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## **NJSIAA to implement tough high school sportsmanship standards**

### ***NEARLY 500 NJ HIGH SCHOOLS, 250,000 STUDENT ATHLETES, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF COACHES TO BE IMPACTED***

**ROBBINSVILLE, NJ (June 19, 2013)** -- The days of taunting, baiting and trash-talking during high school sporting events are over, thanks to teamwork between the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) and the office of the Attorney General of New Jersey and its New Jersey Division on Civil Rights,

Beginning this fall, the NJSIAA, which sets rules and regulations governing high school athletics, will enforce new rules that will make it clear that harassing conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or religion is unsportsmanlike and will not be tolerated at high school events.

The new rules -- which apply to all public, parochial, and private school members of the NJSIAA -- will also require officials to report this conduct to the NJSIAA, which may investigate the incident and will, in turn, notify the state. If such comments are heard, officials can immediately assess penalties. Coaches will be responsible to remind their players about this policy.

These rule changes follow New Jersey's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act in addressing issues of harassment, intimidation, and bullying in the state's public schools, including incidents occurring at school-sponsored events, such as high school athletic events. The rules were developed with the support of the Coalition for Racial Equality in Education, a group of organizations and individuals that seeks to foster equality and combat discrimination in education.

According to Steven J. Timko, executive director of the NJSIAA, his organization and the Attorney General are working together to ensure that interscholastic athletic events are free from harassing conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

"High school sports enhances and supports education," says Timko. "Obscene gestures, profanity or unduly provocative language or action toward officials, opponents, or spectators won't be tolerated in the classroom or the field of play,"

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman added: "High school sports should be about building character and instilling life-lessons about grace, courage, teamwork, and adversity. Sometimes, we lose sight of those lessons on the field and in the stands. I thank the coalition for bringing the issue to our attention, and the NJSIAA for taking steps to address an important concern. We stand ready to work with both groups to ensure compliance with the new rules, going forward."

Under NJSIAA sportsmanship rules, any student-athlete or coach who is cited before, during or after an interscholastic event for unsportsmanlike and flagrant verbal or physical misconduct will be disqualified from participating in the next two regularly scheduled events, or in the case of football, disqualified from the

next game. Now, discriminatory conduct will also be reported to the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights and may result in further investigation.

**About the NJSIAA**

Established in 1918, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletics Association (NJSIAA) is a voluntary, non-profit organization comprised of 433 accredited public, private, and parochial high schools. A member of the National Federation of State High School Associations, the NJSIAA conducts tournaments and crowns champions in 32 sports. Championship competition for girls is sponsored in basketball, bowling, cross country, fencing, field hockey, golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, outdoor track, winter track, and volleyball. Boys' championships are determined in baseball, basketball, bowling, cross country, fencing, football, golf, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, swimming, tennis, outdoor track, winter track, volleyball, and wrestling.

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