



Return To Hockey **Guidelines**

This Pandemic has changed how many things operate. Hockey is one of them.

Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Association, Inc.
Published on June 18, 2020
Updated September 16, 2020
Updated October 14, 2021



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As this season begins, every county in Wisconsin is in either the Very High or the Critical High risk level of transmission. Wisconsin Amateur Hockey is committed to providing information to help keep everyone safe as we return to the ice around the state. We are committed to open programming in phases, using guidelines set forth by Federal and State health experts and USA Hockey. Although these guidelines could change as more information is known, this document and those referenced in this document, are the latest set of guidelines WAHA recommends associations follow. As you create or revise the return to play safely plan, please understand that the return is also subject to restrictions placed on associations and facilities by state, county, and local health department guidelines. The onus of enforcing any mask mandate is on the Association and the rink facility management team.

Current Programming Guidelines – WAHA has determined that the use of “spit guards” as a stand-alone face covering where any government agency or rink facility has issued a mask mandate is strictly prohibited. Where a mask mandate is in place, everyone required to wear a mask must wear a CDC approved mask. Where there is no mask mandate, the use of a spit guard is acceptable. In areas with no mask mandate, WAHA strongly recommends unvaccinated individuals wear a mask at all times when indoors.

Disclaimer – The WAHA Board members are not experts in diseases or disease control. The information in this document is not intended or meant to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are constantly changing and, as such, WAHA makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. Each family and skater participates at their own risk.

Programming Considerations

WAHA recommends that every association have its own plan in place for safely playing the game of hockey. Those associations who do not own the rinks they practice/play on should also consider the guidelines put out by the rink owners when creating their plans.

It is the local association’s choice under what circumstances to play the game. The initial plan for playing safely should focus on practice and tryouts guidelines. Some areas to consider in making a decision are:

- Practices and the number of people in those practices.
- Sharing with families the association’s policies and procedures and asking that they discuss expectations with their children.
- **WAHA recommends:**
 - *Every family exercise their own discretion regarding return to play.*
 - *Every family learn more about the association’s policies and procedures and discuss expectations with their children.*
 - *Every family be comfortable with this information before returning to play.*
- Plans should include but are not limited to, requirements for physical distancing, size of gatherings or number of people permitted in a facility, face coverings (masks), locker room use, bathroom use, coach’s requirements in implementing association guidelines, guideline exceptions for special circumstances, etc.
- Making sure that the local hockey association governing board is comfortable with the guidelines before beginning.

Ultimately it is the parent’s choice if, and when to return. Each family and skater participate at their own risk.

Board Assignment – Associations that had an individual in their Association who was responsible for staying current on relevant and updated information related to Covid-19 and to ensure that information is shared with everyone in the association last season should keep that position in place again this season. Every Association should have someone with this responsibility.



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Resources - Local rinks and associations need to follow the guidelines set forth by the following organizations as they determine when and how, to return to the rinks.

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its Considerations For Youth Sports
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommendations of public health experts
- State and local government health officials
- USA Hockey

General Considerations

1. Players or coaches with any risk factors or illnesses should not participate in any on-ice activity. Any players, coaches or spectators exhibiting symptoms or signs of an illness should not be in the facility at any point.
2. Since each county and municipality have control over restrictions related to COVID-19, it is recommended that hockey associations assign a person who will be responsible to ensure all updated and relevant information is passed on to everyone within their association. Responsibilities can include:
 - a. Monitoring all relevant updates from the CDC, State and Local public health authorities.
 - b. Monitoring all relevant updates from USA Hockey and WAHA.
 - c. Communicating with local ice rink facilities on guidelines and updates.
 - d. Ensuring teams are following the prevention guidelines set by the CDC, State and Local public health authorities, USA Hockey and WAHA.
 - e. Ensuring any COVID-19 cases are reported as required by the CDC, State and Local public health authorities, USA Hockey and WAHA.
3. All participants must be USA Hockey registered for the 2021-22 season to participate in any on-ice activity.
4. Each association and team should have an emergency plan for any positive outbreak within the team, association or community.
5. Each association and team should have an alert plan to notify association members and anyone else who may have been exposed following any positive outbreak within team, association or community.

What To Do If Exposed To An Infected Individual (Per CDC Guidelines)

1. If a player or coach tests positive all team members must be notified of the exposure, and they must be tested and show a negative test in order to return to team activities. Per the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, it is recommended that anyone who had contact with a person who tested positive for Covid-19, even if they are fully vaccinated, get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after exposure and monitor for symptoms. If the individual is not fully vaccinated, they must get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after exposure and quarantine to protect themselves, their family, and the community. If the individual is fully vaccinated there is no need to quarantine but they should wear a mask in public indoor spaces for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
2. Quarantine periods for close contacts last for **14 days** from the date of last contact with the case-patient while the case-patient is infectious, as a close contact could develop COVID anytime during this period. Therefore, while a test performed on day 5 after exposure may pick up early infections, individuals are still at significant risk of developing infection and spreading it to others during days 6-14. This is why negative testing does not release an individual from quarantine early; that person must complete the entire 14 days. Local health departments would be doing contact tracing and follow-up for cases and close contacts and providing this specific guidance.



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3. Anyone showing symptoms after close contact with an infected individual should isolate from others, contact your healthcare provider and be tested as soon as possible after symptoms start to show, even if fully vaccinated.

Rink Access/Use

1. Before using any rink facilities, associations should work with the facility to learn their Covid-19 protocols and make all coaches, players and parents aware of those protocols. In addition, it should be determined if rinks have restrictions or requirements for vaccinated versus unvaccinated individuals.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Players should 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 may need to put on additional equipment at the rink.
 - a. Work with rink management to have a common area with marked physical distanced seating common area to put on skates or remove skate guards.
 - i. Limit locker room use as much as possible.
 - ii. When local health protocol allows use of locker rooms, work to have players appropriately physically distanced (using multiple locker rooms could help).
 - iii. For age groups where parents need to assist players with equipment, limit the number of parents in the locker room at any one time.
5. Promote a more flexible policy around supporting and not punishing a player if they decide not attend training sessions.
6. 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.
7. Associations should work with rink partners and be aware that some communities may not open rinks. All coaches, players and parents are expected to follow all guidelines set by the rink facilities.
8. Dry land activities inside the arena are not advised.
9. 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.

Parents/Spectators

1. Parent/Guardians access to rinks will be governed by local health departments and the individual facilities.
2. Families should be asked to minimize the number of parents/spectators that come with the player in order to limit the number of people in the facility. Work with the local rink partner to determine what is best for that facility.
3. Families should be aware of the facility's spectator rules around physical distancing, mask use, etc.



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On-Ice Practice Activities

As we start this season, it is important to understand that the current variant of Covid-19, the Delta variant, is more contagious than any previous variants we experienced last season, especially among younger aged kids. For this reason, the same precautions regarding on-ice activities should be followed as were used last season. As the vaccination rate increases guidelines may be adjusted.

1. 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.
2. 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
3. Players need to maintain as much separation as possible. Whenever possible, coaches should be promoting social distancing on the ice, while recognizing that there may be times of close contact by players.
4. Minimize chalk talk sessions where players could congregate.
5. In an effort to keep kids separated as much as possible by using smaller groups the use of extra coaches on the ice is recommended.
6. Drills should be age appropriate (station-based.)
7. Coaches should avoid talking face-to-face with players, as well as avoid contact with players whenever possible.
8. Prior to the completion of the ice time, a plan to release players from the ice while maintaining social distancing as much as possible should be in place.

After Practice

1. Encourage participants to minimize their time in or around the facility.
2. Have players put on their shoes or skate guards so that they can leave quickly in the same marked common space.
3. Remind players and parents to follow physical distancing guidelines when leaving the facility.
4. Players should disinfect helmets, sticks and skates after each training session.
5. Wash cloths (jerseys, pant shells, socks and gloves) with high temperature after each training session.



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Sample Activities

USA Hockey's ADM Department has produced a number of documents that can be used to design on-ice drills that incorporate social distancing, number of players, equipment and practice themes. They can be found using this link:

https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/5da9-2178463/Early_Return_On-Ice_Activity_Samples.pdf#_ga=2.205735703.588301908.1591386624-1677397096.1549135653

Equipment Usage

Information from USA Hockey regarding wearing masks and Clear Full Face Shields versus a Cage Face Mask. and the Use of Splash Guards/Spit Guards.

https://cdn3.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a86d-2166147/FullShield.FaceMasks.COVID19.Oct2020.pdf#_ga=2.146188605.884836217.1633623174-68855416.1633042395

Use of Splash Guards/Spit Guards

https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a146-2320699/Spit_Guard_Information.Dec2020.pdf#_ga=2.188104865.884836217.1633623174-68855416.1633042395

Additional USA Hockey Resources

Return to the Rink publication and Return to the Rink Tool Kit

<https://www.usahockey.com/page/show/4965656-resources>

Myths and Facts about Covid-19 Vaccines

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

Covid-19 Vaccines: Get the Facts

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-vaccine/art-20484859>

Quick Summary of Important Changes to Consider

- Follow local and state guidelines.
- Make sure that all players and coaches follow all USA Hockey equipment rules.
- Limit exposure to the virus by staying focused on practices.
- Limit traveling to rinks outside of an association's home facility, especially to areas where COVID-19 cases are still prevalent.
- Practice safety recommendations. Some examples: physical distancing and eliminating handshakes and hugs after goal celebrations.
- Create an emergency plan for a possible outbreak.

Most importantly, work with a rink partner to make this a safe but also a fun environment for the participants, **while still abiding by SafeSport guidelines.**



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Closing - This document is intended to provide general guidelines for associations preparing to return to the rink while living in a COVID-19 environment. ***Please know these are not requirements but are recommendations and ideas to consider when evaluating association programming. Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is approved for kids under the age of 12 and/or the vaccination rate is increased substantially, there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of infection. Since conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, the best advice is to follow the resources indicated in this document and to follow the guidelines that are recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, state and local governments and USA Hockey.***

WAHA is thankful for those essential workers and first responders for their guidance and for keeping everyone safe. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by:

- *Getting vaccinated if eligible*
- *Staying Home When Sick or Experiencing Any Symptoms*
- *Practicing Physical Distancing*
- *Washing and/or Sanitizing Hands and Practicing Safe Hygiene Habits*
- *Cleaning and Sanitizing Surfaces & Equipment between uses.*

Help stop the spread of Covid-19 by getting factual information from trusted sources including:

- i. **Director of Center for Disease Control**
- ii. **U. S. Surgeon General**
- iii. **Brown University School of Public Health**
- iv. **Wisconsin Department of Health Services**
- v. **USA Hockey**

**The Return to Hockey Guidelines can also be found on the WAHA web site at wahahockey.com.
It will be updated as more information and guidance becomes available.**