

Guidance for Sports Academies

Rev. February 19, 2021

Background

Academic institutions that have fully integrated academic and athletic training programs (such as skiing, snowboarding and hockey), and where all students are only enrolled in said academic institution, are considered “sports academies” for the purpose of this guidance. Sports academies must operate in accordance with the state’s existing education and athletics guidance. This guidance includes the [Agency of Education’s Strong and Healthy Start](#) and, if the institution has residential students, the [Agency of Education’s additional guidance for independent schools with boarding programs](#). Sports academies shall also follow the Agency of Education’s [school-based sports guidance](#). Academic institutions that implement an enhanced safety program for boarding schools, including compliance with all relevant state guidelines, restrictions on cross-state travel, strict COVID-19 mitigation protocols and, in many cases, regular COVID-19 testing may also follow the below guidance that provides additional flexibility for programs that serve students participating in combined academic and athletic education programs. This guidance does not apply to club programs administered by sports academies, recreational sports programs, traditional school-based athletic programs, clubs and athletic training programs that do not offer full-time academic classes, or integrated academic and athletic training programs that have commuter students.

Training

Sports academies may offer physical conditioning and training in accordance with the Agency of Education’s physical education guidelines included in the [A Strong and Healthy Start](#) (please refer to [FAQ 7 – Physical Education](#)). This may include indoor and outdoor physical conditioning, such as running, lifting weights, and skills and drills work focused on an individual’s performance so long as physical distancing can be consistently maintained. This may occur in Step I, Step II or Step III of the AOE guidance. Training does not include multi-person or team-based practice sessions; participants must have no physical contact with other individuals while training.

Out of State Travel

All sports academy athletes traveling from or to Vermont must comply with the state’s cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements or have a testing, discipline, and student-athlete code of conduct in place and approved by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. This alternative testing, discipline and student-athlete code of conduct only allows athletes to travel for purposes of participating in academy-sanctioned sports competitions with their academy. Independent travel is not permitted.

A sports academy's alternative plan, which may allow athletes to travel more freely, must include: three PCR tests weekly for athletes, coaches and support staff traveling out of state; an enhanced social contract in place for all student-athletes, coaches and support staff that commits students, coaches and staff to reducing their social circles; and an actionable plan to remove student-athletes, coaches and support staff from competition and campus if they violate the code of conduct.

Sports academies must pay for and arrange the PCR testing. The state will not support testing requirements. Academies must also maintain a record of all testing and provide it to the Department of Health if asked.

A positive test from a member of a traveling group will require all athletes and coaches who traveled together to suspend participation in any imminent competitions and will require active consultation with the Vermont Department of Health.

Competition day travel to and from Vermont is encouraged; overnight stays are only to occur when absolutely necessary, and when they do occur, groups must quarantine while at the hotel, condo or rental house, avoiding contact with other guests and staff. Athletes traveling out of state may not dine out, sightsee or participate in any events outside from the athletic competition.

Example Alternative Plan

1. Sports academies may allow individual athletes, coaches and support staff who participate in COVID-19 surveillance testing that includes three PCR tests per week to travel outside of the state without requiring a quarantine upon return to Vermont.

Out-of-state travel groups may be no larger than 12 athletes and three coaches and/or support staff.

In the event a member of a travel group tests positive, all members of the traveling group will suspend participation in any imminent competitions.

The sports academy will arrange and pay for the three-times weekly testing without support from the state. In addition, the academy will maintain records of the testing and furnish the records if asked by the Department of Health.

2. Each sports academy has implemented an enhanced social contract for all members of their communities that has been signed by all students (and their parents if under the age of 18), teachers, coaches, and support staff. See below for an example:

The GMVS Pact

Green Mountain Valley School's mission is to develop the whole person with a life-long love of learning, sport, and adventure – all through the unique sport of ski racing combined with

education in the liberal arts tradition. The heart of the GMVS experience lies in our collective ability to embrace our school values. As we prepare to confront the challenges associated with navigating the school year in the age of COVID, we must acknowledge that we bear the collective responsibility to take care of ourselves, each other, and the community at large.

Active participation in all elements of GMVS's return to school protocols is an essential requirement of being a part of the on-campus community this year. By joining us this year, each individual in our community (all faculty, staff, students, and parents) agree to adhere to GMVS's Return to School Plan and the expectations for physical distancing and behavior outlined below.

We understand that there is inherent risk in engaging in activities during a pandemic, and that we can increase the risks to ourselves and our GMVS community when our actions on- and off-campus put us at greater risk of exposure. With that in mind, we agree to agree to adhere to health and safety guidelines outlined below, understanding that they are vital in protecting the health and wellness of our entire community and therefore the operations of the school.

- **Take Care of Myself**
 - *Participate in regular COVID-19 testing, as well as daily temperature and health checks and report any COVID-like symptoms.*
 - *Practice appropriate personal hygiene, including hand washing, laundering, sanitizing, and not sharing eating utensils or water bottles.*
 - *Get vaccinated for the seasonal flu in the fall, unless I have an approved reason not to.*
- **Take Care of Each Other**
 - *Maintain appropriate physical distancing of 6-feet or more whenever possible and abide by posted room capacity numbers.*
 - *Wear an appropriate facial covering or mask when in public spaces on or off campus.*
 - *Stay home (day students) or contact a staff member (boarding students) if I'm not feeling well or if I have been exposed to someone who is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19.*
 - *Follow all directions given by school faculty and staff and displayed on school signage.*
 - *Isolate and self-quarantine as required by the school and the State of Vermont.*
 - *Participate in Contact Tracing as requested.*
 - *Follow the COVID Visitor Policy when having guests on-campus, including parent visitation, and agree to follow new weekend travel guidelines.*
 - *Limit social interactions outside of the GMVS community, which includes limitations on traveling outside the state and participation in non-GMVS sponsored activities.*
 - *Refrain from organizing, hosting or attending events or other social gatherings off-campus that may cause safety risks to me and other members of the community.*

- *Be positive and gracious when others provide safety reminders and suggestions.*
- *Be attentive and helpful to anyone in need of support or assistance.*
- ***Take Care of the Community at Large***
 - *Practice safe physical distancing and wear a mask when participating in the community outside of the campus.*
 - *Adhere to school policies regarding sign-out and overnight checkout.*
 - *Adhere to any city, town and state directives.*

We understand that our efforts and the efforts of others in the GMVS community to limit the spread of COVID-19 may not prevent us from contracting COVID-19, and we voluntarily assume the risk that we may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by using GMVS's facilities or participating in GMVS activities. We hereby release, and agree not to sue, GMVS, its employees, agents and representatives with respect to any and all claims related to COVID-19. We understand and agree that this release includes any claims based on the actions, omissions or negligence of GMVS, its employees, agents and representatives.

In agreeing to the foregoing, we are united in our goal to provide a safe and rewarding environment for our students and staff. Should a community member be unable, or unwilling, to follow this Agreement, he/she will be suspended from participating in in-person activities in order to ensure the health of the greater GMVS community.

3. In the event a student violates his/her school's social contract, that student will be immediately removed from his/her next VARA or U.S. Ski & Snowboard sanctioned event(s), in addition to any disciplinary consequences imparted by his/her specific institution.