



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 26, 2021

WA School Faces Backlash for Ankle Monitors to Track COVID, Proximity Among Student Athletes

A public school in Washington is facing backlash for forcing student-athletes to wear taxpayer-funded ankle monitors to track COVID transmission and outbreaks if they want to participate in school sports. The school has since been forced to halt the use of the monitors as it deals with the fallout.

The Daily Wire [reports](#) that Eatonville High School, located approximately 60 miles outside of Seattle, has implemented the use of “Trace Tag” monitors for its student-athletes, which generate an alarm anytime wearers get too close to another person. The device collects contact-tracing data as well.



DavidPrah/iStock/Getty Images Plus

“The proximity monitor contains radio-based sensors that track distance between individuals wearing the device, as well as length of time spent in proximity to one another. The monitor is only worn during participation in the sport,” the school [said](#) on its athletics page.

The devices were implemented for volleyball, basketball, football, and soccer and were purchased using federal COVID relief money, the Daily Mail reported.

The school stated the monitors are required for both coaches and students on the field “regardless of vaccination status.”

“If an athlete were to test positive for COVID-19, the entire team could be quarantined,” the school said. “By using the proximity monitors we can immediately determine who might have been exposed to Covid-19.”

Students can opt out of the monitors, but would forego sports participation as a result.

And though the school was supposed to obtain parental consent for the use of the monitors, one parent, Nicole Hadman, confirmed that she was not informed before her daughter was required to wear the monitor during her volleyball team practice.

When Hadman found out the ankle monitor was placed on her daughter, she was infuriated.

“If you want to use it for your child so they can play sports, right on,” Hadman said at this week’s school board meeting. “I don’t want my kid using it.”

“You better believe someone should be held accountable for my child being tracked without my consent,” Hadman said at the meeting.

Another parent indicated that he signed the form under what amounts to duress.

“I was notified if I didn’t sign it, they couldn’t play,” Jason Ostendorf, who has two children in sports at the high school, [told](#) the *Tacoma News Tribune*. “I signed it reluctantly.”

Even parents of children who do not participate in sports at the school were angered by the device



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rollout and took to the school's Facebook page to opine.

"Nobody in their right mind should attend this jail," wrote one FB user.

"Petition to have those school board members in favor of the monitors removed," wrote another.

Another user remarked, "Anyone forcing kids to wear ankle monitors just to play high school sports has no business being allowed to instruct or coach kids."

Dozens upon dozens of users criticized the school's overreaching policy.

Despite of the controversy, Eatonville School District Superintendent Gary Neal defended the monitors as a means to reduce the number of students who miss school due to COVID exposure.

"This system prevents taking students out of school and athletics unnecessarily," Neal wrote. "It allows us to keep more students engaged and involved in class as well as athletic activities. This is a top priority for staff and families here in Eatonville. This school year we can expect numerous changes and for situations to be dynamic."

But the backlash was enough to force the district to [halt](#) the use of the monitors. At a school-board meeting this week, the district announced it would pause the use of the monitors until further discussion about the devices takes place.

Parents attended the meeting to show their opposition to the monitors. According to the *News Tribune*, people in attendance at the meeting wore "Unmask our children" t-shirts.

"It's just one more thing they're doing to the kids through this whole covid thing," Ostendorf [told the News Tribune](#). "The vaccine, now be tracked when you're at practice. Where does this end? I feel like this is an experiment on our kids to see how much we can put them through before they start breaking."



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