



# MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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PROMOTING SUCCESS ON THE COURT, ON THE FIELD, ON STAGE  
AND EVERYWHERE ELSE UNDER THE BIG SKY SINCE 1921.

January 24, 2025

**TO: MHSА MEMBER SCHOOLS**

**FROM: BRIAN MICHELOTTI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: MHSА JANUARY EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION**

On Saturday, January 18th, and again on Monday, January 20th, the MHSА Executive Board conducted its regularly scheduled meeting. The following is a synopsis of the major items and items that are being sent to member schools for a two-week notice period. These changes will be effective for 2025-26 (unless noted):

- The Executive Board reviewed fall sports postseason financial reports.
- Eight-Player and Six-Player Football Placement – [Click here for the approved 8-player and Six-Player alignments](#)
- Class C District Basketball, Track & Field and Volleyball Alignment – North, South, East and West  
Click on the following for 2025-26 alignments for [Basketball](#), [Volleyball](#) and [Track & Field](#)
- The Executive Board approved the following language for teams that opt down a classification during the football reclassification - Schools that opt down will play a full conference schedule and all games played in the conference will count toward the overall conference standings. [Click here for the football timeline.](#)
- In the football postseason complimentary pass section in the handbook, coaches were removed from the option for tickets at postseason football contests. Coaches enter through the team gate and do not need to be included in these passes.
- Sportsmanship Clinic Requirement revision - Member schools are required to have an onsite administrator and/or athletic/activities director who have viewed the in-service ***NFHS Sportsmanship clinic***. Onsite personnel are required to complete a renewal every five years.
- The MHSА approved the following policy change regarding practice in individual sports.  
All participants in MHSА individual sports (Cross Country, Golf, Swimming, Tennis and Track and Field) will be allowed to practice with either gender during MHSА Practices.

For wrestling, if a school district adopts a policy addressing circumstances under which a female wrestler may practice with or prepare for meets with participants on the boys' team, the girls will be allowed to wrestle boys from the same school in practice and warm-ups. The policy must be aligned with an objective of providing equitable opportunities for participation that assure safety of and meet the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex in any extracurricular activity. Schools must use the following criteria in allowing this option:

A parent of any participant must be allowed to opt their child out of any practice or preparation for an extracurricular activity with participants of the opposite sex.

- The Montana Officials Association - The following financial changes were approved:
  - Football - For the Class AA Semi-Final and Championship football games, officiating crews will have the option to utilize a 5-person mechanic (with alternate) or 7-person mechanic with no alternate.
  - Football and Soccer - Postseason Mileage: For postseason soccer and football, the policy for travel will revert back to one driver round trip mileage rather than the current policy of one-way mileage for everyone. This is pending MHSA Executive Board approval.
  - MOA - Outside Pool Location Mileage: Action Item If more than one official is assigned the same contest in the pool city and lives in the same city or along the normal travel route, only one official will be paid round trip drivers and per diem. The other official(s) will be paid round trip per diem from their zip to the pool city zip. Pending Pool Approval
  - MOA - Fee Increase: Action Item Beginning in 2025-26 a fee increases of \$5.00 for the first sport, \$2.00 for additional sport will be implemented to cover the cost of a background check in the future.
  - Background Checks: Action Item All officials will have background checks through Peoples Trail for the year 2025-2026. Thereafter only new officials, officials with 5-year breaks or out of state transfer officials will be required to have the background check.

**Final action was taken on the following items from their November meeting after two-week notice:**

- 1) Plentywood High School from Class C to Class B
- 2) Fort Benton High School from Class C to Class B
- 3) Superior High School from Class B to Class C
- 4) Park City High School will be reclassified from Class B to Class C

**Final action was taken on the following realignment items from previous meetings:**

- 1) The Board has approved the relocation of the MHSA office to a new site in Helena. This building will enable MHSA staff to host board and membership meetings in a central business district, ensuring ADA compliance and incorporating advanced technology. It will provide a dedicated space for staff to serve our membership effectively for many years to come.
- 2) The Board approved the baseball conferences for the 2025 baseball season. [Click here for the 2025 MHSA Baseball Conferences](#)
- 3) The Board approved moving the 6C District Basketball Tournament to a new date. The new dates will be February 27-March 1, 2025.
- 4) The Board approved Class B Golf qualifying criteria to revert to the same number of qualifying players and teams as last year. The change will be that in addition to the top four (4) teams that qualify, the top fifteen participants with the lowest score will also qualify.
- 5) The Board approved the following change to our Awards rule for Class C Girls Divisional Wrestling Awards: a Trophy will be awarded to the first, second, and third place teams as per General Rules for Awards (6).
- 6) The Board approved a change to the procedures for Football Realignment. Football divisions impacted by the reclassification rubric can present their conference alignment (if needed) at the Executive Board meeting on Saturday of the January meeting. Any schools that wish to appeal their conference alignment can appeal at the January meeting.

- 7) The Board approved a change to the 8-Player Football Playoff Financial Arrangements. Host sites will be allowed to retain up to \$1500 in itemized costs for postseason games.

**Other items for your information - MHSAs Annual Meeting**

Proposals Approved

The 2025 Annual Meeting was conducted in Billings on January 20, 2025. The proposals approved by the membership to take effect in 2025-26 were:

MHSA Eligibility By-Laws were amended to remove the following language from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade participation requirements - Committed to a contest at the high school level, the eighth grade student may not also participate in that same sport at a level under high school concurrently. Beginning next year, 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be allowed to participate at the same time in both middle school and high school contests in the same sport.

MHSA Eligibility By-Laws were amended to allow a revision to the MHSA Awards rule. [Click here to view the new MHSA Awards Rule](#)

MHSA Eligibility By-Laws were amended to allow a revision to the MHSA Amateur Rule. This change allows a student athlete to profit from his Name, Image and Likeness (NIL). [Click here to view the new Amateur Rule.](#)

The MHSA Eligibility By-Laws were amended to add a 3-game suspension to each spectator who is ejected from a contest in the future. [Click here for the new MHSA Spectator Ejection Rule.](#)

The MHSA Eligibility By-Laws have been amended to require MHSA participants to undergo a Pre-Participation Physical Exam every two years, replacing the previous policy that mandated an annual exam. This change aims to encourage more comprehensive evaluations by licensed healthcare providers, allowing for a more thorough assessment of participants' health over an extended period.

Awards

The following awards were presented at the 2025 Annual Meeting:

MHSA AIM Higher Contributor

Joe Studiner & Cathy Cullen-Kuhr – Hampton Inn

AIM Higher Award

Whitehall High School

NFHS State Music Award

Dohn Ratliff – Hardin

NFHS State Speech and Drama Award

Liz Schwartz – Laurel

NFHS Section 8 Award – Theater

Becky Nay – Huntley Project

Mildred Adams Award

Todd Bailey, Lavina

Darrel Neese, Miles City  
Scott Smart, Great Falls

*MHSA Heart of the Arts Award*  
Jennifer Kirby – Florence-Carlton

*MHSA Spirit of Sport Award*  
Mason Garey, Glacier High School

*MHSA Service Citations*  
Luke Kloker, Fairview  
Jim Hawbaker, Billings Central  
Shawn Holmes, Seeley-Swan  
Ron Osborne, Columbus  
John Polich, Miles City  
Mike Ryan, Billings Central

*James C. Haugen Meritorious Service Award*  
Mark Wahl, Billings

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact the MHSA office.