

## **Executive Director's Update August 2009**



**Info from Mark Beckman**

*Greetings from the MHSAA office! We hope your fall activity seasons are off to a great start.*

### **Karen Sanford Gall Appointed to NFHS Board**

The Executive Board of the National Federation of State High School Associations is comprised of eight (8) executive directors representing various regions of the country and four (4) at-large members. With the twelve states in those two sections rotating nominations, Montana is only granted an at-large nominee every forty-four years.

Fortunately, the rotation has come around to Montana again, and Karen Sanford Gall has been named to the NFHS Executive Board. Karen, who currently serves as the Governor's Representative on the MHSAA Executive Board, begins serving her national term immediately. With Karen's background and involvement in student activities she will admirably represent Montana and the other states in our region. To read the entire NFHS press release concerning the Board composition, please visit the MHSAA website at [www.mhsaa.org](http://www.mhsaa.org) and view the "News and Announcements" section on the home page.

### **Student Eligibility**

It is extremely important that the eligibility of all student activity participants is checked thoroughly before the students participate in any Association Contest. Some of the areas that must be reviewed include academics, age, semesters, physical examination before practice, foreign exchange approved program, etc. Included are two new eligibility "Quick Checks" and more detailed information on each area to assist a school activities administrator in ensuring all students are eligible for competition. Please contact me with any questions you may have in regard to students' eligibility.

### **MHSAA/MOA Required Rules Clinics**

The MHSAA/MOA rules clinics once again will be provided in an online format for coaches and officials. All head coaches are required to view the clinic. However the MHSAA still encourages all members of the coaching staff and activity administrators to view the clinics. There is an information sheet attached explaining the procedure on accessing these clinics. Please share this information with your coaches of fall sports and with your cheerleading coach.

### **Forest Fires / Smoke Information**

The fire season hasn't been as active so far this year compared to this time two years ago, but a hot and windy late August and September could change that

quickly. In regard to air quality issues caused by smoke it is important to review the enclosed press release and the guidelines for participation from the State of Montana. It is the schools' responsibility to determine whether their student athletes should be practicing depending on the advice and counsel of each local community's health department. We do not want ever to risk the health and safety of our participants. With that said, the MHSAA cannot waive the minimum number of practice requirement for each sport if practices are missed due to smoky conditions for the same reasons of safety and liability. If a student participated in only six of ten practices because four practices were cancelled as a result of smoke, and that same student were injured in the first contest, one can only imagine the liability that the school, the coach and the MHSAA would experience. Practices at the local level are essential, not just for conditioning, but for rules instruction, sport specific-training techniques, determining expectations, selection of team positions, team building, equity among team members etc. In addition, a waiver of of the MHSAA rule could create disparity between fall sports and winter/spring sports and could contradict regulations at the local district level where there might be additional requirements.

### **Check on your coaches' status concerning completion of the Coaches' Education Program**

All coaches (9-12), whether paid or volunteer, and coaching at any level must complete this program. The coaches' education certification is good for three years and the MHSAA **strongly recommends** that coaches complete the program before their season actually begins. Spirit (cheerleading) coaches are no longer required to complete the program. Each coach must sign in each time she/he enters the curriculum. The coach will either select or be assigned his/her own password that must be remembered. The testing curriculum will also change with each login. See the coaches' education website for more details. All schools must submit the certification report listing whether coaches have completed the program or not. Schools will be subject to penalties for failure to submit this report. OPI renewal units are available if approved locally and if your district is an approved renewal unit provider. MHSAA does not certify renewal units.

### **MOA Items**

MOA game fees increased last year for the first time since 2002-2003. Varsity game fees are \$55 per contest, sub-varsity fees are \$33 per contest. All regular season invitational tournament fees and post

season fees are listed in the MHSA Handbook and a list of the new fees is attached. Also the mileage fee has increased from .505 to .55 per mile. The per diem allowance for each official, including the driver remains at \$0.08 per mile.

I am pleased to report that for the second year the MOA/MCA "Train the Trainer" Mechanics Clinics were held in Great Falls during the MCA Clinic. This year clinics were conducted in basketball and volleyball and by all reports were extremely successful ventures.

One major addition to the MOA Handbook approved by the MOA Regional Directors and the MHSA Executive Board is:

- By District request to the MHSA office, three person crews can be used to officiate district basketball tournaments.

### **No bids for State A-B Track or State B-C Tennis**

As of this time we have not received any official bids for this year's State A-B Track and Field Meet or the State B-C Tennis Tournament. We have received some unofficial inquiries but no official bids have been submitted. Please contact the MHSA office as soon as possible if you are interested in bidding on either event. It is imperative we place these events quickly to allow schools the opportunity to reserve rooms etc.

### **H1N1 (Swine Flu Information)**

The following are some swine flu-related website pages that have been posted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They may be of interest to you as you prepare for the coming school year.

General Business and Workplace Guidance for the Prevention of Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Flu in Workers:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/workplace.htm>

Update on School (K-12) and Child Care Programs: Interim CDC Guidance in Response to Human Infections with the Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus:

[http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/K12\\_dismissal.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/K12_dismissal.htm)

Interim CDC Guidance for Public Gatherings in Response to Human Infections with Novel Influenza A (H1N1):

[http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/public\\_gatherings.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/public_gatherings.htm)

I hope you find this informative and helpful. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please send any questions to Brian Michelotti at [bmichelotti@mhsa.org](mailto:bmichelotti@mhsa.org).

### **Concussion Information from Dr. Steele**

The attached information, "When is it safe for your child to play sports with a concussion?" was authored by Dr. Phillip Steele. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Steele serve as a member of our MHSA Medical Advisory Committee. His expertise regarding sports injuries including concussions is well-known throughout the country. I hope you will take time to review this important information and share it with your administrators, coaches, athletic participants and their parents. If you have any questions please contact Brian Michelotti at [bmichelotti@mhsa.org](mailto:bmichelotti@mhsa.org).

### **MHSA Reference Manuals**

Reference manuals were distributed to member schools in binder form at the Annual Meeting a few years ago. If you still have the binder you can download the forms for replacement in your binder or you can download the forms as you need them from the site assuring your school has the most current versions of the MHSA forms. We will not be mailing the updated materials, but if you have difficulty accessing or downloading any of the material please contact our office for assistance.

### **MHSA Handbooks and Directories**

The 2009-10 MHSA Handbooks and Directories will be mailed to schools after Labor Day. The Directories will not be published until every member school has submitted the appropriate information. The MHSA Handbooks are in the process of being printed, but in the interim, the individual chapters of the Handbook are available in PDF format at [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org) under HANDBOOK.

### **Other Items of Interest ...**

I have attached a handout regarding MHSA Present and Future issues from my presentation at the MCA Clinic. Included is information regarding MHSA staff, MHSA Handbook changes, activity specific rule changes and possible future issues of the MHSA.

### **The MHSA office staff is here to serve you!**

Please contact the office with any questions, concerns, comments or suggestions.

**Have a great fall season!**

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## Eligibility Quick Check Athletics

### Is a student eligible for athletic competition?

- 1) Is he/she enrolled and attending at least 20 hours per week (4 classes ½ credit each)?
- 2) Is he/she academically eligible? Did he/she pass 20 hours of prepared class work the preceding semester? (first time ninth grade exempt)
- 3) Is he/she semester eligible? Eligible for eight consecutive semesters after enrolling in the ninth grade (semesters accrue whether attend or not)
- 4) Is he/she age eligible? He/she can't turn 19 before midnight August 31st.
- 5) Has he/she graduated or earned their GED? If so, the student is not eligible for any level of contests.
- 6) If he/she meets all the above requirements and he/she is a transfer student will he/she be varsity eligible? Examine each part of the transfer rule.
- 7) Before participation in any contest at any level a physical examination must be performed using the MHSA form and the minimum number of practices for that sport must be completed.

## Eligibility Quick Check Music and Speech

### Is a student eligible for music and speech activities?

- 1) Is he/she enrolled and attending at least 20 hours per week (4 classes ½ credit each)?
- 2) Is he/she academically eligible? Did he/she pass 20 hours or prepared class work the preceding semester? (first time ninth grade exempt)
- 3) Has he/she graduated or earned their GED? If so, the student is not eligible for any level of contests.

The semester rule, age rule and transfer rule do not apply to speech and music student participants.

## **Checklist for School Activities Administrators:**

### **✓ Submit a Record of Transfer Form**

The pink form that must be submitted to our office for any student who transfers to your school (except first time ninth graders) and desires to participate in athletics at any level. **These forms must be filed before the student is eligible to participate in an Association Contest on any high school athletic team at any level of competition (freshman, sophomore, junior varsity or varsity).**

### **✓ Check Foreign Exchange Programs**

Make sure your foreign exchange student's program is approved by CSJET. An approved list will be included with the August Activity News, or call the office for a copy. The list is also on the web at [www.csjet.org](http://www.csjet.org). Keep in mind that students in these programs must also meet all other eligibility requirements, i.e., age, number of semesters, academic grades, and they cannot have graduated from their high school (some foreign high schools graduate students after three years of school). Also the foreign exchange student must live in the attendance area of the school requesting eligibility for that student.

### **✓ Waiver of Transfer Rule Petition "Hardship Petition"**

Waivers must be filed by the school after the student is enrolled at your school. A waiver of the transfer rule is considered if the circumstances are beyond the control of the student applying for the waiver. If the behaviors that caused the extenuating circumstances are "self inflicted" by the student, the petition is usually not considered. The information provided for the waiver is confidential, but please include as much information as possible so a well-informed decision can be made. The student can participate only at the sub varsity level until the petition is approved if they are eligible in every other way. If the petition is approved the student is eligible for varsity competition, but if the petition is not approved he/she can play sub varsity but is ineligible for varsity competition for 90 P.I. days (or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks). All other eligibility requirements must be met such as age, number of semesters, academic grades etc. Any student who is transfer ineligible becomes eligible on the 90<sup>th</sup> P.I. day (or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks) at 3:00 p.m.

### **✓ Age Rule**

A student who turns 19 after midnight August 31<sup>st</sup> is age eligible. Any 19 year old (who turns 19 on or before midnight August 31<sup>st</sup>) can file a waiver of the age rule if the following is proved by the student – 1) student does not create a safety risk, 2) student does not skew the overall competitiveness of the activity, 3) participation will not exclude others, and 4) the student meets all necessary criteria to participate in MHSA activities.

### **✓ GED**

If a student has earned a GED he/she is considered a high school graduate and is not eligible to compete in any MHSA sanctioned activity.

### **✓ Academically Ineligible Students**

Students who are ineligible because of grades cannot participate in any Association contest (varsity or sub varsity) for a period of one semester. They can practice if the school allows but they cannot suit up or participate in any games at any level of competition. They become eligible to compete on the Monday morning following the week in which the semester ends. A student who becomes academically ineligible also becomes ineligible on the Monday morning following the week in which the semester ends. A student must have received a passing grade in at least twenty periods of prepared class work in the last previous semester at the school where the student participates or during the last preceding semester in which he/she was in attendance to be eligible. If a student was enrolled 20 days or more or played in an Association contest he/she has attended a semester and must have received credit and passed 20 periods. If he/she withdrew and didn't receive credit (or even W's) he/she did not receive credit and is ineligible. If a student had not been enrolled in school at all for the semester (less than 20 days and did not participate in a contest) then the grades from the last previous semester enrolled are used.

### **✓ Physical Exams**

Physical exams are required for students participating in MHSA sanctioned sports. The exam is valid for one school year and the MHSA form must be used. This examination must be certified by a licensed medical professional acting within the scope and limitations of his/her practice. Physicals performed before May 1<sup>st</sup> are not valid for the next school year.

### ✓ Semester Rule

Students are eligible for eight consecutive semesters and the semesters start to accrue after entering the ninth grade.

*Below is a listing of the eligibility rules revisions enacted last year.*

### Eligibility

2.1 A student must be regularly enrolled and in regular attendance in twenty hours per week at the school where the student participates. A home school student is not eligible to participate for an MHSAA member school.

2.2 A grading period is defined as one semester. A semester is defined as one half of a school year (approximately 18 school weeks or 90 school days). This definition is applicable to all schools regardless of the type of class scheduling format utilized (i.e. block, traditional, trimester etc.).

5. The scholastic record at the end of the semester shall be final and deficiencies may not be made up in any manner. Deficiencies, including incompletes, conditions and failures for the previous semester may not be made up during a subsequent semester, summer session, night school, correspondence, or tutoring for the purpose of establishing or maintaining MHSAA eligibility.

8.1 A student will be eligible to participate in Association Contests for four (4) consecutive years [eight (8) consecutive semesters] after entering the ninth grade. An attendance Enrollment of twenty (20) pupil instruction days during a ninth grader's first semester in high school constitutes his/her first semester of attendance. A ninth grader who attends is enrolled fewer than twenty (20) pupil instruction days in his/her first semester of high school does not begin his/her eight (8) consecutive semesters unless he/she has participated during this time in an Association contest. Such a period of fewer than twenty (20) pupil instruction days is not considered to be "the last previous semester attended" under Section (2). This change specifies that the days of enrollment, not attendance, will be used in determining eligibility.

9.1 A student shall have been regularly enrolled and in attendance no later than fifteen (15) school days after the beginning of the semester to be eligible during that semester. This rule shall not apply to transfer students who have met the attendance requirements in the school last attended.

### Transfer Rule additions

A. Any student who transfers from one member high school, home school, or non-member school to another a member high school is ineligible to participate in a varsity Association Contest for 90 P.I. days or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks from the date of enrollment in the school to which he/she transfers. A student and his/her parents or legal guardians must reside in the attendance area of the school in which he/she is enrolled except for a student enrolling in ninth grade for the first time (see Section (12) Record of Transfer.) This rule applies to a student who transfers after twenty (20) days of attendance enrollment or after he/she participates in an athletic contest while enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12.

1. A student who moves into a new district or school attendance area upon a corresponding change of residence by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) with whom the student was living during his/her previous school enrollment. The legal guardianship must have been established at least one calendar year before the transfer. If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) move to a new location a student must follow within a calendar year of the move to be eligible for varsity competition after proper certification by his/her principal.

2. A change of residence is the actual physical relocation by the parents or legal guardians of a student at a new residence and termination of all occupancy of a previous residence. The change in residence must be bona fide, include other minor siblings and involve transfer from one school district attendance area to another school district attendance area. For the purpose of eligibility, there can be only one residence.