

Dear Athletes and Families,

On Tuesday, Dec. 29, the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL), in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), announced that winter high school sports will be allowed to begin competitions Jan. 14, following an earlier announcement allowing practices to begin Jan. 4. We expect updates for arts and activities to be announced soon.

We look forward to providing this opportunity to our student-athletes, but remain committed to doing so safely and in alignment with state, local and district health and safety protocols. An important safety measure to be aware of is the mandate that requires all student-athletes to wear face coverings during all practices and competitions with few exceptions. Exceptions are made for those sports where wearing a mask may cause additional safety concerns and include gymnastics, cheerleading, wrestling and swimming and diving. All coaches and district employees participating in winter athletics will also be required to wear a face covering at all times, and both a face covering and a face shield whenever possible when it doesn't impede proper use of safety equipment.

District 196 will continue to partner with MDH and local public health to move forward with this opportunity and will continue to put the health of our community at the forefront. MSHSL member schools are focused on limiting any transmission of the virus through implementation of safety protocols outlined in the [COVID-19 Sports Practice Guidance for Youth and Adults](#). Full compliance with the guidance provided by MDH and MSHSL is expected of all administrators, coaches and student-athletes.

The district will continue to contact trace, which will require your partnership to ensure these opportunities remain safe for everyone. If your student-athlete has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been notified that they are a close contact, you are required to inform your coach, athletic director and school nurse immediately. You are strongly encouraged to contact your athletic trainer regarding the [MSHSL recommended return to sport protocols](#).

**As a district, we will continue to follow the 14-day quarantine for close contacts. Those who are close contacts cannot test out of quarantine.** However, someone identified as a close contact would not need to quarantine if documentation is already on file with the school nurse of a lab confirmed, positive case within the last 90 days.

They must fulfill all quarantine, testing and/or health requirements before joining practice or competitions, which are outlined in the [MDH Decision Tree](#). These requirements include seeing symptom improvement for 24 hours and being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If your student-athlete, or any household member is ill, the student-athlete must remain at home and follow the [MDH Decision Tree](#).

For information about testing and the most updated information about COVID-19, [visit the MDH website](#).