

USA HOCKEY

USA HOCKEY PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

As we together work our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, USA Hockey will continue to provide updates to our associations and Affiliates. These considerations focus on initially returning to the rink for practices/tryouts only. A phased approach to hockey programming would initially focus on practices (which limits the number of people in the rink). **Local rinks and programs need to follow the guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well state and 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 of 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, USA 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 training programs in context of COVID-19. Please know these are not requirements or recommendations from USA Hockey, but rather ideas to consider when evaluating your programming. As conditions and requirements vary throughout regions across the country, our best advice – as mentioned above – is to follow state and local government guidelines and recommendations from the CDC. 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're thankful to all involved on the frontlines in helping us through this pandemic. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by doing these three things:

1. Physical Distance
2. Wash Hands
3. Clean Surfaces

Please contact USA Hockey Program Services at (719) 538-1119 or program.services@usahockey.org with any questions or concerns.

REMOTE ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Before we fully return to rinks, we encourage you to use this time as an opportunity to stay connected with players from your team last season. If local coaches and leaders engage with kids/families, there will be a better chance of them returning to hockey in the near future.

Platforms like Zoom or BlueJeans provide an effective tool to meet with your entire team remotely. Below are some valuable USA Hockey resources to utilize with your athletes.

- [USA Hockey Dryland Training Plans](#)
- [Dryland Stickhandling](#)

General Considerations

- Work with your rink to notify participants, prior to any in-person programming, about the cleaning process being implemented at the rink and additionally by coaches and administrators.
- Host an online meeting with the families to run through plans and allow them to ask questions as it relates to:
 - What they can expect.
 - Planning for the first session.
 - Precautions being taken to keep the rink clean and safe.
- Share what your facility's protocol for pacing/limiting the amount of patrons entering at one time.
- Communicate and follow the guidelines for the amount of people that are allowed to be in the building and on the ice.
- Participants with risk factors or illnesses should not attend in-person training and ice sessions.
- Participants with symptoms or signs of illness are strictly advised not to enter the premises and to seek medical assistance.
- A coach should be prepared to require that a player exhibiting signs or symptoms of illness will need to leave practice (this applies in the same way as a suspected concussion).
- Programs or coaches can send a short one-page flyer based off CDC medical recommendations about expectations, self-monitoring for symptoms of illness, the players should stay home if they have any symptoms and that coaches will remove players if they exhibit any symptoms.
- The initial focus should be on practice and skills sessions.
- Players need to bring and label their own water bottles, no sharing of water.
- Player's towels are for personal use only.
- Encourage or require patrons to register and pay online prior to arriving.
- Look at making your payment/refund policies more flexible so that families do not feel as pressured to make an ice session.
- Promote a more flexible policy around supporting, and not punishing, a player if they decide not attend training sessions.
- Players can come dressed in full equipment.
 - Work with your rink to have a common area with marked physical distanced seating common area to put on skates or remove skate guards.
 - Limit locker room use as much as possible.
 - » When local health protocol allows use of locker rooms, work to have players appropriately physically distanced (using multiple locker rooms could help).
 - » For age groups where parents need to assist players with equipment, limit the number of parents in the locker room at any one time.
- If there are multiple entrances to the ice surface, split the kids up into groups and have them space appropriately to meet physical distancing standards at each entrance.
 - Work with your rink to open up multiple entrances to the ice surface.
- Promote strict hand hygiene (hand washing and sanitizer dispensers) before and after training.

- Players need to be prepared to disinfect fitness equipment immediately after use.
- With all of these ideas, make sure you lay out and communicate a set plan for both families/players and coaches.

Parents/Spectators

- 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 your rink partner to determine what is best for your facility.
- Communicate with families to make sure they're aware of the facility's spectator rules around physical distancing.

On-Ice Practices

- Notify and reinforce the message that players and coaches need to observe physical distancing recommendations while on the ice.
- Avoid utilizing benches or depending on local government regulations, work with your facility to determine appropriate protocol.
- Avoid drills that require players to stand in line.
- When designing practice, utilize station based practices and have players/coaches spread out to maintain needed physical distancing.
- Minimize chalk talk sessions where players could congregate.
- Utilize non-contact drills.
- Coaches need to be cognizant to avoid talking within close proximity of players' faces.
- When leaving the ice, coaches could excuse players one-by-one giving appropriate time for each player to get off the ice. Coaches need to plan to leave an appropriate amount of time at the end of their ice session to complete the dismissal process.

After Practice

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

Important Programming Changes to Consider

- Limit exposure by staying focused on practices.
- Limit traveling to rinks outside of your home facility, especially to areas where COVID-19 cases are still prevalent.
- For now, eliminate handshakes and hugs after goal celebrations; instead consider fist bumping.
- Create an emergency plan for a possible outbreak.

- o Have a communication strategy to alert all who may have been exposed.
- o Communicate with your rink partner on their “deep-clean” sanitation strategy.
- o Designate one person to speak publicly for the association (to members, media, health officials, etc.).
- Most importantly, work with your rink partner to make this a safe but also a fun environment for the participants, **while still abiding by SafeSport guidelines**. These are stressful times and we want to make sure that hockey is a positive place for both physical and mental health.

DISCLAIMER

*The following considerations are provided for general informational purposes only and are not intended as, and should not be relied upon as, specific medical or legal advice. You are strongly encouraged to consult with qualified medical personal/public health officials for medical considerations and to local, state and federal orders and or laws for legal considerations. If you use any considerations provided for herein, **you do so at your own risk and you specifically release from any and all liability** United States Ice Rink Association, U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey, and their directors, officers, employees, volunteers, and agents in connection with your use of the enclosed considerations.*

ABOUT US

The United States Ice Rink Association is a non-profit national membership association for individuals, facilities and vendors in the ice rink and arena industry. The organization was formed in 2000 through a joint venture between U.S. Figure Skating and USA Hockey with the intent of servicing the needs of ice-skating facilities and their employees in the United States.

U.S. Figure Skating is the national governing body for the sport of figure skating in the United States as recognized by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the International Skating Union. U.S. Figure Skating is comprised of more than 765 member clubs, collegiate clubs, school-affiliated clubs and more than 1,000 registered Learn to Skate USA programs representing more than 203,000 members. U.S. Figure Skating is charged with the development of the sport on all levels within the United States including athletes, officials, sanctioning of events and exhibitions, and establishing the rules and guidelines by which the sport is governed.

Learn To Skate USA, powered by Toyota, is the only skating program in the world endorsed by U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating, with support from Special Olympics, the Professional Skaters Association and the U.S. Ice Rink Association. Learn to Skate USA's mission is to instill a lifelong love of skating with a positive and fun experience. Classes are taught through an updated curriculum by certified, passionate instructors who build solid skill progression to grow self-esteem in both kids and adults while providing them the resources to reach their hopes and dreams.

USA Hockey, Inc. is recognized as the National Governing Body for the sport of ice hockey in the United States. Our mission is to promote a safe and fun learning experience supporting the growth of the sport and all its participants and enthusiasts by encouraging, educating, developing, and administering all aspects of the sport.