



Date: Saturday, September 5, 2020

From: PVAHA Board of Directors

RE: **Return to Participation Guidelines – EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

The Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association (PVAHA) is the USA Hockey sanctioned Affiliate operating in the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia. USA Hockey is the national governing body for the sport of ice hockey in the United States, as designated by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee pursuant to the Olympic and Amateur Sports Act. USA Hockey has created *Return to the Rinks* guidelines and *Mitigating Risks Recommendations* for its Affiliates and programs to follow in reopening ice hockey in the wake of COVID-19 in order to provide a safe sporting environment for its members (see www.usahockey.com/playersafety). USA Hockey has over 650,000 participant members, and the PVAHA has approximately 27,000 members, comprised of ice hockey players, coaches, managers, officials, and volunteers throughout our Affiliate. PVAHA is working with USA Hockey to create ways in which ice hockey activities may be played in a safe manner with limited exposure to COVID-19 transmission. Below are some key facts that we believe would allow a safe return to ice hockey in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia:

- Ice hockey players are covered in equipment from head to toe, including helmets and face coverings (unlike most other sports);
- Ice rinks have significant HVAC systems that regularly circulate fresh air into the facility;
- USA Hockey and PVAHA provide a controlled environment with players having to register and then be rostered on a team. It is known exactly who is on the ice; groups are together for the season; and,
- During the conduct of an ice hockey game, which is played on a larger surface than other indoor sports (an ice hockey rink is 200 × 85 feet, or 17,000 square feet in the playing surface), players are in close proximity to one another for only a short period of time.

PVAHA Return to Participation Guidelines are in compliance with, and in addition to, the USA Hockey guidelines for returning to play ice hockey, and will be adhered to in order to allow for participation in ice hockey, within its jurisdiction, for the 2020–21 USA Hockey season. These guidelines do not replace Federal, State or Local health guidelines, but are meant as supplement to those regulations. All participants shall also be aware of and follow the respective facility rules and requirements as they relate to the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 virus. Consult with local health officials if you determine your team or coaches have been exposed to COVID-19. Individuals who recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should follow CDC's guidance for when you can be around others. This includes a 14-day quarantine.

PVAHA is in an unprecedented situation and needs to make the best of the situation we find ourselves in order to return to participation in ice hockey, all while staying within Federal, State and Local health guidelines. This will not be a typical looking season and we will have to adapt while working outside the “normal” hockey box. Club business models may look different for the 2020–21 season. We will all need to work together to keep all participants healthy and safe and rinks open.

All players, coaches, officials, volunteers and parents should be aware of respective rink facility’s policies, procedures and operating protocols prior to arrival at the facility. Anyone who is at a higher risk for severe illness should not participate in any on-ice or off-ice activity. Anyone exhibiting any signs of illness with COVID-19 symptoms should not enter any facility. **If you do not feel well, you must stay home.** Procedures and instructions with regard to arrival and departure times and locations, restroom and locker room availability for dressing and undressing must be strictly adhered to in order to insure physical distancing. SafeSport policies remain in effect and there should always be a minimum of two SafeSport certified adults at every on-ice event. There should be no unsupervised one-on-one interaction between a player and a coach.

PVAHA strongly recommends against the use of locker rooms, showers, and communal water fountains (players should bring their own rehydration liquids clearly marked with their name). There should be no shared personal equipment or items, such as, towels. Participants are asked to arrive at the facility completely dressed in hockey gear. They should change into their skates as quickly as possible and leave the facility as quickly as possible. Goaltenders may change pads inside the building following the facility instructions. This will allow for quicker cleaning/sanitizing by facility staff and prevent contamination. Coaches and players should arrive and leave at their scheduled times so as to avoid overlap with other groups. All participants should leave the facility as quickly as possible after practice or games, following the facility instructions.

PVAHA requires each team to have a contact trace person who should be familiar with these guidelines and notify members and others, including leagues, rink facilities, officiating assignors if there is a diagnosed positive infection of COVID-19 within a team. PVAHA will provide a contract trace form for each team. This form must be kept for each practice and game for the entire season or until the COVID-19 pandemic has been declared over.

Training and Practices

Ice hockey practices can easily be planned to avoid players being in close proximity for other than very short periods of time. Until game play is permitted according to the dates below, and for practices occurring after games begin, teams shall comply with the following requirements for the conduct of practice:

- Notify and reinforce the message that players and coaches need to observe physical distancing recommendations while on the ice.
- Avoid utilizing benches or depending on local government regulations, work with your facility to determine appropriate protocol.
- Avoid drills that require players to stand in line.
- When designing practice, utilize station-based practices and have players/coaches spread out to maintain needed physical distancing.
- Minimize chalk talk sessions where players could congregate.

- Coaches need to be cognizant to avoid talking within close proximity of players' faces.
- When leaving the ice, coaches could excuse players one-by-one giving appropriate time for each player to get off the ice. Coaches need to plan to leave an appropriate amount of time at the end of their ice session to complete the dismissal process.

Tier I – 2020-21 Season

Tier I teams are subject to play by the rules of their respective leagues while complying with Federal, State and Local health guidelines.

Tier II, Travel, Recreational, House and High School– 2020-21 Season

The USA Hockey 2020–21 season starts on September 1, 2020. PVAHA will allow league play to begin on October 30, 2020 subject to State and local laws. PVAHA member associations can decide on whether to play non-league games prior to the start of league play on October 30, 2020. It is recommended there be limited interaction of teams across a large geographical region for the weeks between September 1 and October 30, 2020. CDC recommends clubs play within a smaller geographical area of the 3 or 4 rinks in close proximity to them for non-league games or scrimmages prior to the start of league play. Smaller geographical areas will greatly reduce any large-scale contact tracing that may become necessary. Outside of affiliate play during this time frame is strongly discouraged.

Clubs who have non-National bound Travel, Recreational, House and High School leagues may start their league games after October 30, 2020 and extend their season until March 29, 2021.

Clubs who have National Bound teams should have all league game requirements completed no later than February 20, 2021.

The PVAHA recommends all CCHL clubs host end of season play in smaller geographical areas with teams that play in close proximity of each other.

Game Play

All players should be at least 6 feet apart and there should be a minimum amount of players allowed on the bench at one time to comply with the distance required. If there can only be a maximum of 5 players on a bench in which 6 feet can be maintained between players, then the remaining players may be in the building and utilize the space behind the bench or side of the bench, but must be in an area in which they can maintain a distance of 6 feet of any other persons.

Players must wear face coverings while on the bench, at all times. Helmets cannot be removed while on the bench to accommodate a face covering. Helmets must be worn on the bench at all times.

Players must have their own water bottle clearly marked with their name, no sharing of water bottles. No sharing of any towels or equipment on the bench.

Coaches must wear masks on the bench. Coaches must be sure the bench areas are left clean at the end of the game. Any trash and/or empty water bottles must be removed.

Penalized players should not utilize the penalty box, instead they will be removed from the ice for the penalty time out. Players who receive game misconducts, match penalties or game ejections will leave the facility immediately after removing skates.

Spitting on the ice and bench area is strictly prohibited.

It is highly recommended that one person do the job of both the timekeeper and the scorekeeper. A scorekeeper can be in the penalty box in order to be physically distanced from the timekeeper.

Unlike “normal” seasons, the traditional handshake between players, coaches and/or officials will be eliminated. Teams should line up on their respective blue lines after games and tap sticks. Teams will then be dismissed under guidance from the officials and exiting should be through separate entrances.

Parents/spectators may be limited in facilities depending on rink facility guidelines.

Willful failure to follow governmental and PVAHA guidelines may be construed as conduct unsuitable for the sport of ice hockey and could result in sanctioning for the participant, association or the facility.

These guidelines are subject to change to abide by Federal, State and Local Laws.

These guidelines will be reviewed any time there is a change in jurisdictional guidelines or CDC recommendations.

COVID-19

- **Symptoms:** Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19 — cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.
- **Incubation period:** 1–14 days.
- **Mode of transmission:** Human-to-human transmission via respiratory droplets.
- **Prevention tips:** Avoiding close contact with sick individuals; frequently washing hands with soap and water; not touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands; and practicing good respiratory hygiene.

These guidelines are not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Exposure to COVID-19 is possible, even using the most extreme caution and information regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing. A player in any sport, including organized hockey, is a personal choice for all parents and guardians and we encourage you to stay up to date on the latest developments and information on COVID-19.

USA Hockey insurance does not cover or include the risks and dangers of illness or sickness and any disease, virus or infection, including the virus responsible for COVID-19 and any similar viruses or infections like COVID-19.

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