

# MAHA Update – January 29, 2021

## Frequently Asked Questions

Within the last several days, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) has received a variety of questions pertaining to the guidelines and restrictions placed on our hockey community in Michigan. Many questions were raised following Governor Whitmer's press conference on Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, regarding the status of the current 'pause' on Winter contact sports. Additional questions were presented during our recent 2021 MAHA Winter Meetings.

We will continue to provide relevant updates, pertaining to the status of hockey activity in Michigan, as it becomes available. In the meantime, the following is a series of the most Frequently Asked Questions, offered by our membership.

### What is the current status of the activity 'pause' in Winter contact sports, imposed by Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services?

On Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, Governor Whitmer held a morning press conference to announce an extension of the ongoing MDHHS Epidemic Order. Specifically, [the January 22<sup>nd</sup> Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#) confirms that Winter contact sports (including ice hockey) would remain prohibited for its duration, from **Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup> through Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**. During this period, teams may conduct non-contact practices, while adhering to social distancing guidelines. In addition, facial coverings are required at all times in the rink, both on and off the ice.

Games and scrimmages remain prohibited for the duration of the January 22<sup>nd</sup> MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order. As a result, games, scrimmages, showcases and tournaments will not be sanctioned in Michigan during this time period. (This includes two MAHA teams traveling out-of-state in order to play a game or scrimmage against each other)

### Why are two teams from Michigan not allowed to play each other in another state?

No different than two MAHA teams playing a game or scrimmage against one another in-state, two MAHA teams playing each other out-of-state is considered "unsanctioned activity" for the duration of the January 22<sup>nd</sup> MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order. Any associations or teams, that are discovered to be engaging in unsanctioned activity during the 'pause,' will be in violation of its organization's Affiliate Agreement and subject to disciplinary action.

### During the 2021 MAHA Winter Meetings, there was some discussion about possible COVID-19 testing... can you elaborate?

The January 22<sup>nd</sup> MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order prohibits contact sports unless all participants, teams, and venues comply with the enhanced testing regimen specified in the MDHHS's document entitled [Interim Guidance for Athletics](#). The MAHA is currently exploring options for offering a testing protocol, that would allow teams to resume play in Michigan. More information will be provided as it becomes available.



### **Why is it that football has been allowed to play... but ice hockey is currently prohibited?**

The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, in partnership with the Michigan High School Athletic Association, Michigan's schools, and Michigan's local health departments, launched a limited pilot program for high school athletes to complete their Fall 2020 postseason tournaments and championships by adhering to strict COVID-19 safety protocols. By agreeing to frequent rapid testing (which were provided at no cost to participating schools) and other COVID-19 safety precautions, student athletes, coaches, and staff who were symptom-free and continued to test negative for COVID-19 were allowed to participate in their MHSAA postseason championship competitions.

### **Teams are traveling out-of-state in order to play games... is this allowed?**

Ice hockey activity is being sanctioned by USA Hockey affiliates in other states, where local and state government guidelines allow these activities to occur. That being the case, given the current status of the MDHHS Epidemic Order in Michigan, the MAHA does not encourage nor recommend out-of-state travel during this period. Furthermore, the MAHA continues to caution local associations and teams that they may be defined as a 'sports organizer,' and subject to penalties under this Epidemic Order, should they organize competition of any kind during this period. Association Boards, coaches, and managers are also potentially increasing their liability, if they continue to organize competition at this time.

### **What has the MAHA done to advocate on behalf of membership, given all of these government restrictions?**

Since the initial shutdown of statewide sports activity in March 2020, the MAHA has taken many steps to advocate a safe return to hockey activity in Michigan. They include (but are not limited to):

- Worked with several lobbying groups, Michigan State Representatives, and USA Hockey in an effort to get rinks re-opened during the Spring/Summer 2020
- Partnered with the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) to advocate a safe return to sports
- Drafted and submitted multiple proposals to the Governor's office and State leaders, outlining best practices implemented by USA Hockey affiliates nationwide as well as recommendations from the CDC and the MDHHS
- Launched the MAHA Task Force of over 70 volunteers, charged with developing strategies for a safe re-launch of youth hockey in Michigan
- Awarded \$25,000 in scholarship funds to participants in need through the inaugural MAHA Player Scholarship Fund
- Developed and maintained statewide 'Return to Play Guidelines' to ensure compliance with local and state guidelines
- Offered electronic whistles at a subsidized cost to Michigan officials

### **Why doesn't the MAHA just file a lawsuit against the Governor to get the season re-started?**

The Michigan Amateur Hockey Association uses Clark Hill PLC, one of the top law firms in the state of Michigan. We have explored the possibility of legal action, taken in an effort to resume hockey activity in Michigan. At this time, we are not confident that pursuing legal action would produce a favorable result. Therefore, the MAHA does not believe it's the appropriate course to take with the membership fees collected. We will continue to monitor developments within the state of Michigan and, should circumstances change where legal action would appear favorable, we will proceed at that time.



### **How can the MAHA membership help?**

As a result of Governor Whitmer's January 22<sup>nd</sup> extension of the MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order, there has been a ground swell of reaction from the statewide Winter sports community. As one of the most passionate and vocal sports communities in Michigan, the MAHA membership can make a difference by contacting local and state leadership, advocating for a safe return to hockey activity.

**Contact Governor Whitmer:** <https://sombgoweb.state.mi.us/GovRelations/ContactGovernor.aspx>

**Michigan State Senators:** <https://senate.michigan.gov/Senatoremailst.html>

**Michigan House of Representatives:** <https://www.house.mi.gov/MHRPublic/frmFindaRep.aspx>

These links offer directories to all of our local representatives and statewide leadership. There is still an opportunity to preserve our hockey season with the power of our community's collective voice.

