



Suffolk County School Superintendents Association

COVID-19 TESTING OF ATHLETES IN HIGH-RISK SPORTS



A 5-Step Process

Updated on January 27, 2021



The Need for COVID-19 Testing of athletes in High-Risk Sports

Recent trends in COVID-19 infection rates have been alarming, in Suffolk County and across the country. As of 1/26/21, the County has a 14-day rolling average of 8.0% and a 7-day rolling average of 7.2%. On January 22, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced that students could participate in High-Risk Sports after receiving approval from local Departments of health. On January 25, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) issued [Guidance for the Resumption of High-Risk Sports and Activities](#). In addition, the NYSPHSAA issued its updated [Return to Interscholastic Athletics Resource Document](#). Finally, you can access the [Section XI Return to Play "Playbook"](#) for winter sports as well. As part of the guidance SCDHS mandated that Districts develop testing protocols for student athletes requiring weekly testing for:

- All high-risk sports coaches
- Competitive cheerleading student athletes
- Boys/girls basketball
- Wrestling
- Boys/girls volleyball
- Football
- Boys lacrosse

The SCDHS will supply test kits to the School Districts. School and sports leagues can also consider developing partnerships with community-based providers for testing.

In partnership with Suffolk County Executive's Office, the SCSSA has been working with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) to develop supports for this testing. In order to prepare school Districts should begin by obtaining consent from all student athletes. We have prepared [Paper and Pencil Consent](#) versions, as well as templates to collect [Digital Consent](#). If utilizing the Digital consent, please create a copy of the form and do not modify the original. The first round of testing will need to be completed prior to the first actual contest for each high-risk sport.



COVID-19 Testing for High-Risk Sports in Suffolk County Schools

The Process

- Step 1 -** Execute the [SCDHS COVID Testing for High-Risk Sports MOA](#).
- Step 2 -** Initial Set-up Requirements:
- Identify those who will serve as testers; ensure that they complete the [Testing Training](#).
 - Identify a clerical employee who will input testing results to the Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS), the NYS Database. If not previously completed, you must enroll them into the system in advance of testing. View the registration information in the [ECLRS Reporting Folder](#).
 - Identify your testing location and develop your site plan. This could be your COVID-19 Isolation room, or nurse's office.
- Step 3 -** Determine the number of tests needed and have your Chief Medical Officer order your tests by contacting knannini@esboces.org
- Step 4 -** Transmit Daily Testing Data to NYSDOH COVID School Report Card Designee. This data should be entered daily in the COVID reporting.
- Step 5 -** Day of Implementation Considerations:
- Ensure a welcoming environment with positive messaging.
 - Arrange for on-site pick up of medical waste (Red garbage bag of discarded swabs/cards). Many Districts, via nurses have an on-call medical waste pick up arrangement for sharps and other waste. Make sure to check the status of that contract prior to testing.



Procedures:

You Tester will be required to provide:

1. Welcome and Check in, take temperature (Must be below 100.0 to proceed)
2. Administer [Pre-Test Screening Questions](#), (Attestations are completed daily)
3. Complete Test Registration Form ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
4. Administer Testing - Swabbing
 - a. Complete appropriate section on bottom of the Test Registration Form.
 - b. Review process of the swab; five circles just inside the tip of each nostril.
 - c. Collect the sample.
 - d. Place swab on test card at Station 6 that has reagent waiting, hand paperwork to Station 6 along with it.
 - e. Depending upon local procedure, either send student/staff:
 - i. To a Post-Test Waiting Area to wait 15 min for results; or
 - ii. Send them back to their class
 - f. Disinfect or change gloves.
5. Reagent Application
 - a. Prepare a testing card with 6 individual drops of the Reagent.
 - b. Place swab on card, close card and begin 15 minute timer; place timer and test in basket (requires 1 timer per test).
 - c. Review paperwork; confirm correct information and complete to this point.
 - d. Prepare COVID Result Form
 - e. Place the basket with paperwork, test card/swab and timer aside.
6. Keep students present in the waiting area. Students should be wearing masks and socially distant at greater than 6 feet while waiting for results.



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7. Reading of Results for student athlete
 - a. After the 15-minute timer goes off, read the result of the test.
 - b. Record the result on registration paperwork and on the test results form.
 - c. Prepare the [COVID-19 Test Results Form](#).
 - d. If invalid result, administer a new swab test
 - e. If valid result:
 - i. **Positive Individual** - Informed of their result and immediately isolated, begin standard COVID Symptom protocol and send student/staff home with referral to their doctor. Begin contact tracing.
 - ii. **Negative Individual** - Informed of their result, provided with the Test Result Form and released.

8. Provide results to staff member responsible for ECLRS Data Input Reporting Station. Staff member with ECLRS credentials will:
 - a. Enter registration information of individual into ECLRS system.
 - b. Individual data entry personnel need to be given credentials in the ECRLS system (email knannini@esboces.org with name and email of proposed individual ASAP).





Frequently Asked Questions

Schedule

Q. What are the start/end dates for the Winter season?

A. February 1-27

Q. What are the start/end dates for the Fall season?

A. March 1-April 25

Q. What are the start/end dates for the Spring season?

A. April 26-June 19

Testing for COVID-19

Q. Will there be mandatory testing of athletes?

A. Yes. Students and coaches participating in sports designated as high-risk are required to be tested on a weekly basis (competitive cheerleading, basketball, wrestling, volleyball, football, boys lacrosse) starting before the first competition.

Q. Will middle school athletes need to be tested?

A. Middle School high-risk sports will not be running for the Winter Season. If approval is granted for MS High-Risk sports to run in the next season, they will need to be tested as well.

Q. Who pays for the test kits?

A. The Suffolk County Department of Health Services will provide the test kits at no cost to school districts.



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Q. How will a district get the tests it needs and are there enough?

A. You must determine the number of tests needed and have your Chief Medical Officer order your tests by contacting knannini@esboces.org. The county has assured districts that sufficient tests are available.

Q. Does a district need to have an agreement with the county for testing?

A. Yes. The district must enter into the [SCDHS COVID Testing for High-Risk Sports MOA](#) that has been provided by the SCSSA if they plan to test on-site using the County's Limited Services Laboratory license (LSL). Your school counsel should review the agreement before the district signs the MOA. School districts should send the signed MOA to Ryan.Attard@suffolkcountyny.gov at SCDHS.

Q. Can districts contract with outside agencies for testing?

A. Yes, districts can contract with outside vendor agencies for testing.

Q. When will athletes be tested?

A. Athletes will be tested weekly at a time of the district's choosing, with the first round of testing completed before the first competition.

Q. Do coaches/trainers and other staff need to be tested?

A. All staff/volunteers/others associated with a high-risk team sport **must** be tested weekly. This is not at the district's discretion and must be adhered to in order for student-athletes to compete.

Q. Do athletes who tested positive previously need to test again after their mandatory isolation and before returning to play ?

A. Students who tested positive previously do not need to be tested until 30 days after their positive test.

Q. What staff members are authorized to perform the rapid COVID-19 testing?

A. Only certified staff is authorized to perform testing. These may include employees of the school (LPN, RN, EMT, etc.) or volunteers qualified by NYSDOH.



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Q. What if the district does not have an MOA in place with the county due to legal questions by counsel?

A. The district must work collaboratively with their district counsel to complete the MOA with the county if they wish to use the county's Limited Services Lab (LSL) for COVID testing. Should a district not want to enter into an agreement with the County, you can contract with outside vendor agencies for testing.

Q. What should a district do with medical waste, i.e. discarded tests?

A. The district must arrange for on-site pick up of medical waste (Red garbage bag of discarded swabs/cards). Many Districts, via nurses have an on-call medical waste pick up arrangement for sharps and other waste. Make sure to check the status of that contract prior to testing.

Q. What happens with the data that is collected?

A. Test results are entered into ECLRS and reported to the DHS and designated district personnel.

Q. Do results need to be entered into the NYSDOH report card as schools administering testing?

A. All COVID-19 test result data must be entered into the NYSDOH Report Card.

Q. Can the rapid test kits supplied by the County be used to test other employees or students?

A. Yes. However, you need to ensure you have the proper amount of test kits for your athletes and coaches to test on a weekly basis. Therefore, you should not have an overabundance of test kits available for testing other students and staff unless you are directed to do so for district-wide testing.

Q. Can the athletic trainer perform the tests for athletes or give results to students?

A. No, unless they are trained and qualified (LPN, RN, EMT, etc.) by NYSDOH to administer the tests.



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Q. How can nurses conduct tests if they have not yet been fit-tested?

A. If nurses are to perform the COVID testing, districts should arrange for their nurses to be fit-tested for the required masks as soon as possible. A schedule has been provided by Ed Moltzen through the SCSSA for fit-testing at the Suffolk County Police Academy. Please see the email from SCSSA President on Tuesday, January 26, 2021.

Q. Can a parent or guardian choose to have their child tested by a facility of their choosing?

A. Students may obtain testing at approved sites and supply appropriate documentation to schools on a weekly basis.

Health Monitoring and PPE

Q. Is there a standard behavior pledge form for students or can a generic one be modified by each district?

A. The county has launched the "[Champion of the Community Pledge](#)" to encourage smart decisions during the season. All students are required to complete the form.

Q. Do student athletes and athletic staff need to complete a health attestation form every day?

A. Yes. A [digital](#) or hard copy is acceptable, but must be completed daily prior to practice or competition. The district health screener or attestation does not serve as a replacement for the High-Risk sports attestation.

Q. For how long does the attestation form need to be retained by the district?

A. This should be in accordance with your standard record keeping of all forms related to COVID-19.



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Q. Does the district need to take the temperature of student athletes/athletic staff upon arrival to practice/game, or can the daily health screener administered before school serve the same purpose?

A. Yes, temperatures for ALL student athletes/athletic staff participating must be recorded prior to ALL practices/games.

Q. Who will take the temperature of the students and the coaches?

A. This is at the discretion of each district.

Q. From where can a district get thermometers?

A. The DHS will provide thermometers upon request. Contact Kristen Nannini from ESBOCES at knannini@esboces.org should you need to order additional thermometers.

Q. Is PPE required for a person taking the temperature of students/staff?

A. PPE or barriers are required and should be provided to staff members conducting the temperature screening.

Q. What information is required on the attendance logs for games and practices?

A. Attendance logs must include, name, date, position, and contact information of all those present.

Q. If a COVID case occurs, who conducts the contact tracing (AD or principal)?

A. The district should determine the protocols to be followed in the event of a positive COVID case, including notification of the district COVID-19 Safety Coordinator.

Q. Are masks required?

A. Face coverings are required to be worn at all times by all participants. However, athletes in play should wear masks *as tolerated*, but should be encouraged. Proper mask wearing must be followed and fully cover both the nose and mouth. When not in play or on sidelines masks must be worn.



Q. How will I know if an “opposing” district is in compliance with all guidance?

A. Any district not following the issued guidance is not authorized to compete.

Contact Tracing

Q. What will be the requirements for contact tracing and quarantine?

A. The requirements for contact tracing and quarantine are the same as that of each school building. Upon notification of a COVID-19 case to the AD or principal, contact tracing should commence and appropriate quarantines issued.

Q. Will one case on a sports team require the whole team to quarantine?

A. Contact tracing will determine the degree to which participants on either team will need to be quarantined as well as coordinate with your opposing district team, as necessary.

Q. What happens if the coach tests positive? Can practices and games continue?

A. Contact tracing will determine the degree to which participants will need to be quarantined. The district will need to ensure adequate personnel resources in the event a coach needs to isolate or quarantine, but the team is still approved to participate.

Safety

Q. Can a team share equipment or water bottles/containers?

A. Minimize equipment sharing. Players should bring their own equipment when possible. Student athletes must have individual water bottles, and no sharing of food. Additionally, encourage hand washing or sanitizing of hands before and after practices and games, and after sharing equipment.



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Q. Is there a limit to the total number of participants (players and coaches) at a contest?

A. Yes. The limit is sport specific: 20 participants maximum per team at Varsity and Junior Varsity basketball and Wrestling contests.

Q. Are spectators allowed at contests?

A. No.

Q. Will there be a late winter modified sports season?

A. No.

Q. There is a suggestion to "cohort" the school districts so that there are fewer districts meeting each other in contests? How will this be decided?

A. Section XI will communicate the competition schedule.

Q. How will remote students get to school on days of competition?

A. Each district should determine whether they will provide transportation to remote students.

Q. Is the district required to provide transportation to athletes who are remote or on a virtual day in the hybrid schedule?

A. No.





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