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N.J. Department of Health Issues Guidance for Outdoor Organized Sports

06/15/2020

TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Health today issued guidance on COVID-19 health and safety protocols for outdoor organized sports activities (https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_GuidanceForSportsActivities.pdf) which are set to resume as of June 22.

The guidance permits practices and competitions for low-risk sports (golf, tennis) that do not involve contact, and modified no-contact practices for medium-risk (soccer, baseball, softball) and high-risk (football) sports. Traditional practices and competitions for medium-risk sports are expected to be allowed as of July 6, and on July 20 for high-risk sports. As of now, only outdoor activities will be permitted.

“Sports provide an opportunity for healthy exercise and skill building,” **said state Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. “This guidance will enable these activities to resume while protecting the players, coaches and staff – and the larger community – from the spread of COVID-19.”

Under the guidance

(https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_GuidanceForSportsActivities.pdf), outdoor athletic facilities are permitted to open and be available for organized youth and adult sports activities. Municipalities retain the discretion to open or close municipal fields or facilities for these activities.

Each sports program is required to develop a preparation plan that includes social distancing, staggered schedules, screening, equipment cleaning/sanitation, and face covering protocols, among other measures. Programs should consider consistent groups of the same staff, volunteers and athletes, and avoid mixing between groups. Athletes are encouraged to bring their own water bottles and equipment to practices, and equipment sharing should be limited.

Practices and games must follow outdoor gathering limits including athletes, staff and any visitors or spectators.

Staff and parents/guardians/visitors are required to wear cloth face coverings at practices and games. Athletes are encouraged to wear masks during downtime, but not during physical activity. Nonessential visitors, spectators, staff, volunteers, vendors, members of the media, and activities involving external groups or organizations should be limited as much as possible.

The guidance does not apply to professional sports activities or US national team activities. High school sporting activities under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) must abide by NJSIAA protocols, which shall consider state Health Department guidance, and per Executive Order No. 149, may not resume before June 30.

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Youth sports summer camps, which are permitted to open July 6, must follow camp standards (<https://www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/sanitation-safety/youthcamps.shtml>) in addition to the organized sports guidance.

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Office of Governor PO Box 001
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