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To All NYSAHA Association Presidents:

As you know, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hockey in New York State has been shut down, and only recently has been permitted to operate in a very limited capacity under New York State governmental regulations for amateur athletic sports. NYSAHA has followed those directives; has provided guidance to Association Presidents; and has posted that guidance to the NYSAHA website.

This letter further **updates** our membership about permitted reopening activities pursuant to New York State governmental directives, which are based on the phased reopening of each Region in the State (all Regions are now in Phase 4). There are two sources of guidance issued by the State of New York regarding permitted hockey activities: (1) the *Reopening New York* website at forward.NY.gov, which has a section that provides specific guidelines for amateur sports activities (the **Guidance**); and (2) the NYS Department of Health (**DOH**) *Interim Guidance For Sports And Recreation During The Covid-19 Public Health Emergency*. Each Association and Affiliate Organization is directed to review the Guidance and the DOH *interim guidance* (as footnoted at the end of this letter) and to conduct itself in compliance therewith; NYSAHA will periodically update the membership as these guidelines change regarding ice hockey.

NYSAHA is working with USA Hockey to explain to the New York State governing authorities how ice hockey activities may be played in a safe manner with limited exposure to COVID-19 transmission. We anticipate presenting information to the authorities that supports a further opening of hockey activities that would be sanctioned by NYSAHA and USA Hockey. Below are some key facts that we believe would allow a safe return to hockey in New York:

- Hockey players are covered in equipment from head to toe (unlike most other sports);
- Ice rinks have significant HVAC systems that regularly circulate fresh air into the facility;
- USA Hockey and NYSAHA 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, and groups are together for the season; and
- With the significant size of the playing surface and facilities, there are responsible ways forward to conduct the sport - - maintaining social distancing, and with safety and hygiene at the forefront.

USA Hockey and NYSAHA are committed to sanctioning hockey to the extent it is permitted under federal, state and local governing regulations. According to the Guidance, which applies to all minor-age and adult hockey, ice hockey is currently classified as a “**Higher Risk Sport**”, which means at this time that New York State will permit the following ice hockey activities:



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- **Individual or distanced group training or activities; and**
- **Organized no/low-contact group training**

Not permitted under the State of New York Guidance at this time are:

- Competitive team practices;
- Games, meets, matches, scrimmages (e.g. organized leagues, pick-up sports); and
- Competitive tournaments of multiple games, meets, matches, or scrimmages requiring travel.

For *individual or distanced group training or activities*, the DOH *interim guidance* provides the examples of basketball shooting drills, golf, and rock climbing, and for *organized no/low-contact group training*, the Guidance provides sport camps and clinics as two general examples.

For ice hockey, NYSAHA interprets these limitations and examples to allow non-competitive practices and tryouts (but not games or scrimmages) because they are akin to camps and clinics by using drills and station-based practices that permit social distancing of players, including shooting drills, passing drills, skating drills, stickhandling drills, no/low contact one-on-one, two-on-one, two-on-two, etc. drills (for examples of permitted drills, please see “Early Return On-Ice Activity Samples” at www.usahockey.com/playersafety).

In holding camps, clinics, practices or tryouts, the Guidance also requires that *Mandatory Physical Distance* requirements are followed: “Ensure 6 ft. distance between individuals at all times, whether indoors or outdoors, unless safety or core activity (e.g. practicing, playing) requires a shorter distance. If a shorter distance is required, individuals must wear face coverings, unless players are unable to tolerate such a covering for the physical activity (practicing, playing); provided, however, that coaches, trainers, and/or other individuals who are not directly engaged in activity are required to wear face coverings.”

To implement the above, NYSAHA will facilitate the issuance of team rosters for such activities, including results from tryouts that are safely held as provided above, which rosters will be considered sanctioned by NYSAHA and USA Hockey. **All team rosters will have the following notation stamped on the roster:**

All sanctioned practices, scrimmages and games which this team may participate in are expected to be conducted in compliance with local, state and federal health guidelines and regulations in force at the time and location of the activity.

In order to conduct hockey activities, each Association and Affiliate Organization is a “Responsible Party” for ensuring full compliance with all provisions of the Guidance applicable to the particular activity. (The DOH *interim guidance* states that a Responsible Party, in part, includes the owner/operator of the sports and recreation business/league/organization, or another party as may be



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designated by the operator.) Any hockey activity must comply with all governing regulations. This includes:

- The *Mandatory* requirements under the Guidance must be followed;
- All participants must wear masks while entering, existing and inside all buildings;
- Coaches must wear masks during practice;
- Locker rooms may only be used if social distancing can be maintained and all persons inside the locker room must wear masks, and some private and municipal rinks may not permit any locker room use;
- It is strongly recommended that players arrive pre-dressed in their equipment (except for skates, helmets and gloves);
- Practices should only be for members of the same team to limit exposure to other players; there shall be no more than 2 spectators per player, all of whom must wear masks, and some private and municipal rinks may not permit any spectators;
- Each player must have his/her own marked water bottle, and there shall be no sharing of water bottles; and
- No sharing of any equipment.

Although the Guidance provides that a health screen or a provision of contact information for “patrons/players/spectators” may not be mandated, you may encourage them to do so.

All hockey activities must also satisfy all the usual NYSAHA/USA Hockey requirements for the conduct of ice hockey (such as screening, coaching requirements, etc.).

Arenas hosting hockey activities sanctioned by NYSAHA must comply with all applicable requirements of the Guidance, the DOH *interim guidance* and other governmental requirements.

Associations, Affiliate Organizations and related programs and individuals that engage in non-sanctioned events, or violate the legal directives of the State of New York and local authorities, may also be placing their USA Hockey insurance coverage at risk. Associations, Affiliate Organizations, programs, teams, administrators and coaches that permit non-sanctioned activities are placing themselves at risk of substantial liability and exposure.

NYSAHA asks that everyone concerned abide by the above and work to ensure the safety of all of our participants. As hockey activities become eligible throughout the State as permitted by the Guidance¹, the DOH² and by NYSAHA, NYSAHA will notify the membership of the sanctioned activities that

¹ To review the Guidance, go to the forward.NY.gov website; under the section entitled *Industry Reopening and Guidance*, select the *Statewide Guidelines* box, then scroll down and under *Sports and Recreation* select the *View Summary Guidelines* box. This is the State of New York Guidance that is currently in effect for permitted amateur sports activities, and is frequently updated by the State.

² To review the DOH *interim guidance*, which most recently was updated on August 15, 2020, access it at: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/SportsAndRecreationMasterGuidance.pdf>





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may safely resume.

The NYSAHA Board of Directors will continue to make changes as necessary to facilitate the conduct of sanctioned hockey activities.

Thank you for your attention to these considerations.

Yours in Hockey
New York State Amateur Hockey Association, Inc.
Joe Baudo
President, NYSAHA and District Director

cc: NYSAHA Board of Directors



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