



## **PURPOSE:**

**June 2020**

These Recommendations for Returning to Play in a Training Environment are provided to assist youth soccer clubs in safely and gradually resuming soccer training while reducing infection risk in the setting of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

**These recommendations do not supersede or replace any applicable local, state, regional or federal health guidelines or requirements, which should be adhered to by all clubs.** To date, published local, state, and regional guidelines and requirements vary widely.

## **CONTEXT:**

Soccer presents its own inherent risks of disease transmission with respect to SARSCoV-2, the novel coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other communicable diseases. Nonetheless, particularly with respect to COVID-19, member organizations will encounter widely disparate levels of local infection and disease spread, local public health guidelines, available resources for testing and preventive measures, and training / competition environments. In this context, it is unrealistic to implement uniform guidelines that are applicable to all organizations.

This document outlines a training progression before full-contact and high intensity team training in order to promote fitness development, reduce injury risk, and account for the possibility of a local resurgence of COVID-19 cases.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS - practices to reduce the risk of spread of infection:**

- Avoid touching your face.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover mouth and nose (with arm or elbow, not hands) when coughing or sneezing and wash hands afterward.
- Wear a face mask or covering when outside if you have any symptoms of upper respiratory infection.
- Frequently clean commonly used surfaces (doorknobs, for example) with an antiseptic cleanser.
- Avoid contact with other individuals (shaking hands, for example).
- Maintain a distance of 6 feet between you and others.
- Stay home if you feel sick and contact your health care provider.

## **HOME PRE-SCREENING EXPECTATIONS**

### **Symptoms of COVID-19 Infection:**

Any participants experiencing any of the symptoms below are restricted from attending training and may not return until 14 days following the onset of symptoms.

Individuals with COVID-19 can exhibit symptoms ranging from mild to life-threatening. The most common symptoms associated with infection include:

- Fever ( $\geq 100.4$  degrees F)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Less common symptoms that may still be evidence of COVID-19 infection include:

- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Muscle / joint pain
- Sudden loss of taste or smell
- Chills

## **CAR-POOLING AND PREP**

- Allowed if players live within the same household.
- Players encouraged to use the facilities at home prior to training
- Players are to arrive at the designated time, which is typically 15 minutes prior to your session (should not arrive earlier)
- Players shall not congregate in the parking lot or common areas at the facility
- Players shall report to the staging area on Field 1

## **Return to Play Following Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Infection**

*These recommendations are intended to guide decision-making regarding players or staff with a suspected or documented COVID-19 infection in order to reduce the risk of disease transmission.*

### **Symptomatic player / staff with suspected or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection:**

**Cannot attend club events until:**

- a) At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since resolution of fever (defined as  $\geq 100.4$  degrees F) without the use of fever-reducing medications and respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **AND**...
- b) At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. **OR:**
- c) Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **AND**
- d) Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **AND**...
- e) Negative results of an FDA authorized molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart (two negative specimens).

### **Player / staff with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms:**

**Cannot attend club events until:**

- a) 10 days after date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming no symptoms since that time. If symptoms develop symptoms, then management should be guided as above for symptomatic individuals. **OR:**
- b) Negative results of an FDA authorized SARS-CoV-2 RNA test from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart (two negative specimens).



## **COVID-19 FC UNITED PRACTICE RULES**

### **PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- If you feel ill – Stay home!
- Players will need to wash their hands before and after each practice
- Masks are permitted but not required to be worn by the players during practice
- Upon arriving, we will take the temperature of all players with a forehead thermometer to ensure no players have a fever. We will also conduct a short questionnaire. Any players not feeling well or with a temperature at 100.4 or above will be asked to leave
- Players must wait in their car until the session before them is over and players have left
- Bring your own ball and water – Do not touch or share anyone else's equipment, water, snack or bag. Water fountain will be out of use until further notice
- Choose a cone at which to place your belongings – Coaches will set up cones 6 feet apart before players arrive. Only one player per section
- Spatial distancing must be maintained at all times unless otherwise instructed by a coach
- No spitting

### **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Parents must sign a waiver acknowledging the risks involved
- Participants must not exhibit any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 10 days and have no known exposure to someone that has been ill in 14 days – Participants must not have travelled internationally in the past 14 days
- Please monitor your child's symptoms, and take their temperature daily – notify the club immediately if your child becomes ill
- Ensure child's clothing is washed after every practice – Sanitize all equipment before and after every session
- Please be ready to pick up your child as soon as practice is over or if they have a high fever and are asked to leave at the start of practice

### **COACH RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Coaches will get their temperature checked upon arriving at the facility
- Coaches will be required to wear a mask when in close proximity to players or other coaches
- Coaches will maintain a safe distance from all players and other coaches
- Coaches will be asked to design practices to keep the players as safe as possible
- Coaches will be required to sanitize all equipment at the end of each session

**ANY PLAYERS NOT FOLLOWING THE RULES MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE**

## RETURN TO TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Returning to training involves a step-by-step re-initiation of safe training environments for players. It is intended that each phase recommended below should last for at least 2 weeks, even if local guidelines regarding social distancing and group gatherings would otherwise allow for transition to the next phase sooner.

Recommendations for returning to competition will be addressed separately but will require progression through each phase of the return to training protocols.

The recommended minimum 2-week duration for each phase provides an incremental return to soccer participation that is intended to account for both: (i) the risk of both COVID-19 resurgence; and (ii) the risks of overtraining and injury due to a rapid return to play. This timeline is intended to prioritize athlete health and well-being, including but not limited to the risks presented by COVID-19.

These recommendations do not supersede national, state or local laws or requirements. Member clubs should continually abide by all applicable restrictions in their community and should attempt to comply with all recommended guidelines where possible.



## PHASE 1: TRAINING AT HOME

While local shelter-in-place orders are in effect and group gatherings are prohibited, clubs limit participation and activity to individual training at home, or training with household members, under the guidance of virtual coaching modalities.

## PHASE 2: SMALL GROUP TRAINING AT FACILITIES

**Environmental Context.** This phase can begin once local stay-at-home restrictions are no longer in place and group gatherings are permitted, but when social distancing requirements still apply. At this point, clubs can take steps to ensure a safe transition to small group training environments at their facilities. This phase should last at least 2 weeks before progression to Phase 3. In Phase 2, clubs should implement the following recommendations:

- Prior to attending any training event, each player should check his or her temperature at home, and refrain from participation if he or she has a fever ( $\geq 100.4$  degrees F).
- Prior to participation, staff should obtain verbal confirmation from each participating player that:
  - a) The player has not had any no close contact with a sick individual or anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (see Appendix C).
  - b) The player has not had a documented case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
  - c) The player is not currently demonstrating or suffering from any ill symptoms (see Appendix A).
- Any player reporting or demonstrating symptoms of illness at any point should be removed from training (or prohibited from training) and should seek guidance from his or her physician before attempting to return to training.
- Training groups may not exceed nine players and one coach (up to 10 total individuals) and should prioritize grouping players who share living spaces where possible (siblings, for example).
- Players should avoid all physical contact with each other, including celebrations, handshakes, high-fives, etc.
- All coaches and players must maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet to reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- Each group should be given a designated time to arrive and depart the training grounds or facility. Players and coaches should remain in the same groups during Phase 2.
- More than one group may train simultaneously (within local restrictions regarding group gathering size), but each group should train in a designated area, at least 6 feet from other groups, and even further if possible.
- Individuals should maintain social distancing guidelines during arrival and departure from training, and efforts should be made to stagger arrival and departure times to minimize potential interaction with other groups. Clubs should also consider designating separate arrival drop-off and departure pick-up zones.
- Other individuals in attendance (family members, for example) must stay away from the field and maintain at least 6 feet between other individuals in attendance. Ideally, attendees will remain in cars to reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- In the event of an injury, staff may assess and facilitate management of the injured individual in accordance with proper first aid management. Family members may participate in injury management as necessary but other players should maintain proper social distance.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- Training areas must be separated and specifically designated such that groups will not touch the same surfaces (benches, for example).
- Players should bring their own equipment (ball, hand sanitizer, water bottle, training vest(s), towels, etc.) such that no equipment is shared between players. Players and coaches may contact another individual's soccer ball with their feet but should not contact it with their hands.
- Surfaces that may be contacted and shared by players (benches, balls, for example), should be disinfected before and after use. Equipment used by staff (cones, for example) should not be handled by players or other attendees and should be disinfected after use.
- Face mask use by players and coaches should be in accordance with local guidelines.

**FACILITIES AND TRAINING GROUNDS:**

- Indoor facilities may be utilized as necessary so long as the Phase 2 recommendations are implemented for use of indoor facilities.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available at all training grounds and facilities. Each coach and player should have their own hand sanitizer. Players and coaches should disinfect their hands prior to and immediately after every group session and after any contact with a shared surface.
- All surfaces that players/staff may contact when entering and leaving the facility (gates, doorknobs, etc.) should be disinfected between sessions and after the final session of the day. When possible, gates/doors should remain open to reduce contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Restrooms should be cleaned regularly to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Hand sanitizer and/or soap and water should be available and used immediately before and after restroom use. If this is not feasible, restrooms should remain closed.
- If the club does not control the indoor facility's operations, the club should only use the indoor facility if all the precautions included in the Phase 2 recommendations have been implemented at the facility by its owner/operator.

**ACTIVITY EXAMPLES:****PHASE 2: INDIVIDUAL TRAINING**

- Players may do individual exercises (one player one ball), group exercises (passing progressions with a partner or within the group), or fitness exercises.
- Players should not touch the ball with their hands.
- Players should not head the ball.
- Within this phase, goalkeepers should not use their hands, and should train as field players.

**PHASE 3: LIMITED TEAM TRAINING**

**Environmental Context.** Training grounds and facilities are open, local limits on the size of group gatherings have increased, but social distancing requirements remain in place. This phase should last at least 2 weeks, even if local guidelines would allow for progression to Phase 4. While many of the recommendations listed in phases 2 and 3 are identical, this progression is deliberately intended to provide a timeline that can promote fitness development, reduce the risk of injuries, and accommodate a resurgence of COVID-19 cases within the local community.

- Prior to attending any training event, each player should check his or her temperature at home, and refrain from participation if he or she has a fever ( $\geq 100.4$  degrees F).
- Prior to participation, staff should obtain verbal confirmation from each participating player that:
  - a) The player has not had any no close contact with a sick individual or anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (see Appendix C).
  - b) The player has not had a documented case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
  - c) The player is not currently demonstrating or suffering from any ill symptoms.
- Any player reporting or demonstrating symptoms of illness at any point should be removed from training (or prohibited from training) and should seek guidance from his or her physician before attempting to return to training.
- Clubs may increase the size of individual training groups within applicable local restrictions regarding group gatherings, but groups should be no larger than a single coach with a full team. Players should again remain within the same group throughout Phase 3.
- The total number of individuals present should still be restricted based on applicable local guidelines regarding group gatherings.
- Players should avoid all physical contact with each other, including celebrations, handshakes, high-fives, etc.
- All coaches and players must maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet to reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- Each group should be given a designated time to arrive and depart the training grounds or facility. Players and coaches should remain in the same groups during Phase 3.
- More than one group may train simultaneously (within local restrictions regarding group gathering size), but each group should train in a designated area, at least 6 feet from other groups, and even further if possible.
- Individuals should maintain social distancing guidelines during arrival and departure from training, and efforts should be made to stagger arrival and departure times to minimize potential interaction with other groups. Clubs should also consider designating separate arrival drop-off and departure pick-up zones.
- Other individuals in attendance (family members, for example) must stay away from the field and maintain at least 6 feet between other individuals in attendance. Ideally, attendees will remain in cars.
- In the event of an injury, staff may assess and facilitate management of the injured individual in accordance with proper first aid management. Family members may participate in injury management as necessary but other players should maintain proper social distance.

#### **Equipment:**

- Training areas must be separated and specifically designated such that groups will not touch the same surfaces (benches, for example).
- Players should bring their own equipment (ball, hand sanitizer, water bottle, training vest(s), towels, etc.) such that no equipment is shared between players. Players and coaches may contact another individual's soccer ball with their feet but should not contact it with their hands.
- Surfaces that may be contacted and shared by players (benches, balls, for example), should be disinfected before and after use. Equipment used by staff (cones, for example) should not be handled by players or other attendees and should be disinfected after use.
- Face mask use by players and coaches should be in accordance with local guidelines.

### **PHASE 3: CONTINUED**

#### **Facilities and Training Grounds:**

- Indoor facilities may be utilized as necessary so long as the Phase 3 recommendations are implemented for use of indoor facilities.

- Hand sanitizer should be readily available at all training grounds and facilities. Each coach and player should have their own hand sanitizer. Players and coaches should disinfect their hands prior to and immediately after every group session and after any contact with a shared surface.
- All surfaces that players/staff may contact when entering and leaving the facility (gates, doorknobs, etc.) should be disinfected between sessions and after the final session of the day. When possible, gates/doors should remain open to reduce contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Restrooms should be cleaned regularly to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Hand sanitizer and/or soap and water should be available and used immediately before and after restroom use. If this is not feasible, restrooms should remain closed.
- If the club does not control the indoor facility's operations, the club should only use the indoor facility if all the precautions included in the Phase 3 recommendations have been implemented at the facility by its owner/operator.

**Activity Examples:**

- Within this phase, the team may do individual exercises (one player, one ball), group exercises (passing progressions with a partner or within the group), fitness exercises, or team tactical exercises. For example, a coach may train a group of 18 players while still maintaining proper social distancing.
- Players should not touch the ball with their hands.
- Players should not head the ball.
- Goalkeepers should not use their hands and should train as field players.

**PHASE 4: TEAM TRAINING**

**Environmental Context.** Training facilities are open and there are no local restrictions on the size of group gatherings. This phase should last at least 2 weeks prior to any formal competition, even if current guidelines would otherwise accommodate competition at an earlier time.

- Prior to attending any training event, each player should check his or her temperature at home, and refrain from participation if he or she has a fever ( $\geq 100.4$  degrees F).
- Prior to participation, staff should obtain verbal confirmation from each participating player that:
  - a) The player has not had any no close contact with a sick individual or anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (see Appendix C).
  - b) The player has not had a documented case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
  - c) The player is not currently demonstrating or suffering from any ill symptoms.
- Any player reporting or demonstrating symptoms of illness at any point should be removed from training (or prohibited from training) and should seek guidance from his or her physician before attempting to return to training.
- Trainings of any group size can be conducted.
- Contact between players may occur during play.
- Coaches can integrate into training environments for instruction purposes but should not be in contact with players.
- Individuals should maintain social distancing guidelines during arrival and departure from training, and efforts should be made to stagger arrival and departure times to minimize potential interaction with other groups. Clubs should also consider designating separate arrival drop-off and departure pick-up zones.
- Other individuals in attendance (family members, for example) should stay away from the field and practice proper social distancing in accordance with local guidelines.
- In the event of an injury, staff may assess and facilitate management of the injured individual in accordance with proper first aid management. Family members may participate in injury management as necessary but other players should maintain proper social distance.

**Equipment:**

- Training areas should be separated and specifically designated such that groups will not touch the same surfaces (benches, for example).
- Soccer balls should be disinfected immediately before and after use, but can be handled by goalkeepers and by players for throw-ins. Training vests can be shared between team members but should be washed before and after each use. Other personal equipment recommendations as above should still apply.
- Players should bring their own equipment (hand sanitizer, water bottle, towels, etc.).
- Surfaces that may be contacted and shared by players (benches, balls, for example), should be disinfected before and after use.
- Equipment used by staff (cones, for example) should not be handled by players or other attendees and should be disinfected after use.

### Facilities and Training Grounds:

- Indoor facilities may be utilized as necessary so long as the Phase 4 recommendations are implemented for use of indoor facilities.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available at all training grounds and facilities. Each coach and player should have their own hand sanitizer. Players and coaches should disinfect their hands prior to and immediately after every group session and after any contact with a shared surface.
- All surfaces that players / staff may contact when entering and leaving the facility (gates, doorknobs, etc.) should be disinfected between sessions and after the final session of the day.
- When possible, gates / doors should remain open to reduce contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.

### Activity Examples:

There are no restrictions on training activities.



## RETURN TO PLAY: PHASES\*

**Phase 4**

- Date TBD
- Inter-club competition may begin
- Parents & spectators maintain 6 feet of physical distance from each other at all times

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><b>PLAYERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Communicable disease waiver <b>MUST</b> be on file</li> <li>&gt; No handshakes, hugs, high fives, fist or elbow bumps, or any other deliberate contact</li> <li>&gt; No sharing waterbottles or other equipment like pinnies</li> <li>&gt; Regularly monitor/take temperature &amp; stay home if have fever</li> <li>&gt; If have a known exposure to Covid-19, or show any signs/symptoms, <b>DO NOT</b> return to training for 14 days</li> <li>&gt; Bring hand sanitizer to training sessions and games, and use often</li> <li>&gt; Wear mask when arriving to and leaving field (not to be worn during activity)</li> </ul>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><b>COACHES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Only one coach should handle equipment; <b>DON'T</b> allow players to grab cones, etc..</li> <li>&gt; Equipment must be sanitized between every training session</li> <li>&gt; Best practice to assign a pinnie to each player to use and take home to wash between sessions</li> <li>&gt; Keep an attendance log for each session</li> <li>&gt; Reinforce behavior: <b>NO</b> handshakes, high fives, sharing waterbottles, etc...</li> <li>&gt; Encouraged to wear masks while coaching</li> </ul>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><b>PARENTS &amp; SPECTATORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Child's communicable disease waiver already on file</li> <li>&gt; May be present on sidelines, maintaining physical distance of 6 feet at all times</li> <li>&gt; Wash assigned pinnie between each session</li> <li>&gt; Monitor child for signs/symptoms of Covid-19, including regular temperature checks prior to training</li> <li>&gt; Keep child away from training environment for 14 days if has known exposure to Covid-19 or displays signs/symptoms such as fever</li> </ul>
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\* Requirements & considerations for each phase are subject to change if/as conditions warrant. Future RTP date phases will be determined if/as we get through each successive phase. Published 6/10/20

## **PHASE 5: RETURNING TO LOCAL COMPETITION**

Environmental Context. Training facilities are open, there are no local restrictions on the size of group gatherings, and Phase 4 has been completed for at least 2 weeks. Specific guidelines for return to local competition will be included in a separate document issued later, and additional guidelines will be subsequently provided for planning for travel competitions.

### **APPENDIX C:**

#### **Return to Play Following Exposure to a Suspected or Diagnosed Case of COVID-19**

*These recommendations are intended to guide decision-making regarding players or staff following exposure to a suspected or diagnosed case of COVID-19 infection in order to reduce the risk of disease transmission.*

Any asymptomatic player or staff member who has been exposed to an individual with a suspected or diagnosed case of COVID-19 should be restricted from participation for at least 14 days and monitor for any symptoms consistent with infection.

If asymptomatic after 14 days since last exposure, they can return to participation. In general, you need to be in close contact with an individual to contract the disease. In this case, exposure means any one of the following:

- Caring for a sick person with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.
- Living in the same household as an individual with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.
- Being within 6 feet of an individual with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection for around 10 minutes or more. OR:
- Coming in direct contact with secretions from an individual with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection (being coughed or sneezed on, sharing water bottle or utensils, for example).