



# **Gov. Pritzker, IDPH Announce Winter Safety Guidelines for Recreational Sports Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic**

October 27 2020 4:57 PM



CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker and IDPH announced updated 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 updated guidance was developed by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) in conjunction with public health experts from around the state and nation and reflects the high levels of risk associated with contact sports played indoors. The guidance also accounts for new research related to COVID-19 and sports, sports-related outbreaks in other states, and the fact that the second wave of the pandemic is now well underway in all regions of Illinois.

“We can’t ignore what is happening around us – because without action, this could look worse than anything we saw in the spring.” said Governor JB Pritzker. “It’s with that in mind that today, my administration is releasing our updated guidance for youth and

adult recreational sports in Illinois ahead of the winter season. As with sports in the fall, nothing is ‘cancelled,’ just put on hold until we’re through the thick of this pandemic. We adapt as we learn. That has been our mantra throughout this pandemic, and as is true in every other facet of life, we know this virus is of most concern when people are indoors with high contact, especially in vigorous situations that bring about heavy breathing – like in wrestling, hockey and basketball. Life in a pandemic is hard for everyone, and it’s hard for all of our kids, whether or not they play sports. That doesn’t make it any easier – but we really are all in this together.”

The youth sports guidance puts 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 all levels, some form of play is allowed ranging from practice and trainings in level 1 to tournaments and conference play in level 4.

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.

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.

The updated guidance moves basketball from medium risk to high risk due to the close contact of players and indoor play. Wrestling and hockey continue to be categorized as high risk as well. Cheer and dance will be categorized as lower risk, only if masking and distance are enforced. Low risk sports like bowling, gymnastics, swimming and diving will be permitted to play during winter.

“The science, as we know it right now, applies in all situations,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “The more people you are in contact with, the longer you are together, and the closer you are together, the greater your risk of getting COVID-19. Being face to face with another person for a basketball or football game puts players at higher risk of getting and spreading the virus. Right now, cases across Illinois and the country are increasing.”

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 their local health department. Sports organizers or coaches also must maintain attendance logs of participants for contact tracing purposes. Masks should be worn by everyone in attendance. Spectator limits should follow mitigation occupancy limits in each region. For Tier One mitigation that limits spectators to 25 people or less. For Tier Two mitigations no spectators should be allowed.

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. Coaches should limit access to locker rooms as much as possible.

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.

A full list of the winter safety guidelines can be found on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) website at <https://dceocovid19resources.com/restore-illinois/>.