



# VENANGO REGION CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## VRCS COVID-19 Return to Play Plan

The following plan outlines the preliminary policy, protocol, and guidelines for a return to athletic participation at Venango Region Catholic School (VRCS). VRCS recognizes that the knowledge of COVID-19 is changing rapidly. As more public health information is available, the administration will work with our students, parents/guardians, and coaches to release further guidance that could impact our athletic seasons.

The COVID-19 virus is a highly contagious illness that primarily attacks the upper respiratory system. The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among others, has found that while children do get infected by COVID-19, relatively few children with COVID-19 are hospitalized. However, severe outcomes have been reported in children, and a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others who may be far more vulnerable. While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, the current research suggests there are many steps schools can take to reduce the risks to students, coaches, and their families.

The purpose of this policy is to allow our coaches to begin organizing voluntary practices with our student-athletes in a measured and controlled environment while utilizing cautious methods and tactics for conditioning, strength, individual skill development, and team-oriented trainings.

VRCS will take the necessary precautions and recommendations from the federal, state, and local governments, CDC, PA Department of Health, as well as the NFHS and PIAA. The knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing as new information and treatments become available. Thus, these recommendations will be adjusted as needed as new information becomes available to decrease the risk of exposure for our staff, students, and, eventually, spectators.

A continuous line of communication will be established between administration, the athletic department, coaches, athletes, and parents/guardians to promote a safe environment for all involved in VRCS athletics. Kaitlyn Wenner, VRCS Athletic Director will be the primary contact throughout this process. Laura Blake, VRCS President and Laura Beichner, VRCS Principal will be the secondary contacts.

Parents must decide what is the best course of action for their child's voluntary return to athletic activities. Coaches will be sensitive, understanding, and accommodating to players and parents who may be uncomfortable with returning to play at this time.

The Return to Play Plan was approved by the VRCS Board of Directors on insert date and this plan is posted on the VRCS website. Upon written request, stakeholders can review the Return to Play Plan. The Return to Play Plan will be implemented immediately with coaches permitted to work with student-athletes on insert date.

## **Before First Return to Play Session**

Athletes who wish to participate must have their Participation Waiver for Communicable Diseases Including COVID-19 signed and returned before participation.

Coaches who wish to conduct voluntary practices must have their Participation Waiver for Communicable Diseases Including COVID-19 signed and returned before participation.

## **PIAA Classification of Sports**

**High Risk:** Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants. Examples: football, wrestling, cheerleading (stunts).

**Moderate Risk:** Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants. Examples: basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, soccer, hockey, tennis, water polo, pole vault, high jump, long jump, 7 on 7 football.

**Low Risk:** Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between uses by competitors. Examples: running events, cross country, throwing events, swimming, golf, weightlifting, sideline cheer.

\*\* High/Moderate Risk Sports may move to a Low-risk category with non-contact modifications. Team activities should be limited to individual skill development drills that maintain social distancing.

## **Pennsylvania Group Size Limitations**

Any sports-related activities in yellow or green phase counties must adhere to the gathering limitations set forth by the Governor's Plan for Phased Reopening (25 in yellow, 250 in green) and the facility as a whole may not exceed 50% of total occupancy otherwise permitted by law. During the yellow and green phases of reopening, sports-related activities at the PK-12 level may be limited to student-athletes, coaches, officials, and staff only. Visitors and spectators will be contingent upon future health conditions within the state and local communities.

## **PIAA Levels of Participation Guidance**

### **Level 1 (PA State Red)**

Team Activities: No in-person gatherings permitted, athletes and coaches may communicate via online meetings, athletes may participate in individual home workouts including strength and conditioning.

- All school facilities remain closed as per PA State Guidelines
- Athletes and coaches should abide by guidelines set forth by the local and state governments

## **Level 2 (PA State Yellow or Green - permitted by PIAA)**

Team Activities may include team meetings, open gym, kick around, weight training/conditioning, running events, cross country, throwing events, swimming, golf and cheer, etc.

### **Pre-workout Screening:**

- All coaches and students will be screened for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 before a workout. The screenings could range from a verbal/written questionnaire to a temperature check or both.
- Responses to screening questions for each person should be recorded and stored so that there is a record of everyone present in case a student or coach develops COVID-19.
- Any person with positive symptoms reported will not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health care professional. A clearance may be required to return to play.

### **Limitations on Gatherings:**

- No gathering of more than (25 Yellow/250 Green) individuals per group including coaches per practice area.
- Controlled non-contact practices only, modified game rules.
- Social Distancing should be applied during practices and in locker rooms and gathering areas.

### **Facilities Cleaning:**

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable disease.
- Athletic facilities should be cleaned before arrival and post workouts and team gatherings; high touch areas should be cleaned more often.
- Weight Room equipment should be wiped down after an individual's use.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment surfaces.

### **Physical Activity:**

- Lower risk sports practices may begin.
- Modified practices may begin for moderate and high-risk sports (workouts must remain non-contact and include social distancing where applicable, activity should focus on individual skill development).
- Students should refrain from sharing clothing/towels and should be washed after each practice, including pinnies.
- Athletic equipment that may be used by multiple individuals (balls, shields, tackling dummies, shot put, discus, pole vault, etc.) should be cleaned intermittently during practice and events as deemed necessary (or students using them will need to wear gloves).
- Hand sanitizers should be used periodically as resources allow.
- Spotters for maximum weight lifts should be stationed at each end of the bar.

### **Hydration:**

- Students **MUST** bring their water bottles. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water coolers, water fountains, water cows, water troughs, etc.) should not be utilized.

### **Level 3 (PA State Green – once permitted by PIAA)**

Team activities may include basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, soccer, hockey, water polo, tennis, pole vault, high jump, long jump, 7 on 7 football, etc.

#### **Pre-workout/Contest Screening:**

- Any person who has COVID-19 symptoms will not be allowed to participate in practice/games and should contact their primary care physician or another appropriate health-care provider. A clearance may be required to return to play.
- COVID-19 Screenings (questionnaire and temperature checks may continue as per State and Local government recommendations).
- Team attendance should be recorded.

#### **Limitations on Gatherings:**

- As per State and Local Guidelines.
- When not directly participating in practices or contests, social distancing should be considered and applied when able.

#### **Facilities Cleaning:**

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable disease.
- Athletic facilities should be cleaned before arrival and post workouts and team gatherings, high touch areas should be cleaned more often.
- Weight Room equipment should be wiped down after an individual's use.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment surfaces.

#### **Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment:**

- Low, Moderate, and High-risk practices and Low and Moderate Risk competitions may begin (As per State, Local, and PIAA Guidelines).
- Students should refrain from sharing clothing/towels and should be washed after each practice, including pinnies.
- Athletic equipment that may be used by multiple individuals (balls, shields, tackling dummies, shot put, discus, pole vault, etc.) should be cleaned intermittently during practice and events as deemed necessary.
- Hand sanitizers should be used periodically as resources allow.
- Spotters for maximum weight lifts should be stationed at each end of the bar.

#### **Hydration:**

- Students **MUST** bring their water bottles. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration Stations may be used but **MUST** be cleaned after every practice/event.

#### **Level 4 (PA State Green - once permitted by PIAA)**

Team Activities include: Low/Moderate Sports may resume. High-risk sports (football, wrestling, and cheerleading stunting) may begin full person to person contact and competition.

#### **Pre-workout/Contest Screening:**

- Any person who has COVID-19 symptoms will not be allowed to participate in practice/games and should contact their primary care physician or another appropriate health-care provider.
- COVID-19 Screenings (questionnaire and temperature checks may continue as per State and Local government recommendations).
- Team attendance should be recorded.

#### **Limitations on Gatherings:**

- As per State and Local Guidelines.
- When not directly participating in practices or contests, social distancing should be considered and applied when able.

#### **Facilities Cleaning:**

- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable disease.
- Athletic facilities should be cleaned before arrival and post workouts and team gatherings, high touch areas should be cleaned more often.
- Weight Room equipment should be wiped down after and individual's use.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should always be worn in the weight room to minimize sweat from transmitting onto equipment surfaces.

#### **Physical Activity and Athletic Equipment:**

- All sports may resume normal practice and competition.
- Students should refrain from sharing clothing/towels and should be washed after each practice, including pinnies.
- Athletic equipment that may be used by multiple individuals (balls, shields, tackling dummies, shot put, discus, pole vault, etc.) should be cleaned intermittently during practice and events as deemed necessary.
- Hand sanitizers should be used periodically as resources allow.
- Spotters for maximum weight lifts should be stationed at each end of the bar.

#### **Hydration:**

- Students MUST bring their water bottles. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration Stations may be used but MUST be cleaned after every practice/event.

## **Additional Recommendations**

### **Social Distancing and Hygiene Practices During Events and Activities**

- Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines/bench during events, as deemed necessary by the school, PIAA, state and local governments.
- PPE (gloves, masks, eye protection) will be used as needed and as situations warrant, or determined by local/state governments.
- Athletes should come dressed for activity to reduce the use of locker rooms.
- When applicable, athletes should remain with their assigned groups during workouts to limit the number of people they come in contact with.
- Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing (30 seconds with warm water and soap) and employees wearing a cloth face covering as feasible. Face Coverings will not be used for athletes while practicing or competing. Hand sanitizer stations will be available for all participants.
- Promote ways to limit exposure to COVID-19 (cough into elbow, disinfecting touched surfaces, social distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose, face and mouth, no spitting, gum chewing, etc.)
- No handshakes/celebrations (high fives, fist/elbow bumps, chest bumps, hugging), etc.
- No students allowed in training areas without the presence of a coach.
- Use of required to entry and exit (drop off/pick up) through specific doors to reduce additional surface contact. Propping open of doors to minimize contact to be used as feasible.

### **Group people into tiers from essential to non-essential and decide which will be allowed at an event:**

- Tier 1 (Essential) – Athletes, coaches, officials, event staff, medical staff, security
- Tier 2 (Preferred) – Media
- Tier 3 (Non-essential) – Spectators
- Only Tier 1 and 2 personnel will be allowed to attend events until state/local governments lift restrictions on mass gatherings
- Changes to seating capacity and social distancing may be necessary for each venue facility and will be determined as more recommendations are released by the local/state governments

### **Overnight/Out of State Events**

- The school will evaluate each event and follow all local/state government guidelines on a case by case basis. Every consideration will be taken as to not expose students to unnecessary or potential high-risk exposure.

### **Concessions**

- Concession stands or other food must adhere to the Guidance for Businesses in the Restaurant Industry.

## Identifying Symptoms and Reporting Infection

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19? Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The symptoms may range from mild to severe. Symptoms may include:

- Fever or chills (100.4 or High)
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Cough
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Congestion/Runny Nose
  - Diarrhea
  - Sore Throat
  - Headache
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- If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you are infected with the virus, **STAY AT HOME**. You must take steps to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home or community. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever or symptoms, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.
  - Notify the school immediately (coach, athletic director, administration).
  - It will be determined if others who may have been exposed (students, coaches, staff) need to be notified, isolated, and/or monitored for symptoms.
  - If a positive case of COVID-19 is diagnosed contact tracing will be implemented with the assistance of local health professionals and the CDC/PA DOH.
  - If an athlete, coach, or staff member becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms during an event:
    - Every effort will be made to isolate the ill individual from others until the athlete, coach, or staff member can leave the school or event.
    - If the ill individual is a student-athlete, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately, and arrangements will be made for the student to be picked up.

## **VRCS Athletic Department**

### **Participation Waiver for Communicable Diseases Including COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented athletics across the world with a myriad of challenges concerning this highly contagious illness. Some severe outcomes have been reported in children, and a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others who may be far more vulnerable.

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, Venango Region Catholic School (VRCS) will take necessary precautions and comply with guidelines from the federal, state, and local governments, CDC, PA DOH, as well as the NFHS and PIAA, to reduce the risks to students, coaches and support staff. As knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing, our school reserves the right to adjust and implement precautionary methods as necessary to decrease the risk of exposure for our staff, students, and spectators. Some precautionary methods in the school's return to play plan include but may not be limited to:

1. Health screenings before any practice, event, or team meeting with participation in the activities being limited and/or prohibited where an individual displays positive responses or symptoms.
2. Encourage social distancing and promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing, using hand sanitizer, etc.
3. Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation in all facilities.
4. Educate athletes, coaches, and staff on health and safety protocols.
5. Require all athletes and coaches to provide their water bottle for hydration.

By signing this form, the undersigned voluntarily agree to the following waiver and release of liability. The undersigned agree to release and discharge all claims for ourselves, our heirs, and as a parent or legal guardian for the student named below, against VRCS, its Board of Directors, successors, assigns, officers, agents, employees, and volunteers and will hold them harmless from all liability or demands for personal injury, psychological injury, sickness, death, or claims resulting from personal injury or property damage, of any nature whatsoever which may be incurred by the student or the undersigned relating to or as a result of the student's participation in athletic programs, events, and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The undersigned acknowledge that participating in athletic programs, events, and activities may include a possible exposure to a communicable disease including but not limited to COVID-19. The undersigned further acknowledge that they are aware of the risks associated with COVID-19 and that certain vulnerable individuals may have greater health risks associated with exposure to COVID-19, including individuals with serious underlying health conditions whose immune systems are compromised. While particular recommendations and personal discipline may reduce the risks associated with participating in athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of serious illness, medical complications, and possible death does exist.

We knowingly and freely assume all such risks, both known and unknown, even if arising from the negligence of others, and assume full responsibility for student's participation in athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic. We willingly agree to comply with the stated recommendations put forth by VRCS to limit the exposure and spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. We certify that the student is in good physical condition or believe the student to be in good physical condition and allow participation in this sport at our own risk.

Sport: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student-Athlete: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Parents/Guardians may view a full copy of the school's Return to Play Plan per written request. Questions can be directed to Laura Blake, VRCS President [laura.blake@venangocatholic.org](mailto:laura.blake@venangocatholic.org), or Laura Beichner, VRCS Principal [laura.beichner@venangocatholic.org](mailto:laura.beichner@venangocatholic.org).



