

# New NJSIAA proposal mandates 30-day sit for transfers

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*New rule will be heard by NJSIAA Executive Committee Wednesday, could be fast-tracked for July implementation*



(Photo: Chris Pedota/NorthJersey.com file)

Seeking to solve a problem that has stained high school sports in New Jersey, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association has revealed a new proposal on handling the athletic eligibility for transfer students.

The new rule calls for students with few exceptions – to have to sit out for 30 days of their respective sport, or half their games, depending on which is less, starting with the NJSIAA approved regular-season start date. The NJSIAA is the governing body for high school sports in New Jersey.

Each sport under NJSIAA auspices has a unique starting date, meaning the date games can be played and count toward a regular-season record. For football in 2017, it is Aug. 31.

“What we are trying to address is a number of concerns, one, kids hopping back and forth from programs, two, kids going to multiple schools, and three, parents shopping their kids for programs,” said NJSIAA Projects Manager Mike Zapicchi, who also serves as the head of the organization's public/non-public committee, which authored the new rule proposal.

The formal plan will be heard by the NJSIAA's Executive Committee at its meeting on Jan. 11. It can be enacted two different ways. It can be read, voted on, and then approved again at the February meeting. If it goes that route, it will be in place July 1.



**The NJSIAA has a new proposal on handling athletic eligibility for transfer students. The formal proposal will be heard by the NJSIAA's Executive Committee at its meeting on Jan. 11. Steve Timko, pictured, is the organization's executive director. (Photo: NorthJersey.com file photo)**

The Executive Committee could opt to have a bylaw of this importance be sent to the full membership for a vote in December. If it's approved there, it will be enforced starting July 1, 2018.

“The 30-day sit is the shortest sit period in the country,” said Zapicchi. “Twenty-four states have a one-year sit period. And during this 30 days, students can still practice and participate in all team activities so they get the bulk of the positive benefits of interscholastic athletics, but they can't compete.”

The rule also states that if a student transfers after the first interscholastic scrimmage, or after the formal start date, he or she must sit 30 days with their new team, plus state tournament competition.

Another part of the proposal says that an athlete has to sit 30 days even if he/she did not participate for the varsity program at a previous school.

The new policy does not allow for an appeal process.

The ineligibility period will be waived for students placed under the protection of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency and the court system. Student-athletes who transfer as part of the resolution of a Harrassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) statute will also be free to play immediately, but Zapicchi said that there must be written documentation from the school district in those cases.

For the last decade, the NJSIAA has tried to get a handle on the rise of prominent transfers. In their conference call with reporters detailing the plan, NJSIAA officials stressed that less than 1 percent of student-athletes in New Jersey transfer. They acknowledge, however, it has been an issue.

The current transfer rule allowed students to become eligible immediately provided they could present a bona fide change of address. But this loophole was frequently exploited, frustrating coaches and athletic directors.

“I think with the changing structures of family units and our definition of bona fide, it presented a lot of times where parents and families [could] produce multiple addresses,” said NJSIAA Assistant Director Larry White. “Without an investigative board [at the NJSIAA] it put the onus on schools to do their due diligence. The time had come for the rule to go.”

The full plan was sent out to athletic directors throughout the state Wednesday and made public on the NJSIAA's website.

