

# 2020 WIAA RETURN TO FALL SPORTS CONSIDERATIONS

August 14, 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide assistance to athletic administrators as they prepare for athletic events. The information and considerations within this document are not considered best practices; instead, they are based on a review of available guidance from multiple reputable sources. These considerations are designed to stimulate critical thinking and help inform decision-making. They can be adapted by decision makers to support event planning, event operations and other business operations based on federal, state and local municipal requirements. (Covid-19 Considerations for Sport and Entertainment Venues and Events, The University of Southern Mississippi National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security [NCS4])

This document provides assistance as schools prepare for competitive events.

## COVID Basics

- COVID is primarily transmitted by aerosol, but also by touching contaminated surfaces.
  - Sports/training may cause heavier breathing which can increase spread of aerosol & virus transmission.
- Student-athletes with high-risk conditions or household/close contacts with high-risk conditions may want to avoid and/or adjust participation to reduce risk of transmission. CDC list of risk: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>
- Symptoms of COVID: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- The foundations of reducing risk should always be kept in mind:
  - Avoid participation and attendance if sick (fever and/or symptoms) – always discuss with your primary care provider if questions or concerns.
  - Wear a cloth mask or buff to reduce spread of your aerosol to others (the mask captures some of your aerosol and reduces transmission to other people).
    - Do not wear medical/surgical masks or N95 masks for exercise as these can decrease airflow.
    - Masks must be worn indoors according to the [governor's mandate](#) while practicing or playing. Cloth masks are safe with exercise, they do not decrease oxygen levels, increase carbon dioxide levels, significantly restrict airflow, or cause heat illness. They will take time to get used to, as they can be uncomfortable and increase the perceived effort of exercise.
    - Athletes may wear a mask while participating in exertion, but it is not required. Athletes not participating should wear a mask.
    - Coaches and sideline personnel should wear masks at all times.
  - Social distancing of at least 6 feet when not participating (sideline, waiting for turn, etc.)
    - Continue to train in smaller “pods” of athletes to reduce exposure risk.
    - “Close contact” is based on the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation that 15+ minutes of close (within 6 feet) exposure to another increases risk of transmission.
  - Continue to emphasize hygiene.
    - Hand sanitization/cleaning frequently (every time on and off field) – each athlete should be encouraged to have their own bottle.
    - Do not share water or food/snacks.
    - Minimize shared equipment as much as possible and sanitize that equipment frequently.

## WHAT IF ATHLETE IS SICK OR EXPOSED

- Any student-athlete that has symptoms and/or fever should not participate in any activity (meetings, practice, competition) and begin self-quarantine immediately
  - Ensure that student-athletes with a positive COVID test (even if no symptoms) do not return to participation in training or competition until:
    - At least 10 days have passed since positive test; AND
    - No fever (fever is temp of 100.4°F or more) without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours; AND
    - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.); AND
    - Written medical clearance from a health care provider (MD, DO, APNP, PA) allowing return
    - Athletes may not return earlier if negative follow-up testing (cannot test out of quarantine)
  - Ensure that student-athletes with “presumed” COVID (symptoms of COVID – refer to [symptom chart](#) – but not tested), not be allowed to participate in any training or event until:
    - At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms; AND

- No fever (fever is temp of 100.4°F or more) without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours; AND
  - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.); AND
  - Athlete may return with a hard copy of a negative COVID test, no fever, and written medical clearance from health care provider.
    1. Any individual that has no fever or symptoms that was quarantined based on exposure to this student-athlete may return to participation as long as they have no fever and no symptoms.
- Any student-athlete that has “close contact” (teammate, household, classroom, work, girlfriend/boyfriend, friend – someone with over 15 minutes of exposure within 6 feet) should begin self-quarantine immediately.
  - If the student-athlete that was exposed previously had COVID (with a hard copy positive test) in the last 3 months, then there is no need to continue self-quarantine restrictions.
  - If the student-athlete that was exposed previously had “presumed” COVID (illness but not tested) in the last 3 months, then must continue with self-quarantine restrictions described below.
  - “Close contact” to an individual with a positive COVID test, student-athletes should not return until:
    - They have waited 14 days from last exposure to the infected person; AND
      1. This is a longer period of time than positive COVID test time due to the combination of exposure, virus incubation and elimination from the body. This is similar to influenza, which is why if influenza is caught early enough flu medications may be helpful, but if influenza caught too late in the course then flu medications are not helpful.
    - Have no fever without use of fever-reducing medications; AND
    - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.)
    - Athletes may not return earlier if negative follow-up testing (cannot test out of quarantine).
      1. In rare instances where the infected positive exposure is a family member with prolonged illness, then discussion and medical clearance with health care providers can be individually obtained and reviewed.
  - “Close exposure” to an individual with “presumed” COVID (symptoms but not tested), student-athletes should not return until:
    - They have waited 14 days from last exposure to the infected person; AND
    - Have no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; AND
    - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.).
    - If the individual with “presumed” COVID is tested during the course of the quarantine:
      1. The test comes back negative, then all individuals quarantined based on that exposure are free to return to participation if no fever and no symptoms.
      2. The test comes back positive, then all individuals must follow the directions above (close contact).
- Athletes may decondition during their quarantine and may require additional time to get back to full speed.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICES

### Pre-Workout/Pre-Contest Screening:

- Athletes and coaches should check their temperature at home before attending practices or games. If a student-athlete or a coaching staff member has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above, they should not attend practices or games.
- What if athlete is sick or exposed? – See above section.
- A record should be kept of all individuals present at team activities.
- Vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions, but should practice social distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed.

### COVID-19 Coach:

- Designate a coach to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns.
- All coaches, staff, officials, and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols. Conduct training virtually, or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.

### Social distancing:

- **Practice** – Coaches are responsible for ensuring social distancing is maintained between players as much as possible. This means additional spacing between players while playing, chatting, changing drills so that players remain spaced out, and no congregating of players while waiting to bat. Workouts should be conducted in ‘pods’ of students, with the same 5-10 students always working out together. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- **Hydration** – All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.

- Due to the importance of hydration during practice, athletes should not be allowed to work out if they do not have access to their own water bottle.
- Water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc. should not be utilized.
- Water refill stations should be cleaned/disinfected frequently.

## **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVENTS**

### **Venue**

- Review Air Circulation/Filter System – Work with maintenance staff to ensure that venue meets proper circulation requirements.
- COVID-19 Signage at entrances and throughout venue – i.e. spectator flow with designated entrance/exit areas with one-way traffic, reminders of not to attend if feeling ill, masking, social distancing, of hygiene habits, etc.
- “Commonly touched” areas – identify these items, such as water refill stations, door handles, handrails, etc. and develop a risk minimization/sanitization plan for these areas.
- Sanitizing Stations – Consider placing sanitization products in specific areas, such as scorer’s tables, team benches, ticket sales, etc.
- Parking/Drop-Off/Pick-Up Areas – Coordinate these areas to allow for social distancing before, during and after events.
- Restroom Access – Establish protocols to ensure restroom capacity is limited and adheres to social distancing guidelines.
- Booster Club/Sponsor/Vendor Sales – Consider eliminating to reduce fan congestion.
- Concession Sales – Consider eliminating concession sales completely and/or create seating arrangements to allow for social distancing, cashless transactions, establish a plan per the FDA and CDC guidelines.

### **Staff**

- Changes to Policies/Procedure Handbooks – Review current policies and procedures, edit as needed and communicate changes.
- Review Emergency Action Plan with Event Staff – Review EAP, edit as needed and communicate changes.
- Training and Education of Staff and Event Personnel – Provide staff with necessary training on sanitization protocols and other COVID-related items for event.
- COVID-19 Coach – Designate a staff member to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All coaches, staff, officials, and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Crowd Control Staffing Needs – Ensure adequate staffing to address event needs with additional attention to COVID-related items.
- Minimize the number of personnel on the sidelines.

### **Participants**

- Eliminate any shared water stations – Require all participants to bring their own water.
- Player benches and coaching boxes – Use paint or tape as a guide to help maintain social distancing on the sideline for athletes and coaches. Encourage teams to clean up their respective benches before leaving the venue.
- Mask/facial covering on sideline for coaches and athletes not participating, especially if not able to maintain full social distancing.

### **Spectators**

- Follow county guidelines on limiting spectators.
- Face covering requirements – Event Personnel, Media, Spectators – consider having masks available to purchase or to provide for those who may have forgotten to bring one.
- Ticket sales – If unable to eliminate on-site sales, consider steps to establish social distancing and provide a sanitization station.
- Pedestrian flow – Create protocols and signage to address ingress and egress areas and high traffic areas to avoid congestion. Consider using stanchions, tape or paint as a guide and communicate in advance.
- Seating – Establish a procedure for all indoor and outdoor venues that allows for social distancing guidelines. The number of spectators allowed must be in accordance with state/local regulations for gathering sizes.

### **Other**

- Advance messaging to teams, spectators, media – Visiting school teams and spectators are expected to comply with the host school strategies for COVID risk mitigation.
  - Provide written notice to all attendees, outlining procedures for the event.
  - Provide PA announcements to reinforce key site requirements and reminders of guidelines.
- Social distancing requirements – Teams, event personnel, media, spectators – Review and communicate plans to all
- Face covering requirements – Event personnel, media, spectators – Review and communicate plans to all.

- Livestream options for spectators who cannot attend in person – Review and communicate plans to all, consider camera location(s).
- Seating capacity/configuration – Teams, spectators, media, medical, event personnel. Consider tape or paint as a guide, communicate in advance and create signage.
- Designate Event Management team – Includes a health professional. This group has the authority to modify, restrict, postpone or cancel the event based on public health risk or other factors.
- Screening of participants, spectators, event personnel, event officials, teams, media – Communicate pre-screening expectations for all attendees.
  1. All attendees should check their temperature at home before attending an event. If any attendee has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above, or if they have any symptoms, they should not attend the event.
- Create communication plan – Attendees can receive an emergency notification, if necessary. Think about how you will address and communicate a positive COVID test of an attendee before, during or after the event.
- Attendees – Consider grouping people into tiers from essential to non-essential and decide which tiers will be allowed at an event:
  1. Tier 1 (Essential): Athletes, coaches, officials, event staff, medical staff, security
  2. Tier 2 (Preferred): Media
  3. Tier 3 (Non-essential): Spectators, vendors

\*Only Tier 1 and 2 personnel will be allowed to attend events until state/local health departments lift restrictions on mass gatherings.
- Athletic Training services – Athletic trainers in high schools are positioned to play a vital role as sports return following this pandemic. As health-care professionals, they can take lead roles in developing and implementing infection control policy throughout the school. School administrators should partner with athletic trainers to develop and implement infection control policy throughout the school.
- Transportation to events – Schools must consider social distancing requirements when scheduling contests and events for the fall. Masking and social distancing (as required by state or local health departments) will need to be maintained on buses/vans. Thus, multiple buses/vans and/or parental/guardian transportation will likely be needed.

**Additional information can be found in The University of Southern Mississippi National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) COVID-19 Considerations for Sport and Entertainment Venues and Events ([click to view](#))**

**MEDICAL CLEARANCE FORM**  
**For Sports Participation After Positive Test or Symptoms of Covid-19**

Name of Student-Athlete \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

County of Student-Athlete Residence \_\_\_\_\_ County of School \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Initial Symptoms \_\_\_\_\_ Covid-19 Tested? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IF ATHLETE IS SICK OR EXPOSED**

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    - At least 10 days have passed since positive test; AND
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    - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.); AND
    - Written medical clearance from a health care provider (MD, DO, APNP, PA) allowing return
    - Athletes may not return earlier if negative follow-up testing (cannot test out of quarantine).
  - Ensure that student-athletes with “presumed” COVID (symptoms of COVID– refer to [symptom chart](#)– but not tested), not be allowed to participate in any training or event until:
    - At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms; AND
    - No fever (fever is temp of 100.4°F or more) without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours; AND
    - No COVID symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath, etc.); AND
    - Athlete may return with a hard copy of a negative COVID test, no fever, and written medical clearance from health care provider.
      1. Any individual that has no fever or symptoms that was quarantined based on exposure to this student-athlete may return to participation as long as they have no fever and no symptoms.
- Any student-athlete that has “close contact” (teammate, household, classroom, work, girlfriend/boyfriend, friend – someone with over 15 minutes of exposure within 6 feet) should begin self-quarantine immediately.
  - If the student-athlete that was exposed previously had COVID (with a hard copy positive test) in the last 3 months, then there is no need to continue self-quarantine restrictions.
  - If the student-athlete that was exposed previously had “presumed” COVID (illness but not tested) in the last 3 months, then must continue with self-quarantine restrictions described below.
  - “Close contact” to an individual with a positive COVID test, student-athletes should not return until:
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    - If the individual with “presumed” COVID is tested during the course of the quarantine:
      1. The test comes back negative, then all individuals quarantined based on that exposure are free to return to participation if no fever and no symptoms.
      2. The test comes back positive, then all individuals must follow the directions above (2c).
- Athletes may decondition during their quarantine and may require additional time to get back to full speed.

I have examined this athlete and reviewed the WIAA guidelines for return to participation and provide medical clearance to return as defined by the above guidelines.

Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_ License # \_\_\_\_\_  
(MD, DO, PA, NP)

Office Address \_\_\_\_\_ Office Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Provider Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Exam \_\_\_\_\_

# FOOTBALL

## RULE CONSIDERATIONS

### Team Box (Rule 1-2-3g)

- The team box may be extended up to the 10-yard line for players only.
- Maintain social distancing of six feet.
- Cloth face coverings are permissible for coaches, nonplayers, and substitutes.
- Do not share uniforms, towels, and other apparel/equipment.
- Players should use their own water bottles.

### Ball (Rule 1-3-2)

- The ball should be cleaned and disinfected throughout the contest.
- Ball holders should maintain social distancing at all times.

### Gloves (Rule 1-5-2b)

- Gloves are permissible but must still meet either the NOCSAE standard or SFIA specification.

### Face Masks [Rules 1-5-1a, 1-5-3c(4)]

- Cloth face coverings that tie to the head or loop around the ears under the helmet are permissible to be worn under the faceguard. Athletes may **NOT** use a “buff” or neck gaiter as it could result in a neck/tracheal/laryngeal injury if grabbed from behind and used to drag a ball carrier down.
- No facial covering or shield on the outside of any faceguard. It should be on the inside of the faceguard for risk minimization issues.
- Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.
- The following two shields for football will be permissible for competition and is compliant with current 2020 NFHS Football Rule 1-5-3c(4) as long as it is clear and has no tint. The NFHS SMAC is not endorsing or mandating either of these products:
  - Schutt Sports – Flexible 2-piece “Splash Shield” (clear).
  - Actuated Medical, Inc. – Polycarbonate 2-piece face shield (clear).
  - Oakley has manufactured a face shield for the NFL that attaches to the football face mask. At this time, that face shield is not available for purchase by the public.
- NOCSAE stated the following with regards to facial coverings attached to the faceguard: “A face covering attached to a faceguard would not automatically void the NOCSAE certification of compliance with our NOCSAE standard, assuming it does not attach permanently to the faceguard and has no rigid components that might protrude into the facial area. The helmet/faceguard manufacturer has ultimate final say as to what can and cannot be attached to their face mask.”

### Tooth and Mouth Protectors [Rule 1-5-1d (5)]

- Athletes should refrain from the removal of mouthguards while on the playing field. If mouthguards are removed on the sidelines or bench area, the athlete should use hand sanitizer each time after touching the mouthguard.

### Charged Time-outs and Authorized Conferences (Rules 2-6-2, 3-5-3, 3-5-8)

- A single charged time-out may be extended to a maximum of two minutes.
- The authorized conference for a charged time-out should take place between the 9-yard marks and not at the sideline for social distancing purposes. It would be permissible for more than one coach to be involved in the conference and for technology to be used.
- Each game official and player should have their own beverage container brought out to them on the field.

### Intermission Between Periods and After Scoring (Rule 3-5-7I)

- The intermission may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick.

### Pre-Game Conference, Coin Toss and Overtime:

- For the coin toss, limit attendees to the referee, umpire and one designated representative from each team.
- Coin toss should take place in the center of the field with individuals maintaining social distancing and wearing masks.
- No handshakes prior to and following the coin toss.
- Maintain social distancing while performing all pregame responsibilities with all officiating crew members, game administration staff, line-to-gain crew, clock operators, individuals handling the balls during the game and team personnel.
- For the overtime procedure, please use the same procedure as used at the start of the contest for the coin toss.

## EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### Masks

- Masks must be worn according to the [governor's mandate](#) upon arrival to the meet venue and until the official warm-ups have started. Face coverings are strongly recommended in all settings where people may come in contact with others, including outdoors when maintaining physical distance is not possible. A violation of the order would not bring any criminal penalties but could result in a \$200 fine.
  1. Coaches and officials are strongly encouraged to wear masks, especially when not able to maintain social distancing.
  2. Spectators should be strongly encouraged to wear masks and are expected to follow social distancing guidelines.
  3. Cloth face coverings for athletes that tie to the head or loop around the ears under the helmet are permissible to be worn under the faceguard. Athletes may **NOT** use a "buff" or neck gaiter as it could result in a neck/tracheal/laryngeal injury if grabbed from behind and used to drag a ball carrier down.

### Other Hygiene Considerations

- There should be no shared athletic equipment. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned and disinfected prior to and immediately following the meet. Be responsible for your own supplies.
- Each athlete should bring their own hydration/water bottles – no sharing.
- Athletes, coaches, and officials are encouraged to provide their own hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and/or sanitizing wipes and use frequently – including before going on the competition field and after returning to the sideline.
- Emphasize to avoid touching the face throughout practice and competition.
- Spitting/nose clearing/coughing – All athletes and coaches are prohibited from spitting/nose clearing and must cover coughs.

### General Reminders for Athletes

- Personal Items – It is recommended that each athlete bring their own gym bag for personal items.
- Clothing/shoes/helmets/shoulder pads – Must not be shared among athletes. Any items that are not currently being worn should be stored inside a personal gym bag.
- Athletes are encouraged to provide their own hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and use frequently.
- Water bottle – All athletes shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Towels – Athletes should bring their own towels, if needed.
- Athletes should refrain from the removal of mouthguards while on the playing field. If mouthguards are removed on the sidelines or bench area, the athlete should use hand sanitizer each time after touching the mouthguard.
- Tell coaches immediately when you are not feeling well.

## COMPETITION CONSIDERATIONS

### Competition Structure

- Encourage only local, single opponent, single day competitions.
- Teams from the same school (varsity and JV) should remain on the same sideline.

### Social Distancing

- Warm-ups/Stretching – Maintain social distancing between players
- Congregating of Athletes and/or Coaches – Discourage congregating upon arrival to the field, prior to game warm-ups, and immediately following the game.
- Huddles – Social distancing to be maintained as much as possible when the coach is communicating with the entire team or in smaller groups. All players and coaches should be encouraged to mask during huddles, especially non-active players.
- Elimination of Team Handshakes – Teams may find other respectful ways to acknowledge each other before or after a competition, while maintaining social distancing.
- National Anthem – Align team members in a manner that allows them to maintain social distancing guidelines.
- Interaction with Officials – Coaches and officials should maintain social distancing when interacting.
- Coin Toss – Eliminate and determine protocol (i.e., teams will defend the end of the field where their team bench is located for the first half. Home team will kick off in the first half, visiting team will kick off in the second half.)
  - Reduce the number of individuals at the coin toss.
- Starting line-ups/Introductions – Introduce from positions, after players have taken the field, and other athletes are socially distanced in the team box.
- Playing Field and Sideline area
  - Allow only essential personnel on the playing field. These are defined as athletes, coaches, medical personnel/trainers, and officials. Encourage facial coverings.
  - All others (i.e. managers, photographers, media, etc.) are considered non-essential personnel and are not to be on the field of play. Adhere to social distancing guidelines and encourage facial coverings.
- Team Box – Designate "places", within the team box, for members of the team to be when they are not on the field. Consider paint and/or tape to help athletes recognize social distancing.

- Substitutions – designate a safe area for players entering the game. Minimize contact with the table and with each other.
- Departing the Field of Play (post game) – The visiting team should depart the field immediately after the completion of the game, followed by the home team. Every effort should be made to ensure that a log-jam does not occur upon departure of the two teams.

### **Spectators**

- Follow county guidelines on limiting spectators.
- Face covering requirements – Event personnel, media, spectators – consider having masks available to purchase or to provide for those who may have forgotten to bring one.
- Ticket sales – If unable to eliminate on-site sales, consider steps to establish social distancing and provide a sanitization station.
- Pedestrian flow – Create protocols and signage to address ingress and egress areas and high traffic areas to avoid congestion. Consider using stanchions, tape or paint as a guide, communicate in advance and create signage.
- Seating – Establish a procedure for all indoor and outdoor venues that allows for social distancing guidelines. The number of spectators allowed must be in accordance with state/local regulations for gathering sizes.

### **OFFICIALS CONSIDERATIONS**

**Officials are not responsible for monitoring activities on the sidelines, such as social distancing, hand washing, symptoms of illnesses and other such issues. This monitoring remains with the coaching staff and school personnel.**

- Electronic whistles are permissible – choose a whistle that will carry outside. Bring an extra battery.
- Cloth face coverings are strongly encouraged.
- Bring personal hand sanitizer and/or wash hands frequently. Gloves are permissible.
- Do not share uniforms, towels, and other apparel/equipment.
- Officials should use their own water bottles.

### **COACHES CONSIDERATIONS**

- Communicate your guidelines in a clear manner to students and parents. Athlete safety is paramount.
- Communicate expectations regarding minimizing the spread of the virus and the habits that will contribute.
- Remind players to use hand sanitizer when prior to going on the competition field and after returning to the sideline.
- Follow the CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the competition venue.

### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Before, during, and after the contest, players, coaches, officials, team personnel and game administration officials should wash and disinfect their hands as often as possible.
- Maintain social distancing at all times while on the sidelines and on the field of play when possible.
- Everyone should have their own beverage bottles that are not shared.
- Cloth coverings are recommended for all coaches and team staff for all game administration.
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration.
- Try and limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on the field level throughout the contest.
- If possible, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use social distancing protocols and should be properly cleaned and disinfected prior to their arrival.
- Covid-19 Resources on WIAA web site: <https://www.wiaawi.org/Health/COVID-19-Resources>