

IHSA Temporarily Pauses Sports & Activities Under New State Mitigations

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Board of Directors met for a special virtual meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2020, where the Board provided an update on winter sports.

To maintain compliance with the most recent mitigations issued by Governor Pritzker that take effect on November 20, the IHSA Board issued guidance to pause all IHSA winter sports and activities by November 20.

“All IHSA sports and activities will cease by November 20 for what we hope is a short-term pause,” said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. “Given the rising COVID-19 cases in our state and region, we support the Governor’s mitigations and believe it is imperative for everyone in the state to do their part in following them so that we can return to high school sports participation as soon as possible.”

The Board will revisit the status of winter sports at their update discussion on December 2, and again at their regularly scheduled meeting on December 14 if necessary.

“Taking into account the current state mitigations, the Board believes that early to mid-December will be the most reasonable target to review the status of winter IHSA sports and activities,” said Anderson. “The Board is sensitive to the scheduling difficulties these delays create for athletic directors and coaches. However, our experiences this summer and fall lead us to believe that setting arbitrary start dates hinders the process even more. We realize it may seem redundant, but we have to preach patience as we await more data and direction from the state. Despite the obstacles this unprecedented school year has presented, the Board’s vision to provide participation opportunities in all IHSA sports has not wavered.”

The Board was steadfast in their desire to remind all athletes and athletic programs that adhering to the mitigations is vital to the hopes of safely playing high school sports in Illinois as soon as possible.

“I believe there is a misconception that IHSA and non-school athletic programs have an adversarial relationship,” said Anderson. “In my time at the IHSA, I have not found that to be the case at all. More so, I think there is a mutual respect for the opportunities that each provide for athletes. IHSA schools have been exemplary in adhering to state regulations throughout this pandemic and we are calling upon non-school programs to hold themselves to that same standard. As school and non-school sports temporarily cease in Illinois, and throughout the Midwest, it is a great reminder that putting the health and safety of our fellow citizens at the forefront in the short-term will allow all levels of athletics to thrive in the long-term.”

The Board provided the following participation clarifications to member schools:

Winter Season Start Date: Given the timing of the Governor’s new mitigations, November 16 will not be recognized as the start date of the winter season, regardless of whether winter sport teams conducted any official tryouts or practices. A new start date will be established for each sport once winter sports can be conducted again.

Conditioning & Weight Training: Conditioning and weight training before and after school are paused. Local schools will decide if conditioning and weight training programs that are a part of their academic curriculums continue or are ceased.

Open Gyms: Are paused and cannot be conducted at this time.

Outdoor Workouts: Outdoor workouts may be conducted in any sport in groups of 10 or less with masks and social distancing. Coaches are counted toward the 10. Use of sport-specific equipment is allowable with proper sanitizing practices.

One-on-One Skill Work: Per Tier 3 Resurgence Mitigations and with school approval, one-on-one skill work between a coach and student-athlete is permitted for winter sports only, but is limited to one coach and one student-athlete per facility.

Activities: Practices and competitions may only be conducted virtually.

Non-School Participation: All sports organizations in the state, school or non-school, have been directed to abide by the Governor's mitigations. IHSA coaches cannot organize non-school participation in any fashion. IHSA by-law 3.100 will be in effect once winter sport seasons begin following this pause.