Allegany COUNTY New York

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

County Office Building,
7 Court Street, Room #30
Belmont, New York 14813
Phone: (585) 268-9250
Fax: (585) 268-9264

Theresa Moore	Jami D'Arcy	Tyler J. Shaw, MHA	Brittney Schuld	David Rahr
Supervising PHE	Env. Health Director	Public Health Director	DPS	Accountant

TO: All Media Sources
FROM: Theresa K. Moore, Supervising Public Health Educator/Public Information Officer
RE: Resuming High-Risk Youth Sports and Recreation Activities in Allegany County
DATE: January 28, 2021

News Release: Resuming High-Risk Youth Sports and Recreation Activities in Allegany County

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a heightened responsibility on youth sports organizations, coaches, families, and athletes to reduce transmission and to foster a safer environment for children to participate in youth sports. On Friday, January 22, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced he would allow higher-risk sports to commence in New York schools effective February 1, 2021, subject to local health department approval. Individual schools, student athletes, and their parents/guardians must carefully consider a variety of factors before making an individual decision to participate.

Schools must follow the New York State Department of Health's INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR SPORTS AND RECREATION DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY and applicable Executive Orders for all school sports and recreation activities. Per current State guidance, schools must limit capacity of indoor facilities to no more than 50 percent occupancy and a maximum of two spectators per player. In addition, schools must implement protocols to ensure social distancing, use of face coverings, and enhanced disinfection. For moderate and higher-risk sports, if an athlete, coach or referee receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, all in-person team or group activities (e.g. practices, scrimmages, games, meetings) may result in a 10-day suspension to mitigate the spread of infection, especially if an outbreak or cluster is imminent. Situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Participating in higher-risk sports presents significant risks. The level of risk presented by a return to sports is driven by the sport and setting, local disease activity, and individual circumstances including underlying health conditions that may place the athlete or household contacts at increased risk of severe disease should they contract COVID-19.

Additional areas of concern that require consideration include:

- The potential spread of COVID-19 variants that may be present in the community.
- The risk of exposure from overnight travel situations.
- The potential quarantine required of the entire team if a teammate tests positive for COVID-19.
- The school's ability to monitor and enforce compliance with the New York State's sports and recreation guidance.
- The requirement of timely reporting of COVID-19 exposures that occur in sports settings to local health authorities.

Tips for players, spectators, and schools in preparing to return to high-risk youth sports:

- Families should review school and league COVID-19 policies as well as **CDC recommendations** for youth sports.

- Always follow safety protocols.
- Prioritize noncontact activity, including drills that maintain physical or social distancing.
- If physical distancing can't be maintained, use cloth face coverings or masks as directed in State guidance.
- Reinforce appropriate hygiene and respiratory etiquette through signage, education, and use of handwashing stations or hand sanitizer.
- Consider the use of practice pods in small sizes to provide separation among small groups of athletes.
- Minimize travel outside of contiguous counties or outside of New York State, as per State guidance.
  -If you must travel, keep assigned bus seats and a seating chart.
  -Please keep records of room assignments if overnight stays are necessary.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched equipment and surfaces on the field, court, or play surface often.
- Reduce use of shared equipment and communal spaces, such as locker rooms.
- Avoid poorly ventilated areas and small spaces. Use fans or open doors and windows when possible.
- Do not allow athletes to share food and drink.
- Participants should always use their own water bottles; avoid the use of drinking fountains.

Contact sports bring people close together and increase the risk of transmission. If schools, athletes, and their parents/guardians choose to return to high-risk sports, they must follow guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Athletes should restrict their activity outside of sports to minimize risk and reduce community spread. We must work together during these stressful times to ensure that our youth has the opportunity to participate in athletics safely.

All responsible parties must develop safety plans and affirm at the end of the state guidance document that they are able to meet the required State guidance.

Additional Resources: **CDC Toolkit for Youth Sports**

###