



2020-21

COVID-19 Response Manual

Previously Fall 2020 Guidelines & Recommendations

Updated 9.04.20

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM CARR

NAIA Members,

As mentioned when we originally shared the fall 2020 return to play guidelines in July, this was a work in progress. Multiple, significant changes have occurred since then. The original guidelines have been updated to reflect the decisions made in the past six weeks and renamed 2020-21 COVID-19 Response Manual.

Most of this information has been shared with NAIA membership via emails and The Score. However, we wanted a comprehensive document where members can find all the most current information in one place.

We will continue to update the manual as additional decisions are made. However, the most current information can always be found on the COVID-19 webpage in the FAQs section.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please email covid19info@naia.org.

Be well and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Carr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jim Carr
NAIA President and CEO

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I. RETURN TO SPORTS

A. Fall Champions Moved to Spring 2021; Conference Play Still Allowed

At the end of July, the Council of Presidents (COP) voted to move all 2020 fall national championships to spring 2021. This decision still allows NAIA conferences and institutions the flexibility to play their regular season in the fall, winter, or spring.

Moving all the fall championships to spring is the most inclusive option for all members, especially those schools that are not able to participate in athletics this fall. By moving the championships to fall, student-athletes at these schools will have the possibility of participating in a national championship.

This decision also allows the greatest autonomy to our institutions in regards to scheduling and because of that flexibility, sports will be able to extend their maximum number of contests back to the original number allowed, if they so choose.

B. Start Dates

1. Practice: The practice start date for all sports, will be Saturday, August 15. As a result, prior to August 15, any activities deemed practice by the NAIA are strictly prohibited. (Click [here](#) for NAIA definition of practice.)
 - a. Though August 15 is the first day a practice can occur, institutions can have students return to campus earlier.
 - b. The established start date for practice allows for three weeks of practice prior to the start of competition and four weeks for football. However, the three or four weeks of practice are not mandatory and may be shortened at the institution's discretion.
 - c. As an exception to the summer practice restriction, institutions may conduct virtual sessions (e.g. Zoom or Facetime) that may meet the definition of practice prior to August 15.
 - d. Current student-athletes cannot participate in tryouts with prospective student-athletes until August 15, 2020.
2. Competition:
 - a. September 5, 2020 will be the competition start date for all sports with the exception of football. (This start date applies to all sports that schedule competitions in the fall, regardless of when the regular season is played.)
 - b. September 12, 2020 will be the competition start date for football.
3. The COP Executive Committee has determined exceptions will not be granted for either practice or competition start dates.

C. Minimum/Maximum Contests

The July guidelines established an adjusted minimum and maximum number of contests per sport. Due to the fact that the fall championships have been moved to spring, the standard number of maximum contests will be restored. In addition, in recognition of the potential for disrupted schedules, the National Administrative Council (NAC) reduced the minimum number of contests required for a team to be eligible for postseason.

1. Cross Country – 3 meets (minimum), 8 meets (maximum)
2. Football – 6 games (minimum), 11 games (maximum)
3. Men's and Women's Soccer – 8 games (minimum), 18 games (maximum)
4. Women's Volleyball – 13 matches (minimum), 28 dates (maximum)

Institutions may extend the maximum number of contests by one for all teams that schedule at least one contest with a member of the Association of Independent Institutions (A.I.I.).

D. New Fall Championship Dates

1. The NAIA Football National Championship has been rescheduled for Monday, May 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. CT. The championship will remain at Eddie G. Robinson Stadium at Grambling State University.
2. The NAIA Women's Soccer National Championship will take place April 27-May 3, 2021 and has been relocated from Orange Beach, Ala. to Foley, Ala. at the Ralph Schumacher Soccer Complex.
3. It is anticipated that the NAIA Men's Soccer National Championship will take place May 4-10, 2021 in Columbia County, Ga. At Blanchard Woods Park. This should be confirmed in September.
4. Women's volleyball will take place April 27-May 1, remaining in Sioux City, Iowa at the Tyson Events Center.
5. Both men's and women's cross-country will take place on April 9, 2021 and remain as planned in Cedar Rapids, Iowa at Seminole Valley Park.

II. HEALTH & SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Return to Athletics Practice & Activities

Each member institution has the primary responsibility to keep people within its own community safe. This responsibility reaches further than student-athletes and athletic department staff, recognizing that these populations will be included in an institution's comprehensive campus planning.

As a result, the NAIA will defer to each member to implement proper health and safety measures for its general campus operations that are consistent with campus policies and requirements of local and state governments. An institution should

determine the appropriate timing and protocols for when and how student-athletes return to campus, as well as begin to engage in team activities and practice. The NAIA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. *(See Section X. Recommended Best Practices & Resources)*

B. Return to Competition

NAIA staff, in consultation with industry experts, has developed a combination of recommended best practices and requirements for NAIA member institutions to implement prior to and during competition.

When returning to competition, each institution should determine appropriate protocols to be used for its specific facilities and circumstances. Institutions are encouraged to think carefully about additional measures that should be implemented to prepare for traveling to off-site locations, or hosting visiting teams and conducting competitions. The NAIA has collected a variety of resources to assist members with the planning process. *(See Section X. Recommended Best Practices & Resources)*

When student-athletes and staff from a member institution begin to interact with those from another member, we must all work together to keep the NAIA community safe. The policies incorporated herein are intended to provide NAIA members with assurances that opponents are complying with specific minimum standards and using best efforts to achieve best practices.

Requirements and recommendations are as follows and are detailed in sections III, IV and V of this document:

1. Screening (Section III)
2. Testing (Section IV)
3. Notice to opponents (Section VI)

In addition to these specific NAIA guidelines, every NAIA member will be expected to meet all local and state requirements at all times.

III. SCREENING

A. Timing

Beginning August 15, coaches, student-athletes and those in contact with student-athletes are required to be screened each day a practice or team activity of any kind occurs. Team activities includes team meetings, conditioning or weight lifting sessions, film review, practices and games. Screening is only required once per day even if there are multiple activities throughout the day, though an institution may choose to screen more frequently.

Screening is required for any team holding a practice or team activity, even if the team is outside of its typical season. This would include sports that are considered winter or spring sports, as well as fall.

For competition, all game-day participants (student-athletes, coaches, support staff, officials, etc.) are required to be screened within six hours of the beginning of the contest.

B. Who Can Perform the Screening?

Screening that is provided on non-gamedays, such as prior to a practice or team activity, can be conducted by anyone the institution designates. There are no requirements for who can perform screenings on these days.

There is a heightened standard for game days, when your team is going to compete and be in close physical contact with individuals from another institution. On game days, screening can be done by any healthcare professional. Additionally, any university or professional staff/contractors who is not a healthcare professional, but has completed the requisite training, can conduct gameday screening. Undergraduate students are not permitted to serve in this role.

The Athletics Trainers Association is creating a universal online training to serve this purpose. When available, this training will be hosted on [The NAIA Learning Center](#). To ensure all necessary parties have access to the training, please update your NAIAHelp staff information to include any such individuals as "COVID Screeners", thereby ensuring they will be given access to the training.

C. Requirements

Since both healthcare professionals and non-healthcare professionals can now conduct game-day screening, the screening scoring chart has been modified.

1. Non-healthcare professionals will use a version of the scoring rubric that simply asks for Yes/No answers to each of the symptoms and questions. Any "Yes" answer will result in a referral to a healthcare professional for a final decision regarding if the individual should participate.

NON-HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ASSESSMENT

EXPOSURE	***YES/NO***
Have you been in close contact unmasked with someone who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus within the last 14 days? (Close contact is < 6 feet for ≥15 minutes)	
SYMPTOMS	
TEMPERATURE of 100.4° F or greater	
REPEATED SHAKING OR CHILLS	
COUGH (new or different than normal)	
SHORTNESS OF BREATH (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. asthma)	
NEW LOSS OF SMELL and/or TASTE	
DIARRHEA / UPSET STOMACH/NAUSEA	
MUSCLE OR BODY ACHES	
SORE THROAT	
HEADACHE	
CONGESTION/RUNNY NOSE (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. allergies)	

***Any **YES** answer will be referred to the Athletic Training/Sports Medicine Staff for further evaluation. Determination of participation status will be made upon further evaluation.

- Healthcare professionals will use a version of the form that assigns scores to each symptom or question (in other words, weighted symptoms), similar to what has been shared since July 1. This scoring rubric has also been amended to use a score of 3 as the standard for withholding a participant, as opposed to a score of 2 as originally described. Healthcare professionals will use this version whether conducting the entire screen themselves, or if the individual is referred to them following an initial screen by someone else.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ASSESSMENT

EXPOSURE	SCORE
Have you been in close contact unmasked with someone who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus within the last 14 days? (Close contact is < 6 feet for ≥15 minutes)	3
SYMPTOMS	
TEMPERATURE of 100.4° F or greater	3
REPEATED SHAKING OR CHILLS	3
NEW LOSS OF SMELL and/or TASTE	3
SHORTNESS OF BREATH (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. asthma)	3

COUGH (new or different than normal)	2
MUSCLE OR BODY ACHES	2
DIARRHEA / UPSET STOMACH / NAUSEA	1
SORE THROAT	1
HEADACHE	1
CONGESTION (not associated with preexisting condition i.e. allergies)	1
TOTAL SCORE	

<p>High Risk: Symptoms Score of 3 or MORE Action: The participant is to immediately be removed from practice and/or competition and referred for additional care. Institutional protocols for “flagged screening” should occur.</p>
<p>Medium Risk: Symptoms Score of 2 Action: The symptoms described by the participant warrant further investigation by the healthcare team. Expand screening to obtain further information. Based on responses, either allow participation or refer for additional care.</p>
<p>Low Risk: Symptom Score of 1 or 0 Action: Continue with standard precautions and monitor regularly for changes in symptoms. Allow continued participation under supervision. Refer if abnormal symptoms develop.</p>

D. Submitting Screening Verification

In addition to screening all participants prior to any team activity, each institution must verify with the NAIA that the appropriate screening protocol was followed. The NAIA has developed an online form to facilitate the daily submissions from each of our member institutions, and each institution has received an individualized URL for entering daily verification reports. The athletic trainer or institutional representative will be asked to verify that the appropriate steps were taken for all individuals screened, and indicate how many total individuals were withheld. This submission is a “verification” of the daily student-athlete screening process and not a submission of each student athletes’ screening results. The tool will not collect individual screening results and will only collect aggregate data.

Beginning with the first day a team has athletic activity and screening is conducted, verification is required for that team every day from that point forward, regardless of whether the team is in its 24-week season, in its “off season” or during any break periods. The verification form must be submitted each day by midnight.

If a team does not have any activity on a particular day, verification is still required. If a team activity does not place that means no screening will have occurred.

Accordingly, within the form there is an option to report “No Team Activity,” and if selected you will not be asked for any information on the screening process.

All NAIA members have access to a dashboard that shows each team’s compliance with this screening and verification process. Teams shown in green have provided screening verification each day, while teams shown in yellow have missed less than 10% of required days, and teams shown in red have missed more than 10% of required days. The dashboard is provided as a tool to allow you to confirm your own institution’s compliance, and to provide some assurance that upcoming opponents are complying with the screening requirement.

Any questions regarding this process should be sent to screeningsupport@naia.org

E. Multiple Team Members Exhibiting Symptoms

If multiple student-athletes on a single team show symptoms through the screening process, the institution should assess whether the team should be removed from competition. At this time, there is no consensus among experts related to the threshold (specific number of players, % of players, etc.) that would trigger the removal of a team from competition. The NAIA will continue to consult with health experts and monitor requirements and best practices established by the CDC and other sport organizations that have recently returned to play (NBA, MLB, etc.).

IV. TESTING

Originally, the Council of Presidents was requiring a negative PCR test for all NAIA student-athletes and coaches prior to competition. When the COP determined fall championships will be delayed until the spring, allowing for much more flexibility in schedules, the COP also determined the original testing mandate should no longer apply. The COP opted to provide more flexibility considering the types of viral testing, their availability and cost, the turn-around times involved, and the local or regional public stances regarding testing vary greatly across the country.

Given this variability and complexity, the NAIA determined it was inappropriate to require a single testing protocol for all its members. Rather, the NAIA strongly recommends that individual conferences and institutions consider very carefully the best way to deploy COVID testing to support a safe return to athletics.

V. RETURN TO PLAY AFTER BEING WITHHELD

If a student-athlete or coach is withheld from participation through the screening process or due to a positive test, he or she must:

1. Quarantine or isolate immediately,
2. Consult with a healthcare professional, and
3. Continue to be withheld from athletic activities until he or she receives either a release from a healthcare professional or a negative PCR test.

VI. NOTICE TO OPPONENTS

The NAIA believes it is critical for each NAIA member to communicate to opponents about the known presence of COVID-19 within the campus community, while complying with FERPA, HIPAA and other medical privacy guidelines. This current information will allow each institution to appropriately assess the risk of competition and determine whether to proceed with scheduled contests.

VII. SPECTATORS

The NAIA does not have a position on spectator attendance for regular season play, other than to require that all local and state guidance is followed. Institutions and/or conferences should determine if any additional precautions beyond local and state guidance should be implemented. The NAIA encourages all institutions to publicize their regulations regarding spectators clearly and well in advance.

VIII. ELIGIBILITY EXCEPTIONS

In light of the disruption COVID-19 has already created, as well as the unpredictability of the athletic and academic year ahead, a number of eligibility exceptions have been approved. These are one-time exceptions warranted by the current health crisis, and are not permanent changes to NAIA eligibility rules. At the direction of the Council of Presidents, the National Eligibility Committee has worked with the Council of Faculty Athletics Representatives, the Competitive Experience Committee and the COP Executive Committee, to provide these exceptions.

A. Spring 2020 Athletes Not Charged Season of Competition

Due to the cancellation of all spring sports on March 16, the COP determined students competing in spring sports should not be charged a season of competition for the 2019-20 academic year. To be equitable, this policy applies to all spring sports teams on all NAIA campuses, regardless of how many competitions a team or student participated in, and even if the team/student participated in the fall.

B. Incoming Freshman Unable to Take ACT/SAT for 2020-21 Academic Year

A student that does not have a satisfactory test score can satisfy freshman eligibility standards and become eligible by having at least a 2.000 final high school GPA. The student will receive an eligible determination from the eligibility center. However, any student using this exception will be required to earn at least a 2.000 cumulative collegiate GPA prior to their next season of competition in order to maintain eligibility and compete in that following season. This additional collegiate GPA requirement is required as part of the student's ability to gain eligibility immediately by use of solely a high school GPA, and is in addition to any applicable continuing eligibility rules that would normally apply.

All 2020-2021 entering freshmen can still become eligible by satisfying two out of the three requirements, as normal. Any freshmen gaining eligibility this way will not be required to meet a collegiate 2.00 GPA prior to their second season of competition.

C. Terms of Attendance

All academic terms throughout the pandemic continue to be treated as terms of attendance if the student-athlete identified in the term. Exceptions have been granted to recognize that the following academic terms continue to be considered terms of attendance per standard NAIA bylaws for all intents and purposes EXCEPT the 10-semester / 15-quarter limit (NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section E, Item 1).

- Winter 2020 and Spring 2020 quarters: Term(s) will not count towards the total 15 quarter terms of attendance limit for spring sport athletes only.
- Spring 2020 semester: Term will not count towards the total 10 semester terms of attendance limit for spring sport athletes only.
- Fall 2020 semester and quarter term: Will not be counted towards the maximum limits for all student-athletes, regardless of sport.

These terms will not count as a term of attendance towards the maximum limit, but will otherwise continue to count as a term of attendance for applying things like the 24/36-Hour Rule, transfer residency requirements, the Progress Rule, mid-year eligibility, and so on.

D. Mid-Year Graduating Seniors in Fall Sports

Senior student-athletes who participate in fall sports (cross country, football, soccer, women's volleyball) and graduate after the fall or winter term are permitted to compete in the spring following their graduation without satisfying the 12-Hour Enrollment Rule (NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section C, Item 3). The student must be enrolled in coursework of some kind in order to compete, but the institution or conference may determine the type and number of credits required.

E. Seasons of Competition

Student-athletes can be charged seasons of competition for both intercollegiate competition and non-intercollegiate competition. Exceptions have been made for each type of competition this year, due to the uncertainty of if or to what extent a given sport will be played.

- A student-athlete representing an NAIA institution in competition will not be charged until he or she competes in more than 50% of the team's maximum frequency of play limit. Students who play in 50% or less of the regular season but participate in NAIA-approved postseason will also be charged a season of competition. For 2020-21, a student who participates in the following number of contests or dates will be charged a season of competition.

Baseball	28 contests
Basketball	16 games
Bowling	8 contests
Competitive cheer	6 dates
Competitive dance	6 dates
Cross country	5 meets
Football	6 games
Golf	8 matches/ tournaments
Soccer	10 contests

Lacrosse	9 contests
Softball	15 dates
Swimming and diving	7 meets
Tennis	13 dates/ tournaments
Indoor track and field	6 meets
Outdoor track and field	6 meets
Volleyball	15 dates
Wrestling	11 dates

- Current and prospective student-athletes will not be charged a season of competition for non-intercollegiate play in any sport from May 16, 2020 – May 15, 2021.

Amateur regulations have not been waived and continue to apply. A student who participates in elite-level play may not be charged under the seasons of competition rule, but could still be impacted if the competition is considered professional or semi-professional.

F. Fall 2020 Eligibility Center Decisions

As always, first-time NAIA participants will need an eligibility center decision before they compete in any competition, including exhibitions and scrimmages. Students who receive an eligible fall 2020 decision and maintain identification at their NAIA institution will be ready for on-campus certification for the winter or spring 2021 term. Additionally, students who have received an eligible decision from the eligibility center but have not competed or who did not enroll at an NAIA institution may be able to be certified on campus without reapplying to the eligibility center. See the [Situation Analysis](#) or more detail.

IX. SCHEDULING & COMPETITION UPDATES

A. Notification of Postponement

Schools do not need to notify the national office if it intends to postpone fall sports. The national office has been tracking on the school and conference announcements related to fall sports. Because all NAIA fall championships have been moved to the spring, there is no need for schools to submit information at this time. The national office will request updated declaration of intent (DOI) information from all members in late August.

B. Notification of Fall Participation

An updated Declaration of Intent process will be conducted in late August for schools to update sports sponsorship information. Additional questions will include whether the school plans to compete in the fall only, spring only, or both fall and spring.

C. Participation in Declared Sports

Pursuant to current policy, a school can undeclare from a sport without penalty, as long as they undeclare at least four weeks before the conference's postseason play begins. If a school undeclares after the four-week deadline, it is referred to the National Administrative Council for review.

D. Return to Play by Conference

The decision to push NAIA fall championships to the spring allows conferences the autonomy to consider the regional impact of COVID-19 when determining the appropriate time for regular season competition. It also increases flexibility by permitting a current, split, or entirely postponed regular season, all of which can precede postseason play.

E. 50% Threshold and Championships

There must be 50% of NAIA teams in the respective sport competing at the end of the season for a national championship to be held.

F. 24-Week Season

From August 15 – May 15, each team will be required to compete all practice and competition within a 24-week season in accordance with standard NAIA Bylaws. As an exception, a team may take as many break periods throughout its 24-week season as necessary.

G. Soccer Spring Dates

Soccer is permitted three additional dates reserved for weekends or non-scheduled class dates in the spring term. This year, as a result of moving the soccer

championships to the spring, these three additional dates will be limited to scrimmages only.

H. Cancelled Games Due to COVID-19

Scheduled contests that are canceled due to COVID-related reasons will result in a “No Contest” rather than a forfeit, pending review by the National Administrative Council. Forfeit requests received by the national office will result in a follow-up inquiry to both teams questioning if the contest was canceled for COVID-related reasons. If either institution produces appropriate information to show this was the reason for the cancelation, the National Administrative Council will approve the canceled game as a “No Contest” and neither team will be granted a forfeit victory.

I. Institutions Joining the A.I.I. on a Per-Sport Basis

Subject to approval by the institution’s home conference and the A.I.I., an institution could join the AII as a per-sport member for 2020-21 even if the institution’s home conference sponsors the sport in question.

X. RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

The NAIA partnered with a panel of and epidemiological healthcare professionals, including the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association (ATA), to identify and evaluate helpful resources institutions can use in developing institutional safety protocols. Content from the following industry leaders was incorporated:

- American College Health Association (ACHA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- NATA's Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (ICSM)
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)
- United States Council for Athletes’ Health (USCAH)

The following resources have been identified as relevant and reliable best practices. As additional evidence continues to become available and evolves, these resources may be updated.

Risk Mitigation – Facility Usage & Prevention Considerations:

- [ACHA Guidelines for Reopening Institutions](#)
- [CDC Considerations for Institutions of Higher Ed](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Considerations for College & University Intercollegiate Athletics](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Facility Preparation and Management](#)
- [USCAH Return to Sport Checklist: Personnel Development and Training](#)

Equipment and Facility Sanitation:

- [CDC/EPA Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces and Schools](#)
- [CDC Guidelines for Cleaning, Disinfecting and Laundry](#)
- [EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

Athletic Healthcare:

- [ICSM Return-to-Campus Preparation](#)
- [CDC Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [USCAH Addressing COVID-19 Within Athletic Medicine](#)

Training Safety following Inactivity:

- [NSCA COVID-19 Return to Training](#)
- [CSCCa and NSCA Joint Consensus Guidelines for Transition Periods \(Safe Return to Training Following Inactivity\)](#)

For additional best practice information, the NAIA Athletic Trainers Association created a [Return to Athletics Guidelines](#), which includes detailed resources and recommendations.