

A look at what decisions have been made to date, and an outline of the steps that pave the way for a return to athletics and activities in our current environment.

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In an attempt to help answer questions and to clarify the status of the WIAA Return-to-Play Process, the WIAA is sharing this statement in partnership with the Washington State Risk Management Pool and Clear Risk after conversations with the Governor's Office and Washington Department of Health (DOH). The WIAA fully understands the desire to return to play. Education-based activities is a passion for those in our office as well as for athletic directors and coaches around the state. However, the WIAA's top priority is the health and safety of student-participants while offering equitable opportunities to all students.

How Did We Get Here:

1. In June, OSPI worked with the Governor's Office, DOH and the Department of Labor & Industries to develop [health and safety guidance](#) to be included in the school reopening guidance based on their access to the best available medical and scientific information. DOH continuously reviews the science and data available on COVID-19, and updates this guidance accordingly.
 - a. WIAA Return-to-Play guidelines were reviewed by the DOH and the Governor's Office.
2. On August 5, the Governor announced a [decision-making framework](#) for the provision of in-person learning to be used by local school districts and local health jurisdictions as they made decisions about modes of learning for the start of the school year and then for adjustments as the school year and pandemic progress.
 - a. The framework included recommended modes of learning based on community transmission around the school as measured by the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population over a 14-day period by county. The framework also encourages local leaders to consider their test positivity, case and hospitalization trends, and other important education and health risks and benefits.
 - b. The framework prioritizes access to in person learning and recommended no extra-curricular activities if schools are providing primarily remote learning. Extra-curricular activities can resume when most students are back for some form of in person learning (whether hybrid or full time).
 - c. It is reported 95% of Washington students started school in the Fall in primarily remote learning mode.
3. Risk Management groups recommended that schools follow the Governor's Office and DOH recommendations.

Next Steps:

1. The Governor's Office, DOH and OSPI stated they would periodically review guidelines as more information became available. Recommendations related to extra-curricular activities could be adjusted. The timeline for this review process is to be determined.
 - a. The WIAA Board will review any new recommendations and adjust schedules and guidelines as deemed appropriate.

What We Need To Return To Play:

1. Governor to recommend return to play
2. DOH to provide guidance on required steps to return to play
3. Risk management to review any new recommendation in response to Governor and DOH
4. School leadership to commit to play
 - a. Most would consider return to play once students are able to return to school even in a hybrid model
 - b. Coaches under collective bargaining agreements would need to support return to play
5. WIAA Executive Board to review current schedule and guidelines.

Key Considerations:

1. Do schools have the resources and ability to meet any new recommendations that may come from Governor's Office and DOH?
2. Would a limited fall season provide more or less opportunity for a majority of WIAA participants?
 - a. Currently, the WIAA Season 3 schedule provides for 7 regular-season contests in the spring plus one additional contest for schools that do not qualify to postseason
3. The Washington State Football Coaches Association and other coaches associations have advocated for more games rather than fewer
4. What would students gain by playing in the fall rather than the scheduled seasons?
5. What is a realistic start date for a fall season if recommendations and guidelines change? How much time is needed for students to be physically ready to return safely?
6. Would a late fall start disproportionately impact fall sports such as golf, tennis and cross country due to weather issues?
7. Allow competition between schools that desire to play contests during the open period currently scheduled September 28-November 30

About WIAA

Founded in 1905, the WIAA is a membership organization of over 800 middle level and high schools from every corner of the state with the goal of making memories through education-based activities. The WIAA supports and sponsors 23 sports along with five activities that incorporate over 500,000 student participants. The WIAA and its member schools believe in the value of extra-curricular activities have been linked to better standardized test scores, increased school attendance, improved physical and mental health, and a more positive student experience.



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