

Niagara County gives greenlight to moderate- and higher-risk sports

Niagara County Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton on Wednesday said moderate- and higher-risk sports in Niagara County may proceed in accordance with New York state guidelines. Last Friday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the decision on whether these sports could start back up would be made by each county's health director.

"Since the governor's announcement on Friday, I have been in contact with my colleagues in the other Western New York counties, school superintendents, athletic directors, parents, state health department officials, Section VI officials and so many more to make sure everyone had a clear understanding of the guidelines and what to expect should we move forward with these sports," Stapleton said. "Based on those discussions, I am confident everyone understands the risks involved and the steps that need to be taken to mitigate that risk. And with that, I am giving approval for these sports to move forward."

Cuomo also announced the New York state interim guidelines for sports and recreation. These revisions also allow local health departments to authorize non-professional and non-collegiate sports, such as wrestling, ice hockey, basketball, contact lacrosse, and volleyball, to proceed with individual and group training, competitions,

and tournaments, effective Feb. 1. Updates were also made to low- and moderate-risk sports and recreation activities.

The NCDOH said, "All responsible parties (schools, businesses, leagues, organizations) must follow the New York State Department of Health's interim guidance for sports and recreation during the COVID-19 public health emergency, and applicable executive orders for the conduct of their sports and recreation activities."

Per current state guidance, indoor facilities must limit their capacity to no more than 50% occupancy and a maximum of two spectators per player. In addition, protocols to ensure social distancing, use of face coverings, and enhanced disinfection protocols must be implemented.

For moderate- and higher-risk sports, if an athlete, coach or referee receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, all in-person team or group activities (e.g. practices, scrimmages, games, meetings) will likely result in a 10-day suspension to mitigate the spread of infection. Situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

NCDOH added, "Participating in higher-risk sports presents significant risks. The level of risk presented by a return to sports is driven by the sport and setting, local disease activity, and individual circumstances, including under-

lying health conditions that may place the athlete or household contacts at increased risk of severe disease should they contract COVID-19. Individual schools and businesses, student and adult athletes, and parents/guardians must carefully consider a variety of factors before making an individual decision to participate."

To allow continuation of higher-risk sport and recreational activities, local health authorities will continue to consider many factors, including but not limited to the following:

- √ Whether there is a more transmissible variant of COVID-19 identified in the area;
- √ Local rates of COVID-19 transmission or rate of positivity; and
- √ Local ability to monitor and enforce compliance.

NCDOH said, "Contact sports bring people close together and increase the risk of transmission. If persons choose to return to high-risk sports, they must follow guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Athletes should be mindful of their activity outside of sports to minimize risk and reduce community spread. The New York state summary guidelines are posted at forward.ny.gov. All responsible parties (schools, businesses, leagues, organizations) must read and affirm the state's detailed guidelines and develop a safety plan."

Catholic Charities a 'beacon of hope' for those in need



Niagara County District Director Bob Goods and WIC coordinator Judette Dahleiden at a Catholic Charities' parish parking lot pop-up held at the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph Parish in Niagara Falls in December.

BY BOB GOODS
Niagara County District Director
for Catholic Charities

Over the past year, 20,333 Niagara County neighbors in need of all ages were served by the 10 programs Catholic Charities offers here. We provided basic emergency assistance, including support for food and finding housing. Our licensed counselors offered counseling services and for all ages. We have clinics dedicated to children, teens and their families located in three areas of our county. Our multisystemic therapy program worked with dozens of families to address youth problematic behaviors. WIC, which aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk, served thousands.

We are committed to staying at the forefront in providing basic assistance and crucial programs, which serve as a beacon of HOPE for our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet, or who are facing new challenges with their mental health and well-being. However, we can't continue to help like this without your generous support.

Appeal 2021, which benefits Catholic Charities' programs and services, recently launched with a goal of \$10 million to address the

critical need for the tens of thousands through not only Niagara County, but across all eight counties of Western New York.

If you or someone you know needs assistance (even if you have never needed it before) in Niagara County, call us directly at 716-282-2351. We have offices located in Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport.

It is a challenging time for all of us but, thanks to our generous supporters, these crucial Catholic Charities programs continue now when they are needed most. If you can help, please visit ccwny.org/donation. Appeal 2021 runs through June 30.

WNY health leaders strongly suggest wrestling postponement

County health departments issue joint statement on wrestling

The leaders of the five county health departments (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara) in Western New York provided the following joint statement Thursday, related to wrestling programs. This announcement follows updates to the "New York Forward" interim guidance for sports and recreation issued Jan. 22.

Revisions to the guidance relaxed certain restrictions on higher-risk sports, including wrestling. Wrestling involves participants sparring in very close physical proximity for extended periods of time, which significantly increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Similarly, masks, which are a method of COVID-19 risk reduction, are not recommended to be worn during wrestling because of a choking hazard.

Further, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) published Jan. 26 summarized a large COVID-19 outbreak associated with a wrestling tournament in December. Through a case investigation that spanned three counties and included diagnostic testing of con-

tacts, the report noted hundreds of contacts, significant losses of in-person learning days, suspension of all winter indoor and outdoor high school athletics in one county, and one death resulting from multiple exposures during this wrestling tournament.

The circumstances outlined in that MMWR brief could easily be replicated at any WNY wrestling tournament. In the interests of limiting risk and protecting the health of athletes, their classmates, households, and coaching and teaching staff within schools, WNY health department leaders strongly recommend interscholastic, intramural and amateur wrestling teams and leagues cancel or postpone their winter 2021 seasons to a later date, when community transmission of COVID-19 is significantly lower. Coaching staff and parents should consider promoting individual training and distanced group exercises.

This joint statement came from:

- √ Tyler Shaw, Allegany County Department of Health
- √ Kevin Watkins, M.D., Cattaraugus County Department of Health
- √ Christine Schuyler, Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services
- √ Gale Burstein, M.D., Erie County Department of Health
- √ Daniel Stapleton, Niagara County Department of Health

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Vitamins in their natural food state always exist as **living complexes** with specific co-factors, enzymes, phyto(plant) nutrients and organic mineral-activators, never as single isolated factors. A vitamin needs all of the other elements necessary to function. Your body only absorbs a percentage of synthetic forms of vitamins and minerals; it utilizes even less.

Taking a synthetic vitamin draws the co-factors from your body. You may feel good for a while but when the co-factors run out, you will begin to feel worse. The prolonged action of the synthetics imitates the action of drugs; they over-stimulate rather than feed your body. Many illnesses, pain and suffering are the result of our dietary ignorance.

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