

Metro Denver Partnership for Health



January 11, 2021

To: Rhonda Blanford-Green, Commissioner, Colorado High School Activities Association
Jill Hunsaker Ryan & Mara Brosy-Wiwchar, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Kacey Wulff, Senior Advisor for COVID-19 Response, Resilience, and Recovery
Metro Denver Region School Superintendents (via DASCC)

Re: Recommendations to Reduce the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission in Wrestling

The Metro Denver Partnership for Health (MDPH) appreciates Colorado High School Activities Association's (CHSAA) efforts to update guidance around CHSAA-sponsored school sports. We agree that masking is a critical component of a comprehensive approach to mitigate transmission risk within school-sponsored sports. Overall, MDPH supports and believes that CHSAA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) guidance will help reduce risk while allowing young athletes to be physically active, another shared goal.

CHSAA's guidance exempts wrestlers from wearing a mask when engaged in a bout. We have significant concerns about the exposure risk this creates for wrestlers due to the sport's high degree of person-to-person contact and the increased exhalation while in close contact and with unmasked faces. Increased risk of transmission among these athletes not only threatens their health but the potential for schools to continue in-person learning.

MDPH is offering recommendations and strategies to CHSAA, CDPHE, and the region's school districts to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in wrestling. Each of the recommendations incrementally reduces the risk of COVID-19 spread and should be combined to increase safety during this activity. We urge all school districts to implement all of the recommendations to the greatest extent possible to reduce risk and to ensure consistency across our region as schools compete with each other.

1. Delay wrestling until later in the school semester when more vaccine has been distributed, and cases have had a chance to decline from the winter holidays.
2. Promote the use of the Binax Home test. Test all wrestlers regularly as well as prior to competitions, looking to the practices and experiences of other team sporting organizations implementing routine testing approaches.
3. Require all wrestlers to attend classes 100% remotely through the semester or until 14 days after the last bout at the end of the wrestling season.
4. Work together to identify a masking system that could work with wrestling and not increase safety issues with wrestlers themselves, including identifying options and promising practices from other states.

We have similar concerns with cheerleading and the inability to wear a mask, although to a lesser degree given the more limited contact in this sport. Cheerleaders should only remove their mask when engaged in tumbling, stunting, or flying, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Masks should be worn at all other times and coaches are strongly encouraged to alter routines to achieve mask wearing and distancing to the greatest extent possible.

Lastly, local jurisdictions may have masking requirements in place that are more stringent than the state masking requirement and we encourage you to work with your local public health agency to clarify these requirements and how they align with these recommendations.

We look forward to continued partnership and collaboration to implement these approaches.

Regards,



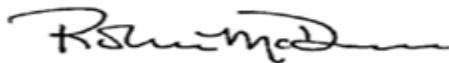
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