2020-2021 Football Rules Modifications

The following rules modifications by the NFHS have been approved by MSHSAA for implementation for the 2020-2021 school year. The modifications outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Return to Competition

1. Football Rules Considerations
   - TEAM BOX (Rule 1-2-3g)
     - The team box may be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard lines (for players only) in order for more social-distancing space for the teams.
     - Maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines at all times while in the team box.
     - Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment.
   - BALL (Rule 1-3-2)
     - The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer.
     - The ball holders should maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times during the contest.
   - FACE MASKS [Rules 1-5-1a, 1-5-3c(4)]
     - Cloth face coverings are permissible.
     - Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.
   - TOOTH AND MOUTH PROTECTORS [Rule 1-5-1d(5)]
     - **Still being determined at this time on how to best handle the tooth and mouth protector during the contest. The NFHS SMAC will update the membership as soon as guidance is developed for all sports that require a tooth and mouth protector.
   - GLOVES (Rule 1-5-2b)
     - Gloves are permissible but still must comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the NOCSAE Standard or the SFIA Specification.
   - STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS (Rule 1-7)
     - Each state association may adopt other playing/administrative rules for football for the 2020 season that would decrease exposure to respiratory droplets and COVID-19.
   - CHARGED TIME-OUTS AND AUTHORIZED CONFERENCES (Rules 2-6-2, 3-5-3, 3-5-8)
     - A single charged time-out may be extended to a maximum of two minutes in length.
     - The authorized conference for the charged time-out should take place between the 9-yard marks and not at the sideline for social-distancing purposes. (It would be permissible for more than one coach to be involved in this conference and for technology to be used.)
     - Each game official and player should have their own beverage container brought out to them on the field.
   - INTERMISSION BETWEEN PERIODS AND AFTER SCORING (Rule 3-5-7l)
     - The intermission may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick.
2. **Football Game Officials Manual Considerations**
   - **GAME OFFICIALS UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT**
     - Electronic whistles are permissible (supplies are limited).
     - Choose a whistle whose tone will carry outside.
     - Fox 40 Mini -
     - Fox 40 Unisex Electronic – (3 tone) -
     - Ergo-Guard - (3 tone) - orange
     - Windsor - (3 tone)
     - Check the market for other choices
     - Officials shall refer to the 2020-21 MSHSAA Guidelines – Recommendations for Opening Sports/Activities document for information regarding the use of masks or face coverings. This document can be found here: [Guidelines & Recommendations](#).
   - Gloves are permissible.

   - **PREGAME CONFERENCE, COIN TOSS, OVERTIME and POSTGAME PROCEDURES**
     - For the coin toss, limit attendees to the referee, umpire and one designated representative from each team. Use of headsets with other crew members (if applicable).
     - Coin toss should take place in the center of the field with designated individuals maintaining current recommended social distancing guidelines.
     - No handshakes prior to and following the coin toss.
     - Maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines while performing all pregame responsibilities with all officiating crew members, game administration staff, line-to-gain crew, clock operators, individuals handling the balls during the game and team personnel.
     - For the overtime procedure, please use the same procedure as used at the start of the contest for the coin toss.
     - Suspend postgame protocol of shaking hands.

   - **MONITORING**
     - Officials are NOT responsible for monitoring activities on the sidelines, such as social distancing, hand washing, symptoms of illnesses and other such issues. This monitoring remains with the coaching staff and school personnel.

   - **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**
     - Take temperature in the morning and then again prior to leaving home/work for a contest; if temperature is elevated above 100.3 or a level recommended by your local or state health department notify contracted school immediately.
     - If you do not feel well and COVID-19 symptoms are present, notify the contracted school, your crew members, your assigner and stay at home.
     - “Vulnerable individuals” are defined by CDC as people 65 years and older and others with serious underlying health conditions. Officials fitting this description may wish to seek medical advice prior to returning to officiating.
     - Communicate with school athletic administrator about school/corporation contest expectations.
     - Upon arrival at site and throughout the contest, wash and sanitize your hands frequently.
     - Travel – considerations should be given to travel policies.
     - Maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines while in the locker room and/or on the court/field.
     - Consider supplying your own hydration and snacks to the venue.
     - Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment.

3. **Final Considerations for Football**
   - Before, during and after the contest, players, coaches, game officials, team personnel and game administration
officials should wash and sanitize their hands as often as possible.

- Maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines at all times while on the sidelines and on the field of play when possible.
- Everyone should have their own beverage container that is not shared.
- Cloth face coverings are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Try and limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on the field level throughout the contest.
- If available, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use current recommended social distancing guidelines and should be properly cleaned and sanitized prior to their arrival.
- **Press Box/Coaches Booth-Box:** Limit individual in the press box to essential personnel which includes home team game clock operator/scorer, play clock operator and spotter while maintaining current recommended social distancing guidelines. Visiting team personnel (statistician, etc.) are not deemed essential and will need to find an alternative location. Space available in order to maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines is a variable in determining the number allowed in the Press Box. Coaches booths/boxes are deemed to be separate areas from the press box. Space available in order to maintain current recommended social distancing guidelines is the variable in determining the number allowed in the Coaches booths/boxes.