

MITCA–MHSAA Phase In Document Questions/Answers

Dear MITCA Member,

This document, created by the MITCA Executive Board, in conjunction with the MHSAA, is intended to present the recommended and safest way to navigate this season while keeping your athletes and workers in the healthiest possible competitive environment. While it is your right to only follow the letter of the law, we cannot in good faith or in the interest of safety present that perspective to you. We do not want to see a cross country invitational become the source of a coronavirus outbreak. Please keep that in mind as you read this document.

Many questions arose since the MHSAA released its “phased- in” approach to fall sports. The MITCA Executive Board met and raised many of these questions in discussion with Cody Inglis, MHSAA Assistant Director in charge of Cross Country. This letter includes answers to many of these questions as well as thoughts on Cross Country this fall.

As you read the MHSAA document, the first line states this will be a fluid document. This means it will be ever changing throughout the season. Please remember to check back often at MHSAA.com under Cross Country for regular updates that will occur. The changes will be based on metrics determined by a combination of the Covid rate, the phase we are in, positive new Covid cases, and Covid deaths. The MHSAA follows the Governor’s plan.

As seen in the Metrics used for decision making, the number one priority of the MHSAA is people’s health. This includes athletes, coaches, officials, workers and others. The guidelines were established to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and protect everyone’s health. Cross Country is considered one of the low risk sports. We are considered a trial for getting sports back. If cross country becomes like other sports, currently attempting to come back, and have Covid outbreaks, cross country will most likely be treated similarly. We had nothing in the spring and are being given an opportunity. We must do all we can to protect this chance and protect ourselves.

With that being said, the resulting MHSAA document and guidelines makes cross country different than it has ever been before. The document is to protect people’s health, so we will have to do things differently than they have ever been done before. The opening line of the cross country portion of the document states “Regular season dual/head to head matchups between multiple levels of two different schools are not affected” This says it all. The MHSAA wants us to develop a dual meet mentality. Remember that we are starting from nothing and working towards something. This perspective is key to maintaining a cross country season. Using physical distancing and staggered or waved starts, as well as an open chute finish will help, and with only two schools, it will limit the spread/exposure to Covid-19.

The 70 person limit does not apply to dual meets. Invitationals, multi school meets, are limited to 70 person meets. The 70 number is meant to facilitate small teams with fewer numbers so they are not restricted to duals, but might have a tri or quad with less than 70 runners. Once again, we need to maintain the health and safety of all involved. A dual meet mentality, not an invitational meet mentality, is what the MHSAA is recommending. So with that, the recommended number of 70 is in effect until something new comes from the Governor.

The next concern has been about regionals and state finals. The MHSAA's response has been that this is a "phase in" document, so we can get back to having cross country. The MHSAA continues to plan and more decisions will be made on end of the year competition.

Questions have occurred about the starts and finishes. These are currently recommendations so cross country has options. The primary concern, again, is physical distancing and the health of athletes, so it is necessary to consider that when doing an interval or wave start as well as an open chute.

Coaches have asked about schools with virtual learning. The MHSAA rule is as long as the school gives the student credit on its transcript in at least 66% of classes that it would count towards participation. It would be critical to connect with your Athletic Director to ensure that this is the case with any student prior to them participating for your team.

Also, questions have occurred about these rules being applied differently, such as by region, county or districts, with differences in Covid rates or sports sponsorship. This is an MHSAA document and is applied to all of Michigan and all MHSAA schools.

Thoughts on masks, interval starts, open chutes, etc. will be addressed in the upcoming webinar. Please refer to the MITCA email sent out Friday, July 3, containing information on the upcoming Webinar for further information and details. Also, please fill out the survey link in that email if you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
MITCA Executive Board