

NJSIAA SECTIONAL MEETINGS SEPTEMBER 2015
FREQUENTLY ASKED ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is the fundamental rule as it pertains to athletic participation?

A. A student plays the sport at the school in which the student athlete is enrolled (with exceptions).

Q. Can a student be enrolled in a private/parochial school that does not offer that sport and play that sport at his/her residential public high school?

A. No, private/parochial schools are not part of the exceptions mentioned above.

Q. Can a home schooled student athlete play at his/her residential public school?

A. Only if the local public school board of education has a policy that allows such.

Q. Can a non-public school allow home schooled student(s) to play for their school?

A. No, the Department of Education law only pertains to public schools and board of educations.

Q. When does a student athlete become a part of the sport program for a high school?

A. When a student is enrolled as a freshman/9th grader, that student is part of that high school's athletic program, and board approved coaches may not have contact/coach those freshman during the out of season time period.

Q. When does a student athlete become ineligible according to the age rule?

A. An athlete becomes ineligible for high school athletics if he/she attains the age of nineteen (19) prior to September 1, regardless of the birthday being August 31.

Q. When does a student's athletic eligibility "clock" start ticking?

A. A student's athletic eligibility "clock" starts ticking when he/she enters 9th grade and the clock is continuous, or when a student athlete competes in an interscholastic high school level contest, even if he/she is not enrolled in high school. High school level means freshman, jv or varsity level play.

Q. Can an 8th grader that is enrolled in a NJ grammar or middle school play on a high school level team?

A. By rule, no, but there is an exception. A waiver may be granted upon request for an 8th grader who is enrolled in 8th grade, is otherwise academically eligible, to participate on the JV or varsity teams where such students will be sixteen (16) years of age or older upon entrance into the 9th grade prior to September 1st.

Q. How many credits are needed to be eligible for the fall and winter sport seasons?

A. Except for freshman, 30 credits are needed at the end of the previous school year to be eligible for the fall and winter sport seasons. Once a student is eligible for a season (winter season), he/she is eligible for the entire season.

Q. How many credits are needed to be eligible for the spring season?

A. 15 credits are needed by the end of the 1st semester (@ January 31).

Q. May a school require more credits for graduation than 120 credits?

A. Yes, a school may require more credits for graduation, or they may require a certain Grade Point Index, for athletic participation, but a school may not require less than 120 for graduation or 15/30 credits for NJSIAA participation rules and regulations.

Q. Are there any special considerations given to seniors as it pertains to credits, accelerated programs, etc?

A. On page 42, CL 3 and CL 4 at the bottom of the page, explains special circumstances that allows for seniors to retain athletic eligibility provided that they meet certain conditions.

Q. If a student athlete is ineligible for the beginning of the winter season, can they become eligible for the remainder of the winter season and how?

A. They can become eligible by receiving/acquiring 15 credits for the 1st semester (1st and 2nd marking periods traditional model) and then are eligible for the remainder of the winter season.

Q. If a student athlete is eligible at the beginning of the winter season, but does not attain 15 credits for the 1st semester, does that student athlete lose his/her eligibility for the rest of the winter season?

A. No, a student eligible to represent his/her school in Winter Sports may continue to do so until the end of the season.

Q. Are classified/handicapped students (students with an I.E.P.) waived from the 30/15 credit rule?

A. If, and only if, their respective I.E.P., does not require that student to reach the credit thresholds that NJSIAA requires for regular education students.

Q. What are the requirements then for a classified student?

A. They must have an IEP, parent(s) or guardian(s) must give consent for such competitive experience, the CST must certify that the student successfully completed the I.E.P. in the previous year/semester commensurate with the student's ability. Final approval for participation must be given by the principal.

Q. Are 504/ADA students waived also?

A. No, courses cannot be waived for ADA or 504 students.

Q. When does an I.E.P. student's athletic eligibility clock start ticking?

A. When the classified student first plays the sport (plays means competes in an interscholastic regular season or post season contest). Practice and/or pre-season scrimmages do not count.

Q. Where may a classified student compete when 1) the Board of Education/DCC&P/the Courts place his/her in an out of district placement, or 2) when the parent(s)/guardian(s) place him/her in out of district placement?

A. For #1, the student will be eligible to compete on the interscholastic athletic teams of the school district in which the student resides, providing such receiving school does not sponsor an interscholastic athletic program in that sport, and so long as such students meet all other applicable NJSIAA eligibility requirements; 2) a classified student is permitted to participate in the interscholastic program of the school where the student is enrolled or the school where the student resides, when extenuating circumstances are present.

Q. What is the definition of “entrance” as it pertains to enrollment?

A. Entrance means registration plus actual attendance at a school.

Q. What is the definition of an Initial Enrollment?

A. At the beginning of his/her secondary school career a student is free to choose any secondary school he/she may legally attend (9th grade in a 4-or 6-year high school or 10th grade in a 3-year high school).

NOTE: After this initial enrollment a student is subject to the transfer provision as provided for in Section 4.K(2) of this Article.

Q. Can you please explain the provisions as it pertains to Vo-Tech Schools, Public Academies, Charter Schools, Shared- time Vo-Tech Schools, et al?

A. Full time Vo-Tech/Public Academy/Charter Schools are governed under this provision: If a Vo-Tech/Public Academy/Charter School does not offer the particular sport in which one of its full-time students wishes to participate, that student may participate in the sport at his/her school of residence upon agreement of both principals, regardless of the number of sports programs offered at the V-T/PA/Charter school.

Q. What about Vo-Tech/Public Academies when the student is a Shared-Time student with the residential public high school?

A. If a student is carried on both Official Registers, the student may choose the school in which he/she wishes to participate in all sports on a full-year basis.

Q. Are there any special or somewhat strange situations that might exist with the above two provisions?

A. Yes, suppose a student is a shared-time student, a three sport athlete, who chooses to play all of the sports at the Vo-Tech/Public Academy. This is his/her choice and must play all sports there. However, the winter sport that he/she wishes to play is not offered by the V-T/PA, so by rule, he/she can play at the residential public school, and does. For the spring sport, he/she must play at the V-T/PA cause that was the chosen school of play at the beginning of the school year.

Q. What about Choice Schools?

A. Students that were enrolled in a Choice School program prior to Sept. 1, 2013 (present graduation classes of 2016 and 2017) are not bound by the transfer sit-out rule. Students that enrolled in a Choice School program after Sept. 1, 2013 are subject to the transfer restrictions contained in Article V, Section 4.K (1) and (2).

Q. Can 7th or 8th graders practice with a high school level team, freshman, jv or varsity?

A. No, not unless the 6th, 7th or 8th grade (turn 16 before September 1 of freshman year) waiver is granted. Nor may these students “suit up” with these high school level teams for scrimmages or games involving grades (9) through (12).

Q. How many semesters of athletic eligibility are student athletes permitted by rule?

A. No student shall be eligible for high school athletics after the expiration of eight (8) consecutive semesters following his/her entrance into the 9th grade. A student becomes ineligible for high school athletics when the class in which he/she was originally enrolled has graduated. (See exception for classified students).

Q. Is this rule the same for out of state student athletes, who may have played on high school level team(s), though they may have been in 6th, 7th or 8th grade, and have moved from their out of state residence into New Jersey and have transferred into a NJSIAA member school?

A. Beginning in September 2015, page 45, Letter J, 4., addresses this situation.

Q. What are the basic components of the NJSIAA transfer rule?

A. 1. A student-athlete who transfers from one secondary school to another because of a bona fide change of residence by his/her parents or guardians or through assignment by the Board of Education, becomes eligible to represent his/her new school immediately upon entrance unless recruitment or transfer for athletic advantage is proven and provided that all other eligibility requirements are satisfied.

2. A bona fide change of residence is defined as when a parent/guardian moves with the student from one public high school district to another public high school district.

3. The NJSIAA transfer form must be executed in its entirety by both the former and present school and both schools must affirm that the transfer is a bona fide change of residence and that there was no athletic recruitment or a transfer for athletic advantage. The transfer form cannot be delayed or not executed for failure to pay tuition payments, fines of any kind, failure to return property, books, etc.

4. Residential placement by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency or by the Courts is treated as a change of residence by the parents/guardians except in cases of involving juvenile or criminal court proceedings.

5. A parental/guardian change of custody to another person, relative, although notarized and accepted by the public school district as a legitimate residence for educational purposes IS NOT a bona fide change of residence per NJSIAA definition as stated in #2 above.

6. In cases where a student resides with one parent and elects to change residence for transfer to another secondary school where the other parent resides, said student will be declared eligible immediately since this is considered a parental change of residence provide the parents do not reside in the same public high school district. However, subsequent retransfers to the previously attended school may be considered a transfer for athletic advantage, which may result in a loss of eligibility.

7. When there is a transfer without a bona fide change of residence and there was varsity participation in that sport, or any sport, the prior year, the student athlete shall be ineligible to participate for a period of thirty (30) calendar days or one half of the maximum number of games allowed in that sport by NJSIAA rules (the ineligibility period) from the beginning of the regular season schedule, whichever is less. For those sports that have regular season options for the number of contest that may be played by a school, the greatest of those options is the maximum number that is used in determining the sit out time period so explained above. (EG: Basketball has three options, the greatest is 26 games – 13 is half, so the sit out time would be 30 days or the first 13 regular season games, whichever is less).

8. Varsity Participation is defined as playing in one play of a regular season or post season interscholastic event. Not receiving a varsity letter is no longer the standard.

9. While a student athlete is sitting out, 1) NJSIAA rules allows for that student to be able to practice and/or pre-season scrimmage if that specific school allows for same, 2) the student athlete that is sitting out may not participate at any level of competition, that is freshman, junior varsity or varsity.

10. In every sport rule there is a middle of the season cutoff date that states: Transfer on or after half of the season (and then that date is given) are not eligible for post-season play (see Article V, Section 4.K. (2) c).

11. There are no appeals of the 30 day/half of the maximum number of games rule, regardless of reason.

12. When a sport does not have a maximum number of games by rule, the interpretation is: The sit out is 30 days or half of the regular season scheduled events prior to the first regular season event, whichever comes first. EG: Cross Country – no maximum number – School A has 12 regular season event scheduled prior to opening event – Student would sit 30 days or first 6 events, whichever comes first.

13. If the maximum number of games is an uneven number so that when divided by 2, the number is a half or .5 number, NJSIAA rule is to round down to make it a whole number (EG: Football – maximum number of regular season contests allowed – 9; half would be 4.5 – round down to 4).