Regulations Summarized: Changing Schools and the Transfer Rule

THIS IS A SUMMARY: ALWAYS CONSULT THE SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Once a student who is enrolled in grades 9-12 changes schools, that student is not eligible for sports in the new school UNLESS they meet one of the 15 exceptions which generally have to do with a residential change or a school’s status changing. Below are brief summaries of the 15 exceptions (these are not the full rule).

See B below on Athletic Related Transfer Students and C below on International Students (those in the US on an F-1 or J-1 Visa). There are many situations which are NOT exceptions and the transfer student is not eligible (See I at end of page two).

EIGHT RESIDENCY EXCEPTIONS
1. Student moves with the people he/she was living with previously (full & complete)
2. Not living with either parent moves back to them +
3. Ward of the Court placed with foster parents.
4. Approved International Program student moves in with host family in district. 2 semesters/3 trimesters then sit one year and may resume eligibility. (See C)
5. Married student moves into school district.
8. Student moves with or to divorced parent (ETF) +
12. An 18 year old moves without parents (ETF) +
13. A student resides in a boarding school (ETF) +

FIVE SCHOOL STATUS EXCEPTIONS
6. School ceases to operate, not merged (Int. 64 & 90)
7. School is reorganized or consolidated
9. School Board ordered safety or enrollment shift transfer.
11. Achieved highest grade available in former school
15. New school established; enrolled on first day

TWO STUDENT STATUS EXCEPTIONS
10. Incoming 1st time 9th grader (Not applicable to J-1 or F-1 Visa Students)
14. Expelled student returns under pre-existing criteria

Four Exceptions (2, 8, 12 & 13) are allowed once in grades 9-12. 

(ETF) = Educational Transfer Form is only used for these 3 exceptions (8, 12 & 13). The current MHSAA form must be completed by both school principals certifying that the transfer is not significantly related to or motivated by athletics and returned signed by the MHSAA before the student participates in a game or scrimmage. There is an allowance for students whose parents never married to use this form. (See Interpretation 92).

A. **How long is a transfer student not eligible?** Generally, if there was no recruiting violation, except for a transfer that is Athletic Motivated or Athletic Related (See B below) or certain International Students (See C below) a student who does not meet one of these exceptions is not eligible for about half a year.
   - A student who changes schools in the first half the year (enrolled before the 4th Friday after Labor Day) becomes eligible on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan. 18, 2016).
   - A student who changes schools in the 2nd half of the year (enrolled before the 4th Friday of February) becomes eligible August 1 for fall sports.

B. **Athletic Related Transfers** – After starting the 9th grade, a transfer student who has played high school sports and who does not meet one of the 15 exceptions would be ineligible for 180 school days in that sport if the transfer is into a school where one of the following links existed in the previous 12 months:

The student was involved in a non-school activity that was coached or directed by a school coach, administrator or parent of the new school (previously the rule only applied to a coach). The student was coached by a personal trainer who is a coach, attended an open gym and then transfers schools, or is involved in summer activities with the new school before registered to enroll at that school. Transfer students who are not signed up to attend a school should not be involved in summer activities with school coaches.

Continued
Note: It is against the rules for a person directly or indirectly associated with a school to attempt to secure or encourage attendance because of athletics. The anti-recruiting rule (undue influence) has a maximum penalty of up to four years of ineligibility for a student or four years of suspension of a coach or other adult involved in any recruiting related to athletics.

C. **International Students:** (F-1 or J-1 Visa) including incoming 9th graders are only eligible if they meet a residency exception or if they are placed by an Approved International Student Program (AISP). AISP students are eligible immediately for one year and then wait one year (play one, wait one). International students who are not from an AISP program may be eligible at the sub varsity level after sitting out as under Section 9 D (MLK or Aug 1), without any special approval if the school desires. Otherwise, international students are not eligible for varsity sports for up to 8 semesters or 12 trimesters. The 2015-16 MHSAA – AISP list is at [http://www.mhsaa.com/portals/0/documents/AD%20Forms/1516aisplist.pdf](http://www.mhsaa.com/portals/0/documents/AD%20Forms/1516aisplist.pdf)

D. **Two special considerations – Executive Committee waivers through school Athletic Director:**

90 Days - For those who just miss being enrolled in the new school by the above 4th Friday (See A). With Executive Committee approval the period of ineligibility can be reduced to 90 scheduled school days of enrollment (not days when practice is held in August) - but only for those who just miss the 4th Friday by a brief number of days.

Sub Varsity – The school may request a subvarsity waiver for a 9th or 10th grade transfer student who never played in a high school game or scrimmage in an MHSAA tournament sport. Only for grades 9 and 10 with no prior high school sports and only with Executive Committee advance approval. Sub varsity eligibility, if approved is to 9th grade or JV team sports, not in MHSAA tournaments, or in non-scoring matches, races or heats in individual sports (e.g.: golf, tennis, x-country, swimming or track & field).

E. **Changes of residency must be full and complete (Exception 1)** (As defined by MHSAA Interpretations)
Students who change residence may be eligible immediately if the residential change was full and complete. Residential changes which grant immediate eligibility are intended to be somewhat permanent. All the people the student lived with previously must move, and the previous residence must be disposed of (vacant, sold, or rented to non-family). Other documentation must also be provided to the school including a changed driver’s license. See points F and G below.

F. **Changes of residency must be from one public school district to another public school district.**
Multi-High School Districts such as Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing consider each school attendance area as a separate district for the purposes of the transfer rule. Transfer students into district wide schools are not eligible immediately at such schools but sit out required period of time (See A).

G. **A student who changes schools under a residency exception is eligible at:**
1) The same school - a student does not have to change schools because they change their residence.
2) **The public school of their new district or attendance area.**
3) The closest Non-Public School to the new residence:
   a. School of the same denomination if the student had most recently been attending such a school.
4) The closest Charter School to their new residence.
   The “closest school” is measured by drivable highway miles.

H. **Transferring after a season begins:** A student who transfers and meets an exception, such as changing residences, is eligible for MHSAA tournaments only if they are enrolled prior to October 1 for fall sports, February 1 for winter sports tournaments and May 1 for spring sports tournaments.
I. **Common situations where a student changing schools after beginning 9th grade is NOT eligible:**
   - School of choice
   - **Returning to a school of residence after choosing to attend elsewhere under school of choice**
   - Changing schools because the former school does not sponsor a sport
   - Guardianship
   - Categorized as homeless (the situation may warrant the school requesting a waiver)
   - A student under 18 moving in with a relative or friend (not moving with people he/she lived with previously)
   - Financial considerations including not being able to afford tuition
   - Transferring to a school because it sponsors no sports or a specific sport or a sport is dropped

Revised June 17, 2015 Transfer Rule Summarized

**See next pages for Athletic Related Transfer Regulation (Links Rule).**
ATHLETIC RELATED TRANSFERS (Links)

This is a summary. See the next page of the 2015-16 Handbook for actual language.

A high school student who changes schools and would be ineligible for about half the year would be ineligible for 180 scheduled school days in that sport if there is a past link in that sport to the new school. The 180 days of ineligibility applies to transfer students who are enrolling (attendance in class) in the new school after Aug. 1, 2014.

In the past 12 months did the transfer student:

1. Attend an open gym at our school and then transfers into our school.
2. That student participated as an individual or on a non-school team or activity coached, coordinated or directed by any of that high school's parents (former or current) or administrators or by any of its coaches in the sport involved for either gender, including summer or at camps or clinics.
3. Played sports for a coach from the student's former school that now coaches at our school.
4. Receive instruction by one of our coaches who was or is a personal trainer or strength/conditioning coach.

The Athletic Related Transfer Rule:

A. Is activated after a student enters the 9th grade and plays in an MHSAA contest or scrimmage.

B. Is sport specific: Except for contact with a strength or conditioning coach (# 4 above), only that sport involved in the link impacts eligibility in that sport at the new school. Boys and girls sports and varsity and sub varsity levels are the same for the purpose of this rule (basketball, soccer, track & field, cross country, swimming & diving, bowling, lacrosse, tennis, golf).

C. Does not apply to students who meet an exception to the sit out period, for example: full and complete residential changes, moving between divorced parents and completing an ETF, former school closed, etc. Unless there is recruiting, these students would be eligible immediately even if a link is present.

Implementation of the Athletic Related Transfer Rule:

1. ADs are to complete a New Student Transfer Information Form for each new student-athlete and exchange with the former school AD to check for the existence of past links.

2. New students who plan to change schools over the summer and participate in summer activities with players and coaches from the new school must be registered to enroll at the new school prior to these activities or they will be considered to have a past link to the new school (# 2 above). These students would be ineligible for 180 scheduled school days. Only allow students who are officially signed up to attend your school to be involved with players and coaches from your school in summer activities.

3. If a coach with a past link to a transfer student is hired after a student has transferred or the discovery of a past link is made after a student participates in a scrimmage or game or if other compelling circumstances exist the new school may petition the MHSAA Executive Director for eligibility and the determination of forfeiture. It could be the same period as the transfer rule, half a year, the full 180 days or 180 days from discovery of the past link.
The Athletic Related Transfer Regulation

A student who changes schools and is ineligible under Section 9(A) is ineligible for 180 scheduled school days to participate in an interscholastic contest for the high school to which that student transferred if any one of the following circumstances existed during the previous 12 months:

1. That student participated at an open gym at that high school to which the student has transferred.

2. That student participated as an individual or on a non-school team or activity coached, coordinated or directed by any of that high school’s parents (former or current) or administrators or by any of its coaches in the sport involved for either gender, including contact permitted under Regulation II, Section 11(H) 2 b (summer days of competition) or at camps or clinics.

3. A transfer student’s participation in otherwise allowed out-of-season or summer activity with staff (coaches or administrators) of the new school, prior to being on the written or electronic records of the school that the student transfers into would cause the student to be ineligible for 180 school days in that sport. A new student’s enrollment information must be on file in the offices of the superintendent or principal or athletic director prior to participation in otherwise allowed out-of-season or summer activity.

4. One of that high school’s coaches served as a personal sport trainer, conditioner or instructor (paid or volunteer) for that student. Note: The 180 days of ineligibility will apply to all sports a student previously participated in when transferring into a school where a non-sport-specific instructor (strength and conditioning coach) is on staff.

5. That student transfers to a school where the coach of his/her previous high school is employed (any level, paid or volunteer).

This Section 9(F) applies only to students who have participated in a game or scrimmage on any interscholastic team of the previous high school of enrollment and only in the sport or sports in Items 1 through 4 above. Even if the student’s circumstances subsequently satisfy one of the exceptions of Section 9(A) that would normally allow a transfer student immediate eligibility, the student shall remain ineligible for 180 scheduled school days at this MHSAA member school in the sport(s) involved.

A student’s new school may petition the MHSAA executive director for eligibility as under Section 9(D) when an adult described in No. 2, 3 or 4 becomes a school coach at the new school AFTER a student has enrolled or under compelling circumstances. The school must provide the basis for the request with sufficient documentation to make a decision. The executive director will make eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis as to the student’s period of ineligibility and possible forfeitures. The student’s period of ineligibility could be as under Section 9(D) or 180 scheduled school days from the point of discovery or 180 scheduled school days from the date of enrollment.
Below is a portion of the MHSAA New Student Transfer Information Form.
The full form is on MHSAA.com > ADs > Forms & Resources

VERIFICATION OF ATHLETIC RELATED TRANSFER REGULATION FOR STUDENTS SITTING OUT WHO DO NOT MEET AN EXCEPTION TO THE PERIOD OF INELIGIBILITY (Reg. I, Section 9 [F])

“Links to open gyms, former coach/personal trainer, school or non-school sports & summer teams”

16. List the high school sports the student participated in (game/meet or scrimmage) since first enrolling in the 9th grade at the previous school ___________ ___________ ___________

17. List the sports in which the student desires to participate in during the next 12 months at new school: ___________ ___________ ___________ ___________

Today’s Date: ___________ In the past 12 months?

18. YES NO Prior to attending classes at the new school, the student has attended an open gym at our high school.

19. YES NO The student has competed or practiced in a non-school sport activity that was coached, coordinated or directed by a coach, parent (former or current) or school administrator of our high school including in any summer activities or non-school sports such as AAU basketball, 7 on 7 football, indoor soccer, etc. If yes, indicate the school connection and activity:

________________________________________________________________________

20. YES NO The student has had involvement with any member of our school’s coaching staff (current or incoming) who provided individual or team instruction in sports or as a conditioner, personal trainer or coach whether paid or volunteer. If yes, indicate the staff member and the activity:

________________________________________________________________________

21. YES NO While at the former high school the student was coached by any member of our high school’s coaching staff (current or incoming). If yes, indicate the name of the coach and sport:

________________________________________________________________________

RECOMMENDED VERIFICATION & COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS

By my signature below I state that the above is true and accurate. I also understand that contests the student participates in may be forfeited to opponents if the information submitted is not accurate:

Student __________________________ Date ________ Parent __________________________ Date ________

New School Athletic Director __________________________ Date ________ School __________________________ email or fax ________

To Former School Athletic Director: Please sign and return to AD at the student’s new school

Exchange this form between athletic directors for students who wish to play the same sport as played previously. The former school athletic director indicates that to the best of their knowledge the above is true and accurate:

Former School Athletic Director __________________________ Date ________ Form Returned to New School: __________________________ Date ________

Notes if former AD declines to sign: Revised June 17, 2015 Transfer Rule Summarized