

DCYSA Return to Activity

August 21, 2020

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide athletes, parents, coaches, and soccer organizations with information they can use to assist them with developing their return-to-activity programming in the context of COVID-19.

Current Status:

Since June 2nd, the pandemic has “stabilized”, but we hope for the key numbers (cases, hospitalizations, testing) to improve. We do know more about soccer:

- The guidance, practiced in many areas of the country, has been implemented, and we see no signals of spread by playing soccer.
- The overwhelming view is that outdoors, with minimal close contact time, is much safer than indoor sports or those with close contact (ex. basketball) and repeated contact with the same person (ex. football). Soccer offers players a large field where space is important in our game.
- The other aspects of healthy youth (exercise, competition, social contact) are important factors in decisions to return to play.

Important to remember:

- All sports and activities have risks of injury, viruses, and illnesses. We can mitigate risk to players and their families and still get the benefits of soccer.
- Parents have the ultimate say in their kids’ activities, and they should expect no repercussions for any decisions they make.
- Clubs, who know their local conditions, must determine to start, stop, or alter their practice and play.
- While we should carefully consider guidelines and recommendations, we MUST follow mandated state orders and protocols, which may change with the pandemic.

Effectively Immediately:

- Team small-sided activities & scrimmages are permissible within the current practice groups. Reminder, per our Phase 2 Guidelines provided on June 2nd, practice groups are limited up to 25 players/coaches. This group of 25 may be a team, players from a pool, or recreation/academy players who have been grouped together in training.

Beginning August 21st (recommended if local Covid-19 numbers are improving in the club’s area)

- Team vs. Team scrimmage within the same NCYSA club is permissible beginning Friday, August 21st. A team vs team scrimmage should be limited up to 25 total players/coaches on a field. (Clubs should constantly monitor local health guidelines and any changes from the State.)

A. General Guidelines

General Guidelines for practice (to include scrimmaging):

- Participants should have no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and have no known exposure to someone that has been ill in 14 days.
- Participants have not travelled out of state for 14 days prior to beginning training.
- Participants have no temperature readings above 100.4F; temperature checks should not be conducted by staff but by players and their families prior to attending 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 as soon as possible.
- Appropriate infection prevention supplies should be present in multiple targeted areas (e.g., hand sanitizer, facial tissues, facial coverings, hand wash stations, etc.).
- Training sessions should take place outside in an area where social distancing can be maintained. Current NC guidelines are groups of no more than 25, including players and coach(es).
- Two groups of 25 may train on a full size field, one at each half. Actual group size and younger age-appropriate fields may require adjustments.
- Team small-sided activities & scrimmages are permissible within the current practice groups. Practice groups are limited up to 25 players/coaches. This group of 25 may be a team, players from a pool, or recreation/academy players who have been grouped together in training.
- Participants should use their own equipment and properly sanitize the equipment after every training session.
- Participants should use their own water bottle, towel and any other personal hygiene products.
- Avoid any activities that may require direct or indirect contact (e.g. bumping) between athletes.
- Establish a cleaning schedule/protocol for equipment with the proper use of disinfectant before, during, and after training.
- While coaching can occur onsite, coaches must maintain social distancing from all participants.
- Clubs and coaches must remain sensitive to accommodating parents who may be uncomfortable with returning to activities. There should be no punitive repercussions for players whose parents are uncomfortable with returning to activities.

When moving into scrimmage:

- Players should hydrate while socially distanced. This will also provide the brief opportunity for cooling down, which may not happen throughout the scrimmage.
- Players should sanitize their hands.
- No unnecessary contact: no high-fives, chest bumps, elbow bumps, huddles, etc.
- Social distancing should be observed and masks on while on the sidelines.

DCYSA Responsibilities:

- Create and post protocols to members. Document what was done, who did it & how, and who from the club verified ongoing communication and actions.
- Identify strategies for working with public health officials to notify adult leaders, youth and their families if the organization becomes aware of a participant or adult leader has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others while at a youth activity. Also, call NCYSA (Kathy Robinson) and report the incident immediately.
- Maintain participant confidentiality regarding health status.
- Be sensitive and accommodating to parents who may be uncomfortable with kids returning to activities.
- Have an action plan in place, in case of notification of a positive test result.
- Be prepared to shut down and stop operations.
- Provide hand sanitizing stations and waste receptacles at fields for individual participant use.
- Provide adequate field space for social distancing.

Coach Responsibilities:

- Ensure the health and safety of the participants. Be aware of any higher risk conditions noted in NCYSA waivers (formerly called medical waivers).
- Inquire how the athletes are feeling. Send home anyone you believe acts or looks ill.
- Keep a log of all players attending. Ask if players took their temperature before coming and it was below 100.4F.
- Ensure all athletes have their own individual equipment (ball, water, bag etc.)
- Ensure coach is the only person to handle practice equipment (e.g. cones, disk etc.); do not enlist parental or attendee assistance.
- All training should be conducted outdoors and compliant with social distancing per state or local health guidelines.
- Coaches are strongly encouraged to incorporate hydration / cool-down / or “sanitation breaks” during practice.
- Coaches should focus on space, not close 1v1 defense, in practice and scrimmage to mitigate risks of contact between players.
- Monitor to ensure no group celebrations, high-5s, hugs, handshakes, fist-bumps, etc.
- Coaches should maintain social distance requirements from players and parents based on state and local health requirements. Avoid huddles, parent conferences, etc. if social distancing is difficult.
- The use and sharing of scrimmage vests, or pennies, is not recommended at this time.
- Have fun, stay positive – players and parents are looking to you for leadership.

Parent Responsibilities:

- **Ensure your child is healthy and symptom-free, and check your child’s temperature before activities with others.**
- Ensure your child’s NCYSA waiver includes any high risks (ex. asthma, diabetes, heart, immuno-compromised conditions).
- Stay in car or adhere to social distance requirements, based on state/local health guidelines.
- When at training, wear a mask if outside your car.
- Ensure child’s clothing is washed after every training.
- Ensure all equipment (cleats, ball, shin guards etc.) are sanitized before and after every training.
- Notify your coach immediately if your child becomes ill for any reason.
- **Do not assist your coach with equipment before or after training.**

Player Responsibilities:

- With parent direction, take your temperature daily and before activities with others.
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after training. Avoid touching your face and avoid spitting.
- Bring, and use, hand sanitizer with you at every training. Bring a labeled baggie for your mask and a plastic bag for practice clothing items you remove after practice.
- Wear mask before and immediately after all training.
- Do not touch or share anyone else's equipment (ex. gloves, shoes, uniforms, water, food)
- Practice social distancing, including placing bags and equipment at least 6 feet apart.
- Wash and sanitize all equipment before and after every training.
- No group celebrations, high-5s, hugs, handshakes, fist-bumps, etc.