

Return to Play Considerations



NCYS

National Council of



YOUTH SPORTS



Foreword

Sports, recreation and active lifestyles are integral to helping youth reach their full potential. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has caused most of us to hit the pause button on providing opportunities for youth athletes. Many of us in the youth sports sector believe this virus is potentially an existential threat to the youth sports industry. The fragmented nature of youth sports called for an industry coalition to work cooperatively, and with the federal, state and local governments and agencies, to advocate for collective relief.

These organizations are a lot like the redwood trees located in California. The redwoods are some of the biggest, tallest and oldest trees in the world. What's unique about redwoods is their roots are shallow reaching down only to 12 feet. However, they survive earthquakes, flooding and strong winds because their root systems are intertwined. Now is the time for us to collectively stand together.

That's why we're part of the [PLAY Sports Coalition](#). We're advocating for the return of play on behalf of youth sports organizations across the country. We also want to ensure that youth sports return safely and under the guidance of state and local guidelines. That's why we've created these return to play considerations. They're intended to help youth sports organizations create a Return to Play playbook that is right for their geography, sport, and circumstances.

This new resource is a compilation of the great work of many organizations. We intend to provide you with access and direct links to the many great tools and resources already developed by sport and health experts at all levels of competition and government. These are tools you will need to create safe Return to Play guidelines that are customized for your situation.

I'd like to thank several individuals who helped make this resource possible including Luke Zaiantz (Reigning Champs), Jon Butler (Pop Warner), Keri King (Triple Play Sports), Brian Litvack (LeagueApps) and Derek Ernst (Augusta Sportswear Brands).

At the National Council of Youth Sports (NCYS), we know that helping young people to live healthier lifestyles gives them a better chance of improving their overall well-being. We thank you in advance for taking a proactive approach to the health, wellness and safety of the youth people in your care.

Sincerely,
Wayne B. Moss
Executive Director



How to Use This Document

This document is not a prescriptive list of Return to Play protocols. It is a summary, synthesis and set of links to the work of government and non-government agencies and is intended to be helpful as you build your own Return to Play playbook.

Use as a research tool

Use as a template for letters and communications

Use as a template to build your own Return to Play plan

Please find an example of a Return to Play plan from [Little League](#). Your operating plan does not have to be a 40-page binder. It can be short and simple. What is important is that it reflects your situation, guidance from appropriate experts like the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is communicated and executed well. The basic elements should include:

- When to Return, including an ability to add restrictions (move backward in Phases) if there are additional waves in your area
- What operating adjustments your organization will make
- A communication plan
- A designation of a point person or team responsible for the Return to Play plan
- An ability to monitor the outcomes of what is happening as you Return to Play so that you can make adjustments

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Return to Play Checklist

Monitor When to Return

- Review state & [Local](#) guidelines and orders
- Check the ability to secure your place of play from the property owner
- Assess your organization's readiness and ability to meet local guidelines
- Establish that safety, financial and other risks are understood and acceptable

Understand Liability & Minimize Risk

- Alignment of return to government orders
- Organizational readiness and willingness to comply with operating considerations
- Understand insurance considerations
- Understand waivers and communication
- Understand appropriate signage
- Understand the current legal environment
- Develop a policy for anyone in your community doesn't comply with new guidance

Create an Operating Playbook

- Review operating considerations from various authorities
- Create a playbook and assign a team leader
- Communication plans to all parties
- Secure your playing space
- Order any new requisite supplies (e.g. masks for coaches)

Communicate to Field Owners, Parents, Referees and Coaches

- Communication plan to secure playing spaces
- Communication plan to parents, coaches and officials

Create a Learning & Feedback Plan

- Open communication channels to parents, coaches and referees for adjustments
- Create a communication process for parents, coaches and referees if someone on the team becomes sick



When to Return Considerations

When to Return to Play is a combination of **six considerations**:

1. The type of play and dynamics of your sport - Cross country running has different training and competing dynamics than boxing or football. Important differences in potential contagion in sport have to do with sustained proximity to other players and protective barriers. Consider where your sport fits on a spectrum of Distanced Play to Close Play.



2. The Phase of COVID locally - The CDC and White House defined a Path to Return in [Phases](#). A phase is a 14-day period in which [gating criteria](#) have been satisfied. The timing of a phase is because 14 days are when virus symptoms generally appear. Gating criteria include things like lower new case rates and hospital visits. The chart below shares some concepts of what type of activities may be available depending on the phase. [Local Health Officials](#) and the government will determine what phase, orders and rules apply to your location. [Here are charts on state-level case rates](#)

It is very important to understand that phases go both forward and backward. If there are additional waves of the virus locally, your area may move from a Phase III, to Phase II or I. Continue to monitor your local situation and act accordingly.

	PHYSICAL DISTANCING	GATHERING	MEETINGS	TRAVEL	SCHOOL & YOUTH ACTIVITIES	ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS	TYPE OF PLAY
PHASE I* 14 Day Declining Local Case Rates	All	Avoid > 10	Encourage Virtual	Minimize Non-Essential	Remain Closed	Distance Play Sports Practice	Distanced Play
PHASE II* 14 Day Declining Local Case Rates	All	Avoid > 50	Encourage Virtual	Non-Essential Can Resume	Can Reopen with Clear Safety Protocols	Distance Play Sports Games & Close Play Sports Practice	Close Play
PHASE III* 14 Day Declining Local Case Rates	Vulnerable Only	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Non-Essential Can Resume	Can Reopen	All Sports Practice, Games, Tournaments & Events	Close Play



3. Explicit approval from your state & local government - There is no one answer for the entire country on when to Return to Play. The government's authority on *when* is typically local. States and municipalities largely have authority in reopening communities. However, you need to do your own research on the decision-making for your area and be sure that there are clear orders that allow you to operate. If you are unclear, communicate directly to the appropriate office and ask. If you do communicate with the office, it may be helpful for you to have prepared your Return to Play plan and share how you intend to prepare and solicit feedback. While you need government approval, that alone does not necessarily mean it is time to Return to Play.

Here are some examples of links on what to look for in your State and County - [White House](#), [NY Times: State Level Detail](#), [LA County](#), [City of Los Angeles](#), [California Department of Public Health](#).

4. The ability to secure a place to play - In case you don't own your own facility, operating approval from the government does not mean that you will have approval from the property owners. Property owners may not grant your organization the space for financial reasons, risk concerns or in some cases, their facility may remain closed even after orders have been lifted (e.g. school districts). Start communicating early with the property owner to understand the situation and be prepared to share your Return to Play operating plan to assure the property owner that you will operate responsibly. There are examples of communications and tips in the Communications section of this document.

5. Your organization's readiness to reasonably operate in a way that aligns with CDC Return to Play Considerations - You will likely operate differently than you did prior to the pandemic as your organization returns to play. After you read through this document of considerations, consider changes you will make and if you are able to execute those changes effectively.

6. Risk is clearly understood and minimized - Even with approvals, a place and plan to play, you should still take time to understand the risks of your local environment (i.e. your county has orders lifted, but you know there is a flare-up in your town). You should also understand your legal liability and financial risks.

The CDC provides a useful [Decision Tree](#) for youth programs and camps, illustrated below, which is a close analogue to youth sports.



YOUTH PROGRAMS AND CAMPS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



The purpose of this tool is to assist directors or administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding youth programs and camps during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.

Should you consider opening?

- ✓ Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
- ✓ Are you ready to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- ✓ Are you able to screen children and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?

ANY
NO



Are recommended health and safety actions in place?

- ✓ Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing and employees wearing a cloth face covering, as feasible
- ✓ Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation of facilities and transport vehicles/buses
- ✓ Encourage social distancing through increased spacing, small groups, and limited mixing between groups, and staggered scheduling, arrival, and drop off, if feasible
- ✓ Where feasible, adjust activities and procedures to limit sharing of items such as toys, belongings, supplies, and equipment
- ✓ Train all employees on health and safety protocols

ANY
NO



Is ongoing monitoring in place?

- ✓ Develop and implement procedures to check for signs and symptoms in children and employees daily upon arrival, as feasible
- ✓ If feasible, implement enhanced screening for children and employees who have recently been present in areas of high transmission, including temperature checks and symptom monitoring
- ✓ Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home
- ✓ Plan for if children or employees get sick
- ✓ Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, employees, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
- ✓ Monitor child and employee absences and have a pool of trained substitutes, and flexible leave policies and practices
- ✓ Be ready to consult with the local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area

ANY
NO



ALL
YES

OPEN
AND
MONITOR



cdc.gov/coronavirus

Start Slow, Observe and Iterate

When you do return to play, consider opening with a 2-week practice plan before the regular season and narrowing attendance to focus on players and include minimal non-player attendees. This will give young people time to warm up, time for administrators and coaches to get new operating processes in place and to monitor the health of players and coaches.



Liability Considerations

Concepts to Consider

- Do not assume that lawsuits based on COVID-19 exposure will be covered by your liability carrier. Whether a lawsuit will be covered depends upon the language in a particular policy, the circumstances of the injury, and applicable state law. [Article](#)
- To date, few COVID-19 liability lawsuits have been filed. [Article](#)
- However, as the risk of COVID-19 exposure-related litigation increases due to the reopening of businesses, federal and state officials have begun to consider creating potential liability shields to help protect businesses from legal liability if they take reasonable efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. [Article](#)
- In the near term, create a Return to Play playbook. The playbook should optimize for safety and be consistent with federal, state, and local government guidelines. Also, consider industry suggested best operating practices. Once you make a plan, operate to the plan. If you observe situations that allow you to improve your plan, adjust accordingly. [USOPC Example](#)

Legal Defense Concepts That You Should Consult Your Own Attorney About

- The most likely legal claim that youth sports organizations will face arising from alleged exposure to or contracting of COVID-19 at a practice or sporting event will be negligence claims based upon the failure to cancel a sporting event or otherwise mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure.
- Generally, assuming compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations, businesses may be held liable only if they (1) were negligent in the operation of their business or (2) do not exercise ordinary or reasonable care to maintain their premises in a reasonably safe condition and to warn of hidden dangers, which typically requires a duty to inspect the premises to identify dangerous conditions. “Ordinary and reasonable care” is a fact-specific test that varies from state to state and even from jury to jury. Youth sports organizations, however, should give special consideration to duties imposed upon them by federal, state and other local governments and agencies, sports governing bodies, and if applicable, school districts and athletic associations. These duties could vary with respect to participants, spectators and other groups of individuals.



- **Waiver/Release With COVID-19 Language** – Existing waiver/release agreements for minors and adults should be modified to add language releasing the youth sports organization from liability resulting from contracting illness such as communicable diseases including COVID-19 at such organization’s events. Or, a specific COVID-19 waiver/release may be used. Any liability waiver should be clear and unambiguous that the signer is knowingly subjecting their child or children, him or herself to the risk of being exposed to or contracting the COVID-19 virus, that despite any preventative measures being taken by the youth sports organization there is no guarantee that the signer will not be exposed to or contract the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, and that by entering the sports organization’s premises and/or participating in or otherwise spectating at the sports organization’s events the signer could be increasing his or her risk of exposure to or contracting COVID-19. In any event, liability waivers have limitations and the degree of their enforcement varies among the states. Importantly, courts have not yet decided to what extent COVID-19-related liability waivers are enforceable, including whether or not a public policy reason exists to bar or otherwise limit their enforcement. Most jurisdictions will not permit the waiver of liability for intentional, willful, wanton, reckless, or grossly negligent conduct. Additionally, as noted below, many jurisdictions have placed restrictions and even bars on the enforceability of liability waivers with respect to minors. Consultation with your attorney regarding the modification or creation of a liability waiver/release is important. [Sadler On COVID Waivers](#).
- **Assumption of Risk** – Spectators and participants likely assume certain known risks when they decide to attend or participate in a sporting event, such as injury. Due to the breadth of media coverage on the risks of COVID-19 and the many actions taken and restrictions imposed by various federal, state and other local governments and agencies on the general public, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 may be one of these risks. However, a waiver/release that expressly sets forth a spectator’s or participant’s voluntary acknowledgment and assumption of that risk can provide sports organizations with a stronger defense against lawsuits in the future.
- **Contributory or Comparative Negligence** – Spectators and participants may share in the negligence to the extent that they did not practice personal discipline in taking precautions against transmission. This may result in a total bar or an offset against damages depending on state law. New protocols and guidelines put in place by sporting organizations should be explicitly made known to spectators and participants. This group, as a condition of their participation in or spectating at the sports organization’s events, should acknowledge their responsibility to abide by those protocols and guidelines.



- **Federal Volunteer Protection Act** – The federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides certain immunity for volunteers of not-for-profit associations. There are also state law versions that are preempted by the federal act to the extent that the federal act provides stronger protections. These immunity acts do not apply to the extent of gross negligence or other wanton or willful behavior. [Sadler](#)
- **Federal or State COVID-19 Immunity** – There is the discussion of a federal COVID-19 immunity act to protect businesses including sports organizations from some liability risk of opening up operations. Some states may also pass their own versions and/or governors may issue temporary immunity proclamations. For example, the governor of Alabama recently issued the first COVID immunity proclamation. These statutes and proclamations will provide some relief, but will likely exempt gross negligence or willful or reckless disregard for COVID-19 mitigation best practices. These proposed immunity statutes and proclamations have also not been tested in courts, and it is possible that courts may not enforce such laws or executive orders.

Parent Waivers of Liability on Behalf of Minors

Laws vary state to state with respect to the enforceability of minor waiver/releases. Minors are likely not legally competent to enter into a binding waiver/release, which would require a parent's signature on the waiver/release. However, many states will not allow a parent to contractually waive their minor children's right to sue for a sports-related injury. Additionally, the enforceability of the waiver/release could turn on whether or not the released party is a for-profit business or a nonprofit organization. *A parental waiver/release on behalf of minors may be upheld in a minority of states.* [Sadler on Waivers](#)

Consultation with your attorney regarding the modification or creation of a liability waiver/release with respect to minors is important.

Insurance

Any existing liability coverage should be carefully reviewed for provisions that may impact coverage for an injury based on COVID-19 exposure. Although normally general liability policies purport to cover claims and lawsuits for bodily injury, some liability policies specifically exclude injuries resulting from communicable diseases. Even without this exclusion, some insurers may argue that coverage does not apply for other reasons. However,, insurers generally must provide a legal defense for claims that even arguably



fit within the policy's coverage, so without a clearly applicable exclusion, it would be fairly aggressive for insurers to outright deny claims for COVID-19 exposure.

If insurance coverage is not already in place, it should be expected that a large number of insurers will begin specifically excluding loss arising out of communicable disease and/or virus exposure. *Any new policy should be carefully reviewed before purchasing with this point in mind.* [Sadler](#)

Event Signage

You should consider posting conspicuous signage at sports facilities, warning of coronavirus risks and what steps can be taken to reduce such risks. The following is sample language that could be included on signage, which should always be reviewed by your local legal counsel to ensure compliance with any federal, state or local requirements.

- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#)
- Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page
- Broadcast [regular announcements on public announcement \(PA\) system](#)
- Include COVID-19 prevention messages (e.g. [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff, volunteers, officials, and families. This could include links, videos, and prevention messages in emails, on organization websites, and through the team and league's [social media accounts](#).
- Example Signage:
 - Do not enter if you are exhibiting any signs of illness such as sneezing, coughing, sniffles, have a fever, or don't feel well
 - If you are repeatedly sneezing or coughing, you may be asked to immediately leave the premises
 - All players, staff, and spectators should practice responsible social distancing by remaining at least 6 ft apart whenever possible
 - All players, staff, and spectators should wear cloth face coverings whenever applicable
 - Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer upon entrance, during the event, before and after you eat, and as you leave. Hand washing and hand sanitizer stations are provided



- Avoid touching your face including your eyes, nose, and mouth

[Sadler](#)

Other Links to Consider: [Sadler Sports](#), [NAYS](#), [US Justice Department](#)



General Operating Considerations

A majority of this section comes directly from the CDC. There are links to original CDC documents throughout. As you make your own guide, many of the items in this section should be considered to be included. Your sport, age groups, locality and travel/tournament nature of your organization will affect what is appropriate for you.

Assessing the Safety Risk Levels of your Situation [From the CDC](#)

The way sports are played, and the way equipment is shared can influence the spread of COVID-19 among players. When you are assessing the risk of spread in your sport, consider:

- **Physical closeness of players**, and the length of time that players are close to each other or to staff. Sports that require frequent closeness between players may make it more difficult to maintain social distancing, compared to sports where players are not close to each other. For close-contact sports (e.g., wrestling, basketball), play may be modified to safely increase the distance between players.
 - For example, players and coaches can:
 - focus on individual skill building versus competition;
 - limit the time players spend close to others by playing full-contact only in game-time situations;
 - decrease the number of competitions during a season.
 - Coaches can also modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups (cohorts) that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups.
- **Amount of necessary touching of shared equipment** and gear (e.g., protective gear, balls, bats, racquets, mats, or water bottles). It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. Minimize equipment sharing, and clean and disinfect shared equipment between use by different people to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- **Ability to engage in social distancing** while not actively engaged in play (e.g., during practice, on the sideline, or in the dugout). During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, attention should be given to maintaining [social distancing](#) by increasing space between players on the sideline,



dugout, or bench. Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.

- **Age of the player.** Older youth might be better able to follow directions for social distancing and take other protective actions like not sharing water bottles. If feasible, a coach, parent, or other caregivers can assist with making sure that athletes maintain proper social distancing. For younger athletes, youth sports programs may ask parents or other household members to monitor their children and make sure that they follow social distancing and take other protective actions (e.g., younger children could sit with parents or caregivers, instead of in a dugout or group area).
- **Players at higher risk of developing serious diseases.** Parents and coaches should assess the level of risk based on individual players on the team who may be at [higher risk for severe illness](#), such as children who may have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems.
- **Size of the team.** Sports with a large number of players on a team may increase the likelihood of spread, compared to sports with fewer team members. Consider decreasing team sizes, as feasible.
- **Nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers.** Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- **Travel outside of the local community.** [Traveling](#) outside of the local community may increase the chances of exposing players, coaches, and fans to COVID-19, or unknowingly spreading it to others. This is the case particularly if a team from an area with high levels of COVID-19 competes with a team from an area with low levels of the virus. Youth sports teams should consider competing only against teams in their local area (e.g., neighborhood, town, or community)

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread [From the CDC](#)

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- **Staying Home When Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and player families about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity
 - Actively encourage sick staff, families, and players to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees aware of these policies.



- [Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
- Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, who have recently had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
- CDC's criteria can help inform return to work/school policies:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Teach and reinforce [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - Do not allow spitting and encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease). Face coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports. Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.
 - Wearing cloth face coverings is most important when physical distancing is difficult.
 - People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided to all participants on the [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
 - Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old;
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious;



- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face-covering without assistance.



- **Adequate Supplies**

- If hand washing facilities are available, support healthy hygiene by providing supplies including soap, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans. If hand washing facilities are not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for coaches, staff and older players who can safely use hand sanitizer)

Maintaining Healthy Operations [From the CDC](#)

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protections for Staff and Players at Higher Risk** for Severe Illness from COVID-19
 - Offer options for individuals at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 (risk increases with age, and people of any age with certain medical conditions are at higher risk), such as virtual coaching and in-home drills that limits their exposure risk.
 - Limit youth sports participation to staff and youth who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**
 - Keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches or staff, and make sure that each group of players and coaches avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible. Teams might consider having the same group of players stay with the same coach or having the same group of players rotate among coaches.
 - Consider staging within-team scrimmages instead of playing games with other teams to minimize exposure among players and teams.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between groups and with guardians as much as possible. One example is increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to depart before another group enters the facility. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between uses.
 - When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for



social distancing (maintaining a distance of approximately 6 feet) between employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.

- **Gatherings, Spectators, and Travel**

- Avoid group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings, where the spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- Avoid activities and events such as off-site competitions or excursions (e.g., watching a professional team compete).

- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**

- Designate a youth sports program staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All coaches, staff, officials, and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

- **Communication Systems**

- Put systems in place for:
 - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having coaches, staff, umpires/officials, and families of players (as feasible) self-report to the youth sports organization if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#)
 - [external icon](#)
 - (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below), and other applicable laws and regulations.
 - Notifying staff, officials, families, and the public of youth sports facility closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).

- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**

- Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices for coaches, officials, and staff that enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or are [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not be punitive to people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for



employees who need to stay home with their children if there are schools or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.

- Develop policies for return-to-play after COVID-19 illness. CDC's criteria to [discontinue home isolation and quarantine](#) can inform these policies.
- **Back-up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of coaches and officials, cross-train staff and create a roster of trained back-up personnel.
- **Coach and Staff Training**
 - Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually, or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., [symptom checking](#)) of coaches, officials, staff, and players safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.
 - Youth sports program administrators may use examples of screening methods found in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening children, and CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.
- **Sharing Facilities**
 - Encourage any organizations that share or use the youth sports facilities to also follow these considerations.
- **Support Coping and Resilience**
 - Encourage employees to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
 - Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
 - Encourage employees to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
 - Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text [CDC]TalkWithUs to 66746



Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick [From the CDC](#)

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Sick coaches, staff members, umpires/officials, or players should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that coaches, staff, officials, players, and families know that sick individuals should not attend the youth sports activity, and that they should notify youth sports officials (e.g., the COVID-19 point of contact) if they (staff) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
 - Immediately separate coaches, staff, officials, and players with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath) at any youth sports activity. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick. Individuals who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated and sent home as well, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#) (see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” below). If symptoms develop, individuals and families should follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
 - Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning disinfectants](#), and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.



- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**

- In accordance with state and local privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations, youth sports organizations should notify [local health officials](#), youth sports program staff, umpires/officials, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and other applicable laws and regulations.
- Work with [local health officials](#) to develop a reporting system (e.g., letter) youth sports organizations can use to notify health officials and close contacts of cases of COVID-19.
- Advise those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and to follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

Oversight and Leadership

Many Organizations are specifically assigning a team leader to manage adjustments related to the Pandemic or have created an oversight body. The leader or body ensures safety policies and practices comply with any governing regulations from Federal, State, County and Local; align with the standards, guidelines and best practices of the youth-serving sector; and are reliably executed.

Emergency Protocols

Develop a written emergency protocol for hazards and threats that might reasonably affect persons participating in its programs and activities. Managers, supervisors, coaches and others should be familiar with the protocols and have access to them when needed. The section on “Preparing for when someone gets sick” has much of this.

Reporting & Feedback

Players, Coaches and others involved should report any symptoms they experience and if they become sick.

Scheduling and Time



Understand that as you constrain locker room capacity or make other changes, things can take more time. Plan accordingly so you don't unintentionally create queues and other congestion areas.

Cloth face masks for players?

There is no clear answer yet on whether a player or participant should wear a cloth facemask during play. Distance sports may not require the use of a mask and in some close play sport situations where there is intense cardio and or body moisture, wearing a mask may cause more risk than prevent. The CDC yet does not take a position on whether participants should wear a mask.



Sport Specific Operating Considerations

The Operating Considerations are relevant to most sports. Please also review the following considerations that are unique to certain sports.

Softball & Baseball

Links - [USA Baseball](#), [USA Softball](#), [Sports UAC](#)

- No spitting seeds or anything else in the bench area or anywhere on the field.
- Consider moving the umpire to behind the pitcher's mound to reduce congestion at home plate.
- Practice social distancing for players and spectators (e.g. extending the dugout down the baseline and clearly mapping spectator seating).
- Discourage shared equipment such as bats, helmets, hats and gloves.
- Don't throw "around the horn" during the game. For warmup and training wash hands before and after and remind children not to touch their faces.

Flag & Tackle Football

Links - [NFL FLAG](#), [Pop Warner](#), [USA Football](#)

- Consider having coaches call plays from the sidelines rather than in a team huddle.
- Consider adding additional timeouts to allow for hand hygiene during each half.
- Provide additional footballs if possible to allow for more frequent equipment switches and disinfect footballs with disinfecting wipes or alcohol as often as possible.



- Discourage players from removing and re-inserting mouthguards.
- Consider electronic or handheld whistles.

Basketball

Links - [Team USA](#)

- Review venue spectator capacity and consider limiting spectators to 30% of capacity. Include any capacity reductions in your communications plan.
- Create a buffer between the baseline and players bench and baseline.
- Distance the players on the baseline and bench.
- Consider a specific plan for warm-up and allow extra time for flow through locker rooms and at breaks to sanitize basketballs and benches.
- Consider electronic or handheld whistles.

Field Hockey

Links - [USA Field Hockey](#)

- Potentially keep rosters to game participants only.
- Consider limiting the coaching area to stay within the designated bench area.
- For outdoor tournaments, consider expanding the area around each field to allow for proper social distancing.
- As appropriate, ask spectators to bring their own chairs.
- Consider electronic or handheld whistles.

Golf

Links - [USGA](#)

- When on the driving range, encourage players to leave one open spot open between one another to practice social distancing.



- When on the putting green, do not touch any pins (most courses will have raised pins) and do not putt to the same hole at the same time as another player.
- Consider asking players to carry their own bags rather than using caddies.
- On-course officials are advised to carry cleaning products and hand sanitizers. Regular cleaning/wiping of pins, bunker rakes, and other course components is strongly encouraged.
- Provide sufficient space at scoring tables between each individual.

Ice Hockey

Links - [USA Hockey](#)

- Consider reducing player and referee locker room capacity as needed. Additional time for shifts of players getting dressed may be needed before and after a match.
- Practice social distancing by limiting the team box area to two coaches and one row of seated and one row of standing players.
- Place backup goaltenders in the penalty box with their helmet on and team managers, injured players and medical personnel outside of the team box.
- Ask referees to use hand signals or put a protective pane up for scorekeepers to avoid that physical proximity when reporting goals or penalties.

Lacrosse

Links - [US Lacrosse](#)

- Disinfect all sticks and gloves before games begin.
- Place benches on the opposite side of the field from spectators and separate from one another by at least 50' of dead space.
- Limit the substitution area to a 10' square at the inside end of each bench area so athletes can be clearly ready to enter play while still socially distancing.
- Consider re-configuring faceoffs to practice social distancing for the referees.



- Consider electronic or handheld whistles.

Rowing

Links - [US Rowing](#)

- Stagger access to the row house and dock to one team at a time to ensure proper social distancing prior to the start of the race.
- Encourage the crew to maintain a 6' distance to the nearest boat while on the water, pre- and post-race.
- Disinfect oars, shells and all land training equipment before and after each use and with any change of athletes in the lineup.
- Ask all Regatta officials and safety monitors to wear a cloth mask

Soccer

Links - [US Youth Soccer](#)

- As much as possible, keep players six feet apart from one another during warmups.
- Sanitize benches before and after each match.
- Consider situating benches as far apart as possible. If feasible, place benches on opposite sides of the field.
- No spitting. Goalkeepers should refrain from spitting on their gloves.
- Encourage substitutes to sit six feet apart from one another and wear masks while sitting on the bench.
- The signing of game cards should not be required. Referees should submit game cards online if available.

Swim & Diving

Links - [USA Swimming](#), [CDC](#)



- Consider providing a warm-up or staging area outside of the natatorium with room for each team to properly warm up.
- Maintain proper social distancing, by asking athletes to enter the locker room in shifts. Venues may need to allow extra time for all athletes to get properly dressed.
- Whenever possible, develop one-way entry and exit into the competition area.
- Depending on the size of the field, consider extending warm-ups in the pool for swimmers to maintain proper distancing.
- Divers should be limited to one at a time in the shower/tub area after competition to mitigate exposure.

Tennis

Links - [USTA](#)

- Encourage players to access the court through separate entrance points, when possible. If only one entry point is provided, ask players to enter separately, at a safe distance from one another.
- Consider situating players' bench areas on opposite sides of the court.
- For doubles matches, Discourage players from whispering strategies to one another or "huddling up" to discuss strategy. Remaining six feet apart between points is paramount.
- If a ball from another court comes to a player, ask players to send it back with a racket and refrain from touching the ball with their hands.
- Disinfect player bench areas before and after each match.

Track & Field

Links - [USA Track & Field](#)

- Limit team tents to pop-up style only, with no sides and space tents at least 10' apart from each other.



- All athletes from the event should be taken to the starting line or field event area together and be escorted back to the warm-up area after competition.
- Encourage coaches to coach from the outside of the track only - no one other than athletes and officials should be allowed on the infield.
- Disinfect implements and poles prior to weigh-in and disinfect blocks between each use.
- Encourage officials to use electronic measuring devices whenever possible to avoid contact with a shared tape measure or other officials.
- Consider adding additional heats to make sure there is the proper distance on the starting line, in a waterfall start there should be no more than one runner per lane, with block starts, one runner per lane also applies.
- Each athlete must bring their own supply of chalk or grip tape.
- In a cross country race, implement additional breakdowns in age group, etc. to reduce the number of athletes on the starting line so they can reasonably socially distance. There should be a space of 6' between team boxes at all cross country starting lines.

Volleyball

Links - [USA Volleyball](#)

- Consider enlarging the bench area to allow athletes proper social distancing while on the bench.
- Limit cross-team contact by separating team warm-ups as much as possible and ask each team to bring and retrieve their own balls.
- Disinfect balls prior to warming up and rotate 3 game balls as often as possible in order to always have a disinfected ball in play.
- Encourage athletes to apply hand sanitizer at each time out, during each substitution and if there is any cross-net contact.
- Limit officiating teams to one R1 per match who shall keep the visual score on the stand.



Water Polo

Links - [USA Water Polo](#)

- Consider providing a warm-up or staging area outside of the natatorium with room for each team to properly warm up.
- Ask athletes to enter the locker room in shifts in order to maintain proper social distancing - venues may need to allow extra time for all athletes to get properly dressed.
- Identify one-way entry and exit into the pool deck whenever possible.
- Encourage teams to enter the water from opposite ends of the pool to maintain social distance.
- Disinfect the ball before each match and at every time out.

Wrestling

Links - [USA Wrestling](#)

- Consider limiting coaches to a taped off area at least 6' from the edge of the mat.
- Disinfect headgear and shoes prior to the start of the match and disinfect mats between each match and at every other available opportunity.
- Ask referees to wear a cloth face covering, as well as a special pair of "mat only" shoes that they disinfect and do not wear off the disinfected mat.
- Encourage wrestlers to use sanitizer on their hands before the match and between each period.
- Distance the scorer's table at least 10' from the edge of the mat to limit exposure to those officials.



Communication Considerations

On the following pages, you will find tips and examples of communications to Property (Field & Court) Owners & Government Agencies, Parents, Coaches & Officials

Timing

Don't wait until registration opens to communicate with Parents, Coaches, Referees, and the broader community. Keep the community in the loop on what is going on even if you don't have all of the answers.

Provide a simple playbook and set of instructions and train your staff and athletes on it.

Over-communicate and be available for Q&A.

Understand Trauma and Families

As your organization communicates and Returns to Play, please remember that many children and families are going through challenging times. People have lost loved ones, lost jobs, been disconnected from friends and school and haven't had the structure they are accustomed to. This creates a lot of stress that can show up in different ways. You can help reduce this stress through your communication approach. The Special Olympics shares the [Bridges Model](#) , ([more on Bridges](#)) which have some helpful insights on leadership in times of crisis.

The CDC also has some helpful useful resources, which include: [Helping Children Cope](#) and [Talking with Children](#). [Helping Athletes Cope with Covid](#) was published by NCYS.

Youth Sports are often the center of communities. With your voice, you have the opportunity to bring your community back safely and with empathy.

Emergencies or Big Adjustments

Have a plan to get important information and announcements out quickly to your community of Parents, Players, Officials, Coaches and Vendors. For example, there may be a COVID flare-up in your community, or a staff member or athlete tests positive.



Communications to Secure Play Spaces and Resume Operations

Tips

- Your primary message and all communications should underscore the actions taken to ensure public safety. The most important of these is your Return to Play operating guide.
- It's important to note that municipality budgets will likely be under pressure due to COVID-19 related revenue issues. While important, field revenue is a small portion of a city's budget. Still, look for creative ways to partner with your city and optimize the financial arrangement for both parties.
- Every municipality has its own unique culture, values, and priorities. Take time to learn and understand your city at a deep level and tailor your approach for their culture, value, and priorities.
- Overall, you will be best served by attempting to create a true long-term partnership with your municipality rather than a transactional approach. Understand your municipality at a deep level and keep public safety at the forefront of all conversations

Example Letter 1 - Request to Secure Fields from City

To: City or County Recreation Manager

RE: Request to Secure Fields

Dear [Name of City or County Official]:

My name is [your name] and I am the [your sport] of [your organization]. Our organization provides [number of participants] kids in [your city or county] with the opportunity to play [your sport]. We believe we serve an incredibly important resource for both kids and families in [your city or county], enriching their lives through physical activity, mental well-being, and community connection.

I am writing to you today to request access to [the fields/play areas] to further serve our mission. Given the current circumstances, we do not make this request lightly. As a small business in [city or country], our first and foremost priority is the health and safety of the kids and families in our community. After carefully reviewing the guidelines established by the state of [your state] and [your city or county], we believe that we can



operate in a safe manner under the right conditions. Those conditions are fully listed and detailed in the attached Return to Play Operating Protocols.

To create these protocols, we have not only reviewed our state and local guidelines, but also the guidelines released by the CDC, WHO, OSHA, White House, in addition to the sport-specific recommendations provided by the USOPC, NFHS, NCAA, and [NGB or other relevant guidelines]. We have also worked with [local health officials or local health authorities] to gather their feedback and receive approval for our protocols. Finally, as a part of our protocols, we are committed to providing you with tracking of our players in an organized and non-invasive way that we hope can also be helpful to [your city or county].

Please also know that we are very open to your feedback and modifications to our Return to Play Operating Protocols. We are asking to be a part of the solution as we move forward and would love to collaborate with you on how to create a safe, enriching [your sport] experience for our kids. Our goal is not simply to restart play. We would like to work with you to create a safe solution that works for everyone involved - the [city or country], [your league], and especially the kids and families that love to play our game.

As a next step, we would like to request a meeting with you to review our Return to Play protocols together. We are available to discuss this at any time. Our contact information is listed below.

Best Regards,

[Name]

[Title]



Example Letter 2 - Request to Reopen

To: County of Your County Here Department of Health CCHS

County of Your County Here Board of Supervisors

USSoccer COVID-19 Task Force – George Chiampas, Chief Medical Officer

CC: City Officials

RE: Submittal of Social Distancing and Sanitation Protocol Plan (SDSPP) Under Essential Business For Use by Private Soccer Clubs Which are Equivalent to Golf Courses/Essential Child Care and Pose Lowest Risk

Dear Mayor, County Board of Supervisors, Your County Here Department of Health, and County Board of Supervisors:

This letter represents the request for [Your Club] located in [Your Municipality] to reopen under the current guidelines established by Your County Here County and the State of California. We are committed to both our sport, our place in the community, and keeping our children safe.

We are also a local small businesses and care deeply about our communities and our children, We have reviewed the State’s proposed phased reopening plan recently released by Governor Newsom April 28, 2020, along with current guidelines released by OSHA, EPA, State, and the local County of Your County Here required business templates for social distancing plans for child care, essential businesses open to the public, parks and golf courses currently available on the County website.

We are submitting our SDSPP under “Business.” We follow a team formation process which results in a team roster of children that are set for the entire season. This group of children stays constant and does not change. We also serve as a significant after school anchor program in our communities for children from age groups from 5 through 18. We are not fitness gyms. We do not have rolling memberships which change on a daily basis open to the public like a fitness gym. We align most closely with the requirements outlined for essential businesses (care programs) and golf courses. We pose less risk than any business in Your County Here County with modified operations. This request is being made for our competitive program only at this time in a very modified and phased return to play. This will allow us to effectively monitor the policies in our SDSPP and make any necessary changes based on those observations.



We have very seriously considered how we as a collective club sports program can significantly modify our operations to meet all of the requirements in the currently available guidelines published by [Your Municipality] and [Your State] for training, social distancing, sanitation, and even tracking. We have provided a detailed plan to outline these considerations.

We have determined we can operate in a safe manner and have developed the attached Model SDSPP for your consideration, acceptance, and use by local soccer clubs, including Your Club Here. Your Club Here is submitting this SDSPP for your approval based on the criteria to reduce the risk for all categories posted by the [the Municipality]. We fall under the requirements that allow golf courses to be open as well as for child-care groups.

We wanted to emphasize the nature of our operations so that you will be able to approve our SDSPP under the “Business” category and understand why we are a substantially lower risk classification than any other business in Danville. We should be allowed to be open based on the risk reduction criteria set forth by the County of Your County Here for Businesses, Golf Courses and Parks:

[Your organization] is not open to the public. Our rosters are closed once the teams have been selected. Therefore, we are more closely in line with the daycare criteria. We have complete control of our facility. We can therefore significantly modify operations to meet all criteria for essential business, parks, and golf courses. Our club has 800 competitive players. Because of set rosters of no more than 11 to 18 players, we have a list of every player so we can track and control when and how many players enter our facilities from our set team rosters. We can stagger our schedules to make sure no more than 8 players are entering or exiting a field at any given time. While we have 800 competitive players, we have attached a plan that makes sure there are no more than 32 players on a field at any given time and no more than 8 players in a 35 yard by 60-yard area of a field. Each space that a child is in is at least 9 feet away from the next player in the modified training environment we have detailed. Coaches will be in masks maintaining a distance of 10 feet or more from the players as they train.

Our facility is a large, completely open outdoor turf surface floor. We have two fields that are each 98,000 square feet that are in the direct sunlight outdoors. This allows for the successful implementation of the SDSPP through scheduling for sanitation and social distancing.

As identified under [Your Municipality] guidelines for essential child-care groups, team rosters are stable groups of players consisting of between 10 and 18 players that have been consistently together from November to date. In the cases where a roster exceeds 8



players, it will be split in half to two areas of the field to maintain the distances described above.

The small size of a team roster and large field open space lends itself to social distancing at our facilities with proper scheduling and logistical planning. Coaches and players among teams do not intermix before, during or after practices. Soccer practices and training can be accomplished in a safe manner through scheduling and utilizing our outdoor facilities to achieve social distancing with very strict guidelines on drills and training to meet all County requirements. All players will return in a modified individual space in which they will train for the time they are with us.

[Your organization] is located in [Your Municipality] which by Zip Code is one of the lowest COVID-19 rates in the [Municipality] at [xx people per 100,000 as of [Date]].

[Your organization] will follow this plan and the low-risk business classification will be maintained. As a part of this plan, we are committing to provide tracking of our players in an organized and non-invasive way that will be helpful to the overall goals of the County.

Last, and most importantly, we are asking for approval as an essential, low-risk business equivalent to a child-care or golf course to open under the attached SDSPP. We ask that this model be available to [Your organization] in [Your municipality].

[Your organization] serves an incredibly important resource in our youth athlete's lives and their families both mentally and physically. We are asking to help our kids out, especially now. We are asking to be a part of the solution as we move forward. We are all prepared to substantially alter how we function to maintain a low-risk classification. We are open to any and all suggestions for improvement to our SDSPP from the County and State Health officers to further this cause.

We appreciate the opportunity to be heard and hope that you will review our carefully considered SDSPP and approve our plan. We are a lower risk than any golf course in the State or the County and function as a children's program that is in alignment with child care guidelines for a stable group of kids. Our youth are just as important as being able to golf.

We are available to discuss at any time comments on our SDSPP or any other questions you may have on how we would modify our operations to accommodate all guidelines so this SDSPP can be approved. I can be reached at [phone number] to arrange a discussion or call.

Best Regards,



[Name]

[Title]



Communications to Parents

Tips

- Gently remind parents about the value of Sport for their child
- Show empathy for the safety of family and the stress they have endured
- Clearly explain what any new expectations are for the players, equipment and spectating
- Share specific information about the timing of local start dates, if available
- As applicable, a note on how any credits from the prior season will relate to registration this season
- A point on waivers if there are any changes
- As appropriate, a clear call to action, such as “register now”

Example Letter 1

Parents and Families-

As the country begins to recover from the pandemic, our state and local authorities have released guidance that allows youth sports leagues to resume activities. We are excited about the prospect of bringing youth sports back to our kids, families, and communities. However, we also firmly believe it's important to maintain incredibly high standards for safety and health during this tenuous time of reopening our society. As such, we plan to restart [our league's name], but under strict guidelines outlined by the CDC and national governing body for [our sport].

Included in this email are the newly modified play rules that we will utilize in conducting practices and games. [Alternative when re-starting practices only]: Given the high contact nature of our sport, we do not believe we can modify our games in a manner that is both safe and maintains the integrity of our game play]. In addition, we've also attached our new operating protocols to provide you with full transparency over the measures we're talking to ensure our facilities, people, and processes are maximizing the safety of everyone involved in the new [league name] experience.

Our first practice is scheduled for [date]. Prior to that, we plan to train our [coaches, referees, volunteers, others] on our new modified play rules, as well as the new operating protocols. Additionally, during the week of [date], we will hold a series of online meetings



for parents to give you the opportunity to ask questions on anything related to the new experience. Please mark your calendars accordingly for both of these dates.

Lastly, we recognize that some families will face a difficult decision when it comes to returning to [our sport] this season. Please respect each family's decision. For those that choose not to return this year, we fully support your decision to do the right thing for your family. In that case, please contact [person's name] at [phone/email] and let us know as quickly as possible. To provide the best experience possible for everyone involved, we may need to re-allocate teams based on these decisions.

Thank you again for your support of [our league]. These are extraordinary times and we believe strongly that youth sports can help us in our recovery. However, it has to be done safely, with the utmost care for the health of our youth and our society. Let's bring [our sport] back to our communities together.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]



Example Letter 2

Good morning Moms and Dads!

I can imagine we're all very excited to get the boys out of our house and back to practice ASAP! Please check the calendar for the practice schedules. Our first practice will be Friday 5/22/20 at 5 pm at Al Ruschhaupt field 5. Through the summer, we'll practice/condition every Monday, Wednesday and Friday (weather permitting). I'll hold Beast Camp every non-game Saturday. The locations may change based on field availability. Today, we're uncertain of the league schedule and may need to enter tournaments throughout the summer. I'll have more information on this as the season takes shape.

We'll prioritize 7th-grade UIL 7v7 schedules should it return this summer. Meaning, if your middle school is participating in UIL 7v7 events, then your player should play and practice with that team on those scheduled days instead of with us. Just communicate any schedule conflicts with me. I'll do the same as well. UIL 7v7, Performance Course, and the High School football camps are extremely important and should be prioritized accordingly.

Our first practice will be brief. We'll cover some practice guidelines and break the boys into groups that will practice against each other at specified times. This is to limit the total number of boys practicing at the same time. For example, the Gold Offense will practice against the Navy Defense during session one. The Navy Offense will practice against the Gold Defense during session 2. Based on the numbers, some boys may practice during both sessions. Based on the numbers, some boys may need to switch from Navy to Gold or vice versa (I'll cover the cost of the jersey if needed).

Before each practice, I'll complete the NFHS COVID-19 Athlete/Coach Monitoring Form. Most of our current guidance for returning to play comes from The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). This is until we get further guidance from the UIL. <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/guidance-for-state-associations-to-consider-in-re-opening-high-school-athletics-and-other-activities/>

Here are some general points:

- Each player must sanitize their hands before practice.
- Each player must bring their own water and must not share.
- Parents must stay in/near their vehicles during practice.



- The boys will ask for shirts/skins, or want to show off their new muscles. Nope. We're keeping our shirts on at all times.

I have the uniforms and will hand them out at the start of practice.

I'll need some assistance with sanitizing and conditioning the balls before and after practice. If you have some sanitizer spray and can help please let me know.

See you Friday!

Coach [Your Name]

Example Letter 3 - from CDC

Dear Parents,

First and foremost, we hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. We have received questions from the community about if and how COVID-19 will change this year's athletic season. We know this outbreak has been stressful to many and recognize that exercising and participating in activities like sports can be a healthy way to cope with stress and connect with our community. After careful thought and planning, we are excited to let you know that we plan to resume youth sports while following CDC considerations to protect players, families, and our community.

The health and safety of our athletes, staff, and volunteers remain our highest priority. Below, you will find a summary of actions we are taking to help ensure we are lowering COVID-19 risk as much as possible while also allowing our athletes to play. We are:

- Intensifying cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation within our facilities and premises by [insert examples, such as cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces on the field, court, or play surface at least daily or between use as feasible, cleaning and disinfecting shared objects and equipment between use, and ensuring safe and correct use and storage of disinfectants]
- Reducing physical closeness or contact between players when possible [insert examples, by allowing players to focus on building individual skills (like dribbling or kicking), keeping children in small groups, and staggering arrival and drop off times, putting signs and tape on floors or



playing fields to ensure that coaches and players stay 6 feet apart, discouraging unnecessary physical contact, such as high-fives, handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs]

- Postponing travel outside of our community [insert examples, we will compete against teams in our local area (e.g. neighborhood, town or community)]
- Promoting healthy hygiene practices [insert examples, such as providing hand sanitizer before and after practices and games, encouraging children to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or to use the inside of their elbow, and reminding them to not spit]
- Requesting that coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators wear a cloth face covering during practices and games. Players may opt to wear a cloth face covering on the sidelines and the dugouts, and during play if feasible. As a reminder, cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
- Limiting the sharing of equipment [insert examples, by providing extra equipment to minimize the need to share or encouraging players to bring their own equipment].

Anyone who is sick or has been in contact with someone who has COVID-19— including players, family members, coaches, staff and spectators — should not attend practices or games. Be on the lookout for symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Call your doctor if you think you or a family member is sick.

If someone does get sick during practice or at a game, we have plans in place to isolate and transport that person to their home or healthcare facility. If you have a specific question about this plan or COVID-19, please contact [person/staff/contact information] for more information. You can also find more information about COVID-19 at www.cdc.gov.

We look forward to seeing you. Now, let's play!

Thank you and stay healthy,

[sports administrator name]



Communications to Coaches and Officials

Tips

- Show empathy for the safety of the Coach and their family
- Clearly explain what any new expectations are for themselves, players and families
- Remind Coaches and Officials that children have gone through a trauma which can affect how they behave
- Share specific information about any upcoming virtual training or meetings
- Share specific information about the timing of local start dates, if available

Example Letter 1: Coaches

Subject Line: Returning to Soccer

Dear Coaches,

We hope you are staying safe and healthy! We know this is a challenging time for, not only our families but also for you, our coaches and staff. As the safety of our team and families is always our number one priority, our team is working with the [Company Name] to diligently track and follow information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) for guidance on the proper actions to take in order to reduce the spread of the virus.

We greatly appreciate your patience and understanding as we all work through these unprecedented times. As businesses begin reopening, we are preparing for our return to Soccer by making sure our coaches are equipped to handle our updated safety measures for this season. Like you, we are anxious to return to the field but need to do so in a way that best represents our brand and keeps our families at the forefront.

[Insert information here about local start dates. i.e. we will begin offering in-person sessions on xxx to finish out the spring season, we are currently planning to begin summer soccer on xxx, etc.]

Health and Safety

To adhere to social distancing measures, modifications are being made to the curriculum and our operating procedures. Before returning to the field, all coaches will be required to complete a new e-Learning course that covers these new procedures.



[Insert e-Learning information here – how to access, the deadline for completion, etc.]

Coaches will be expected to:

- Sanitize all equipment and your hands before and after each session
- Monitor your temperature daily
- Report any symptoms immediately
- Avoid high-fives, fist bumps, or any form of physical contact with children and families
- Carry hand sanitizer in your pocket to discreetly sanitize before and after any contact may occur
- Wear a face covering if your state and/or local jurisdiction requires or recommends doing so
- Use rings, spots or orange cones as “home base” to keep children spread out
- Request that equipment be cleaned up and put away only by coach
- Continue to remind children the importance of keeping safe distances when practicing skills, by mentioning to, “keep your distance so you don’t bump into your friends”
- Avoid the use of pinnies
- Use a modified cheer at the end of the session
- Only use the modified curriculum

We will also do our best to use smaller group sizes and/or larger field setups to allow for the distancing of participants and observers.

We are also requesting that families attending in-person sessions follow these guidelines for the health and safety of other families and our coaches:

- Wash or sanitize hands before entering Soccer Island
- Adhere to state and/or local jurisdiction regarding face-covering requirements



- Practice social distancing by trying to stay 6 feet away from others that do not live in their households
- Stay home when they are sick and keep their children home from soccer if they are sick
- If attending a Mini session (ages 2-3), only one family member per child can be present on Soccer Island

We understand this is a lot of information, but our top priority is keeping everyone safe. We will be holding a virtual coach meeting to cover our new requirements as well as answer any questions you may have.

[Insert information here about virtual coach/staff meeting details – date, time, link, etc.]

As we are monitoring the situation and working with local contacts, we will let you know if anything changes and additional precautionary steps need to be taken.

Thank you for continuing the fun and helping to keep safe!

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]



Example Letter 2: Coaches & Officials

[Date]

To All Coaches and Officials

We sincerely hope that all of you are remaining healthy during the current pandemic.

This unique event has made your already challenging jobs even more demanding as we all work together to get our young athletes back onto the field and into the gyms. We know that the process will be lengthy and painstaking, but we will get through it working together.

There are recently developed “Return to Play” guidelines for almost every sport. It’s important that you know them and follow them. Equally, if not more important, are your local and state health guidelines and facility opening policies. Currently, those policies vary by state, and, in some cases even within the same state, so it’s vital to contact your local governmental Health Department and coordinate closely with them. Keep in mind that a friendly, cooperative approach will achieve more positive results.

Our young people want and need to play sports. It’s important to their physical health and their psychological wellness. It’s our job to provide this opportunity as safely as possible for everyone involved – athletes, coaches and officials.

Thank you for all you do for the young scholar-athletes!

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]



Links to Other Organizations

Government Agencies, Healthcare, Media & Research

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) World Health Organization (WHO) Mercy Hospital OSHA Directory of local health departments	NY Times US Map Worldometer State of Texas Aspen Institute
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US Sport Governing Bodies

USOPC Team USA USA Hockey USA Baseball USA Swimming USA Volleyball USA Wrestling USA Triathlon USA Pickleball USA Field Hockey Special Olympics USGA USA Track & Field	NCAA NAIA NFHS USTA US Lacrosse US Rowing NRPA Little League - Guide Little League - Best Practices USSSA US Youth Soccer Pop Warner USA Water Polo
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Thank you

This document includes citations from many amazing organizations and has received support from many others. From the Youth Sports Community, you are all appreciated.

