



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

Two important changes were implemented last year that affect requirements for coaches, officials, parents, student athletes and school trainers. One was passed by the state legislature and one by the MHSAA Executive Board.

Concussion Legislation

I have attached, once again, the information I sent multiple times last year. It is important to note the requirements for all participants including coaches, officials, trainers, parents and student athletes.

If you have any questions regarding MHSAA's requirements to continue to implement this state law please contact the MHSAA office.

NFHS Coaches Education

Also, I have attached the information sent by email last spring notifying schools of the Executive Board's decision to require all coaches (paid and volunteer, head and assistants) to complete the NFHS Coaches Education Program. OPI renewal units may be available if approved locally and if your district is an approved renewal unit provider. MHSAA does not certify renewal units.

If you have any questions regarding the Coaches Education Program please contact Joanne Austin at the MHSAA office.

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. Attached is the "[Fundamentals of MHSAA Athletic Regulations](#)" which combines many of our handouts pertaining to rules and regulations (athletic eligibility "Quick Check", open gym/field, fundraising, out-of-season contests, etc.) into one document. Also attached is an Activity Eligibility (speech, music and cheerleading) "Quick Check" 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.

Foreign Exchange Students – Linked to this publication is the [CSIET resource page which](#)

[included the 2014-2015 approved list of Foreign Exchange Programs from CSIET.](#) Also, the membership approved adding F-1 Visa's with J-1 Visa's for foreign students however those students must be on an approved CSIET program whether the students possess a J-1 or F-1 Visa. As per Article II, Section (10), these are the only approved programs that waive the MHSAA Transfer Rule for participation. However, please keep in mind that while students under these programs are varsity eligible under the transfer rule for two semesters, they still must meet all other eligibility requirements, i.e., live in the school's attendance area, age, academics, number of semesters, etc., and they cannot have graduated from their high school.

MHSAA/MOA Required Rules Clinics

The MHSAA/MOA rules clinics once again will be provided in an online format for coaches and officials. ***All coaches including the head coach and all assistant coaches and all school-approved volunteer coaches*** are required to view the clinic. The MHSAA still encourages all activity administrators to view the clinics. [Attached is an information sheet explaining the procedure on accessing these clinics.](#) Please share this information with your coaches of fall sports and with your cheerleading/dance coach(es).

MOA Items

All regular season invitational tournament fees and post season fees are listed in the MOA Handbook. You can access regular season MOA fees on the Forms Page of the MHSAA website (www.mhsaa.org) or [by using this link](#). Also the mileage fee has **decreased** from .565 to .560 (this is the IRS mileage rate). Last year the per diem allowance for each official, including the driver has increased from \$0.08 per mile to \$0.12 cents per mile. Also, per diem at post season tournaments increased from \$15.00 to \$20.00 per day for officials commuting to the tournament site and from \$25.00 to \$30.00 per day for officials staying overnight at the site.

Reminder - Payment of Officials – there are only three ways that officials can be paid for contests:

- 1) All assigned officials must be paid before the contest with a check issued by the member school. A member school has seven (7) business days from the date of the contest to reissue appropriate checks to the official(s) who actually worked the contest or;
- 2) Officials can be paid with RefPay via Arbiter assignment software.
- 3) If a member school and the local official's pool agree to other methods of payment (still payment to the individual official – not to the pool) and the method of payment is approved by the regional

director, the official must be paid within seven (7) business days of the contest. Pools cannot receive payments from the schools to distribute to individual members as this practice would make the officials pool the employer, nullifying the independent contractor status and subjecting the pool to unemployment and workers' compensation obligations. Any changes in the payment process must be approved by the Regional Director. Note: If there is change in the payment process from one option to another, that change must be approved by the Regional Director.

Exception for soccer pools only: because the fee structure for soccer officials differs from all other MHSAsanctioned sports, an alternative payment method for soccer officials may be approved by the MOA Commissioner, provided that the local soccer pool, the local school(s), and the Regional Director are in agreement. The alternative payment method must be submitted in writing for approval by the MOA Commissioner on an annual basis prior to implementation.

Cultural Diversity Training

Effective in 2011-12, the MHSAs Executive Board approved Cultural Diversity Training for an onsite administrator and/or athletic activities director from each member school, all MHSAsanctioned sports head coaches and all MOA officials.

Even though this was a onetime requirement, the MHSAs/MOA encourages administrators, coaches (head and assistant) and officials to view the clinic. The clinic is found on the Clinics Page of the MHSAs website, which is linked from the homepage.

The purpose of the training is to help administrators, coaches and officials enhance their knowledge and self-awareness of diversity issues in MHSAsanctioned athletics and activities to prevent cultural miscommunications, disconnects or conflicts.

MHSAs Handbooks and Directories

The 2014-2015 MHSAs Handbooks and Directories will be mailed to schools after Labor Day. The Handbook will be printed in a new format in order to comply with USPS regulations for bulk mail. The new 8½" x 11" format provides easier reading and fewer pages. The MHSAs Handbooks are in the process of being printed, but in the interim, the individual chapters of the Handbook will be available in PDF format at www.mhsa.org under HANDBOOK.

School Directories will not be published until every member school has submitted the appropriate information.

Other Items of Interest ...

I have included information on the following pages regarding changes that were made last year by the Executive Board and by the membership, including information regarding changes to the By-Laws, Rule and Regulations and sport and activity specific rule changes.

The MHSAs 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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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 and by MHSAA rules **Foreign Exchange students must possess a J-1 Visa. This year CSJET approves programs where foreign students possess an F-1 Visa and the MHSAA membership added the F-1 visa in addition to the J-1 vision currently noted in the rule and those students (F-1 now included) are eligible for two consecutive semesters if on an approved CSJET program and meet all other MHSAA eligibility requirements.** An approved list is attached with this Executive Director's Update, or contact the office for a copy. The list is also on the web at 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 90th P.I. day (or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks) the end of the day.

✓ **Age Rule**

A student who turns 19 after midnight August 31st is age eligible. Any 19 year old (who turns 19 on or before midnight August 31st) 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 MHSAA activities.

✓ **Graduate Students**

Any student who meets any of the following criteria shall be ineligible to participate in any Association Activity:

- a. The student is a graduate of a regular four-year high school.
- b. The student is a graduate of a secondary school which has the same requirements for graduation as a regular four-year high school.
- c. The student has earned enough credits to entitle him/her to be graduated from the high school and has completed eight semesters of high school.
- d. The student has received a high school equivalency diploma (GED or **HiSET**)

Interpretations

1. A student who graduates the first semester is ineligible the second semester.
2. A student who has earned enough credits to graduate the first semester but remains enrolled and graduates on the regular date remains eligible to participate.
3. Senior students who are currently eligible in their eighth semester (4th spring) will continue to be eligible for all interscholastic activities even though graduation exercises precede the completion of interscholastic activities for that specific year. If a student has earned a GED or **HiSET** he/she is considered a high school graduate and is not eligible to compete in any MHSAA 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 MHSAA sanctioned sports. The exam is valid for one school year and the MHSAA 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 1st 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 changes to the By-Laws and Rules and Regulations effective this year or as noted:

MHSAA Annual Meeting Actions

The following proposals were adopted at the 2014 Annual Meeting:

1. The due date for annual membership dues was amended from August 1st to July 15th.
2. The transfer rule language governing foreign exchange students was amended to include F1 visas as well as the current J-1 visas.

MHSAA Executive Board Actions

Reclassification

- Approved reclassifying the following schools commencing in the 2015-16 school year:
Plentywood High School from Class B to Class C
Anaconda High School from Class A to Class B
Libby High School from Class A to Class B

Realignment

- Approved three teams to be reassigned to six-player football and two teams to remain in six-player football.
- Approved Class C Eastern Division volleyball realignment.
- Approved Class C Northern Division realignment for basketball and track and field.

Other General Rules and Regulations Items

- Approved adding vuvuzelas to the items prohibited at outdoor MHSAA events
- The Board approved adding that sticks of all kinds are prohibited at MHSAA contests (no signs on sticks, pompoms on sticks etc.)
- Open Gym Provision additional clarification: "The open gym is open to any high school youth (Grades 9-12) from your high school who is interested in attending".
- Sportscaster requirements from the joint MHSAA/Montana Broadcasters Radio Policy were added to all video display broadcast sections of the MHSAA Media Policy.

MOA Items

- Approved increasing the fee for basketball three-person crews to match the fee for two-person crews. The fee will increase from \$51 to \$60 per official for varsity crews
- Approved the following provision: Officials are also prohibited from working post season games in the gender-specific classification where they have an immediate relative who is participating as an athlete or head coach
- Approved the following revisions for postponed contests: Contest(s) cancelled due to weather or act of God will be rescheduled using the same officials (if possible) and those officials will receive only travel and per diem allowances for the cancelled contest(s). If different officials are used, officials will be paid the travel/per diem allowance and game fee. In regard to cancellations/postponements after the contest begins, officials that work one quarter (or its equivalent) or more will receive a full game fee and if the officials work one quarter or less, they will receive a half of a game fee (lightning cancellations, power outages etc.)

Wrestling

- Approved releasing Class B-C Wrestling pairings after divisional meets are completed

Football

- Approved Six-Player Football practices can begin in 2014-15 on August 15th, aligning all divisions of MHSAA football to the same practice and competition start dates.

Softball

- Approved the following for Class B-C Softball - If the divisional tournament cannot be played, the four teams that will be seeded at the state tournament will be seeded based on their seeding entering the divisional. If the tournament cannot be completed then the four highest seeded teams remaining will advance to the state tournament and be seeded accordingly.

Soccer

- The Board approved increasing the game limit for Class AA soccer from twelve games to fourteen games per season.

Cross Country

- The Board approved a standard \$7.00 fee per participant for all state cross country meets.

Track and Field

- Approved that no individual may participate in an out-of-state invitation only meet unless approved by the MHSAA Executive Director. Any out-of-state participation approved under these criteria will count toward the ten-meet limit for the particular student.

Golf

- Approved golf coaches using golf carts if the course allows
- Approved the use of electronic distance measuring devices for golf
- Approved qualifying scores for the State Class AA Golf Tournaments – 100 on an 18 hole/Par 70 course for boys and 120 on an 18 hole/Par 70 course for girls.

Music Items

- Several amendments were made to the music rules and regulations, including a revision of the definition of major performing groups and re-codification of the music handbook. To receive a complete copy of the changes, please email jpaustin@mhsa.org.

Speech and Drama Items

- As recommended by the MFEA, various amendments to speech, debate and drama rules were approved, including an amendment to state participant fees for Classes A and B-C. To receive a complete copy of the changes, please email jpaustin@mhsa.org.

Spirit Items

- Approved various changes to the spirit section of the MHSAA Handbook. To receive a complete copy of the changes, please email jholmes@mhsa.org.