- The lead official must bounce the ball to the shooter for all free throws.

Jump ball

- Eliminate the jump ball.
- Award the ball to the visiting team for the first possession of the game.
- The alternating possession arrow will be set after the initial throw-in.
- If the game is at a neutral site, a coin toss determines which teams gets the first possession of the game.
- If the game goes to overtime, a coin toss determines which team gets the first possession of the overtime period. The visiting team's coach calls the coin toss.
- The alternating possession arrow will be set after the initial overtime throw-in.
- If the game goes to multiple overtimes, a coin toss determines the opening possession of each overtime. The visiting team's coach calls the coin toss.