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## **7 Simple Steps to Streamline Your Athletic Clearance Process**

It's never been more important to make sure only eligible athletes suit up and take the field. Fielding ineligible players comes with serious penalties at the department, district, and state level; not to mention the public relations and legal nightmares. Unfortunately, "eligibility" is becoming increasingly complex due to evolving, required consent, compliance, and waiver forms.

Suffice it to say that athletic clearance is complex — and it's even harder when you're relying on outdated systems. That being the case, optimizing athletic clearance needs to be a top goal for every district in order to keep kids safe and avoid negative outcomes.

With that in mind, let's take a look at some of the ways you can streamline your athletic clearance process and ensure only eligible athletes play.

### **1. Examine your current process**

Before you change anything about your program, take a hard look at your current process. Document what's working and what needs improvement.

For example, it's possible your school has a stellar system in place for collecting information and preventing ineligible athletes from taking the field. If your district never has any issues with eligibility, it may just be a matter of further optimizing your system and digitizing your operations. On the other hand, if you're constantly running into problems, you may need to scrap your current system and start fresh.

Some key points to consider include:

#### **Parent accessibility**

Is your system ADA compliant, does it translate forms to any language, and is it easily accessible via any standard web browser?

#### **Data delivery**

Does your system automatically deliver data such as physical clearances, eligibility alerts, and return-to-play statuses?

#### **Time commitment**

Can you save time by employing a more efficient, more secure system so each stakeholder has fewer touch points and less duplication?

Investing in the right technology can improve all of these needs. Digitizing athletic clearance lowers operational costs, eliminates data-entry errors, and increases data security.

As an added bonus, it's also more convenient for parents, guardians, coaches, and students.

## **2. Collect feedback**

Talking with parents, coaches, and students about digital options prevents pushback and allows each party to ask questions about hot-button issues like data security, health and safety protocols, and communication.

At this point, ask stakeholders how they feel about your current data collection process and see if they have any recommendations for improvement.

## **3. Find a vendor**

It's important to be highly selective when sourcing an athletic management provider and partner with a company that offers real-time alerts, on-demand data delivery, and status updates.

Why? For example, an athlete may require a clearance review before the next game. If that's the case, the platform should automatically pick up on this, send out an alert to all necessary parties, and provide a list of action items and steps. This eliminates using email and third-party messaging apps to ensure no important messages slip through the cracks.

## **4. Form a migration strategy**

Whenever you're implementing new tools and new processes, things can get a little dicey. For the best results, look for a technology partner that has a solid migration plan to ease your transition to a digital athletic program. This is something you should ask each vendor during the sales process.

It's also a good idea to ask the vendor for a plan on how they will help walk you through migration, so you don't wind up with a program that's overly complex to administer and manage.

Some questions you should ask include:

How long will the deployment take?

What to do with your current accounts?

What is the district's role in the migration process?

Athletic directors often ask whether a hybrid solution is possible, meaning one that allows parents to submit paper forms after going digital. While this is technically possible, it's not advisable, as it can create confusion and add risk. Making a clean switch to a digital program is far more effective.

## **5. Demonstrate the new solution**

Once the platform is up and running, it's a good idea to show all stakeholders how to use it so there are no questions. It can be as easy as playing a video or sharing three to four screenshots. Heck, maybe the provider has a "Playbook" that helps

your medical professionals, coaches, and parents understand clearances.

Remember, be patient with parents, coaches, and students during this process, as there may be some people who are not technologically proficient and need to be trained to use the platform productively.

## **6. Roll out the new platform**

Sports programs start at different times throughout the year, making it easy to deploy your digital athletic management system slowly and methodically.

This staggered schedule allows you to roll out a new platform early on in the year, assess progress, collect feedback, and apply changes from season-to-season.

## **7. Use the platform daily**

There is a big difference between a digital form solution and an end-to-end athletic management system. With the former solution, you roll out the product during registration, collect all the information you need, and shelve the platform until it's time to use it with another sports team.

An end-to-end management platform, on the other hand, becomes a core aspect of daily operations — a one-stop-shop for collecting information, issuing updates, and communicating with athletic stakeholders.

For example, [FinalForms](#) is a purpose-built athletic management platform designed to make managing athletic seasons easier than ever before.

Ready to take your first steps towards a streamlined and more compliant athletics program? [Schedule a free demo](#) with a member of the FinalForms team today.