



# Implementation Guidance for the Four Pillars: School-Sponsored Athletic Events

March 9, 2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, San Mateo County schools have successfully relied on the [San Mateo County Pandemic Recovery Framework](#) and the [Four Pillars](#) to ensure multiple layers of prevention against transmission of the COVID-19 virus in the instructional setting.

Within the context of youth sports, the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) also reiterates the importance of the Four Pillars in ensuring the safest setting for athletes as they resume these important activities. Organizers of school athletic events should read and follow the CDPH's [Outdoor and Indoor Youth and Recreational Adult Sports](#).

As school sports continue expanding to include larger outdoor events such as football as well as indoor athletic activities, the San Mateo County Office of Education, in consultation with San Mateo County Health, provides the following implementation guidance to further support the health and safety of San Mateo County's interscholastic athletes and athletic event observers through the Four Pillar approach.

## Health and Hygiene:

- Athletes do not share drink bottles or any other personal items and equipment.
- Athletes and all coaching staff should have easy access to and utilize hand washing stations and/or hand sanitizer prior to and during practice and competitions.
- Visiting teams should have access to hand washing stations and/or hand sanitizer and must comply with the rule of no shared drink bottles or personal items.

## Face Coverings:

- Face coverings to be worn by coaches, support staff and **observers** at all times, and in compliance with the CDPH [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#).
- Face coverings to be worn by participants during practice, conditioning and during competition, even during heavy exertion as tolerated. [See the American Academy of Pediatrics Interim Guidance on Return to Sports \[1\]](#) for specific exceptions where the face covering may become a hazard.

## Physical Distance:

- Maintain at least six feet of distance between sport participants and others to the maximum extent possible, including when on the sidelines.
- All observers must maintain at least 6 feet from non-household members.
- Mixing with other households during pre-game or post-game activities are discouraged and must strictly adhere to current CDPH gathering guidance.
- Limit indoor sports activities (practice, conditioning) to comply with capacity limits (which shall include all athletes, coaches, and observers) indicated in current CDPH [Gym & Fitness Center Guidance Capacity](#).

### **Limited Gatherings: Guidelines for Observers**

- Observers are limited to two adult family or household members in addition to any siblings per participating athlete as long as indoor and outdoor capacity limits can be maintained.
- Participating athletes of the team's junior varsity squad may observe its varsity competition as long as the athletes maintain at least six feet of distance between other groups, athletes, or coaches.
- Household members must sit together as a group.
- Each household group must maintain at least six feet of distance between other household groups, athletes, coaches, and others while at the event and while entering and exiting the facility.
- All observers must wear face coverings at all times and in compliance with the [CDPH Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#).
- Event organizers may limit the number of people at the event, including turning people away, if they have concerns about maintaining physical distancing.
- Observers may clap, but should avoid yelling, singing, or other behaviors that are known to cause further spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- The guidelines for observers should apply to both the home and visiting teams.

### **Suggestions for Local School Implementation:**

- Consider video streaming of games so that they can be watched live from home.
- Teams can manage the limiting of observers through a variety of methods:
  - Use a ticketing system for athletes unique to each competition.
  - Register names in advance of competition and have observers check in at the entrance.
  - Be careful to **not exceed** the maximum number of 2 family/household observers per athlete for any reason.
- Recognize that the best way to ensure that sports activities continue is to keep health and safety concerns as the top priority.

Based on [California Department of Public Health Guidance](#) with input and review by San Mateo County Health.