



MPA Cheerleading Committee Competitive Cheer Recommendation for Return to Participation

Referencing Orders and Guidelines from the Following Resources

National Federation of State High School Associations
Governor's Office - State of Maine
Maine Department of Education
Maine Department of Economic & Community Development
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Principals' Association Sports Medicine Committee

The Maine Guidelines for Community Based Sports has labeled competitive cheerleading as a “Moderate Risk” activity. “Moderate Risk” activities are sports and activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental contact, but with protective equipment or mitigating measures in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants (e.g., wearing masks, modifying play to maintain 6 feet of physical distance, cleaning and disinfecting). The NFHS has labeled the sport of competitive cheerleading as a “High Risk” activity. “High Risk” activities are those that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants. The following recommendations are being made in accordance with NFHS and the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development guidelines.

Coaches and School Administrator(s) must hold a team educational session prior to the first contest to educate student-athletes of all rules related to competitive competition with other school districts and the requirements outlined below. In addition, each coach, paid and volunteer, must complete the free Covid-19 course called Covid-19 for Coaches and Administrators currently available on the NFHS Learn platform at <https://nfhslearn.com/>.

- **DISTANCING**

- Space cheerleaders at least 6 feet apart (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills, when explaining drills or the rules of the game).
- Organizers should identify staff members or volunteers to help maintain physical distancing among players, coaches, officials, and spectators.
- Require individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from individuals who are not part of their household group.

- **SPECTATORS/CAPACITY**

The approval of spectators must follow the guidelines below.

- Spectators are allowed at outdoor competitions. Spectators are not allowed at indoor competitions given the challenges of adhering to indoor gathering limits. Such public health-informed limits make it impossible for athletes to invite even one spectator. Video or streaming of events is recommended.
 - Organizers of sports activities are responsible for limiting the number of individuals that can gather in a shared space, in accordance with the [Governor's Executive Order](#) on gathering size limits.
 - Every individual in the space counts toward the gathering limit, including players, coaches, volunteers, officials, cheerleaders, and spectators.
 - If a space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the 6-foot distancing requirement, occupancy in that space must be limited to allow for such compliance.
 - Face coverings must always be worn by athletes, coaches, staff, officials, and spectators.
 - Spectators must maintain 6 feet of physical distance between themselves and other spectators as well as players.
- **FACE COVERINGS**
 - Face coverings must always be worn by cheerleaders.
 - Athletes must replace their face covering if it becomes wet or otherwise soiled.
 - Face coverings must always be worn by coaches, staff, officials, and spectators.
 - Unless the governing body for the sport has a specific recommendation regarding plastic face shields, do not wear them in place of a face covering given potential safety risks.
- **SANITATION AND HYGIENE**
 - Student-athletes and coaches must complete a self-screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to participation or entrance into an opposing school's facilities.
 - Participants do not share water bottles, poms, megaphones, or signs.
 - Face coverings are required for all coaches, team staff, cheerleaders, and officials.
 - Regularly and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 second or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Hand sanitizer must be available at the team area.
 - Educate all participants on the importance of washing hands or using hand sanitizer before, during, and after play, as well as during practices and all team-based activities.
 - Gloves are permitted for ~~all~~ coaches and team members.
 - Only essential personnel are permitted into the team area.
 - Team members must observe physical distancing of 6 feet.
 - ~~○ All participants must wear a face covering.~~
 - Face coverings may be removed while hydrating so long as the person hydrating is 6 feet from anyone else.
- **FACILITY PREPARATION MODIFICATIONS**
 - Clean and disinfect, per the manufacturer's recommendations, frequently touched surfaces in the play area, including mats, at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects should be limited and objects should be cleaned between uses if possible. Follow recommendations provided by the equipment manufacturer when cleaning and disinfecting equipment.
 - Post signage in the activity area that encourages foundational components of lowering risk: masking, physical distancing, monitoring one's personal health, hygiene, etc.
 - When possible, schools should provide separate entrance and exit for teams and spectators to separate the teams from the public.
 - Medical staff must brief all coaches of protocols and isolation space for if an athlete becomes sick during a practice or competition.

- Host sites shall provide hand sanitizer/sanitizing stations at various locations.

• **DURATION OF PLAY**

- Transmission risk increases with exposure time; therefore practices, scrimmages, and competitions (when allowed) should be as time-limited as possible.

• **SIDELINE MODIFICATIONS** (The MPA Cheerleading Committee recommends that sideline cheer be suspended for the 2020-2021 season)

- All cheerleaders must wear masks throughout the contest.
- Avoid congregating before, during, or after the contest.
- No pregame or postgame handshakes, teams may use the good sportsmanship wave.
- No signs or banners for the team to run through prior to the contest.
- Halftime routines must maintain 6 feet of distancing, must have face coverings, and may not include tumbling or stunting.
- Because of the increased risk of transmission associated with vocalization, cheerleading squads may not perform vocal routines in practice sessions, sidelines, or competitions during the Winter 2020-21 season.

• **COMPETITION CONSIDERATIONS**

- Schools must adhere to state and local rules and guidelines in relation to COVID-19 accommodations.
- Physical distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained. No hugging, shaking hands, or fist bumps for support/encouragement.
- Team meetings must employ proper distancing measures.
- Stunt groups should be kept together in their cohort, refrain from mixing and matching bases and tops from different groups.
- Six feet of physical distance must be maintained between individual stunt groups.
- Modifications to skills (i.e., stunting and lifts) must be considered to ensure participant safety while wearing face coverings, such as limiting inversions, twisting, and tosses.
- Tosses should remain in pods but should be limited to one or two during a routine.
- Jumps and tumbling should be done independently with no physical interaction.
- Pyramids are not permitted.
- Congregating after the round needs to be minimized and monitored by all to ensure proper distancing.
- Because of the increased risk of transmission associated with vocalization, cheerleading squads may not perform vocal routines in practice sessions, sidelines, or competitions during the Winter 2020-21 season.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSING/TRANSPORTATION**

- If transport vehicles (e.g., buses) are used, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff (e.g., hand hygiene, face coverings). Drivers should be a minimum of six feet from passengers to the extent possible; drivers must wear a face covering; consider physical barriers for driver.
- Open bus/vehicle windows open if weather allows.
- Masks/face coverings must be worn by everyone on the bus.
- Hand sanitizer should be available and used when entering and exiting the bus.
- To the extent possible, maximize the distance between individuals on the bus. Since vehicles have different sizes and capacities, there is no single recommendation for spacing. That said, filling a vehicle to its maximum capacity even with masks/face coverings poses a public health risk and is inadvisable.

- Assign seating—I, individuals from the same household should sit together if space on the bus is limited.
- Minimize the number of people on the bus at one time within reason.
- To minimize contact between passengers, load the bus from back to front and unload the bus from front to back.
- Routinely clean and disinfect buses or other transport vehicles.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation to competitions for athletes who have other options. Advise athletes who carpool to wear face coverings while in the vehicle, maximize outdoor air circulation, and open vehicle windows if weather allows.