

ACPS ATHLETICS VACCINATION REQUIREMENT

Beginning November 8, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) requires student-athletes to be vaccinated against COVID-19 for the winter and spring sports seasons as an additional safety measure. This requirement applies to student athletes participating in out-of-season conditioning as well. An increase in positive COVID-19 cases in sports programs results in large numbers of students being paused from athletic participation and, more importantly, from classroom instruction.

Vaccination Requirement

Students who are participating in VHSL sponsored athletic events within ACPS who are unvaccinated and do not have either a medical or religious exemption will not be able to participate in team activities.

Students who are not receiving the COVID-19 vaccine due to medical or religious reasons will be **required to submit a negative COVID-19 test weekly** or they will be unable to participate in team activities.

Submitting Proof of Vaccination

Starting October 25th student athletes can submit their proof of COVID-19 vaccination by uploading a picture of their vaccination card into their profile of the RankOne System. Students may NOT bring physical copies of their vaccination card to the athletic office.

Exemptions

Is there a religious exemption?

Students who are not receiving the COVID-19 vaccine due to religious reasons will be exempt from the requirement, but they will need to provide information to their schools.

Starting October 25, student athletes can submit the Commonwealth of Virginia Certificate of Religious Exemption form. The **form must be notarized** and should be uploaded into your profile area of the RankOne System.

Students who are not receiving the COVID-19 vaccine due to religious reasons will be **required to submit a negative COVID-19 test daily** or they will not be able to participate in team activities.

Deadline for Submitting Religious Exemptions

The deadline for submitting religious exemptions for the Winter Season is Monday, November 1. The exemption must be received by the November 1 deadline for students to participate in winter tryouts. This will allow enough time for those students with a medical exemption to start testing daily to provide proof of their negative daily COVID-19 test so that they may participate in tryouts. As a reminder, all students with a religious exemption for receiving the COVID-19 vaccination must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test daily.

Is there a medical exemption?

Students who are not receiving the COVID-19 vaccine due to documented health or medical reasons will be exempt from the requirement, but they will need to provide information to the school. They will need to provide documentation of a medical exemption from their physician. Students can do this through a letter from their doctor (**on the doctor's office letterhead**) stating the student has a medical condition that prevents them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Please email julie.crawford@acps.k12.va.us for more information.

Students who are not receiving the COVID-19 vaccine due to documented health or medical reasons will be **required to submit a negative COVID-19 test daily.**

Deadline for Submitting Medical Exemptions

The Deadline for submitting medical exemptions for the Winter Season is Monday, November 1. The exemption must be received by the November 1 deadline for students to participate in winter tryouts. As a reminder all students with a medical exemption for receiving the COVID-19 vaccination must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test daily. Please email julie.crawford@acps.k12.va.us for the medical exemption process.

Timeline

Do students need to wait until two weeks have passed after their vaccination to participate in athletics?

A student is considered fully vaccinated if two weeks have passed since their second COVID-19 shot. However, as long as they have had their second shot by November 8 they may participate.

Why the November timeline and why are fall sports exempt from the policy?

Fall sports have already begun. It is too late to require proof of vaccination for participation in fall sports as this could negatively impact students who are already playing/participating.

Decision Making

Why did ACPS decide to mandate vaccinations for high school athletes?

Athletics are deemed high contact activities with an increased chance for spread. Vaccinating student athletes adds another layer of protection against the virus, particularly as the majority of students do not wear masks while competing.

Requiring vaccinations reduces the need for contact tracing by both the school staff and the health department. It will also greatly reduce the number of students and teams paused, thereby minimizing any time a student has to be paused from in-person learning.

Was ACPS directed by anyone to develop this mandate? Why are you mandating a vaccine that is currently not part of the state requirements for school attendance?

[VDH Interim Guidance for K-12 School Reopening](#)

Instructs school divisions to prioritize educational opportunities over athletics, extracurricular activities, or other events in the school and surrounding community. Vaccinating our students is a critical step in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and minimizing any disruption to learning. The Virginia High School League supports ACPS' decision.

Our goal is to keep students in school whenever possible. This action should both lower the number of COVID-19 cases stemming from athletic activities and reduce the time a student is required to pause.

The state mandates vaccinations for instruction where students earn credit. The COVID-19 vaccine is not included in the list of required vaccines for classes in which students earn credits. ACPS can require vaccinations for voluntary participation in activities where no credit is earned.

Who Is Affected

Why not require it of all students instead of just athletes?

The state mandates vaccinations for instruction where students earn credit. The COVID-19 vaccine is not included in the list of required vaccines for classes in which students earn credits. We can only require vaccinations for voluntary participation in activities where no credit is earned.

What about other VHSL activities including - Debate, Creative Writing, eSports, Forensics, Robotics, Student Leadership, Scholastic Bowl, etc.? What about other activities?

ACPS will require proof of a COVID-19 vaccination for participation in any other activity that requires a physical, including dance team and step team. We are only mandating the vaccine for those VHSL activities that require a physical and are deemed high contact activities with an increased likelihood of transmission of the virus.

Testing

What type of weekly testing is required?

Students who are not vaccinated will be required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test on a weekly basis. This test will need to be either a rapid test or a PCR test. Home testing using over the counter testing products will not be accepted at this time. If an exemption is approved, a process will be given to you on how to submit testing.