

## **Illinois High School Girls Wrestling Gets Big Boost from Statewide Coaches & Officials Organization.**

***For the 2018-19 school year, the IWCOA will promote Girls Wrestling as an emerging sport with structure, resources & tournaments.***

The 2018-2019 school year marks a turning point for high school wrestling in Illinois, as the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association (IWCOA) is providing leadership to promote girls wrestling as its own competitive sport.

Until this year, girls have been allowed to compete with and against boys. But with the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) declaring girls wrestling an “emerging sport” last year, a new era has dawned for girls, many of whom historically have been reluctant to participate within a co-ed context.

With a membership that crosses all generational lines, the IWCOA has already made a commitment to girls wrestling by hosting the Girls State Wrestling Championships for the past two years. This year, it will be organizing a Girls State Championship Series, conducted in conjunction with the Chicago Public Schools Championships. The state tournament will be held on the weekend of Jan 25-27, at a site to be determined. There will be three sectional tournaments (sites TBA) held on the weekend of January 19-20.

Fred Arkin of Oak Park, a longtime state wrestling leader and volunteer coach at Oak Park and River Forest High School, and Colleen Kristoff-McGlynn, whose daughter wrestled at Althoff Catholic High School in Belleville, are co-chairs of a seven-member IWCOA steering committee dedicated to helping grow girls wrestling into a recognized IHSA sport.

The increased organizational support from the IWCOA is expected to help generate increased interest and participation among girls interested in competing with and against other girls, said Arkin.

“Illinois has long been a national leader in development in wrestling programs, but when it comes to girls wrestling, we are behind,” said Arkin. “There are at least 15 states that currently have girls wrestling as a recognized high school sport.”

Kristoff-McGlynn noted that the benefits girls receive from wrestling “are no different than what the boys gain.”

“Discipline, dedication, teamwork, sportsmanship—there are so many lessons and other intangibles that extend well beyond the mat,” said Kristoff-McGlynn. “We are excited to create an expanded space for more girls to enjoy these experiences.”

Through its steering committee, the IWCOA will provide member schools with information and other resources necessary to participate in girls wrestling, including schedules, rules and regulations. Among its other functions, the committee will also maintain, evaluate and report data the IHSA regarding school involvement, individual participation and competitions.

Girls only wrestling tournaments for the 2018-2019 season will be competed as a separate division of boys wrestling (similar to JV, JVII, Sophomore & Freshmen). As in the past, girls may still compete in boys wrestling events, however must remain in compliance with IHSA By-Laws. Girls not competing in the IHSA state tournament series will be allowed to compete in five tournaments, while those wrestling in the IHSA state tournament series will be allowed to compete in four tournaments prior to the IHSA regional tournament. Total tournaments can be a combination of girl's division and boys' events.

Girls will compete in one single classification, and in the following weight classes: 101, 106, 111, 117, 122, 127, 132, 138, 145, 153, 164, 180 and 225 pounds. Sectional and state tournaments will recognize individual awards only, from first through fourth at the sectionals and first through sixth at state.

Some preliminary sites planning to host Girls tournaments include: Conant High School, Curie High School, Dunbar High School, Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Roosevelt High School, and Maine East High School. Dates and times are to be determined.

*For more information go to the IWCOA website at <https://iwcoa.net>  
Or contact the IWCOA at: [ilhsqirlswrestling@outlook.com](mailto:ilhsqirlswrestling@outlook.com)*