



# Shepherd Hill Athletic Department

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## **Winter 2020-2021 Out-of-Season Practice/Conditioning Protocols & Procedures**

As excerpted from the MIAA (12/11/2020): “Playing sports comes with inherent risks. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional risks to group activities/sports. Modifications have been developed to lower risks from COVID-19 using National and State guidelines and input from medical specialists. Playing any sport (even with modified play) will continue to carry some risk of acquiring COVID-19, but these modifications were developed to help guide schools in best practices to limit exposure while offering an opportunity to participate. These protocols and procedures are to be utilized in compliance with all EEA, DESE, DPH, and DCRSD guidelines already in place.”

### **Pre-Conditioning Screening:**

Students, coaches, and adult supervisors, along with any others associated with the athletic program, must complete the daily self-certification completely and honestly, every morning prior to the start of school, and any time there is a change in health status. These individuals may not attend practices or conditioning sessions if they are isolated for illness or quarantined for exposure to infection. All registered students *must* have a valid physical exam, dated within the last 13 months, on file in the nursing office.

If any individual exhibits any signs/symptoms of COVID-19 infection (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), they should not attend practices or conditioning sessions, and should seek further medical attention, followed by alerting the school nursing staff. Those who have signs/symptoms of COVID-19 infection should test and isolate in accordance with DPH guidance. For students, coaches, and adult supervisors who begin to show signs/symptoms of COVID-19 during a practice or conditioning session, self-isolation must occur immediately and the individual must go home. Appropriate school personnel will be notified as soon as possible, and further medical attention should be sought.

For individuals with symptoms who test negative for COVID-19 infection, they may return to practices or conditioning sessions once they are approved to return to school by the school nursing staff. Those who are diagnosed with COVID-19 infection should rest and avoid exercise for at least 10 days from symptom onset. Procedures for return to activity should follow CDC, DPH, and local board of health guidelines (see CDC link above). In addition, persons with COVID-19 infection need to receive written clearance from their health care provider and school administrator/designee to return to participation. Any return to activity should be slow and gradual, and may follow a return-to-play plan under the supervision of the athletic trainer and/or school nurse.

For students, coaches, and adult supervisors, along with any others associated with the athletic program who were exposed to COVID-19 and/or are considered a “close contact”, all DCRSD policies and procedures must be followed in regards to quarantine, including no participation in practices or conditioning sessions following the exposure, while also complying with CDC, DPH, and local board of health guidelines and protocols. All individuals should receive written clearance from their school administrator/designee to return to activity.

### **Cohorts and/or Participants:**

For all practices and conditioning sessions, cohorts of no more than ten (10) students must be created and implemented, including communication to students regarding which cohort they belong to. These cohorts are to be kept with fidelity; cohorts cannot practice together, and students may not switch between cohorts. A written (or electronic) record detailing each cohort must be provided to the Athletic Director prior to the first date of practices or conditioning sessions. A written (or electronic) record must be kept of all individuals present at each practice or conditioning session. Students who sign up to participate in practice sessions may **not** also sign up for conditioning sessions, and vice versa. Practice and conditioning sessions will be limited to those students who are **not** already registered or participating in a Winter 2020-21 sport to preserve all cohorts and limit the risk of exposure and/or cross-contamination.

For the Winter 2020-2021 season, “out-of-season” practices are applicable to the sport of Indoor Track **only**, and may be held exclusively for those students who have previously participated in or intend to participate in Indoor Track and may consist of *sport-specific* activities, per Midland-Wachusett Interscholastic League vote. Conditioning sessions may be held by any qualified adult during the Winter 2020-2021 season, however these sessions may **not** be held exclusively for any particular team, should be open and available to any interested student at Shepherd Hill, will be limited in scope, depth, and frequency (e.g. weight-lifting; conditioning; no *sport-specific* training), and will **not** be mandatory for any student or for future participation on any particular team, whether explicitly or implicitly communicated. All out-of-season practices and conditioning sessions must abide by the guidelines detailed within this document.

### **Timeline:**

Out-of-season practices for Indoor Track **only** may begin on Tuesday, January 19th and are limited to ten **(10)** total practice sessions. The out-of-season practice period will end on Sunday, February 21st. Practice sessions will not exceed 90 minutes in length, and are limited to outdoor activity only (per Midland-Wachusett Interscholastic League vote). All efforts should be made to plan according to the weather to ensure safe participation for all involved. Appropriate attire should be worn.

Conditioning sessions may begin on Tuesday, January 19th and are limited to no more than two (2) total conditioning sessions per week. The conditioning session period will end on Sunday, February 21st. Conditioning sessions will not exceed 60 minutes in length (and may be reduced depending on the number of cohorts and available space), and are limited to controlled, pre-approved weight room and outdoor facility use following the strict cohort model. If outdoors, all efforts should be made to plan according to the weather to ensure safe participation for all involved. Appropriate attire should be worn.

### **Social Distancing:**

- **Practice** - Coaches and adult supervisors are responsible for ensuring social distancing is maintained between students as much as possible. This includes additional spacing between students while stretching, warming up, chatting, changing machines/locations, etc. Students must maintain spacing, and there should be absolutely no congregating of students while practicing or conditioning. All sessions must be conducted in pre-determined and documented cohorts, with the same group of no more than ten (10) students participating together, throughout the duration of the practice/conditioning period. Students must not move between pods for the entire duration. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection. Records must be kept of who is present in each cohort, each day, and will be the direct responsibility of the coach and adult supervisors.

- **Locker Rooms** - All locker rooms will remain closed. Students should report to practices or conditioning sessions in proper gear/attire, and immediately return home to shower, clean clothing, and sanitize equipment at the conclusion of each workout. Specific bathroom facilities will be explained to coaches and adult supervisors, and students should use restrooms one-at-a-time, except for emergencies. Coaches and adult supervisors will be responsible for tracking whether multiple students used a restroom at the same time and for how long.
- **Facility Access** - Only those students, coaches, and adult supervisors who have signed up to participate in practices or conditioning sessions, as well as any essential school personnel (e.g. athletic trainer, administrators, custodians) are permitted in the facilities being used for practices or conditioning sessions. All others are not to be within the facility. *Students, coaches, and adult supervisors who did not sign up prior to the start of the practice/conditioning period will not be allowed to join after the start of the period, nor will anyone be allowed to add to cohort groups.*
- **Personal Items** - It is recommended that each student bring their own gym bag for personal items (see gym bag information below). All personal items should remain in the gym bag when not in use. Gym bags should be placed in a predetermined area six **(6)** feet apart for the duration of the practice or conditioning session.
- **Huddles/Group Gatherings** - Social distancing (six feet or more between individuals) must be maintained and ear-loop style face masks utilized at all times. Communication should occur as openly as possible, without using excessive speech volume to reduce vocal aerosol.
- **Weight Lifting Spotters** - Spotters may be used for weight lifting, provided no two spotters/lifters are closer than six **(6)** feet for fifteen **(15)** or more cumulative minutes during any one session. All efforts should be made to rotate spotters and drastically limit or fully eliminate exercises which necessitate spotters.
- **Spectators** - No spectators of any kind are allowed during any practice or conditioning sessions. Only those students, coaches, and adult supervisors who were previously approved may be in attendance or inside any facility during a session.
- **Travel** - All practice or conditioning sessions must take place on the Shepherd Hill campus. Students, coaches, and adult supervisors will assume responsibility for transporting themselves to and from the Shepherd Hill campus for practice or conditioning sessions. Those individuals who are not from the same household should wear face masks during travel to and from sessions, especially if car pooling.

#### **Practice/Conditioning Session Protocols:**

- **Masks** - Students, coaches, and adult supervisors are required to wear cloth face masks per MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) guidelines, including covering *both the nose and mouth at all times*. Gaiters/bandana-style masks are not permitted. Face masks consisting of multiple layers and a tighter weave are more effective and mandatory. Masks with valves or filters should not be worn.
  - The most effective fabrics for cloth face masks are:
    - Tightly woven fabrics, such as cotton and cotton blends
    - Breathable
    - Two (2) or three (3) layers

- Less effective fabrics for cloth face masks are:
  - Loosely woven fabrics, such as loose knit wool or synthetic blends
  - Difficult to breathe through (e.g. plastic; leather)
  - One (1) layer

Masks breaks may be taken for drinking, and when needed for breathing comfort or health emergencies. Mask breaks may only be taken when greater than six **(6)** feet of distance can be maintained from all others, and are recommended to occur outdoors.

All individuals will be responsible for providing their own face masks, and students should prepare to have extra face coverings available. Students who have their face masks become damp or soiled should change regularly. Caution should be exercised when replacing a mask if hands are soiled or dirty. All individuals that are unable to wear face masks due to a medical condition or disability must provide a written medical note to the school administrator/designee excusing the student from wearing the mask, and may be subject to further review.

It is the responsibility of the coaches and/or adult supervisors to monitor and ensure that all students, coaches are wearing face masks appropriately (over the nose and mouth) and at all times. If students, coaches, and/or adult supervisors are observed in non-compliance with this requirement, the current session will be immediately terminated, and any remaining sessions may be cancelled.

- **Player Habits** - Coaches and/or adult supervisors should work to break old habits and create new ones in an effort to minimize the spread of the virus. Spitting, nose clearing on the floor/ground, licking hands/fingers, and spitting on gloves/hands/shoes during practices and conditioning sessions are not permitted. The habit of minimizing any touching of the face and covering coughs should be practiced.

Given that indoor conditions and ventilation impact the external risk of participation, it is highly recommended that indoor conditioning session participants and all in attendance work to refrain from active yelling, grunting, etc. due to the increased opportunity for droplet transmission. Coaches and/or adult supervisors are encouraged to monitor this and remind participants to eliminate any unnecessary shouting.

- **Hand Sanitizer and/or Sanitizing Wipes** - Students, coaches, and adult supervisors are strongly encouraged to provide their own hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and/or sanitizing wipes AND use them frequently - including prior to entering a facility, prior to exiting a facility, between machines, before and after using equipment, and frequently otherwise. Additionally, it is emphatically recommended that all individuals avoid touching the face/nose/mouth throughout practice or conditioning sessions. Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes will also be provided at each facility by the Shepherd Hill Athletic Department.
- **Ventilation** - Ventilation should be optimized (please see EEA guidance on page 14 at the following link: <https://bit.ly/38oNggQ>) . For controlled, limited, pre-approved conditioning sessions in the weight room, exterior doors should be left open to increase air circulation and ventilation.

## **Equipment:**

- **General Equipment** - There should be no shared athletic equipment unless required. Any equipment that is used for practice or a conditioning session should be cleaned and disinfected prior to and immediately following use. Efforts should be made to have only one individual handle the set-up and break-down of equipment on any given day, and where possible, students should not share machines, weights, etc. Shepherd Hill custodial and maintenance staff will provide disinfecting atomizers to disinfect indoor facilities/equipment between cohorts and/or sessions.
- **Personal Items** - Shoes, clothing, towels, and other personal items must not be shared among students. Any items that are not currently being worn/used should be stored inside a personal gym bag. Gym bags should be placed in a predetermined area six **(6)** feet apart for the duration of practices or conditioning sessions.

## **Hydration:**

All students must bring their own water bottle and/or enough water for the entire practice or conditioning sessions. Water bottles must not be shared, and water will not be provided. All water fountains will be closed for use.

## **Personal Gym Bag - recommended supplies:**

- Reusable face masks - The face masks must be worn at all times over the nose and mouth. All students should have at least four **(4)** additional, back-up face masks should their initial mask become damp or soiled.
- Warm-up clothing, electronic devices, and other personal items that are used by the student, prior to practice or conditioning, must be placed back in the personal gym bag before practice or conditioning begins.
- Students are recommended to always have a personal bottle of hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) available. There will be less chance of cross-contamination and less time standing around waiting to use a shared hand sanitizer. Be sure to have this inside a sealable bag, in case it leaks. This will be used when you enter and exit the practice/conditioning facility, and at other necessary times in between.
- Students are recommended to have sanitizing/disinfectant wipes for personal use. When using a restroom area, it is best to disinfect any surface that may be touched, before and after using the facilities.
- Athletic braces, tape, inhalers, or any other sports/medical item used before, during, or after practice/conditioning should be stored in a personal gym bag when not in use.
- Additional shoes should also be stored in a separate compartment or bag inside a personal gym bag to prevent possible cross-contamination with other items in the personal gym bag.
- Any other item that is deemed necessary for practice/conditioning must be stored in the personal gym bag when it is not being used.

**\*Disclaimer:** Practices and conditioning sessions remain a privilege. Compliance with all aforementioned protocols and procedures is expected. Failure to do so may result in the immediate cancellation of all such sessions, and those which remain.