

# MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION



## Return to Soccer Activities Guidelines

June 5, 2020





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Massachusetts Youth Soccer is dedicated to protecting the health of all people in and outside of our community. In an effort to assist our players, coaches and parents with their efforts to return to play after the recent suspension of activities, due to COVID-19, Massachusetts Youth Soccer has put together the following guidelines for our affiliate members to use. Given the nature of this pandemic, this framework may change at any time based on the most recent CDC and or Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) guidelines. Please keep in mind that local municipalities may have additional guidelines in place that will need to be adhered to. Once this order has been relaxed, please be aware that individual counties and jurisdictions may have additional restrictions in place that affect your decisions.

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## RETURN TO SOCCER ACTIVITIES GUIDELINES

Governor Baker has provided a 4 phase guideline to reopen the state. Each phase of return has specific guidelines that must be followed by your organization. It is important to note that these phases may not always proceed linearly, but rather a step backwards in phases may be required following continuous review of the ongoing situation and environment. Implementing the Return to Soccer Activities Guidelines presented here will require a cooperative relationship between the organization, coach, parent, and player. While the organization and coach must create a safe environment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are the only ones who may make the decision for their child to return to soccer activities.

Below is a list of the phases and an explanation as to how it applies to youth sports.

**NOTE:** The information provided below is based on current guidelines provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for Phase 2. At the time these guidelines were released Phase 3 recommendations had not been released by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Once they are released this document will be updated.



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## PHASE 1 - NO ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS

**No organized youth sports. Included in the Reopening Phases in Massachusetts document for the reopening standards of and Parks, Open Space Outdoor Education Programs is the following guidance: Athletic fields and athletic courts can be utilized only for non-contact sports, with no shared equipment, such as tennis and pickleball. No permits should be issued for group gatherings and users should not engage in pick-up games, organized games or tournaments.**

**Youth Sports are not permitted to return under Phase 1 of the reopening and as such all soccer activities under the umbrella of Mass Youth Soccer, as well as all other youth sports in the state, will be suspended during this Phase.**



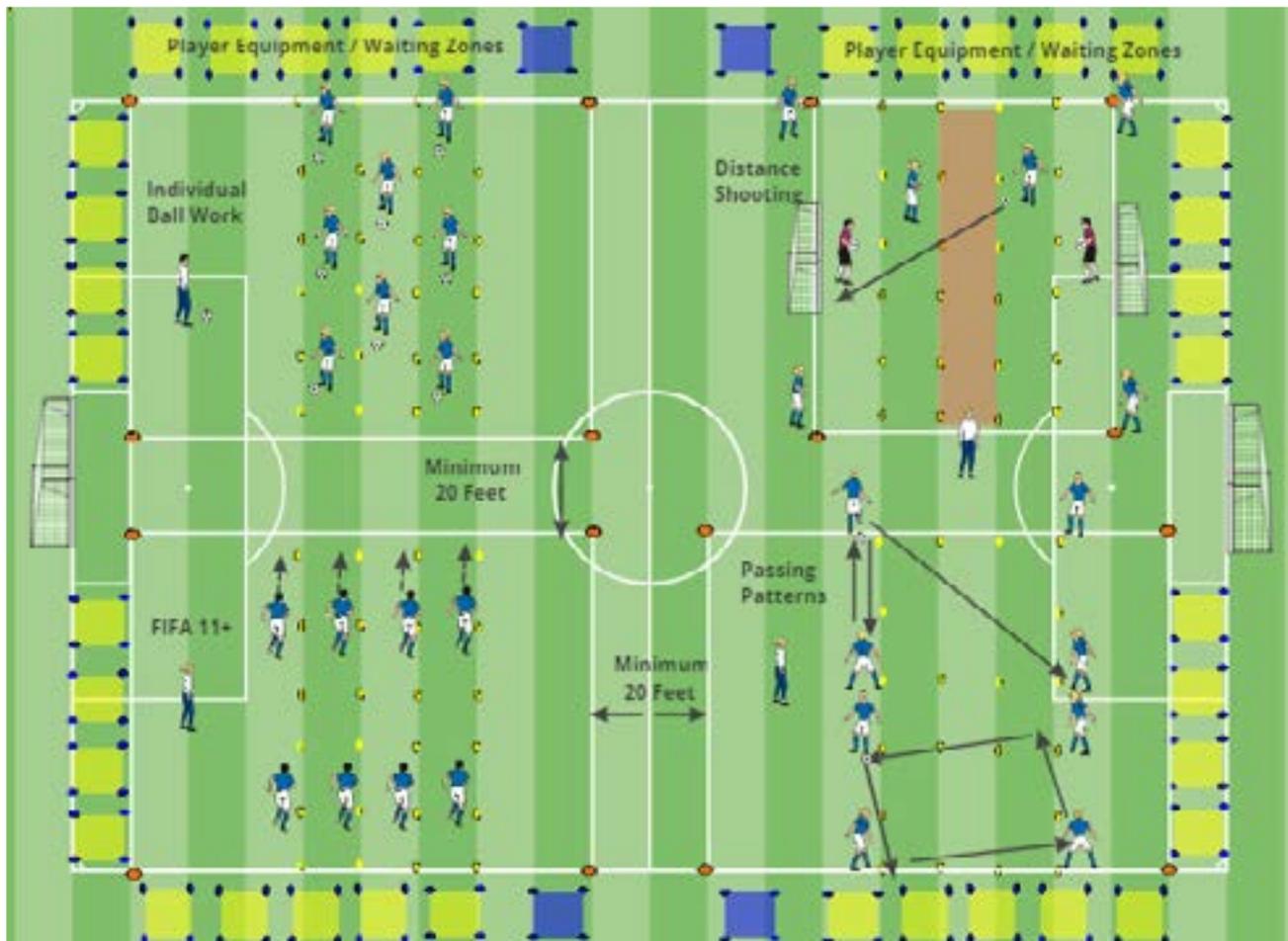
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## PHASE 2

With Soccer classified as a contact sport, activities under this phase will be allowed but will be limited to no-contact drills and training exercises only. No scrimmages, league games or tournaments may be held during the duration of this phase. This includes friendlies, intrasquad scrimmages or other arranged games. Session plans for conducting practice sessions using physical distancing are available on the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association Website under the section Coaches / Session Plans website. [CLICK HERE](#)

Programs must separate participants into groups of no more than 10 participants including coaches and staff. Larger playing areas and surfaces such as athletic fields may be used by more than one group of 10 at a time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation can be maintained. To ensure group separation, groups must be spaced at least 20 feet apart while sharing a playing surface.





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## Criteria to participate in these Phase 2 training sessions should adhere to these guidelines (adapted from US Youth Soccer Guidelines)

- No signs or symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and have not been exposed to someone that has been ill in 14 days.
- Live in a general location for 14 days prior to beginning group training. This requirement reduces the risk of introducing COVID-19 into the training group by someone traveling from a different region.
- Take temperature before going to training.
- Upon arrival to training, coaches or staff should ask each athlete if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If the athlete has any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 they should be sent home and instructed to contact their healthcare provider. They will not be allowed to return to training until they are cleared by a healthcare provider. A doctor's note must be provided.
- Participants, organizers, spectators, volunteers and facility employees in high risk categories should not participate or attend organized sport activities. List of high risk categories can be found [here](#).
- Be sure appropriate infection prevention supplies (e.g. hand sanitizer, facial tissues, facial coverings) are present in multiple targeted areas (outlined later in this document).
- Small group training should take place in an area where physical distancing (6' apart) can be maintained.
- All spectators must adhere to CDC and DPH assemblage and distance guidelines. Spectators, nonessential visitors, staff, volunteers and activities involving external groups or organizations should be limited as much as possible. Operators are encouraged to mark off spectator/chaperone viewing sites to allow for social distancing.
- Spectators/Chaperones must practice social distancing including wearing face coverings.
- Participants should use their own equipment and be instructed to sanitize their equipment after every training session.
- Each participant will be required to have their own water bottle, towel, and personal hygiene products (hand sanitizer, facial tissues, face coverings). Players are not required to wear face coverings during soccer activities, but must wear them when arriving and leaving a session. Coaches and spectators will be required to wear face coverings by DPH guidelines (currently whenever within 6 feet of others a face covering must be worn). Tissues, wipes, or disposable gloves must be properly disposed in the appropriate receptacles.
- Follow cleaning schedule/protocol of equipment (cones, goals etc.) with disinfectant before, during, and after training.



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- **Appropriate personal protective equipment (gloves, face coverings/masks) must be worn as required per DPH guidelines.**
- **Wear a face covering, when not actively playing and when a player cannot abide by the physical/social distance requirements from coaches, other players and parents.**
- **Soccer will be permitted to be played by the players under the rules/laws of the sport.**

**In Phase 2 Indoor athletic facilities shall be open and available exclusively for the use of supervised sports programs, including sports camps (which must comply with Reopening Massachusetts camp guidelines), for youths under the age of 18. Locker rooms and indoor common areas in these facilities must remain closed. One way entrances and exits must be instituted while still adhering to established fire and building codes.**

## **PHASE 3**

**Training group size, games and tournaments to be determined by the Commonwealth as we get closer to the opening of the phase. Above guidelines to remain in effect.**

## **PHASE 4**

**Return to new normal - Full resumption of all outdoor recreation.**



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## BEST PRACTICES TO LIMIT RISK TO OUR SOCCER COMMUNITY

### FACILITIES

- Assign a COVID-19 Safety Officer who will communicate policy organization wide to organizations utilizing the facility. Regular updates and reminders should be provided.
- Assign staff to oversee the compliance of organizations at the facility. One staff per two playing surfaces.
- Operators should log persons (name and phone number or name and email address) who remain on site for a sustained period of time to facilitate contact tracing, including staff, participants, and spectators.
- Access to equipment storage and office space should be limited to employees only. First aid kits should be available at the playing area or court rather than in an office, where possible.
- Facility owners/operators and staff should clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.
- Frequently touched surfaces and objects vary by location but may include doorknobs, light switches, handrails, sinks, faucets, toilet handles, drinking fountains.
- Restroom facilities shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with Centers for Disease control guidance and best practices linked here.
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning.
- In the event of a positive case, shut down the site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting in accordance with current guidelines.
- If any equipment is provided by the Facility Operator, the operator must minimize equipment sharing and clean and disinfect shared equipment at the end of a practice session from the list of disinfectants meeting [EPA criteria for use against the novel coronavirus](#).
- Remove visible dirt and grime before using disinfectants. Disinfecting surfaces removes most germs and are most effective on clean surfaces and objects. Coronaviruses are relatively easy to kill with most disinfectants. When selecting disinfecting products, always read and follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Staff should use gloves and or other personal protective equipment. Throw away gloves after each cleaning.
- Indoor facilities must provide access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, and allow sufficient break time for staff and participants to wash hands frequently; alcohol - based sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative.
- Facility staff should ensure that all handwashing sinks have clean running water, soap, and paper towels at all times.



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## FACILITIES - CONTINUED

- Operators must post visible signage throughout the site to remind employees and visitors of hygiene and safety protocols.
- Operators must close any public water bubblers, fountains, or bottle fillers if present on site.
- Consider having alcohol based hand sanitizer in common areas to encourage hygiene.
- Facility managers must set, post, and monitor occupancy limits for bathrooms based on the ability to maintain six-foot social distancing.
- Facilities that house a concession stand must adhere to the guidelines outlined by both the local Board of Health and the Governor's office.
- Do not allow congregating in the parking lot, common areas, entrances, and exits before and after practice.
- Schedule groups/teams with a minimum of 30 minutes in between the time one team concludes and the other arrives. Players must leave immediately after their session. Players should not arrive at their field earlier than 5 minutes prior to their scheduled arrival time.
- Teams who wish to schedule warm-up time prior to their sessions must build that into their scheduled session/rental time. Warm-ups will not be permitted adjacent to the assigned field prior to the scheduled start time for a team.
- Remove benches from all soccer fields. Players & spectators must bring their own chair. All chairs must be spaced according to physical distancing rules. (6' apart)
- Facilities that permit the use of golf carts will allow 1 operator per cart.
- Indoor facilities must have proper ventilation allowing for the proper outside air to filter into the building.



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## TOWN ORGANIZATION/CLUB

- Assign a COVID-19 Safety Officer who will communicate policies organization-wide, to coaching staff, administrators, parents, and players. Regular updates and reminders should be provided.
- Assign each team a coordinator to oversee compliance at the team level (can be a team parent who must register as an Adult with Mass Youth Soccer).
- Train and educate all volunteers/staff on return to activities protocols.
- Develop a relationship and dialog with local Health Department officials (identify risk tolerance).
- Develop a plan to communicate with the local health department in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within a team.
- If a team member or coach contracts COVID-19, all training sessions should be canceled for that team and any additional team associated with that coach for 14 days.
- Be prepared to shut down and stop operations. Develop plans for temporary closure of facilities (indoor, outdoor) to properly disinfect and ensure other adult leaders are not infected.
- Provide coaches and team coordinators with PPE (masks) and sanitizing products.
- Schedule groups/teams with a minimum of 30 minutes in between the time one team concludes and the other arrives. Players must leave immediately after their session. Players should not arrive at their field earlier than 5 minutes prior to their scheduled arrival time.
- Teams who wish to schedule warm-up time prior to their sessions must build that into their scheduled session/rental time. Warm-ups will not be permitted adjacent to the assigned field prior to the scheduled start time for a team.
- Do not allow players or parents to congregate in parking lots, at drop off zones, facility entrances/exits before or after a training session.
- Provide adequate space at the field to allow for proper physical/social distancing (6').
- All parents, spectators, and players should have their own chair. Chairs should be placed to allow for proper physical and social distancing (6').
- All waste should be placed by the respective parent, player, coach, and spectator in the trash receptacle. Nothing should be picked up by anybody other than the originator of the waste.
- Require players to have their own water, sanitary products (hand sanitizer, facial tissues, PPE (optional for play), ball, GK Gloves (if necessary), dark and light shirt (in lieu of shared scrimmage vests)).



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## COACH

Please review the Coaches toolkit document found on the [Return to Soccer Activities](#) webpage for more information regarding responsibilities during coaching sessions

- Understand that there may be parents/guardians who may not be ready to have their child return to activities at this time.
- Understand some parents/guardians may require their child to wear a face covering. If so, it should be a face covering which attaches around the ears so as not to cause any injury if accidentally tugged or pulled on. No around the head or neck face coverings permitted during play.
- Ensure the health and safety of all athletes.
- Ensure athletes arrive dressed for practice and leave immediately after practice. No recreational play, or loitering is allowed.
- Upon arrival, inquire how athletes are feeling, send them home if you believe they are acting or look ill.
- No handshakes, fist or elbow bumps, or any other physical contact.
- Practice and encourage proper hygiene, washing hands frequently with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds at a time. Use alcohol based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol). Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or sleeves, do not use your hands. Do not touch your face (eyes, nose, mouth with unwashed hands). Launder clothing after training session.
- Follow all state and local health protocols.
- Coach is to be the only one to handle cones, discs, goals etc.
- Ensure all athletes have their individual equipment. (Ball, water bottle, GK Gloves etc.)
- Ensure player's personal belongings (bags, coats, sweatshirts) remain in their personal space and are kept physically distanced from the belongings of others. Do not allow sharing of personal items.
- Ask players to bring a dark and light shirt to eliminate the need of shared scrimmage vests.
- Do not allow shared team snacks. No use of public water bubblers, fountains or bottle fillers if present on site. Participants and spectators should only drink from their own containers.
- Wear a face covering, when not actively coaching and abide by the physical/social distance requirements from players and parents.
- **STAY POSITIVE** – Players and parents will be looking to you to remain calm and supportive during this transition time.



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## PARENTS

- **Ensure your child's health. Take temperature daily. The average normal body temperature is generally accepted as 98.6°F (37°C). Some studies have shown that the "normal" body temperature can have a wide range, from 97°F (36.1°C) to 99°F (37.2°C). A temperature over 100.4°F (38°C) most often means you have a fever caused by an infection or illness.**
- **If your child has any symptoms, even mild ones, public health urges you to stay home and isolate until:**
  - **You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without the use of medicine) AND**
  - **Other symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) have improved AND**
  - **At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.**
- **Anyone in your household that you have had close contact with (within six feet for approximately 10 minutes) should self-quarantine for 14 days, even if you haven't been tested for COVID-19.**
- **Notify the club immediately if your child has become sick.**
- **Adhere to physical/social distance requirements posted by the organization. These are based on state and local requirements. When at training, wear a face covering if you are outside of your car.**
- **Ensure that your child has a water bottle, equipment (ball and GK Gloves if necessary), light and dark shirt (no shared scrimmage vests will be provided).**
- **Ensure your child's personal equipment, cleats, balls, shin guards etc. are cleaned and sanitized before and after every training.**
- **Ensure your child's clothing is washed after every session.**
- **Do not assist the coach with equipment before or after a training session.**
- **No carpooling with other members of the team.**
- **Be sure your child has necessary sanitizer with them at every session.**



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## PLAYERS

- **Take temperature daily (see information outlining this in the parent's section).**
- **Practice and encourage proper hygiene, washing hands frequently with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds at a time. Use alcohol based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol). Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or sleeves, do not use your hands. Do not touch your face (eyes, nose, mouth with unwashed hands).**
- **Have your own hand sanitizer with you.**
- **Wear a face covering before and immediately after each training session. They may be removed while participating in practice and drills, provided players are able to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from other persons present.**
- **Practice physical distancing on the sidelines. When sitting on the sidelines you should be 6' from the next player. Your belongings should remain in your space when not in use.**
- **Bring your own equipment (Ball, GK Gloves (if required), shin guards, jacket etc.) Do not touch anyone else's equipment.**
- **Bring your own water bottle and snack. Do not touch anyone else's belongings as sharing will not be permitted.**
- **Wash and sanitize your equipment before and after each training.**
- **No group celebrations, hugs, handshakes, fist bumps, etc.**



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## **TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS/EVENT STAFF (When allowed by the State)**

- **Tournament Directors should follow the guidelines set forth by Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, CDC, Federal, State and local governments.**
- **Tournament Directors should ensure that participants are following the specific local and state restrictions from their home location counties or associations before allowing teams from other associations/areas into the tournament.**
- **Predetermine appropriate emergency contacts should anything arise during your event and provide the information to all tournament staff and participants.**
- **All communication leading up to the tournament should include information on COVID-19, preventive measures and all procedures that the host has established as requirements for participants and spectators, including:**
  - **Information on physical distancing measures, personal protection equipment requirements, limits on spectators and what the plan of action will be for suspected cases.**
  - **Instructions to stay home if the participant or a member of the participant's family is not feeling well.**
  - **Instructions on what to do if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. If a participant is exhibiting symptoms of Coronavirus the participants should not attend or participate in the event until such time as the participant has been tested and cleared. Doctor's note would be required as proof of testing.**
  - **All participants and spectators should have access to handwashing and hand sanitizer.**
- **Bleachers and team benches should not be used. All spectators and players should provide their own seating. They should allow for 6' of physical distance from others.**
- **A procedure should be developed for any possible cases at the event. This should include a designated area for those who present with symptoms and those they came in contact with to be isolated until an ambulance is called.**
- **Event staff are to wear appropriate personal protection equipment when they come in contact with spectators, participants, and coaches.**
- **It is the responsibility of the tournament host to supply any and all masks, gloves and hand sanitizer for their tournament staff. The tournament host is the organization running the tournament and not the facility at which the event is held.**
- **Team registration/check in area should be set up to allow for necessary physical distancing for both the staff and the team representatives. Markers should be placed on the ground to ensure 6 feet of physical distance for those waiting in line.**
- **When possible, organizations will need to coordinate team registration and roster check-in electronically prior to the event. If needed, paper materials may be exchanged on the day of the event.**



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## DISCLAIMER

Participants, parents, family and spectators taking part in soccer and soccer related activities do so with the knowledge of risk and potential exposure involved. In doing so they agree to accept any and all inherent risks to their personal health.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Reopening Massachusetts](#)

[Center for Disease Control - Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

[CDC Considerations for Youth Sports](#)

[CDC Guide to Mass Gatherings](#)

[CDC List of people in high risk categories](#)

[COVID-19 Outdoor Recreation Facility Restroom Cleaning Best Practices](#)

[EPA Recommended Disinfectants](#)

[WHO Handwashing Video](#)

[FIFA COVID-19 Resources](#)

[US Soccer Play On](#)

[US Soccer Recognize to Recover - COVID 19 and Mental Health](#)

[US Youth Soccer Return to Activity Notice](#)

[Aspen Institute - Coronavirus and Youth Sports](#)

[COVID Safety Officer Enrollment Form](#)

## CONTACT

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