



**PELHAM HIGH RETURN TO  
COMPETITION PROTOCOL**

**FALL 2020**

## **PREFACE:**

The following proposal is put forth on behalf of Pelham High Athletics to assist the Pelham School Board and the Superintendent in determining the best possible approach to the upcoming Fall 2020 athletic season.

The uncertainty that exists at this time creates a challenge as to whether or not to return to competition under the NHIAA Phase 3 Guidelines. Pelham High School acknowledges that athletic participation is voluntary, and for many, it is a critical part of the educational experience for both physical and psychological development and well-being.

The Pelham High Athletic Dept. has considered several factors when making the decision as to whether or not to return to competition this Fall.

- Considering the current active cases in our area, what is the current risk of contracting COVID-19 for our student-athletes? Coaches? In our community? At other Division 2 schools?
- What are the risks to the health of our student-athletes if they don't have athletics?
  1. Grades decline
  2. Mental Health (depression, anxiety)
  3. Unhealthy lifestyle, weight gain
  4. Social development
- Seeing that many area high schools are returning to play certain sports, why would we feel we shouldn't?
- Does the risk of contracting COVID-19 during alternate activities to PHS sports, such as work and club sports, differ from the risk while playing Pelham High athletics?

Currently statewide athletics and athletic competitions within New Hampshire are allowed under the Governor's Youth Sports NH Guidelines. Our athletes are and will play whether we have fall sports or not. We believe that our student-athletes will benefit more both physically and mentally by playing for PHS, being a Python again.

- We can monitor practices for safety protocols
- We can educate our coaching staffs correctly
- We can control physical distancing whenever possible
- They get to represent their school, their community
- We can improve the amount of exposure they have to outside communities by creating a regional, limited schedule.
- It will be less expensive for families rather than outside clubs.

## **NHIAA'S THREE CATEGORIES OF RISK:**

**Lower Risk:** Golf, Cross Country (with staggered starts ), Sideline Cheer

At this time the Pelham High Athletic Department recommends that we compete in these sports. The start date for each will be Tuesday, Sept. 8. We will attempt to create a regional schedule for each and both golf and cross country will have an end of season tournament. Golf may have to play a D3 schedule in order to qualify for their tournament, and if so we will do everything we can to allow our athletes the opportunity to qualify.

**Moderate Risk:** Volleyball, Soccer, Field Hockey

At this time the Pelham High Athletic Department recommends that we compete in these sports with the expectation that we can create a regional, limited schedule and practice social distancing whenever possible for all four teams.(see all guidelines below under practices and games). The start date for these sports will be Tuesday, Sept. 8. Pelham High Athletics understands that at times these sports do not allow for full social distancing. Nevertheless, we believe our screening, physical distancing, and cleaning protocols will be sufficient for student-athletes to be safe under current conditions.

**Higher Risk:** Football, Competition Cheer

At this time the Pelham High Athletic Department would like to table this decision until we can gather more information from the state of NH and also neighboring communities. Many districts have not made final decisions on these sports based on the increased number of risks that are associated with playing competitively. It would be very unlikely that we could have a fully regional football schedule based on the size and strength of our surrounding communities, and playing very large schools could have its own set of risks to our athlete's safety. Competitive Cheer will not have their competition season until mid October, so we have more time to analyse the risks that come with daily practices and eventual competitions in this sport. Once we have gathered more valuable information and statistics, we feel we can make a more accurate and educated decision on these "higher risk" sports.

## **COACH'S EDUCATION:**

The Pelham High Athletic Department will work swiftly to educate our coaching staff to ensure compliance of state and athletic department guidelines. The NFHS currently offers a free course for coaches regarding COVID-19 entitled COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators. All PHS coaches will be required to take this course and provide the Athletic Director a Certificate of Completion before Sept. 8, 2020. Four of our current coaches have already completed the course. The Pelham Athletic Department will also hold a mandatory fall coaches meeting where the Administration and our Athletic Trainer will address them on proper guidelines and protocols, based on NHIAA and CDC Guidelines.

## **SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR PELHAM HIGH ATHLETICS:**

- Each day, much like when entering the school building, each PHS athlete will self screen for any symptoms of COVID-19. Answering yes to any of the questions will result in immediate removal from participation.
- No athlete shall return to train/practice until they are deemed safe to do so per district protocols and guidelines that are already in place.
- Athletes and coaches shall maintain 6 feet of separation when not engaged in physical activity. Coaches and athletes will have masks with them at all times before, during and after practice/games in case social distancing can not be achieved.
- All athletes and coaches should leave immediately following their practice/game and shower at home.
- All practice and game venues will have hygiene stations set up which will include hand sanitizer, wipes or spray with paper towels, and a waste basket. All coaches and athletes will either wash or sanitize their hands when entering and exiting any playing area.
- All shared equipment will be disinfected immediately after use by either the coach, athletic director or athletic trainer. All personal equipment should be brought home with the athlete and disinfected or washed immediately.
- There will be no community water stations. All coaches and athletes should bring their own water bottles and there is to be no sharing of any water bottles.
- Athletes are encouraged when possible to come to their event already dressed and ready to play. All personal belongings should be either left in their vehicles or in the designated space that each team will have.
- Locker rooms will be available for PHS athletes to change or use the bathrooms or showers. All athletes will be required to wear masks while in the locker room

changing. Lockers will not be used to store clothes or equipment. Athletes will rotate in and out in small groups, 10 or less at a time, to get changed after school. There will be no congregating in the locker rooms. There will be no locker rooms for visiting teams. They will arrive ready to play, as will we when we travel.

### **GAME SCHEDULING PLAN:**

It is the goal of the Pelham High Athletic Dept. to have regional, reduced schedules for it's fall athletic teams when possible. Ideally we are striving for a local cluster of schools, 4-5 is the goal, and play each of those opponents a few times in all sports. The Pelham High Athletic Director will be in charge of forming these schedules, with input from coaching staff if requested. The ultimate goal is to create a modified, fair and competitive schedule that prepares our teams for their end of season "Open" tournament within their respective division. Scheduling goals that we hope to address are:

- Weekday games limited to one per sport, per week. This will help with transportation issues and also allow for physical recovery after each game.
- Saturday games which will again assist with transportation issues and not interfere with each school's academic week. (Getting back from games late)
- Sundays off for work commitments or quality family time. A day of rest as well.

The Athletic Director of each school has the right to cancel any athletic event for any reason related to COVID-19 and the safety of their student-athletes or spectators. No forfeits will be handed out for cancellations of any kind.

### **PRACTICE PROCEDURES:**

- No practices will start prior to 3:00pm. This will allow for on-campus students to change in an orderly and safe fashion and allow for remote learners to arrive on time for their practice and not have to leave their online class early.
- No combined practices. Each team will have their own time and own space. Attendance should be taken at each practice by the coach for tracing purposes.
- No spectators are allowed at any PHS practice sessions.
- Team practices shall not exceed 2 hours in length, with 90 minutes recommended whenever possible. The athletic department supports more days off for athletes to rest during this stressful time when the coach sees fit.

- Whenever possible, proper social distancing should be followed, (6 feet), and coaches should have masks on when they have to be closer than 6 feet addressing their athletes.
- Congregating on fields or courts before or after practices will not be permitted. After practice, student-athletes can collect their belongings and leave campus in a safe manner.
- All classroom or film sessions should be done via Zoom or Google Meet. No facetime film sessions should occur at this time.

### **HOME GAME PROCEDURES:**

- Facilities will be open one hour prior to gametime. No one should be on the gamefields/courts prior to that time.
- Only 1 game per field per weekday will be allowed. On Saturdays one game in the AM, one in the PM with adequate time in between for cleaning and crowd control.
- Any equipment used, including game balls, shall be disinfected at all game breaks. (quarters, halves, timeouts)
- No handshakes, huddles or scoring celebrations will be allowed unless social distancing is followed. Time to get creative, athletes.
- Visiting teams will bring their own equipment, water and disinfecting materials. They will arrive ready to play and not more than 60 minutes early.
- Team sidelines will follow social distancing protocols that are in place. There will be no team benches. Coaches will wear masks if addressing players closer than 6 feet.
- Spectators at PHS events will be limited to two per player, family members only, both home and away teams. Rosters will be at the event entrance so that each player only has 2 family members checked off. Spectators will be asked to self screen before entering our fields/courts. Seating will be marked off with social distancing rules in place. Spectators are asked to arrive no more than 30 minutes early, and leave immediately following the game, preferably with your student/athlete.

## **TRANSPORTATION/AWAY GAME PROCEDURES:**

- Pelham High teams will adhere to all protocols put in place by our host schools. This could include screening, temperature checks, hand sanitizing, etc.
- On buses, all coaches and athletes will wear masks and sit at most one to a seat. Coaches will disinfect any equipment that goes on the bus prior to loading. This means before leaving PHS and after the game.
- The Pelham Athletic Department is encouraging parental transportation to and from events whenever possible. Athletes cannot drive themselves.
- Coaches will have on them at all times medical kits that will contain disinfecting materials and hand sanitizer. Coaches and athletes should be washing/sanitizing hands as much as possible on all road trips.
- Upon arriving back at Pelham High, athletes and coaches will go home and shower immediately.

Note: This guidance is based on the [NHIAA PHASE 3 PROTOCOLS](#). Thank you to Pinkerton Academy, Kingswood Regional and Hollis/Brookline High School Athletics for their support in developing these materials.

# **Participation in Pelham High Athletics**

## **Release Form**

*No student will be allowed to participate in athletics until this form is returned to the coach or Athletic Director.*

As the parent/ legal guardian I authorize my child's full participation in athletics, band, chorus, and other extracurricular activities (collectively, "activities") at Pelham High School and acknowledge that participation in these activities is completely voluntary. I further understand that my or my child's failure to comply with the guidelines established by Pelham High School regarding safety, including guidelines related to limiting the spread of COVID-19, or to comply with the instructions of coaches, trainers, advisors, and activity leaders regarding such guidelines, will result in my child's removal from participation in these activities at Pelham High School.

### **Assumption of Risk and Medical Clearance**

I agree and understand that participating in activities with other students carries inherent risks including potential exposure to or contraction of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, injuries (whether severe or minor), permanent damage, or even death. This assumption of risk includes participation in activities on or off the campus of Pelham High School, and includes the risks associated with participation athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic. My child is covered with family insurance in the event of an accident or injury. I attest my child is in good health and has no restrictions covering participation in the activities, including any symptoms of COVID-19. I agree that if my child experiences any symptoms related to COVID-19, including cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, nasal congestion, fatigue, fever, chills, muscle aches, headaches, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, and/or loss of taste or smell, my child will not participate in activities until their symptoms have cleared and they produce a negative test for COVID-19.

I agree and understand there are specific guidelines in place in order to participate in activities and understand that even if coaches, trainers, advisors, activity leaders, and students follow these guidelines, Pelham High School cannot guarantee that students will not contract COVID-19 while participating in activities.

**Release Waiver**

In consideration for my child’s participation in activities at Pelham High School, I, (for myself and on behalf of my minor child), agree to forever release and discharge Pelham High School and its Administration, faculty, employees and other agents and representatives (together, the “Released Parties”) from, and agree not to sue for any and all liability or claims I (or my child) may have for any causes of action, liability, losses, or damages arising or resulting from property damage and loss, personal injury, emotional distress, illness, disability, or death, related to my child’s participation in activities, including participation in activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This release is for any type of claim, including breach of contract, negligence, fraud, or any other type of suit and includes losses alleged to be caused by the negligence of Pelham High School and the Released Parties, to the fullest extent permitted by law but does not include claims for intentional wrongdoing.

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_