

Northern Berkshire Youth Hockey League

Return to Hockey

Following Guidance of
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Phase III, Step I
Amended August 13, 2020
Effective August 17, 2020

1. Activities Allowed
2. Meeting Minimum Mandatory Standards for Modification to Play
3. Protective Equipment and Facial Coverings
4. Safety Protocols
 - A. Social Distancing
 - B. Hygiene
 - C. Staffing and Operations
 - D. Cleaning and Disinfecting

1. Activities Allowed

Under current guidance, ice hockey falls in the high-risk category of sports and recreational activities. As of August 17, 2020, level 1 activities can resume as traditionally played:

- Non-contact workouts
- Aerobic conditioning
- Individual skill works
- Drills

Level 2 and 3 play are only allowed if minimum mandatory standards for modification can be met. Level 2 activities are competitive practices:

- Intra-team/group games
- Contact drills
- Scrimmages

Level 3 activities are competitions:

- Inter-team games
- Meets
- Matches

2. Meeting Minimum Mandatory Standards for Modification to Play

Per Executive Offices of EEA:

There will always remain an inherent risk in participating in sports. To plan activities and implement modifications to minimize risk, NBYHL considered the following as outlined by the EOE:

- Identify measures that can be implemented to significantly limit contact and increase physical distancing. Modify play and practice as much as possible to keep players spaced 6 feet apart for the majority of a game or practice.
- Shorten activities, practices, and game play or perform the activity with fewer participants to the extent possible.
- Modify the activity or sport to reduce the sharing of equipment or to allow for cleaning of shared equipment between participants.
- Incorporate protective equipment in a safe manner to further reduce the spread of respiratory particles.

The below minimum standards for modifications must be met in order for hockey, a higher risk sport, to engage in Level 2 or Level 3 play.

a. Mandatory Modifications for Level 2 and Level 3 Play

In order for Moderate and Higher risk activities and sports to engage in Level 2 and Level 3 play, NBYHL will:

- Modify Play to Limit Contact or Increase Distancing for Participants where there is intermittent close participant proximity and/or sustained face to face contact between participants. Modifications will strive to keep participants 6 feet apart for the majority of play and will:
 - Eliminate deliberate contact including all checking during practice and games, and;
 - Minimize intermittent contact during game situations that result in close physical or face-to-face contact. Face-offs, restarts and scrums for the puck will be modified. Face masks will be used by players in direct face-offs and restarts. Players will be allowed to wear neck gators that can be worn during face-off and removed during regular game play.

- Indoor Competition Capacity Limits: 40% of 700

Games will be conducted in the following manner:

- No more than 25 players on the playing surface.
- Chaperones/spectators will be instructed to maintain at least six feet of social distancing. Facility capacity will not exceed 40% of the posted maximum capacity including spectators, players, coaches, referees, and facility staff. Only one spectator per player will be allowed to attend.
- Sharing of equipment will be discouraged. Any shared equipment will be disinfected before and after use.
- Spectators must wear facial coverings and maintain six feet of social distance at all times.

3. PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND FACIAL COVERINGS FOR ATHLETES

While limiting proximity of participants is the first line of defense to reduce the risk of transmission, NBYHL will require facial coverings to be worn by all participants except:

- For individuals actively on the ice during practices and games; and
- For individuals that are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability

It is required that players use facial coverings when participating in face-offs.

Coaches, staff, referees, umpires, and other officials are required to wear facial coverings and maintain social distancing of 6 feet from players, coaches, spectators, and other persons at all times.

Pucks will be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each practice and game.

4. REQUIRED SAFETY PROTOCOLS

NBYHL will incorporate the following standards for social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning and disinfecting.

A. SOCIAL DISTANCING

No more than 25 players or participants will be on the ice at any one time. The number of coaches and staff will be limited. Should a practice time be shared, each group will be limited to 25 players and maintain a minimum of 14 feet between each group.

Benches and bleachers will be open and require six feet of distance be maintained between each participant at all times. League and team volunteers will clean/disinfect all seating areas used after games and practices.

If social distancing is not possible, chaperones/spectators will be asked to wait outside the facility until an activity is completed.

Sportsmanship will be done in a touchless manner – no handshakes/slaps/fist bumps.

NBYHL will ensure that individuals are not congregating in common areas or parking lots following practices or events.

All players and spectators will enter the ice rink through the front doors of the facility. Players will arrive in full gear and allowed to put on skates using bleachers while observing proper social distancing. Players will enter the ice rink with all bags and other belongings and place them in the bleacher area near the rear door (closest to the ladies' restroom). Once athletes have completed their competition or activity, they must leave the area immediately if another team is taking the ice to ensure adequate space for distancing. Players will exit to the rear of the facility and will be allowed to remove skates using marked areas allowing for proper social distance.

Volunteers will disinfect all high touch surfaces (benches, net frames, door handles, etc) between practices and games.

Players entering the rink will wait until all disinfecting is complete before entering the rink area. Players and spectators may be asked to wait outside to ensure building does not exceed maximum capacity.

Lockers will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

B. HYGIENE

Sharing of equipment is strongly discouraged amongst players. Any equipment that is borrowed must be disinfected before each use by each individual.

Pucks should be the only shared equipment and will be disinfected at the end of a practice session and game. Goal/net frames will be wiped with disinfectant as necessary.

No shared food or drink will be provided during any activities for participants or spectators except by concessions and food service providers following the Safety Standards for Restaurants. Only prepackaged items will be sold at concession.

The water fountain will be used for bottle filling only. Each player is required to have their own drink container, which must be clearly labeled with their first and last names. The state requires NBYHL to provide containers and we will have a supply available should players not follow guidelines.

Upon entering the rink and at the end of all activities, all participants and coaches will be required to either wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Volunteers will be stationed at the rink entrance to perform a thermal temperature scan of all players. Any player with an elevated temperature will be instructed to leave the facility.

All players must arrive dressed for practice and leave immediately after their session. Skates can be put on in the lobby or on the bleachers observing the six foot social distance rule and wearing a face covering. Players should refrain from spitting and expelling mucus onto the ice surface as respiratory droplets are the primary means of transmission of the virus.

C. STAFFING AND OPERATIONS

NBYHL will provide coaching staff with a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and disinfectant cleaner. Parent, coaching, and staff volunteers will wipe shared and high-touch surfaces at the end of each practice session and game.

Practices and games will be staggered as needed to allow time between activities for cleaning and disinfecting, and to avoid exceeding building capacity maximum. Doors will be marked for entrance and exit to/from the lobby/ice rink. Entrance and exit doors for the facility will be marked.

Volunteers of the program will monitor the lobby and parking lot areas to ensure participants do not congregate.

All those who enter the rink will be required to log their name and contact information to facilitate contact tracing. NBYHL will maintain these logs in cooperation with rink staff.

To participate or attend: participants, volunteers, coaches, and spectators must show no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days prior to the start of hockey season. A current list of symptoms is available from the CDC.

If any individual develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the activity, they will be removed from the activity and instructed to return home. NBYHL coaches/staff will notify rink staff immediately of the removal.

NBYHL is committed to educating all participants and spectators on the applicable protocols for ice hockey practices and games, protocols for entering/leaving the facility, and any other hygiene requirements.

D. CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

At the end of each practice session and game, members of NBYHL will record cleaning completed including date, time, and scope of cleaning (goal/net frames, high-touch surfaces, benches, bleachers).

As players do not typically share hockey equipment, disinfecting shared equipment is not a concern. Should a player borrow equipment, they will be instructed to disinfect the items before and after use.

Per EOE guidelines, NBYHL will assess the cleanliness and disinfection protocols being employed at the ice rink and, should concerns arise, will immediately stop any ongoing athletic activity until such time as operator can show that conditions have been brought up to the standards outlined in the state's guidance. As well, NBYHL commits to understanding the cleaning and disinfection protocols employed at the facility they are using and will raise any issues to the operator or Local Board of Health.