



Fall 2020

Guidelines & Recommendations

(Updated 7.10.20)

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM CARR

NAIA Members,

In this document you will find the NAIA's guidelines, requirements, and recommendations regarding the Fall 2020 athletics season. We know that it's imperative to allow our members time to prepare and we appreciate your patience as we researched many options and gained input from various constituent groups to assist with these recommendations.

Determining requirements during a pandemic is a little like building a house in the sand. While we all desire the strongest foundation possible, we must acknowledge that many elements are outside of our control and can change at any moment. These guidelines have been developed in good faith based on what we know at this time. Our goal is to adhere to them to the best of our abilities, but it is imperative to allow for some flexibility as unforeseen changes arise.

It is also critical to keep in mind the greater good of all our member institutions as we navigate this process. Restrictions and accessibility differ by region, so many different viewpoints had to be taken into consideration. Most importantly, this entire process must be guided by the health and safety of our student-athletes.

Finally, this is still a work in progress. We are continuing to examine details and will share additional information as soon as it is available.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please email covid19info@naia.org.

Be well and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Carr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jim Carr
NAIA President and CEO

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I. RETURN TO PLAY

A. Threshold Policy Overview

The NAIA will implement a threshold system as a guideline for determining return to play. The threshold goal is for approximately half the participating institutions in each sport to receive clearance from local authorities to return to competition before the season can begin. (For example, NAIA football has 95 participating institutions. When 47 of these programs gain clearance from authorities to play, the NAIA football season will be authorized to begin.)

1. A Cleared to Play Questionnaire was emailed to presidents and athletics directors at all member institutions. If you did not receive it or have new information regarding when competition can occur on your campus, please email Director of Communications [Jen Saab](#).
2. The following are the approximate thresholds needed for each fall sport:
 - a. Cross Country: 110 schools cleared to play
 - b. Football: 47 schools cleared to play
 - c. Men's Soccer: 101 schools cleared to play
 - d. Women's Soccer: 105 schools cleared to play
 - e. Women's Volleyball: 110 schools cleared to play

Spring sports that play in the fall (e.g. golf) do not need to meet a participation threshold for fall play since their championships do not take place until spring.
3. The threshold must be met by August 15 for the season to proceed. The NAIA will continue to share updates regarding the status of when each program's threshold has been met.
4. If the number of participating programs falls below 50% during the season, the NAC Executive Committee will assess the individual program's status and championship options.
5. While we are optimistic that we will meet the thresholds necessary to start competition in the fall, we are assessing the opportunities and challenges available to NAIA members if thresholds are not met. No decisions have been made at this point, but the COP Executive Committee and national office staff agree that NAIA members who can compete should be allowed to do so. More to come on this topic as we assess the proper role of the NAIA in this scenario.

B. Start Dates

1. Practice: The practice start date for all sports, will be Saturday, August 15. As a result, from today through August 14, any activities deemed practice by the NAIA are strictly prohibited. (Click [here](#) for NAIA definition of practice.)
 - a. Though August 15 is the first day a practice can occur, institutions can have students return to campus earlier.
 - b. The established start dates for practice allows for three weeks of practice prior to the start of competition and four weeks for football. However, the

three or four weeks of practice are not mandatory and may be shortened at the institution's discretion.

- c. As an exception to the summer practice restriction, institutions may conduct virtual sessions (e.g. Zoom or Facetime) that may meet the definition of practice prior to August 15.
 - d. Current student-athletes cannot participate in tryouts with prospective student-athletes until August 15, 2020.
2. Competition:
- a. September 5, 2020 will be the competition start date for all sports with the exception of football. (This start date applies to all sports that schedule practices or competitions in the fall, regardless of when the regular season is played.)
 - b. September 12, 2020 will be the competition start date for football.
 - c. The COP Executive Committee has determined exceptions will not be granted for either practice or competition start dates.

C. Minimum/Maximum* Contests: Due to the reduction of the length of season, contest minimums and maximums have been altered for the 2020 fall season.

- a. Cross Country – 4 (minimum) to 7 (maximum)
- b. Football – 6 (minimum) to 9 (maximum)
- c. Men's and Women's Soccer – 8 (minimum) to 14 (maximum)
- d. Women's Volleyball – 13 (minimum) to 22 (maximum)

**Institutions may extend the maximum number of contests by one for all teams that schedule at least one contest with a member of the Association of Independent Institutions (AII).*

II. HEALTH & SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Return to Athletics Practice & Activities

Each member institution has the primary responsibility to keep people within its own community safe. This responsibility reaches further than student-athletes and athletic department staff, recognizing that these populations will be included in an institution's comprehensive campus planning.

As a result, the NAIA will defer to each member to implement proper health and safety measures for its general campus operations that are consistent with campus policies and requirements of local and state governments. An institution should determine the appropriate timing and protocols for when and how student-athletes return to campus, as well as begin to engage in team activities and practice. The NAIA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. *(See Section VII. Health & Safety Resources)*

B. Return to Competition

NAIA staff, in consultation with industry experts, has developed a combination of recommended best practices and requirements for NAIA member institutions to implement prior to and during competition.

When returning to competition, each institution should determine appropriate protocols to be used for its specific facilities and circumstances. Institutions are encouraged to think carefully about additional measures that should be implemented to prepare for traveling to off-site locations, or hosting visiting teams and conducting competitions. The NAIA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. *(See Section VII. Recommended Best Practices & Resources)*

When student-athletes and staff from a member institution begin to interact with those from another member, we must all work together to keep the NAIA community safe. The policies incorporated herein are intended to provide NAIA members with assurances that opponents are complying with specific minimum standards and using best efforts to achieve best practices.

Requirements are as follows and are detailed in sections III, IV and V of this document:

1. Screening protocols (Section III)
2. Testing protocols (Section IV)
3. Notice to opponents of safety preparations (Section VI)

In addition to these specific NAIA guidelines, every NAIA member will be expected to meet all local and state requirements at all times.

III. SCREENING

Please note that the screening requirements are based on data that is currently available. As findings related to COVID-19 continue to develop, this information will be evaluated and updated accordingly.

A. Timing

Beginning August 15, coaches, student-athletes and those in contact with student-athletes are required to be screened each day a practice or team activity occurs.

For competition, all game-day participants (student-athletes, coaches, support staff, officials, etc.) are required to be screened within six hours of the beginning of the contest. All screening must be done by an athletic trainer or designated healthcare professional. If an institution does not have an athletic trainer or healthcare professional on site, it will be the responsibility of the host institution to conduct all prescreening requirements for the visiting team(s).

B. Requirements

Each institution must implement the screening requirements described below, though an institution and/or conference is free to include additional components or questions it may deem necessary. Screening must include:

1. Monitoring of the temperature of each participant, specifically monitoring for a fever $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$
2. Observation or self-reported feelings of illness
3. Medical history questioning related to common COVID-19 indicators and exposure to the COVID-19 virus

The screening process will identify student-athletes, staff or other game-day participants who should be withheld from participation and referred for further evaluation or COVID-19 testing. A weighted scoring system will be utilized to determine the threshold for withholding a participant. Symptoms and responses from medical history questioning should be scored as follows:

| EXPOSURE | SCORE |
|---|---|
| Within the last 14 days, have you been in close contact unmasked with someone who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus? Close contact is < 6 feet for ≥ 15 minutes | 2 (Unless you have received a negative test result since exposure) |
| SYMPTOMS (Self-reported) | |
| TEMPERATURE OF 100.4° F or greater | 2 |
| REPEATED SHAKING OR CHILLS | 2 |
| COUGH (<i>new or different than normal</i>) | 2 |
| SHORTNESS OF BREATH (<i>not associated with preexisting condition i.e. asthma</i>) | 2 |
| NEW LOSS OF SMELL and/or TASTE | 2 |
| LOOSE STOOLS / UPSET STOMACH | 1 |
| MUSCLE PAIN | 1 |
| SORE THROAT | 1 |
| HEADACHE | 1 |
| CONGESTION (<i>not associated with preexisting condition i.e. allergies</i>) | 1 |
| TOTAL | |

Total score of 0: Continue with standard precautions and monitor regularly for changes in symptoms. Allow individual to continue participation under supervision.

Total score of 1: The symptoms described by the individual warrant further investigation by the healthcare team. Expand screening to obtain further information. Based on responses, healthcare team will determine whether to allow participation or refer individual for additional care.

Total score of 2: The individual is to immediately be removed from practice and/or competition and referred to healthcare provider for care. A release for return to activity from the healthcare provider must be provided prior to return to practice or competition.

C. Submitting Results

To streamline the screening process, the NAIA is developing an online solution that will be used to verify the screening protocol was followed. The athletic trainer or institutional representative will be asked to verify that the appropriate steps were taken for all individuals screened, and indicate how many total individuals were withheld. The tool will not collect individual screening results.

D. Removal from and Return to Competition or Practice

If a student-athlete is withheld from participation through the screening process, he or she must:

1. Quarantine immediately,
2. Consult with a healthcare professional, and
3. Continue to be withheld from athletic activities until he or she receives a release from a healthcare professional or a negative PCR test.

E. Multiple Team Members Exhibiting Symptoms

If multiple student-athletes on a single team are showing symptoms through the screening process, the institution must assess whether the team should be removed from competition. As of July 1, there is no consensus among experts related to the threshold (specific number of players, % of players, etc.) that would trigger the removal of a team from competition. The NAIA will continue to consult with health experts and monitor requirements and best practices established by the CDC and other sport organizations returning to play in July (NBA, MLB, etc.). Guidance will be provided on this question in late July or August.

IV. TESTING

A. Timing

All student-athletes and coaches must receive a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test no more than seven days prior to their first competition. If a student or coach tests positive during initial testing, he or she must have a negative test prior to returning

to competition. If a student or coach is unable to test during the seven-day window, he or she then must receive a negative test result before his or her first competition.

B. Requirements

Members may use local or regional CLIA approved labs or use a national resource made available by the NAIA. The NAIA has partnered with Precision Genetics (PG) and is currently negotiating with other providers.

PG will provide information soon to all NAIA members. Members must indicate no later than August 1 if they intend to use PG for testing. Those members using other testing options will be asked to provide the NAIA with documentation related to test results prior to first competition.

C. Results

More information will be provided.

D. Removal from and Return to Competition or Practice

If a student-athlete tests positive, he or she must:

1. Isolate immediately,
2. Consult with a healthcare professional, and
3. Continue to be withheld from athletic activities until he or she receives a negative PCR test.

E. Multiple Team Members Testing Positive

If multiple student-athletes on a single team test positive, the institution must assess whether the team should be removed from competition. As of July 1, there is no consensus among experts related to the threshold (specific number of players, % of players, etc.) that would trigger the removal of a team from competition. The NAIA will continue to consult with health experts and monitor requirements and best practices established by the CDC and other sport organizations returning to play in July (NBA, MLB, etc.). Guidance will be provided on this question in late July or August.

V. NOTICE TO OPPONENTS

Communication among NAIA members will be essential to keeping our student-athletes safe and completing the fall season. The NAIA is in the process of identifying key information needed by opponents to understand what protections are in place and to facilitate compliance with shared expectations. Details of how this information will be collected and made available will be included in a subsequent communication.

VI. SPECTATORS

The NAIA does not have a position on spectator attendance for regular season play, other than to require that all local and state guidance is followed. Institutions and/or conferences should determine if any additional precautions beyond local and state guidance should be implemented. The NAIA encourages all institutions to publicize their regulations regarding spectators clearly and well in advance.

VII. RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

The NAIA partnered with a panel of and epidemiological healthcare professionals, including the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association (ATA), to identify and evaluate helpful resources institutions can use in developing institutional safety protocols. Content from the following industry leaders was incorporated:

- American College Health Association (ACHA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- NATA's Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (ICSM)
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)
- United States Council for Athletes' Health (USCAH)

The following resources have been identified as relevant and reliable best practices. As additional evidence continues to become available and evolves, these resources may be updated.

Risk Mitigation – Facility Usage & Prevention Considerations:

- [ACHA Guidelines for Reopening Institutions](#)
- [CDC Considerations for Institutions of Higher Ed](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Considerations for College & University Intercollegiate Athletics](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Facility Preparation and Management](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Personnel Development and Training](#)

Equipment and Facility Sanitation:

- [CDC/EPA Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces and Schools](#)
- [CDC Guidelines for Cleaning, Disinfecting and Laundry](#)
- [EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

Athletic Healthcare:

- [ICSM Return-to-Campus Preparation](#)
- [CDC Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [USCAH Addressing COVID-19 Within Athletic Medicine](#)

Training Safety following Inactivity:

- [NSCA COVID-19 Return to Training](#)
- [CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods \(Safe Return to Training Following Inactivity\)](#)

For additional best practice information, the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association created a [Return to Athletics Guidelines](#), which includes detailed resources and recommendations.

VIII. GOING FORWARD

The NAIA, in consultation with industry experts, is providing these protocols as of July 1. They are intended to help members prepare for the fall season and invite feedback as we continue to assess the proper balance of 1) student-athlete safety and 2) a structure that would allow fall sports to proceed for those who healthy. We will continue to assess these protocols as best practices evolve and will share any necessary adjustments by early August.

FAQs are currently being developed. Please email any questions or concerns to covid19info@naia.org.