



August 31, 2020

Jesse C. DeLee, MD
Chair, Medical Advisory Committee
University Interscholastic League
P.O. Box 8028
Austin, Texas 78713

Dear Chairman DeLee and Members of the UIL Medical Advisory Committee:

On behalf of the 53,000 physician members of Texas Pediatric Society (TPS) and Texas Medical Association (TMA), thank you for the opportunity to comment on procedures associated with the safe return of children who have been infected by COVID-19 to extracurricular University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities.

It is our understanding that via an emergency meeting of the UIL Medical Advisory Committee on August 7, 2020, that discussion took place about how best to ensure the safe return of students to UIL activities after a confirmed infection with COVID-19. We appreciate the Committee's attention to this important matter due to the continued high rates of community spread throughout our state while school and school related activities begin again. It is also our understanding that a final decision was made during the meeting to require a student to receive clearance from a physician prior to returning to UIL activities. This measure is meant to ensure the child is safe from any lingering cardiopulmonary side effects of their COVID-19 infection. This new policy seems to align with the *Cardiopulmonary Consideration for High School Student-Athletes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: NFHS-AMSSM Guidance Statement*.ⁱ Finally, it our understanding the notice of this new policy is now listed on the UIL's 2020-2021 UIL COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Guidelines webpageⁱⁱ under *Individuals Confirmed or Suspected with COVID-19* as:

In addition to the criteria and processes described above, a student who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 must receive clearance from a physician prior to returning to participation in UIL activities.

While our organizations very much appreciate the intent to ensure children are healthy before returning to UIL activities after a COVID-19 infection, we have a few concerns based on current available scientific knowledge that we feel could be addressed with a slightly altered protocol moving forward.

First, we do not think it is vital for every student who has been infected with COVID-19 to be required to seek physician clearance before returning to UIL activities. After reviewing the American College of Cardiology's *Returning To Play After Coronavirus Infection: Pediatric Cardiologists' Perspective* expert analysisⁱⁱⁱ, we would strongly recommend differentiating between students who are 1) asymptomatic or only exhibit mild symptoms, 2) students with moderate symptoms under the age of 12, and 3) those with moderate symptoms above the age of 12 and those

with severe symptoms. Students that fall into the first two categories should not be required to receive a medical evaluation and clearance from a physician prior to returning to UIL activities. Secondly, due to the varied nature of UIL activities, we do not think it is vital for any student who would not have been required to receive a preparticipation physical evaluation prior to participating to then be required to undergo a medical evaluation prior to participating in that same activity. For instance, academic competitions that do not require rigorous physical activity should be differentiated from athletic activities. To note, we intend this to apply to the *activity* that would require a preparticipation physical evaluation, not whether the *student themselves* was required to receive a preparticipation physical evaluation this year in light of the UIL's new policy that certain student athletes no longer need to receive a preparticipation physical evaluation for the 2020-2021 school year if they have had one in the past.

We note that recommendations enclosed in this letter reflect best available clinical evidence at this time. As new evidence becomes available, clinical recommendations may change. If a modification to our recommended approach is necessary, we will notify UIL in writing of any suggested updates.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important policy. Our organizations share the extremely important goal of ensuring children can return safely to UIL activities when appropriate to do so. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to Clayton Travis, Director of Advocacy and Health Policy with the Texas Pediatric Society at Clayton.Travis@txpeds.org or Troy Alexander, Director of Legislative Affairs with the Texas Medical Association at Troy.Alexander@texmed.org.

Kind regards,



Tammy Camp, MD
President, Texas Pediatric Society



Diana L. Fite, MD
President, Texas Medical Association



Javier "Jake" Margo Jr., MD
President, Texas Academy of Family Physicians

CC: Jamey Harrison, EdD, UIL Deputy Director

ⁱ Drezner, J. A., Heinz, W. M., Asif, I. M., Batten, C. G., Fields, K. B., Raukar, N. P., ... Walter, K. D. (2020). Cardiopulmonary Considerations for High School Student-Athletes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: NFHS-AMSSM Guidance Statement. *Sports Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1941738120941490>

ⁱⁱ University Interscholastic League. 2020-2021 UIL COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Guidelines. Retrieved on August 24, 2020 from: <https://www.uil-texas.org/policy/covid-19/2020-2021-uil-covid-19-risk-mitigation-guidelines>

ⁱⁱⁱ Dean, P.N., Jackson, L.B., Paridon, S.M. (Jul 14, 2020). *Returning To Play After Coronavirus Infection: Pediatric Cardiologists' Perspective*. American College of Cardiology. Retrieved from: <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2020/07/13/13/37/returning-to-play-after-coronavirus-infection>