



Minnesota Hockey Return To Play Guidelines

Phase 3 -- Updated October 19, 2020

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 four things:

- 1. Physical Distance*
- 2. Wash Hands and Practice Safe Hygiene Habits*
- 3. Clean Surfaces & Equipment between uses*
- 4. 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. **It should be noted that certain policies regarding mask wearing inside facilities and limits of players on the ice are mandates, and not guidelines.***

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



Phase 3 – Minnesota Hockey Regular Season

Phase 3 opened on September 1 and follows Minnesota's [Stay Safe Phase III Plan](#) and [MDH guidelines](#).

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 should arrive at the rink no more than 15 minutes before the start of on-ice activities. Anyone arriving earlier than 15 minutes before their start time should wait outside of the facility and be socially distanced from others.
5. 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.
6. **For practices or clinics, players are allowed one parent/guardian to be in the arena. Those parents/guardians should be socially distanced from others. Masks are required for any spectators, per the MDH mandate.**
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. **It is recommended that players and officials arrive to the arena fully dressed, and at a minimum, half-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 may need to put on additional equipment at the rink.**
11. 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.
12. 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.



13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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
16. Each association and team must maintain accurate rosters of teams or pods and be prepared to support local public health contact tracing efforts.
17. Associations should work with rink partners, and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Stay at Home order being lifted.
18. Dryland activities inside the arena are not advised during Phase 3.
19. 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 should be no unsupervised one-on-one interaction between a player and a coach.

Phase 3 On-Ice Activities for Practices, Clinics and Tryouts:

1. 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. During tryouts, it is recommended that pods do not mix for the duration of the process.**
2. 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.
3. Avoid using player benches during practices.
4. Coaches should be keeping players active and engaged at all times. Players should not leave the ice during a practice unless absolutely necessary.
5. Each coach and on-ice helper counts toward the number of people allowed on the ice as stipulated by the MDH.
6. Reduce contact between players as much as possible.
7. 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.
8. 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.



9. There should be no spitting by any player or coach at any time inside the arena, including on the ice surface.
10. Coaches must be wearing masks at all times before, during and after practice. Players are not required to wear masks while on the ice for team activities.
11. **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. **To minimize time spent in confined spaces, players should leave the premises within 15 minutes of the end of practice.**
2. Players should 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 3 – Local Games, Scrimmages & Tournaments

1. A maximum of two spectators per player are allowed for games. 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 facility.
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. Whenever possible, resurfacing of the ice sheet should only take place before or after a game. During any intermissions, players and coaches should go to an area where social distancing can be maintained.
4. There should be no more than two coaches allowed in the bench area during games. Coaches on benches must be wearing masks. One coach should monitor players on the bench and keeping them physically distanced.
5. 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.
6. During a stoppage of play caused by a save, the goalie should drop the puck on the ice for the official to retrieve.
7. There should be no pregame or postgame handshakes. Teams should honor each other after the game with a stick salute.



8. There should be no pregame or postgame huddles or post goal gatherings on the ice.
9. A two official system shall be used for games at all levels.

Phase 3 Regulations Across State

Phase 3 is the 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, with the exception being players practicing or playing games, and officials during game play. Coaches must wear masks at all times, including on the bench during games, and during practices.**
2. 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 discouraged.
3. Travel into Minnesota by out of state teams must also be approved by the District Director in which the competition is taking place.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Teams and associations are encouraged to consider utilizing more outdoor ice this season.
8. 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.
9. 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 would not be eligible for a refund.



Phase Overview

Activity	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Timeline	June 1	June 24	September 1
Practice	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
Tryouts	Open but not recommended per MDH guidance on no contact	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance
Dryland	Closed inside arena	Recommend outdoors	Recommend outdoors
Inter-Team Scrimmages	Closed	Open after June 24	Open per MDH guidance
Local Games	Closed	Open after July 8	Open per MDH guidance
Travel Games	Closed	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance
Tournaments	Closed	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance
Inter-State Travel	Closed	Not recommended per MDH guidance.	Not recommended per MDH guidance. Requires District Director approval.

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/>