



News Release

Date: **January 27, 2021**

Hudson Valley Counties Authorize Higher-Risk Sports to Proceed, Effective Feb. 1st

County Executives from the seven counties of the Hudson Valley have issued the following joint statement:

The Hudson Valley region has reviewed the updated [“Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency,”](#) dated January 22, 2021 published by New York State. Following discussion with the New York State Association of County Health Officials, regional County Executives, and area public health officials, the Hudson Valley region will authorize “Higher-Risk” sports — both scholastic and non-scholastic — to proceed, effective February 1st, 2021, at the sole discretion of the governing school district or non-scholastic athletic organization. These activities include, but are not limited to, football, wrestling, ice hockey, rugby, basketball, contact lacrosse, volleyball, martial arts, and competitive cheer/dance. In accordance with the state guidance, county health departments in the region will also monitor whether there has been a more-transmissible variant of COVID-19 identified in the area, as well as the percent of local residents that test positive.

Our region agrees that sports provide many positive impacts for a student’s social, physical, and emotional wellbeing and should be authorized whenever possible. However, COVID-19 transmission rates around the state and throughout the Hudson Valley region demonstrate the critical nature of proper safety precautions to limit the continued spread of the virus in our communities. The following must be taken into consideration as school districts and athletic organizations in the Hudson Valley region make their individual determinations on how to proceed:

- School districts and non-scholastic organizations that will be organizing sporting activities are responsible for oversight and compliance with all published state guidance, including relevant safety protocols. All requirements outlined in the January 22, 2021 update to the [Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation](#) must be followed by sports teams, recreation activities, and facilities where games and practices are held. League staff, school athletic directors, sports facility directors, coaches, and parents are strongly encouraged to review this guidance and take steps to make sure current team and league operations align with this updated guidance.
- Parents, coaches, and athletes should be fully informed and affirmatively consent to the participate in these activities understanding the risk of disease transmission.

- Surveillance testing programs may be considered, but are not required as a means to minimize the spread of disease within these activities.

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell said, "It is up to each school district to decide whether to allow their students to participate in high risk sports. The health and safety of students, staff and the local community during this pandemic must be each district's first priority. What works in one district does not necessarily work in another."

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, "Following an extensive review of New York State's guidelines and our local COVID-19 data, Dutchess County's Department of Behavioral Health and I support the resumption of 'higher-risk' youth sports – both school-sanctioned and non-scholastic – provided all involved take the necessary precautions. This decision was not reached lightly and came about only after proper deliberation; but we as a county – and as a region – want our children to have the opportunity to play, and we will continue to be vigilant for the sake of all involved. As a coach of my son's youth soccer team, I see firsthand the benefits participating in athletics provide all children who partake in them, and they can do wonders for kids who have been so greatly impacted by this pandemic. I thank my colleagues around the region for their similarly careful consideration of the risks and benefits associated with this decision, and we look forward to seeing our kids back in action on the field, in the gym and on field soon."

Orange County Executive Steven Neuhaus said, "Many people have contacted my office in support of playing sports. It is important that this be approached as a region, but that families make their own educated decisions based on their student athlete and other household members."

Rockland County Executive Ed Day said, "As a 20-year youth sports coach, I understand and fully appreciate the value of sports competition to the well-being of our young people. I am proud that our region was able to craft a plan that enables schools and athletic organizations to let our youth play."

Sullivan County Manager Joshua Potosek said, "Having enjoyed and benefitted from athletics programs both as a student and as an adult, I very much appreciate the role high school sports plays in the development of well-rounded, healthy young people. However, we remain in the midst of a serious global pandemic, and it's critical that our local school districts, athletes and families exercise ongoing diligence and wise judgment in determining when, where and how to mount practices and games. We can't risk losing the progress we are making in fighting this virus and reopening our schools and communities."

Dr. Carol Smith, **Ulster County Commissioner of Health**, said, "In response to NY State DOH's new guidance on sports, we are committed to working with our schools, parents and student-athletes to ensure all school sports are conducted as safely as possible."

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