

Gov. Pritzker Announces Safety Guidelines For Recreational Sports Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
July 30 2020 1:43 PM



Guidance for All Youth and Adult Recreational Sports Takes Effect August 15th

CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker announced today guidance for youth and adult recreational sports, including, but not limited to, school-based sports, travel clubs, private leagues and clubs, recreational leagues and centers, and park district sports programs. Collegiate sports and professional leagues are not impacted by these restrictions. The guidance was developed by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) following consultation with a number of stakeholders including the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) and the Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA). The complete guidelines are available online at the state COVID-19 website: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/>.

“I know our hearts break when we hear the word ‘restrictions,’ especially when it comes to our children’s love for their sports. Whether this year is their first time on the court or it’s their senior season – this isn’t the news anyone wants to hear,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “But with rising rates of spread of the virus, with rising positivity rates throughout Illinois and the United States, this is a situation where the toughest choice is also the safest one. Therefore today, my administration is releasing new guidance restricting youth and adult recreational sports in Illinois. We have worked in consultation with the governing bodies of many of these organized sports programs, and collectively we hope that, when metrics and risks improve measurably, we will be able to restart these sports.”

The newly released guidance categorizes sports into three risk levels, lower, medium, or higher, based on the amount of contact between athletes and their proximity during play. The guidance sets four levels of play allowed based on current public health conditions. In level 1, only no-contact practices and training are allowed. In level 2, intra-team scrimmages are allowed with parental consent for minors but there can be no competitive play. In level 3 intra-conference, intra-EMS-region or intra-league play is allowed and there may be state- or league-championship games allowed for low-risk sports only. In level 4, tournaments, out-of-conference/league play, and out-of-state play are allowed. Championship games would also be allowed in level 4.

This guidance takes effect Saturday, August 15th. Based on current conditions, lower risk sports can be played at levels 1, 2, and 3. Medium risk sports can be played at levels 1 and 2, and higher risk sports can be played at level 1.

“Daily physical activity is an important part of staying healthy,” said **IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike**. “The COVID-19 pandemic has upended many of our activities, including sports. Some sports carry an inherently higher risk of exposure because of direct contact, like football and wrestling, while others have a lower risk, like golf and bowling. As we learn to coexist with COVID-19, we must be smart and measured in

how we go about it. We want to encourage people to be physically active, but to be safe and understand the risks that come with certain activities.”

Similar to other guidance, sports organizations should make temperature checks available and participants and coaches should monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and should not participate if they are experiencing illness. If multiple individuals have symptoms or test positive, coaches or organizations should alert the local health department. Sports organizers or coaches also must maintain attendance logs of participants for contact tracing purposes.

“Extracurricular activities and sports are an important part to a well-rounded education,” **said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala.** “This guidance is not meant to be a one-size-fits all approach and takes into account the inherent risk level of each individual sport and current public health conditions.”

Athletic equipment such as bats and hockey sticks should be cleaned between each use. Other equipment, including personal gear such as hockey, football, lacrosse, or other sports using helmets, pads, or gloves should only be used by one person and not shared.

“This latest guidance builds on our ongoing efforts to partner with businesses, public institutions and communities across Illinois to ensure a safe return of key activities and the reopening of our economy,” **said DCEO Acting Director, Michael Negron.**

“Informed by the latest guidance by our public health officials, the updated youth and recreation sports guidelines will allow us to partner with recreational and competitive sports industry leaders on reducing risk and protecting our communities. Doing so will allow us to make not only a faster health recovery, but also a faster economic recovery from COVID-19.”

Illinois first issued guidelines for youth and recreational sports in late May, when every region in the state advanced to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois plan, marked by return to work, the reopening of retail as well as the return of specific recreational activities. The latest guidelines make adjustments to temporarily halt competitive play for most higher to medium-risk sports pending further health progress, as well as to provide additional clarity on capacity limits and high school sports.