

New York State Association of Certified Football Officials, Inc.

GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIATING DURING A PANDEMIC

If an official assigned to a game experiences Covid symptoms, no matter how mild, during the week prior to the game, they are obligated to contact the assigner immediately, so they can be replaced on the crew. If they worked a game the previous week, they should also contact the members of that crew. Do not put others at risk – get a Covid test before taking any other assignments.

CONTACT THE HOST SCHOOL

- The crew Referee must contact the school athletic administration no later than 3 days prior to their upcoming contest to determine:
 - Sanitized locker room that conforms with social distancing guidelines availability for pre-game, dressing and showering?
 - Designated parking area?
 - Where to enter the host school's property – greeting by school personnel?
 - Health screening upon arrival?
 - Halftime location for officiating crew?
 - Masks are always required for all coaches, players, sideline staff and officials.
 - Any other information that you may want to communicate to each other prior to your arrival.
- The Referee shall request hand sanitizer be available in the locker room and on the field and use it between periods and during time outs. Officials are encouraged to bring their own in the event none is available.
- If facilities cannot accommodate social distancing guidelines for a pregame conference, officials should come to the contest fully dressed in uniform.
- The Referee is responsible for sharing/providing this information to all members of the crew.

NOTE - Keep in mind that you may see much more haphazard implementation of Covid policies at the JV or Modified levels.

GENERAL OFFICIATING GUIDELINES

- Officials are not responsible for monitoring activities on the sidelines, such as social distancing, face coverings, hand washing, symptoms of illnesses and other such issues.
- This monitoring obligation remains with the coaching staff and school personnel.
- Be prepared to have a health screening conducted upon arrival at a school campus. Officials should self-screen during the week.
 - NOTE: If an official cannot tolerate a face covering while officiating, it is recommended they contact their local health dept. for guidance.
- Upon conclusion of the contest, officials should leave the contest area and not interact with others.
- Reminders should be issued for situations that involve hygiene (spitting, etc.)
- Officials should maintain distance from players if an altercation occurs and minimize the times that they are within six feet of others.
- Officials should be aware of the location of medical personnel while on school property.
- Limit the exchanging of documents between officials and others.
- Once the contest begins, avoid conversations within six feet with coaches. If a coach begins yelling at you, with or without a mask, back away immediately.

GAME OFFICIALS UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

- Masks are strongly recommended by NYSACFO.
 - Gators may not be acceptable - The final decision rests with the governing County DOH Office and the School District.
- Whistles under the mask or a mask with a whistle protective cover are optional.
- Electronic whistles are optional and have proven ineffective.
- The NYSACFO recommendation based on the experience of officials that have already officiated games under Covid conditions is for the official to pull the mask down, blow the whistle and then put the mask back up.
- The mask should be used when speaking with players, coaches, and other officials.
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer in uniform pocket is recommended – use throughout the game.
- Gloves are optional.
- It is recommended that each official bring their own unopened bottle(s) of water with their name on it to the game. Access to the bottles will have to be determined on site. Short delays in restarting the game after timeouts to accommodate this are acceptable.

FOOTBALLS

- 3 sanitized game balls should be provided to the officials on the field by each team prior to the game.
- The host school should ensure that the game balls are cleaned and sanitized as recommended by the ball manufacturer during time-outs and between quarters; more often if possible.

GAME DAY

- Upon arrival at the host site and throughout the contest, officials should wash and sanitize hands.
- When traveling to contests, it is recommended that officials drive separately. It may be safe to engage in limited carpooling with other individuals while masked and as socially distanced as possible. The final decision rests with the individual officials. The safety of the crew is of prime importance.
- Whenever possible maintain social distancing of at least six feet, including while in the locker or dressing room and on the field.
- To maintain social distancing, officiating positions may need to be changed in a manner that is not necessarily in accordance with standard officiating mechanics.
 - The Umpire may take initial position in the defensive backfield up to 10 yards in depth. Relocating the Umpire to the offensive backfield is not approved – this would create large inadequacies in play coverage.
 - Wing officials may take an extra step onto the field of play as an initial starting position if the ball is being snapped at the far hash. The better procedure would be strict enforcement of the coach and team boxes.
- Chain crew and ball persons should be masked and maintain social distancing to the best of their ability.

PREGAME CONFERENCES

- Pre-contest official crew meetings should be held outside when possible and where social distancing is more easily accomplished. Zoom meetings or conference calls earlier in the week are acceptable.
 - Schools may request that officials arrive on site no more than 60 minutes prior to kickoff.
- When meeting with the coach on the field prior to the game, limit attendees to the Referee, the Umpire and the head coach while maintaining social distance. No handshakes, no fist bumps.
- Coin Toss – should involve only the Referee, the Umpire and one captain from each team. All participants will wear masks and be socially distanced in the middle of the field. No handshakes, no fist bumps.
- Maintain social distancing while performing all pregame responsibilities.
- For the overtime procedure, please use the same procedure as used at the start of the contest for the coin toss.

2020 RULES BOOK MODIFICATIONS

- Masks must be worn by all non-players (2-32-10).
 - If a player (2-32-1) cannot tolerate the mask during physical activity the mask can be removed and does not have to be worn.
 - If a player's mask comes off during play, it is not a foul.
 - If a player is wearing a mask (due to their personal decision) and needs a new mask due to the mask that the player is wearing becoming unusable, the player must leave the game for at least one play to get a new mask.
- Team boxes (1-2-3g) will be extended from 10-yard line to 10-yard line to facilitate social distancing of the players. However, coaches are still limited to the 25-yard lines.
- Plastic shields covering the entire face of the player (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint as per 1-5-3c.4) shall not be allowed during the contest.
- Gloves are permissible for players but still must comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the NOCSAE Standard or the SFIA Specification.
- Time Outs
 - A single charged time-out may be extended to a maximum of two minutes in length (3-5-3).
 - The authorized conference (3-5-8) for the charged time-out should take place between the 9-yard marks and not at the sideline for social distancing purposes (it is permissible for more than one coach to be involved in this conference and for technology to be used).
- The intermission between periods may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods, and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick (3-5-7l).