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NCHSAA addresses home-schooled and transgender students with new policies

By Joe Sirera joe.sirera@greensboro.com 15 hrs ago



The N.C. High School Athletic Association approved two significant policy changes related to inclusiveness and addressed a rise in the number of ejections at its spring board of directors meeting today. Here's a quick look at the highlights:

HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENTS: *(see attached pdf of the new policy, with changes in red)* The NCHSAA voted to allow home-schooled students to participate in athletics for their "base school" (the one where they are enrolled) and students "must participate in a class schedule that is at least one half of the school's instructional day," according to the association's handbook. Some of those classes may be taken online, but "at least one class must be on campus each semester or meet the LEA (school district's) requirements."

Home-schooled students also must pass all classes in which they are enrolled at the "base school" and have documentation of their status as approved home-schoolers from the N.C. Division of Non-Public Education.



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NCHSAA HANDBOOK VERSION

1.2 ELIGIBILITY

1.2.1 Initial Entry: A student may participate in athletics at any member school upon initial entry into ninth grade provided they meet applicable NCHSAA and local Board of Education eligibility requirements. Initial entry is defined as the first day of classes that a student is in attendance and counted present or, if sooner, the first day a student practices or otherwise takes part as a member or potential member of a member school's athletic team prior to the start of the academic year (e.g., if a student participates in preseason football workouts prior to the beginning of the ninth grade academic year, this will be deemed the student's initial entry at this member school).

(a) Upon initial entry into ninth grade, transfer and boundary criteria shall apply as follows:

- (1) The student must live within the member school's boundary as established by the local board of education (LEA); or
- (2) If the student's member school does not have a boundary established by an LEA (e.g., charter school, non-boarding parochial school, etc.), after initial entry, the boundary for the member school shall be considered to be:
 - (i) The entire county in which the member school is located; and
 - (ii) Any addresses within a 25-mile radius of the member school as measured by an NCHSAA designated computer program; or
- (3) There will be no boundary limitation if the student is a member of a parochial church affiliated with a non-boarding parochial member school and submits an authorized pastor verification form.

(b) Home school students

- (1) Documentation from the Division of Non-Public Education must be presented upon initial dual enrollment-attendance, immunization, transcript, school number, etc.
- (2) Home school students must communicate athletic intent at a member school in which they are domiciled and follow the enrollment and assignment procedures/policies established by the local board of education.
 - (i) Notice to principal must take place within ten days prior to the first practice date of each sports season.

1.2.2 Master Eligibility Sheets: All students must be eligible prior to dressing or participating in any interscholastic contest, whether or not the NCHSAA sponsors a championship in that sport.

(a) Only those students listed on the master eligibility sheet(s) are covered by catastrophic insurance.

(b) No student shall be listed on the sheet unless and until documents substantiating eligibility are on file with the school. Such documents shall be available for inspection until the student's eligibility has ended.

(c) The master eligibility sheet should be used for each sport and shall list all players, varsity and junior varsity, participating in that sport. A copy should be on file at the school prior to the first regular season contest including Endowment games.

(d) Eligibility sheets are no longer required to be filed with the NCHSAA but must be made available upon request. It is required that eligibility sheets be shared among conference schools in each sport.

(e) Ineligible players are NOT allowed to participate in practice, but this does not apply to summer workouts or skill development.

(f) When completing Master Eligibility Sheets, if a student's parent(s) or legal custodian(s) does not live within the LEA, please make all required entries and enter one of the following eligibility criteria on the second page:

- (1) Any student proposed for a contest is eligible at the school to which the local board of education assigns them within the unit of residence of a parent or legal custodian within this state, subject to the Transfer Policy. (see 1.2.10).
- (2) When two boards of education within North Carolina by mutual agreement assign a student to a different school, and the NCHSAA has authorized eligibility pursuant to the Transfer Policy. (see 1.2.10)
- (3) Absent a transfer referenced above, a student is eligible at his or her assigned school if he or she has attended school within that administrative unit the previous two semesters, provided it meets LEA policy.
- (4) Legal documents signed by a judge (ward of court) or social service (orphanage/foster home) are required to be submitted along with eligibility forms pertaining to students in these circumstances.
- (5) Foreign exchange students (see 1.2.9.i).
- (6) The NCHSAA has approved a Transfer Waiver Request and/or a Hardship Request to waive the residency requirement on the student's behalf.

TRANSGENDER STUDENTS: *(see attached pdf of the new policy)* If a student wishes to participate in athletics for a NCHSAA school and their "gender identity differs from the gender listed on the student's certificate of birth," the NCHSAA Handbook reads, the student must submit a Gender Identity Request Form that documents that the request is "based on the gender identification of that student in the current school records and in daily life activities in the school and community."

The request must also include documentation of medications, interventions and a written verification from an "appropriate healthcare professional." The request will be handled by the NCHSAA's new Gender Identity Committee, which will include a current member of the board of directors, a school district or school administrator, a physician "with experience in gender identity health care and/or World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care" and a psychiatrist, psychologist or licensed health professional familiar with the WPATH.

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UPDATED Policy Attachment 1

NCHSAA HANDBOOK VERSION

1.2.4 Gender of Player: The NCHSAA allows participation in interscholastic athletics for all students, regardless of gender or gender identification. It is the intent that all students are able to compete on a level playing field in a safe, competitive and friendly environment, free of discrimination. The following rules and regulations are intended to provide every student athlete with equal opportunities to participate in athletics.

- a) A student may participate based on the gender noted on the student's certificate of birth.
 - i. Women shall not participate on a men's interscholastic athletic team where the school has a women's team in the same sport or where a school sends an entry to the women's state playoffs in the same sport.
 - a) In cases where women are permitted on a men's team, the school forfeits all participation in the women's playoff in the same sport.

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- b) Men's rules will be used where women play on men's teams.
- b) When a student's gender identity differs from the gender listed on the student's certificate of birth, the Gender Identity Request Form must be submitted by the member school to the NCHSAA prior to any participation by the student under circumstances that would constitute ineligibility. The Request should be based on the gender identification of that student in current school records and daily life activities in the school and community.
- I. The following information should be submitted with the Request:
 - a) Documentation from individuals such as, but not limited to, parents/legal guardians appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction, friends, and/or teachers, which affirm that the actions, attitudes, and manner demonstrate the student's consistent gender identification.
 - b) A complete list of all the student's prescribed, non-prescribed, or over the counter treatments or medications relative to gender identity.
 - c) A complete list of interventions that have happened related to the gender identity of the student.
 - d) Written verification from an appropriate healthcare professional (e.g. physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, school nurse, etc.) of the student's consistent gender identification. Include any other social/emotional information from health-care professionals that would help the Committee make a decision about the student. This information must be submitted on office letterhead of the healthcare professional who provides verification with contact information and professional title of the individual.
 - e) Any other pertinent documentation or information which the student or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction believe relevant and appropriate.
 - c) The NCHSAA will refer the Gender Identity Request to the NCHSAA Gender Identity Committee for consideration. The Committee will approve the Request if it finds that the student genuinely identifies as the gender indicated in the Request.

INCREASED EJECTIONS: Through last week there were 906 ejections from NCHSAA contests during the 2018-19 school year. That is up from 738 for the entire 2017-18 school year.

The greatest number of ejections this year have been for profanity. The total of 341 is more than double the 153 profanity-related ejections for 2017-18, but the NCHSAA board says that increase is a product of stricter enforcement by officials.

"The profanity issue is at the forefront," said Sandy George, president of the NCHSAA's board and principal at Mount Airy. "We're not going to tolerate that and (the increased emphasis) is part of the reason" for the rise in ejections.

There also have been 282 ejections for fighting during the 2018-19 school year, up from 210 in 2017-18. "The fighting is absolutely out of hand," George added. The bulk of the fighting ejections in 2018 involved eight football teams: Charlotte Independence, East Mecklenburg, Greenville Conley, Harrisburg Hickory Ridge, Mint Hill Rocky River, Wilson Fike, Wilson Hunt and Winterville South Central.

ALSO: The NCHSAA's full membership will vote Thursday on Haywood County's final appeal to allow Tuscola to compete in Class 2-A instead of Class 3-A for the final two years of the current realignment cycle, based on a decline

in enrollment at the Waynesville school. The vote will take place during the NCHSAA's Annual Meeting in Chapel Hill.

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