



RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

One of USA Field Hockey's core values is the safety, health and well-being of all members and of the field hockey community. The organization is committed to supporting clubs and members in returning to training and competition as soon as it is safe to do so. The purpose of this document is to provide USA Field Hockey Members with information they can use to assist with planning their Return to Play protocols as restrictions related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) are lifted in areas throughout the country.

Having a system in place to reduce outbreaks is critical to navigating the next phase of this pandemic. Many of the recommendations in this document are based upon rules and regulations, guidelines and considerations set forth by public health authorities in support of sports organizations. The phases and timings of Return to Play will differ across the country. It is the responsibility of each program director, coach and facility staff member to know their local restrictions and enforce policies and procedures intended to keep all participants and parties safe. The recommendations in this document are meant as guidance only and must be used in conjunction with federal, state and local government health agencies rules and regulations.

Given the fluid nature of this situation, USA Field Hockey will continue to monitor the information from federal, state and local health authorities, and will provide updates to the field hockey communities as available.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers general guidelines and recommendations for the public on how to limit the spread of COVID-19. They currently include:

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and exercise equipment including balls
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Wear a cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth in public settings
- Stay at least 6-feet away from non-household members
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Stay at home if you are sick

RISK OF INFECTION TRANSMISSION IN SPORT

Currently there are no specific scientific studies done evaluating the risk of COVID-19 transmission in sport. Certain sports could have potential for a higher incidents of disease transmission. The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) has proposed a stratification scale for COVID-19 transmission in sports with the highest risk being a Level 1 category and the lowest risk being a Level 3. Currently, field hockey is listed in the Level 2 category with sports that have intermittent close contact with equipment that can't be cleaned between participants. The USOPC documents can be found and referenced on their website at teamusa.org/coronavirus.

Per these guidelines it is recommended that Level 2 sports be avoided until the risk of transmission can be eliminated or measures can be taken to make the sport low risk, such as switching group activities to individual activities.

Many trusted organizations, including the USOPC and The Aspen Institute, are recommending the implementation of phases into your Return to Play protocol. USA Field Hockey is also carefully monitoring best practices from the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and other National Associations for policies and protocols specific to the sport. The information provided are adapted recommendations that can be utilized to form training plans for field hockey.

RETURN TO PLAY PHASES

PHASE 1

STAY AT HOME ORDERS IN PLACE & PUBLIC TRAINING FACILITIES ARE CLOSED

- Individual training sessions in own home using own equipment
- Coaching would only occur virtually
- No athletes work or train together unless they are living in same home
- Focus on individual development and skills

PHASE 2

STAY AT HOME ORDERS ARE RELAXED, BUT GROUP ACTIVITIES ARE LIMITED TO 10 OR FEWER PEOPLE.

Public indoor facilities are closed, parks and outdoor facilities begin to open and allow visitors continuing to follow social distancing guidelines.

- Limit training groups to 10 (ten) or less
- Limit coaches to 2 (two) or less
- Limit attendance to those that can confirm no symptoms of COVID-19 for the past 14 days
- Minimize changes in small group participants – assign groups and keep them the same
- Don't allow parents and spectators to stay at the facility, only drop off and pick up
- Coaches handle all shared equipment – cages, balls, cones, etc.
- Athletes use own water bottle, towels and personal hygienic products
- No high fives or handshakes
- Focus on drills that allow for social distancing to be maintained
- No activities that require direct contact between athletes should be planned
- Frequent cleaning of equipment with disinfectant before and after training session should be considered

RETURN TO PLAY PHASES

PHASE

3

MITIGATION EFFORTS ARE LIFTED, INDOOR AND OUTDOOR TRAINING FACILITIES ARE OPEN, NO LIMITATIONS ON GROUP SIZE.

- Recommended to follow a criterion to participate in training sessions
 - Pre-Arrival – no signs or symptoms for past 14 days and no contact with anyone sick in last 14 days
 - Arrival at Site – participant questionnaire and temperature check
 - *Athletes with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 would be sent home*
- Continue with standard infection control measures (frequent handwashing, avoid touching face, cover mouth when coughing)
- Provide appropriate infection prevention supplies in targeted areas (hand sanitizer, facial tissues, sanitizing wipes, etc.)
- Normal sized group training sessions can occur
- Continue to use own water bottle
- Face masks and other personal equipment shouldn't be shared
- Activities with direct contact can resume

PHASE

4

VACCINE OR CURE FOR COVID-19 IS DEVELOPED

- Athletes, coaches and staff are vaccinated as recommended by CDC
- Continue to educate athletes coaches and staff on the signs and symptoms of infection and don't let them participate if they have symptoms of infection
- Continue infection prevention protocols
- Continue equipment cleaning protocols before and after training sessions

COMMUNICATION

Develop a plan to communicate your new guidelines in a clear manner.

- Provide information, prior to start of training sessions, on new policies and protocols making expectations clear (use of personal equipment, face masks, individual water bottles, etc.)
- Consider posting signage to reinforce policies, social distancing measures and illness prevention measures (The CDC has free posters and handouts available on their website. The FIH has one specific to field hockey.)
- Confirm preferred method of communicating important information with parents in order to assure delivery (email, text, phone, etc.)

USA FIELD HOCKEY PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

As conditions and requirements vary throughout the country, USA Field Hockey advises following federal, state and local government health agencies' guidelines and recommendations. The considerations below are not requirements from USA Hockey, but rather ideas to consider when evaluating Return to Play protocols. Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of infection.

FACILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Work closely with facility management to understand their policies and procedures relating to COVID-19
 - Occupancy numbers
 - Facility cleaning procedures
 - Entry and exit policies
 - Locker room policies

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Clearly communicate with families your Return to Play protocols
- Recommend participants with high risk factors consider not attending
- Participants with symptoms or signs of illness shouldn't attend
 - Consider implementing a screening policy for athletes on arrival
- Stagger training start times, create multiple entry points to field, to ensure ability to maintain social distancing
- Promote flexible attendance policies to ensure athletes stay home when feeling sick or uncomfortable
- Promote good hygiene practices with signage and verbal reminders
- Inform that participants exhibiting signs and symptoms of illness will be required to leave practice
- Provide supplies to disinfect equipment immediately after use

COACH & ATHLETE CONSIDERATIONS

Prepare to Play

- Arrive dressed and prepared to play
- Arrive as close as possible to when the activity begins (no earlier than 10 minutes is recommended)
- Recommend each athlete has individual hand sanitizer for use
- Bring enough water for individual use throughout training
- Don't attend if you or a member of your household doesn't feel well

During Play

- Follow directions for spacing and other outlined social distancing instructions
- Avoid handshakes, high fives and other contact related encouragement
- Avoid touching your face
- Don't share equipment (each athlete should have own face mask, clean frequently)
- Coaches use verbal cues rather than physical contact when instructing athletes
- Coaches handle equipment such as balls, cones and cages (particularly while under Phase 2 restrictions)
- Maintain social distancing during chalk talk sessions
- If utilizing benches, encourage social distancing and disinfect frequently
- Avoid sharing food, drinks, towels and other personal care items
- Utilize drills that allow for players and coaches to spread out and maintain physical distances (Avoid contact drills in Phase 3)

USA FIELD HOCKEY PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

After Play

- Wash hands thoroughly or use a hand sanitizer after activity
- Leave facility as soon as reasonably possible after activity finishes
- Shower and change at home
- Disinfect all personal equipment
- Wash all training clothing worn after each session

UMPIRE CONSIDERATIONS

- Bring and use own hand sanitizer
- Don't lend rule book or any paper documents to others
- Don't share equipment (whistles, cards, pens, etc.)
- Don't touch the ball
- Keep six feet minimum distance when carding or talking to others (players, coaches, partner)
- Don't shake hands
- Don't handle or carry other's personal property
- Consider using electronic whistle
- Use radios to communicate with partner, disinfect frequently
- Follow all facility protocols

RESOURCES

Click on the links below to access the resource:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Coronavirus Updates](#)

[CDC - COVID-19 Print Resources](#)

[CDC - Consideration for Youth Sports](#)

[The Aspen Institute - Project Play - Return to Play](#)

[Husch Blackwell State by State COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[USA Field Hockey Coronavirus Updates](#)

[FIH Safety Guidelines](#)

INSURANCE

When organized sports activities are permitted to resume by governmental authorities, the General Liability and Participant Accident Insurance provided to member clubs for activities that are organized, sponsored, sanctioned or approved by USA Field Hockey shall continue. Clubs are expected to comply with any applicable orders, restrictions or guidelines issued by federal, state and local authorities.

While [federal guidelines](https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica) (whitehouse.gov/openingamerica) currently specify organized youth sports are a Phase 2 initiative, states appear to be taking the lead on how and when certain activities can resume. Timing and requirements will likely vary from state-to-state.

DISCLAIMER

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. USA Field Hockey makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. Further, you should seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials if you have specific questions about your return to training and competition. It is important to remember that all plans must comply with federal, state and local health authorities and guidelines.

APPENDIX

FIH Safety Guidelines Graphic



HOCKEY SAFETY GUIDELINES





1 RESPECT YOUR GOVERNMENT RULES AND GUIDANCE. ANYONE SHOWING SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 SHOULD NOT TRAIN



2 ARRIVE AT TRAINING ON YOUR OWN USING PRIVATE TRANSPORT: WALKING, BY BIKE OR BY CAR



3 ARRIVE SHORTLY BEFORE TRAINING



4 FOLLOW THE SIGN FOR ENTERING AND LEAVING THE FIELD



5 RESPECT THE 1.5M DISTANCE BETWEEN PLAYERS



6 DO NOT TOUCH THE BALL WITH YOUR HANDS



7 DO NOT CELEBRATE OR "HIGH FIVE" WITH TEAMMATES



8 CLEAN AND DISINFECT YOUR HANDS BEFORE AND AFTER TRAINING



9 DO NOT TOUCH YOUR MOUTHGUARD WITH YOUR HANDS AND NO SPITTING



10 BRING AND USE YOUR OWN WATERBOTTLE ONLY



11 BRING AND USE YOUR OWN STICK, SHIN PADS AND/OR GOALKEEPING KIT ONLY



12 RETURN HOME DIRECTLY AFTER THE TRAINING SESSION