



NCCAA COVID-19  
Guidelines and Recommendations

FALL 2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## I. Return to Play (p. 2)

- a. National championships
- b. Start Dates
- c. Minimum/Maximum Contests
- d. Declaration of Intent
- e. Season of Competition

## II. Health & Safety Recommendations (p. 3)

- a. Return to Athletics Practice & Activities
- b. Return to Competition
- c. Follow Normal CDC Guidelines

## III. Screening (pp. 4-5)

- a. Timing
- b. Requirements
- c. Results
- d. Removal from and Return to Competition
- e. Multiple Team Members Exhibiting Symptoms

## IV. Testing (p. 6)

- a. Timing
- b. Requirements
- c. Results
- d. Removal from and Return to Competition
- e. Multiple Team Members Testing Positive

## V. Notice to Opponents (p. 6)

## VI. Spectators (p. 6)

## VII. Recommended Best Practices & Resources (p. 7)

## VIII. Going Forward (p. 8)

## I. RETURN TO PLAY

## **A. National Championships**

The NCCAA will allow each institution to determine if their athletic program can return to campus and begin practice and competition. The NCCAA intends on maintaining their championship schedule for 2020-2021. The current COVID-19 situation is a fluid one and the national office continues to monitor this environment and will continue to evaluate with our host the continued viability of this decision.

A committee has been developed to begin reviewing the protocols that will be expected by student athletes and coaching staffs at the national championship venues and tournaments.

## **B. Start Dates**

1. Practice: The recommended practice start date for all sports, will be Saturday, August 15.
  - a. Though August 15 is the recommended first day a practice can occur, institutions can have students return to campus earlier.
  - b. The established start dates for practice allows for three weeks of practice prior to the start of competition and four weeks for football. However, the three or four weeks of practice are not mandatory and may be shortened at the institution's discretion.
2. Competition: September 5, 2020 is the recommended competition start date for fall sports

**C. Minimum/Maximum Contests:** Due to the reduction of the length of season, contest minimums and maximums have been suggested for the 2020 fall season.

- a. Cross Country – 4 (minimum) to 7 (maximum)
- b. Football – 6 (minimum) to 9 (maximum)
- c. Men's and Women's Soccer – 8 (minimum) to 14 (maximum)
- d. Women's Volleyball – 13 (minimum) to 22 (maximum)
- e. The Administration Committee has approved a blanket waiver for any team that cannot meet their minimum number of games for 2020-2021.

**D. Declaration of Intent:** Each Institution will continue to be allowed to determine their team's ability or interest in competing in the NCCAA Championships using the Declaration of Intent. Modifications to the Declaration of Intent are allowed up to two weeks before regional competition begins.

**E. Season of Competition:** The Administration committee has approved that a season of competition will not be charged to student athletes, if a team from an institution is unable to play in half or less of the stated maximum number of contest allowed in a season for that sport in the handbook.

## **II. HEALTH & SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Return to Athletics Practice & Activities**

1. Each member institution has the primary responsibility to keep people within its own community safe. This responsibility reaches further than student-athletes and athletic department staff, recognizing that these populations will be included in an institution's comprehensive campus planning. As a result, the NCCAA will defer to each member to implement proper health and safety measures for its general campus operations that are consistent with campus policies and requirements of local and state governments. An institution should determine the appropriate timing and protocols for when and how student-athletes return to campus, as well as begin to engage in team activities and practice. The NCCAA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. (See Section VII. Health & Safety Resources)
2. Cleaning Procedures – develop and implement a cleaning and disinfecting of public spaces. See guidelines listed from NATA and such for development of a plan.

## **B. Return to Competition**

NCCAA staff, in consultation with industry experts, has developed a combination of recommended best practices and requirements for NCCAA member institutions to implement prior to and during competition. When returning to competition, each institution should determine appropriate protocols to be used for its specific facilities and circumstances. Institutions are encouraged to think carefully about additional measures that should be implemented to prepare for traveling to off-site locations, or hosting visiting teams and conducting competitions. The NCCAA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. (See Section VII. Recommended Best Practices & Resources) When student-athletes and staff from a member institution begin to interact with those from another member, we must all work together to keep the NCCAA community safe. The policies incorporated herein are intended to provide NCCAA members with assurances that opponents are complying with specific minimum standards and using best efforts to achieve best practices. Requirements are as follows and are detailed in sections III, IV and V of this document:

1. Screening protocols (Section III)
2. Testing protocols (Section IV)
3. Notice to opponents of safety preparations (Section VI)

In addition to these specific NCCAA guidelines, every NCCAA member will be expected to meet all local and state requirements at all times.

**C. Follow Normal CDC Guidelines:** Washing hands, physical distancing of 6 feet, and wearing mask are continued to be recommended.

## **III. SCREENING**

Please note that the screening requirements are based on data that is currently available. As findings related to COVID-19 continue to develop, this information will be evaluated and updated accordingly.

## A. Timing

Beginning August 15, coaches, student-athletes and those in contact with student-athletes are recommended to be screened each day a practice or team activity occurs.

For competition, all game-day participants (student-athletes, coaches, support staff, officials, etc.) are required to be screened within six hours of the beginning of the contest. All screening must be done by an athletic trainer or designated healthcare professional. If an institution does not have an athletic trainer or healthcare professional on site, it will be the responsibility of the host institution to conduct all prescreening requirements for the visiting team(s).

## B. Requirements

Each institution must implement the screening requirements described below, though an institution and/or conference/region is free to include additional components or questions it may deem necessary. Screening must include:

1. Monitoring of the temperature of each participant, specifically monitoring for a fever  $\geq 100$ .
2. Observation or self-reported feelings of illness
3. Medical history questioning related to common COVID-19 indicators and exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

The screening process will identify student-athletes, staff or other game-day participants who should be withheld from participation and referred for further evaluation or COVID-19 testing. A weighted scoring system will be utilized to determine the threshold for withholding a participant. Symptoms and responses from medical history questioning should be scored as follows:

EXPOSURE	SCORE
Within the last 14 days, have you been in close contact unmasked with someone who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus? Closes contact is < 6 feet for $\geq 15$ minutes	2 (Unless you have received a negative test result since exposure)
SYMPTOMS (Self-reported)	
TEMPERATURE OF $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$ F	2
REPEATED SHAKING OR CHILLS	2
COUGH (new or different than normal)	2
SHORTNESS OF BREATH (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. asthmas)	2
NEW LOSS OF SMELL and/or TASTE	2
LOOSE STOOLS / UPSET STOMACH	1
MUSCLE PAIN	1
SORE THROAT	1
HEADACHE	1
CONGESTION (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. allergies)	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	

**Total score of 0:** Continue with standard precautions and monitor regularly for changes in symptoms. Allow individual to continue participation under supervision.

**Total score of 1:** The symptoms described by the individual warrant further investigation by the healthcare team. Expand screening to obtain further information. Based on responses,

healthcare team will determine whether to allow participation or refer individual for additional care.

**Total score of 2:** The individual is to immediately be removed from practice and/or competition and referred to healthcare provider for care. A release for return to activity from the healthcare provider must be provided prior to return to practice or competition.

### **C. Submitting Results**

To streamline the screening process, the NCCAA is developing a solution that will be used to verify the screening protocol was followed. The athletic trainer or institutional representative will be asked to verify that the appropriate steps were taken for all individuals screened and indicate how many total individuals were withheld. The tool will not collect individual screening results.

### **D. Removal from and Return to Competition or Practice**

If a student-athlete is withheld from participation through the screening process, he or she must:

1. Quarantine immediately,
2. Consult with a healthcare professional, and
3. Continue to be withheld from athletic activities until he or she receives a release from a healthcare professional or a negative PCR test.

### **E. Multiple Team Members Exhibiting Symptoms**

If multiple student-athletes on a single team are showing symptoms through the screening process, the institution must assess whether the team should be removed from competition. As of July 1, there is no consensus among experts related to the threshold (specific number of players, % of players, etc.) that would trigger the removal of a team from competition. The NCCAA will continue to consult with health experts and monitor requirements and best practices established by the CDC and other sport organizations returning to play in July. Guidance will be provided on this question in late July or August.

## **IV. TESTING**

### **A. Timing**

Testing for COVID -19 will not be expected for student athletes and staff prior to returning or competing. However, anyone who has been exposed to the virus who exhibits any symptoms of

the virus must self-isolate and seek medical advice and testing before returning to team activities.

## **B. Testing sites**

Members may use local or regional CLIA approved labs. The NAIA has partnered with Precision Genetics (PG).

## **C. Removal from and Return to Competition or Practice**

If a student-athlete tests positive, he or she must:

1. Isolate immediately,
2. Consult with a healthcare professional, and
3. Continue to be withheld from athletic activities until he or she receives a negative PCR test.

## **D. Multiple Team Members Testing Positive**

If multiple student-athletes on a single team test positive, the institution must assess whether the team should be removed from competition. As of July 1, there is no consensus among experts related to the threshold (specific number of players, % of players, etc.) that would trigger the removal of a team from competition. The NCCAA will continue to consult with health experts and monitor requirements and best practices established by the CDC and other sport organizations returning to play in July. Guidance will be provided on this question in late July or August.

# V. NOTICE TO OPPONENTS

Communication among NCCAA members will be essential to keeping our student-athletes safe and completing the fall season. The NCCAA is in the process of identifying key information needed by opponents to understand what protections are in place and to facilitate compliance with shared expectations. Details of how this information will be collected and made available will be included in a subsequent communication.

# VI. SPECTATORS

The NCCAA does not have a position on spectator attendance for regular season play, other than to require that all local and state guidance is followed. Institutions and/or conferences/regions should determine if any additional precautions beyond local and state guidance should be implemented. The NCCAA encourages all institutions to publicize their regulations regarding spectators clearly and well in advance.

# VII. RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

The NAIA partnered with a panel of and epidemiological healthcare professionals, including the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association (ATA), to identify and evaluate helpful resources institutions can use in developing institutional safety protocols. Content from the following industry leaders was incorporated:

- American College Health Association (ACHA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- NATA's Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (ICSM)
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)
- United States Council for Athletes' Health (USCAH)

The following resources have been identified as relevant and reliable best practices. As additional evidence continues to become available and evolves, these resources may be updated.

**Risk Mitigation – Facility Usage & Prevention Considerations:**

- [ACHA Guidelines for Reopening Institutions](#)
- [CDC Considerations for Institutions of Higher Ed](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Considerations for College & University Intercollegiate Athletics](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Facility Preparation and Management](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Personnel Development and Training](#)

**Equipment and Facility Sanitation:**

- [CDC/EPA Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces and Schools](#)
- [CDC Guidelines for Cleaning, Disinfecting and Laundry](#)
- [EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

**Athletic Healthcare:**

- [ICSM Return-to-Campus Preparation](#)
- [CDC Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [USCAH Addressing COVID-19 Within Athletic Medicine](#)

**Training Safety following Inactivity:**

- [NSCA COVID-19 Return to Training](#)
- [CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods \(Safe Return to Training Following Inactivity\)](#)

For additional best practice information, the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association created a Return to Athletics Guidelines, which includes detailed resources and recommendations.

## VIII. GOING FORWARD

The NCCAA, in consultation with industry experts, is providing these protocols as of July 20. They are intended to help members prepare for the fall season and invite feedback as we continue to assess the proper balance of 1) student-athlete safety and 2) a structure that would allow fall sports to proceed for those who are healthy. We will continue to assess these protocols as best practices evolve and will share any necessary adjustments by early August. FAQs are currently being developed.