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WWW.SPECIALHOCKEY.ORG

PLEASE NOTE THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UPDATED
AS NEW INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE

With many rinks starting to prepare to re-open, we know that our athletes are anxious to return to playing the sport they love. Our athletes miss their friends and the camaraderie of their team. Volunteers and families miss seeing each other and cheering as goals are achieved.

Now that the conversations have started about the return of hockey and game play, we understand that special hockey must consider new health and safety measures. We acknowledge that this is an evolving discussion with new information changing daily, so we share the attached guidelines with the caveat that they will be updated as new information is available.

One of the strengths of the American Special Hockey Association is our diversity. Many of our athletes and volunteers, have underlying concerns which exposure to COVID-19 could adversely impact and many are anxious about a safe return to the rink. We have prepared our suggested “Return To The Rink Special Hockey Guidelines” to help ease concerns and help folks adjust to possible expectations.

Each organization’s return will be dictated by their local health officials and rink managers. We caution you to not rush, and allow your organization to thoughtfully listen to your athletes and families. While some may be eager, others may be anxious. We are working with partners to obtain sport specific PPE for athletes and volunteers, and carefully focusing on new initiatives and information to help your team safely navigate the uncharted territory ahead.

To stay engaged off the ice, we have been working with partners to create new and exciting opportunities which will increase opportunities for your teams. We hope to release further details in early July. We are grateful for the incredible support we have received from our community partners over this past season, and its an honor to see how much growth is yet to come!

As we work to gather up-to-date best practices and resources we invite you to stay connected to us. We expect the attached guidelines to have updated. Your feedback and input will be important for considerations.

We love to hear from you, and are happy to help.

Suggested Return to the Rink Guidelines for American Special Hockey Association

Registration

- ALL Participants must be registered in good standing with ASHA.
- ALL Coaches and volunteers must be Safe Sport Act Compliant with background checks and abuse training up to date.
- Any “Off Season” activities (April 30th – September 1st) must be registered events

Participation

- At no point will a hockey event exceed the number of attendees (including athletes, coaches, referees, team officials, volunteers, parents and other family members) noted as the maximum number by the local health authority, or any relevant municipality or public health authority.
- The number of participants involved should be reviewed and kept down to the absolute essential (e.g. Team members, Officials, Referees, facility staff, Volunteers, etc.)
- Limit the number of non-participants attending (siblings, parents, extended family, friends, etc.). As long as the maximum number of persons permitted to gather by the local authorities and the relevant municipality and public health authority is less than or equal to 100, the maximum number of non-participants attending any event is limited to 1 per athlete.
- If the local public health authorities establish different maximum numbers of people who are permitted to gather in different areas, the maximum number established for the municipality where the team is located (i.e. home rink) applies to that team. Travel by a team to another area does not mean that the team can rely on the maximum gathering size of that other area.
- Program directors (or appointee) will keep an attendance tracker (written or electronic) for all practices, games and in-person activities including all athletes, coaches, referees, parents and others in attendance. Team officials will maintain an archive of the attendance tracker for each event. Team officials will present any record to Public Health, local municipality, or other applicable agency upon request. Compliance with all contact tracing mandates/regulations are not negotiable.
- Ride sharing/carpooling should be avoided. Where unavoidable, record should be kept and set groups should be maintained if possible.

Screening/Diagnosed with COVID-19/Return from COVID-19

- Self-screening through <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html> is required by all participants, volunteers and spectators prior to attending any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and any individual shall not attend if they fail the screening protocol.
- A person, who is identified as part of an at-risk group, but otherwise passes the screening questions is discouraged from participating in in-person hockey activities, but they are not considered to have failed the screening protocol.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with any person having COVID-19 in the previous 14 days MUST not attend any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and MUST notify their local public health authority.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 must be cleared by appropriate medical authorities prior to attending any in-person team activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to the organization in writing.
- Organizations should be aware of any “contact tracing” requirements for gatherings from their local health authorities.

Cleaning/Sanitization

- Teams are to have soap and water or 70% (or higher) alcohol hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes (or acceptable option) readily available at all times, and especially in any medical treatment areas. A list of recommended disinfectants is available on the EPA website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- General cleaning shall be done with microfiber cloths and appropriate cleaning products from the previous bullet.
- General cleaning shall take place several times a day using different cleaning cloths for each type of object/surface (i.e. doors, tables, chairs, control panels such as those for scoreboards, remote controls, etc.)
- All cleaning personnel (not including those individuals who work for the municipality or facility owner, who shall follow whatever guidelines are established by their employer) shall be protected appropriately with face mask and protective gloves at a minimum. This applies to the cleaning of facilities and/or equipment in accordance with the requirements of this document.
- Only adults shall perform cleaning/sanitization functions.
- Those not involved in the cleaning/sanitization shall stay a minimum of 6 Feet (2 Meters) away from the cleaning/sanitization activities.
- Cleaning/sanitization products will not be used by or stored within access of young children.
- Where this document requires the use of protective gloves, this shall mean PPE gloves.
- Implementation of safe physical distancing
- Maintain minimum of 6 Feet (2 Meters) distancing during physical activity, including warm-ups, pre-game and post-game activities, wherever possible.
- Use of benches should be avoided where safe physical distance cannot be maintained.
- Use as much space as required on the ice surface to maintain adequate physical distance or restrict on-ice numbers to accommodate safe physical distancing.
- Avoid congestion at points of entry to the rink (i.e. doors, hallways, etc.) to allow maintenance of 6 Feet (2 Meters) distancing among participants.
- If spectators are in attendance, specific spectator measures for physical distancing shall be set as required/recommended by the local public health authorities.

Establishment of hygiene standards

- Wash hands frequently for at least twenty (20) seconds
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with your hands
- Sneeze and/or cough in a tissue or the internal crease of the elbow. Avoid contact of hands with personal respiratory points
- All potentially infected waste (i.e. disposable tissues, masks, protective gloves, etc.), hygiene material, rubbish, debris, etc., in all shared spaces shall be disposed of safely at the end of the in-person activity

Venues

- Scheduling of ice time must allow for a minimum of 30 minutes between the conclusion of the prior event and the start of the subsequent event to allow for: (1) the team(s) involved in the prior event to clean/sanitize equipment, dispose of garbage from common areas, and have all team members vacate the facility BEFORE the team(s) involved in the subsequent event enter the facility and clean/sanitize common areas; without crossover between the teams participating in the two events. In the case of games, this may require organizations to establish appropriate "drop dead" or modified game play rules to allow for safe crossover between events.

Venues (Continued)

- Participants, volunteers and spectators for a subsequent event shall remain in their vehicle in the parking lot until participants, volunteers and spectators from the prior event have returned to their vehicles. Organizations should designate appropriate waiting areas for any participants, volunteers and spectators not arriving in vehicles.
- For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their areas before and after games.
- It is preferred that dressing rooms not be used. If it is necessary to use them, the team using the dressing room shall clean/sanitize it before and after use.
- Washrooms are to be open and accessible only at the discretion and direction of the municipality or facility owner where the venue is located.
- Thorough disinfection of common spaces before/after use including:
 - Benches, including seating areas, ledges and bottle rack
 - Door handles, surfaces and latches
 - Any other spaces that come into frequent touch
- Establishment of sanitation stations with soap and water and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizers at all entrances/exits to on and off-ice areas
- Provide disinfectant wipes and advise event officials and volunteers to disinfect door handles, latches, and any other spaces that come into frequent touch in all areas several times per session.

Spectators

- If/when spectators are allowed, make sure to follow local authorities' guidelines strictly
- Ensure physical distance from participants and between spectators
- Spectators are encouraged to bring their own disinfectant wipes to clean the area where they sit. Municipalities and/or facility owners may or may not be cleaning seating areas on a regular basis.
- Spectators are encouraged not to wander to other areas of the facility.
- Practices
- Practice or training is a more controlled environment than the game environment. Practice can also accommodate lesser numbers of participants than games. Accordingly, it is envisioned that return to practice will likely occur prior to return to play. The protocols listed under General also apply to Practice. Below are some practice specific protocols to be implemented by all organizations.

Equipment

- No sharing of equipment such as hockey helmets, protective masks, water bottles, or other equipment likely to have been exposed to respiratory droplets. Each athlete should arrive at the rink with all of his/her own equipment and store these items inside their personal bag when not in use.
- Avoid personal clothing, equipment or electronics etc. being left in common places. Store inside personal bag always.
- We strongly discourage sharing of equipment, when equipment must be available to multiple athletes, it should be minimized must be cleaned/sanitized between athlete's use.
- Pucks to be used at the practice should be sanitized before and after the practice.
- PPE is highly recommended. Due to the needs of some special athletes, the type of PPE may be worn at the discretion of the participant.
- Rules of acceptable behaviour cannot be contravened.
- Equipment must be wiped down between groups if it must be shared.

Participants

- Discourage participation of high-risk demographics (age and health)
- No spitting, including tobacco and other products
- No chewing gum
- No sharing of water bottles or food
- No handshakes, fist or chest bumps, high fives, hugs, kisses, etc.

Competition

- Sports activity and life in general have been significantly affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in place across the globe. In general, hockey is a high-contact, close proximity sport and many of our program areas must be evaluated. Our traditional ways of competing will need to be altered in many instances to allow us to be back on the ice while minimizing the risk of infection. The protocols listed under General and Practice also apply to Competition (when permitted by local authorities). Below are some competition specific protocols to be implemented by all organizations we participate with.

In-Game (To be developed)

- In-game guidelines will be developed as local health authorities determine this option will exist in the 2020-2021 hockey season. We will seek guidance from partner organizations, and program insurance providers.
- At the time of this writing (June 2020) we do not encourage any inter team play, or events, until further notice.

Best Practices

- Minimum physical distancing of 6 Feet (2 Meters)
- The following, while not mandatory requirements, are suggested best practices or other considerations which teams should take into consideration with respect to in-person hockey activities:
- Where required by local health authorities, masks should be worn.
 - ASHA is currently working with partners to investigate option on helmet shields and other athlete/sport specific PP for availability in the fall.
 - We recommend that all organizations provide PPE to volunteers.
- Avoid ceremonies (i.e. anthems, ceremonial puck drops, etc.)
- Volunteers should always work from a restricted area and keep safe distance from others. If using a booth, it must be cleaned/sanitized before and after use. Only one volunteer shall be permitted to be inside the booth.
- Equipment such as microphones, if applicable, shall be thoroughly cleaned before and after use.
- Run drills with athletes in groups of 3 to 4 (maintain groups intact throughout all practices to minimize number of interactions)
- Consider split squad practices with no physical cross-over between sessions
- Group rotation in one direction (i.e. Designated rink entry and exit points)
- Use of protective gloves and personal face masks by all coaches, volunteers, participants (where feasible), and spectators (where feasible).
- Use of physical barriers (e.g. Plexiglas) at points of interaction between team officials and spectators.