

Dear RIIAAA Members,

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and is ready for the start of another successful school year. As we begin the 2026-27 school year, I want to thank each of you for your continued leadership, collaboration, and commitment to education-based athletics and the student-athletes of Rhode Island.

The start of a new school year brings new opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities for all of us. The RIIAAA will continue to advocate for our athletic administrators and provide a strong voice for the schools and student-athletes we serve.

Below are several important updates, reminders, and opportunities for our membership.

The PCOA recently met and continued discussions on several important topics that will impact interscholastic athletics across Rhode Island. Below are some of the key updates and decisions from the meeting.

Girls Flag Football

Girls Flag Football will officially move forward as a **spring sport beginning with the 2026-27 school year**. This is an exciting opportunity for Rhode Island student-athletes and represents another opportunity for students to participate in education-based athletics.

As we prepare for the inaugural spring season, there are many details that need to be addressed to ensure the sport is organized and implemented successfully.

RIIAAA Girls Flag Football Committee

The RIIAAA is currently seeking **committee members** who are interested in helping with the development and implementation of Girls Flag Football. • Scheduling

- Rules and regulations
- Facilities and field considerations
- Officials and officiating
- Equipment
- Competition structure
- Season organization
- Tournament and championship considerations
- Other issues associated with establishing a new RIIL sport

If you are interested in serving on the **RIIAAA Girls Flag Football Committee**, please reach out to the RIIAAA.

We encourage athletic directors and other individuals with an interest in the development of this new sport to become involved. This is a tremendous opportunity to help shape the future of Girls Flag Football in Rhode Island.

Middle School Winter Athletics Start Date

The PCOA continued its discussion regarding the start date for middle school winter athletics.

As reported in the July newsletter, the membership supported beginning middle school winter athletics on the same day as high school winter athletics. A calendar was developed that would allow middle school winter sports to begin on **November 30th** while still completing the season before February vacation.

This item was tabled at the previous meeting and was scheduled for further discussion at the August PCOA meeting. The RIIAAA will continue to keep our membership informed as this discussion progresses.

Game Contracts Between Schools

The PCOA also continued discussions regarding game contracts between schools.

The goal is to establish stronger expectations and procedures when schools agree to athletic contests and to provide greater accountability when those commitments are changed or canceled.

This issue is important because cancellations can create significant scheduling, transportation, officiating, and financial challenges for schools. The RIIAAA will continue to work with the PCOA and RIIL on this issue and will provide additional information to the membership as the discussion moves forward.

Beginning this fall, all Injury Fund contests will be played in a **modified or shortened format based on the sport**.

For example, traditional timed contests will be played as half-regulation games, baseball and softball will use speed-up game formats, and volleyball will play best two-out-of-three sets, with the third set played to 15 points when necessary.

As a result, game officials will be compensated at **one-half of the standard game fee**.

Please remember that participation in an Injury Fund game is required for Injury Fund coverage. Schools that do not participate in an Injury Fund game under the guidelines outlined above will not have their coaches and players covered by the Injury Fund.

We ask all athletic administrators to communicate this information with their coaches and ensure Injury Fund games are properly scheduled and played.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding Injury Fund games, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your cooperation and continued support of the Rhode Island Injury Fund.

The **2026 National Athletic Directors Conference** will take place **December 11-15, 2026**, at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Co-hosted by the **NIAAA and NFHS**, the 57th annual conference will bring athletic administrators from across the country together for several days of professional development, networking, and collaboration.

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in Leadership Training Institute (LTI) courses, professional development workshops and sessions, networking opportunities, and an exhibit hall featuring more than 400 vendors showcasing products and services for education-based athletics. The National Athletic Directors Conference is a great opportunity to learn from fellow athletic administrators, bring new ideas back to our schools and communities, and strengthen relationships with colleagues from Rhode Island and across the country.

First-Time Attendee Scholarship Opportunity

We hope to have a strong group of Rhode Island athletic administrators attend this year's conference and represent RIIAAA in Phoenix. For first-time attendees, a scholarship opportunity is available to help offset the cost of attending the conference. We strongly encourage members who have never attended the National Athletic Directors Conference to consider applying and take advantage of this opportunity. Attending the national conference is an outstanding way to connect with athletic administrators from across the country, participate in professional development opportunities, and bring new ideas and resources back to your school and athletic programs.

Additional registration information and details regarding the first-time attendee scholarship and application process will be shared with the membership as they become available.

One of the strengths of the RIIAAA is the willingness of our members to volunteer their time and expertise to improve interscholastic athletics throughout Rhode Island.

As we begin a new school year, I encourage our membership to consider becoming involved with one of our committees. Your experience and perspective as an athletic administrator can make a meaningful difference in the development of policies, procedures, and opportunities for our student-athletes.

If you are interested in serving on a committee or would like additional information about current opportunities, please contact the RIIAAA.

As we begin the 2026-27 school year, there will undoubtedly be new challenges and opportunities facing interscholastic athletics. The RIIAAA will continue to advocate for our student-athletes, coaches, athletic departments, and schools while working collaboratively with the RIIL and PCOA.

I encourage each of us to continue sharing best practices, supporting our colleagues, mentoring new athletic administrators, and advocating for education-based athletics across Rhode Island.

Our association is strongest when we communicate, collaborate, and work together.

HOPE - Helping Other People Everyday.

Best wishes for a successful 2026-27 school year, and thank you for all you do on behalf of Rhode Island's student-athletes.

Sincerely,

Justin Erickson

President

Rhode Island Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association