



Minnesota Hockey Return To Play Rules & Guidelines

Phase 5 -- Updated January 12, 2021

As we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic while returning players to the ice, Minnesota Hockey will continue to provide updates to our associations and members. These considerations focus on several phases of returning our members to the rinks throughout the state of Minnesota.



Each association should have its own plan in place for returning to the rink. Local rinks and associations must follow the guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and its [Guidance for Social Distancing](#), as well as local government officials in determining when, and how, it is appropriate to return to the rinks, including requirements or guidelines for physical distancing, size of gatherings or number of people permitted in a facility, or wearing masks, etc.

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Minnesota Hockey makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information.

As you plan for a return to the ice, below are some ideas to consider to assist with developing a return to hockey programming in context of COVID-19. As conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, associations must follow local government guidelines in addition to [recommendations from the CDC and MDH](#). Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of infection.

We are thankful to all of those essential workers and first responders who are guiding us and keeping us safe and healthy during this pandemic. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by doing these five things:

- 1. Physical Distance*
- 2. Wear a Cloth Mask/Face Covering*
- 3. Wash Hands and Practice Safe Hygiene Habits*
- 4. Clean Surfaces & Equipment between uses*
- 5. Staying Home When Sick Or Experiencing Any Symptoms*

Minnesota Hockey will open programming in phases, which are subject to change at all times. They are also subject to restrictions placed by state or local governments.

****The latest updates to this document from its original form are shown in red font.***



Phase 5 – Return to Game Play

Phase 5 will open on Thursday, January 14 and follows Minnesota's [Stay Safe Phase III Plan](#) and [MDH guidelines](#).

New Rules implemented by the State of Minnesota and/or Minnesota Hockey Board of Directors for the 2020-21 season only will be effective beginning on January 14. Some may be adjusted as the season progresses.

These new rules include:

1. Per the state mandate, cloth face coverings (masks) must be worn by everyone inside an arena at all times. This includes participants during on-ice practice and game play. Mask guidance can be found [here](#) and approved splashguards can be found [here](#).
2. **No equipment bags will be allowed in facilities with the exception of goalies. Small drawstring bags or small backpacks may be utilized to help carry in smaller items and store personal belongings (medications, phones, keys, etc.). Coaches and officials may also need to bring in bags that carry supplies for practice.**
3. All participants must arrive to the arena fully dressed, with the exception of skates, helmet and gloves. Goalies are allowed to arrive half dressed.
4. Participants must not enter the arena prior to 10 minutes before the start of their scheduled ice time. They must exit the arena no later than 10 minutes following the conclusion of their ice time. **Goaltenders will be allowed to enter the arena 15 minutes prior to the start of their scheduled ice time to allow for more time to put on their equipment.**
5. In Phase 5, spectators for practices will be limited to one spectator per player. With the exception of Mites/8U players and below and Disabled Hockey players, it is not recommended to have spectators at practice.
6. In Phase 5, spectators for games will be limited to two spectators per player. Exceptions will be made when needed for parents/guardians who must bring other children into the arena with them. All spectators will be required to wear a facial covering and maintain proper social distance guidelines.
7. **No resurfacing of the ice during games (between periods).**
8. Dryland activities will not be allowed inside the arenas.

Rules already implemented for the 2020-21 season that remain in effect are:

1. Only active players and three coaches are allowed on the bench during game play. Players who are unable to participate may not be on the bench.
2. Coaches must wear a mask while on the ice or on the bench for all games and practices, unless they have a pre-existing medical condition which should be communicated to their association leadership in advance. Coaches must retain the medical waiver on their persons at all times.
3. Players who are instructed to quarantine by public health will be considered ineligible for participation for the duration of their quarantine period. If a player instructed to quarantine plays in a game, rules subject to playing an ineligible player shall be enforced.



Arriving at the Rink

1. Any players, coaches or spectators exhibiting symptoms or signs of an illness should reference the [MDH COVID-19 Decision Tree](#) and follow its guidance prior to entering any facility or participating in on-ice activity.
2. Participants should utilize the [Minnesota Symptom Screener Guide](#) prior to any on-ice activity. These screens should be monitored by each association. Associations and teams are also encouraged to use a “Quick Entry Check In” or “Check In and Tracking Protocol,” which will be provided by Minnesota Hockey.
3. All participants must be USA Hockey registered for the 2020-21 season to participate in any Minnesota Hockey sanctioned on-ice activity.
4. Players cannot arrive at the rink prior to 10 minutes before the start of on-ice activities. Anyone arriving earlier than 10 minutes before their start time should wait outside of the facility and be socially distanced from others. **Goaltenders will be allowed to enter the arena 15 minutes prior to the start of their scheduled ice time to allow for more time to put on their equipment.**
5. **Locker room use is strongly discouraged. However, in some facilities, keeping players and officials socially distanced in lobbies and other common areas is not possible. In such cases, there should be no more than seven people in a locker room at any one time, and all should be socially distanced by at least six feet. Locker rooms can only be used to put on skates for players, with the exception of goalies.**
6. If there is an activity occurring at the rink before the team’s scheduled start, the incoming team should wait until all players from the prior event have vacated the building. There should not be interaction between the two groups.
7. For practices or clinics, spectators are strongly discouraged. However, a maximum of one parent/guardian per player will be allowed. Those parents/guardians should be socially distanced from others. Masks are required for any spectators, per the MDH mandate.
8. While it is important to limit the number of people in the facility as much as possible, there may be circumstances in which a parent or guardian must also bring in young siblings. This will be allowed, but should be limited as much as possible.
9. Families should provide coach/team manager with accurate contact information in the event of emergency while the player is at the arena. This information **MUST** be accurate and the responsible party **MUST** be able to reach the designated person if the need arises.
10. Whenever possible, players should use the restroom at home prior to leaving for the rink in an effort to limit bathroom use at the facility.
11. Players must arrive to the arena fully dressed with the exception of skates (coming into the arena with skate guards on is ideal) and helmets. Exceptions may be made for goalies, who must arrive a minimum of half dressed.
12. Players should be bringing their own rehydration liquids to the rink in clearly marked or labeled containers with the player’s identity. The container should be re-sealable. Players should **NOT** plan on refilling their containers at the rink.
13. Prior to the first on-ice session, coaches and/or association leaders should host an e-meeting to explain procedures to parents, and to answer any questions.
14. Coaches should be as prepared as possible to ensure complete utilization of the allowed ice time. This also helps ensure that players are not distracted and know they need to be on time and ready to go, not engaged in other areas of the building.



15. Each association and team must have an emergency plan for any positive cases within the team or association. If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you and is a part of your organization or team, report the case to the Minnesota Department of Health at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us and local health officials. MDH or local public health will work with you to identify close contacts and do follow-up with your team. Minnesota Hockey provides [Guidelines for Confirmed Cases](#) within teams and associations.
16. Each association and team must have a designated contact who is responsible for concerns and communications related to COVID-19. All team and association members should know who this person is and how to contact them.
17. Each association and team must maintain accurate rosters of teams or pods and be prepared to support local public health contact tracing efforts.
18. Associations should work with rink partners, and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Stay at Home order being lifted.
19. Dryland activities inside the arena are not allowed during Phase 5.
20. SafeSport policies will continue to be in effect in all phases. There should always be a minimum of two adults at every on-ice event, and there must not be any unsupervised one-on-one interaction between a player and a coach.

Phase 5 On-Ice Activities for Practices, Clinics and Tryouts:

1. Spectators should be limited as much as possible at practices, and should not exceed one spectator per player.
2. Within the program, create consistent pods of the same staff, volunteers and participants with a maximum number of **25 people in each pod. Ice rinks will be allowed to have two (2) pods of 25 people or less at a time with no mixing between the groups.**
3. Players need to maintain as much separation as possible during practices. Whenever possible, coaches should be promoting social distancing on the ice, while recognizing that there may be times of close contact by players.
4. Avoid using player benches during practices.
5. Coaches should be keeping players active and engaged at all times. Players should not leave the ice during a practice unless absolutely necessary.
6. Each coach and on-ice helper counts toward the number of people allowed on the ice as stipulated by the MDH.
7. Reduce contact between players as much as possible.
8. Coaches should avoid talking face-to-face with players, as well as avoid contact with players whenever possible. Physical contact may be necessary when assisting a young player or a player with a disability (helping up or adjusting equipment), but whenever possible, coaches should provide assistance without physical contact, or ask the player's parent/guardian to assist.
9. Prior to the completion of the ice time, players should be excused from the rink one by one and through different exit points of the rink. Do not ask players to participate in picking up pucks or other equipment from the ice.
10. There should be no spitting by any player or coach at any time inside the arena, including on the ice surface.
11. Coaches and players must be wearing masks at all times before, during and after practice.
12. Electronic whistles are an encouraged alternative for coaches to use during practices.



After On-Ice Activities are Completed:

1. No on or off ice interaction (socializing, team meetings, dryland activities) should occur following the conclusion of practice. Players must remove skates and helmets and leave the premises within 10 minutes of the end of practice.
2. Players must vacate the arena immediately to allow for the next user group to enter.
3. Parents/Guardians must be made aware of the time when the players will be done. The parents or person assigned to pick up players at the arena must be punctual. Players should not have to wait for a ride.
4. Coaches or other responsible adults should remain until all players are safe and removed from the premises.
5. While at home, players should clean and disinfect gear after each use.

Phase 5 – Local Games and Scrimmages

Games and scrimmages are allowed during Phase 5, beginning on January 14, 2021.

1. A maximum of two spectators per player are allowed for games, with exceptions made for parents or guardians that must bring in young children. If arena or MDH guidelines are stricter, teams must adhere to the arena/MDH policy. Spectators should be physically distanced at all times. Cloth face coverings are required at all times inside the facilities.
2. The scorer's/announcer's/penalty box should be staffed by no more than two persons, preferably from the same household, and should be staffed by the home team. If off-ice officials are not from the same household, they should maintain social distancing at all times. Masks should be worn by off ice officials at all times.
3. **No resurfacing of the ice during games (between periods).**
4. There should be no more than three coaches allowed in the bench area during games. Coaches on benches must be wearing masks. One coach should monitor players on the bench and keep them physically distanced as much as possible. Coaches should figure out a system that maximizes physical distance between players on the bench during game play, stoppages, intermissions, etc. Space outside the bench area (next to bench) should be utilized whenever possible.
5. During a stoppage of play caused by a save, the goalie should drop the puck on the ice for the official to retrieve.
6. There should be no pregame or postgame handshakes. Teams should honor each other after the game with a stick salute.
7. There should be no pregame or postgame huddles or post goal gatherings on the ice.
8. A two official system shall be used for games at all levels. Officials are required to wear a mask. The use of electronic whistles is encouraged but not required



Phase 5 Regulations Across State

Phase 5 is the re-implementation of the Minnesota Hockey regular season. All associations and members should be aware that changes or adjustments may be made based on the status of COVID-19 in Minnesota.

1. Masks are required to be worn at all times inside arenas. Approved masks for players within Minnesota Hockey can be found here.
2. The Minnesota Hockey season has been extended, with the final date for competition being Sunday, March 28, 2021.
3. Out of state travel by Minnesota teams to other states must be approved by the District Director. When traveling anywhere, special attention should be given to areas of high community spread according to Minnesota Department of Health statistics. Travel to those areas is strongly discouraged.
4. Travel into Minnesota by out of state teams must also be approved by the District Director in which the competition is taking place. With the exception of border towns, travel into the state by out of state teams is strongly discouraged.
5. Associations that host tournaments should have a refund policy available to all participating teams, and should be prepared to offer refunds to teams unable to play due to COVID-19 situations.
6. Teams participating in any tournament should be aware of the tournament organizer's refund policy, and should not participate if they are uncomfortable with that policy.
7. Associations who rent equipment are encouraged to do a full season rental for the upcoming season. If equipment will be available for daily rentals, it must be thoroughly disinfected between each use.
8. Teams and associations are encouraged to consider utilizing more outdoor ice this season.
9. Further questions regarding roster changes, game cancellations, standings, school waivers etc. will vary by District. These questions should be brought to your District Director for clarifications or rulings.
10. USA Hockey has a no refund policy. Therefore, any player who joins USA Hockey and Minnesota Hockey association, participates in association activities and later chooses to withdraw from the season is not eligible for a refund.



Phase Overview

Activity	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Timeline	June 24	September 1	January 4	January 14
Practice	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH Guidance
Skill Clinics	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH Guidance
Tryouts	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH Guidance
Dryland	Recommend outdoors	Recommend outdoors	Closed inside arena	Closed inside arena
Inter-Team Scrimmages	Open after June 24	Open per MDH guidance	Closed	Open per MDH Guidance
Local Games	Open after July 8	Open per MDH guidance	Closed	Open per MDH Guidance
Travel Games	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance	Closed	Open per MDH Guidance
Tournaments	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance	Closed	Open per MDH Guidance
Inter-State Travel	Not recommended per MDH guidance.	Not recommended per MDH guidance. Requires District Director approval.	Closed	Strongly Discouraged with exception of border towns

Additional Resources

As stated previously, this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Associations must adhere to guidelines set by the CDC and MDH. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Minnesota Hockey encourages all programs engaging in activities to stay up-to-date on future developments. Below are some additional resources for programs to reference.

Minnesota's Stay Safe Plan - <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>

MDH Guidance for Sports - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf>

CDC Considerations for Youth Sports - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

USA Hockey Coronavirus Information - <https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>

Minnesota Ice Arena Managers Association COVID-19 Resources - <https://miama.org/members/covid-19-reference-page/>