

**NORTH SUBURBAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE
TWIN CITY NORTH YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE
COVID CONTROL POLICIES
AUGUST 12, 2020**

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

The contents of this document and attachments include minimum safety requirements, additional suggestions, and relevant policy guidelines issued by NFHS/MSHSL and the Minnesota Department of Health. These policies and guidelines are intended to allow our leagues to play football in the fall of 2020 and upcoming years in as safe manner as possible. It is important that all directors, coaches, officials, parents, players and spectators recognize that while it is impossible to completely insulate everyone involved in our programs from potential exposure to COVID, it is our joint responsibility to take every reasonable and appropriate measure to minimize potential exposure. If a participant (whether director, coach, official, parent, player or spectator) is exposed (close contact) to an individual infected with COVID, or does become infected, we must take every reasonable and appropriate measure is to assure that the individuals that are infected and exposed are properly quarantined and that the Minnesota Department of Health and all affected league participants are notified. League participants include communities from a large portion of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, so the potential for league activities contributing to the development of an extensive “hot spot” cannot be ignored or minimized. Our general guidelines:

1. We are following all applicable NFHS and Minnesota Department of Health guidelines. These guidelines are attached, and each community and organization must be thoroughly familiar with their contents. Community directors should also be thoroughly familiar with USA Football return to play guidelines.
2. All league participants must also follow applicable local city and school district guidelines where they impose more stringent restrictions than our guidelines. The most obvious example of such a restriction would be a limitation or total ban on spectators.
3. Each community/organization must have a designated director responsible for administration of that community/organization’s COVID control policy and communication of COVID related information to other affected communities/organizations. Each individual team should also have a designated coach or parent responsible for COVID control and communication of COVID related information to the designated COVID control director of that team’s community/organization. A verified exposure or positive test result must be immediately communicated to the League Director, the Minnesota Department of Health, and other communities/organizations whose teams have come into contact with the infected individual.

4. Any individual who tests positive or has been exposed (close contact – see Appendix) to a person who tests positive must self-isolate and not participate in any in-person League activities, whether as player, coach, director, official, or spectator for a minimum of fourteen (14) days and also provided the designated COVID control person doctor's verification that he or she is cleared to participate.
5. All decision makers involved in a COVID related decision must exercise good judgment and common sense, with the safety of all participants and our communities in general always of **PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE**.
6. Any community/organization that is found to have *deliberately and materially* violated League guidelines will have its teams removed from game competition for the remainder of the season. The League Director recognizes that community/organization directors and coaches might face situations that present difficult decisions related to COVID exposure where immediate outside consultation is not available. All we ask is that our coaches and directors use good judgment and common sense in following these guidelines, and make decisions with the safety of League participants as the paramount consideration

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

1. **Waiver and Communication to Parents/Guardians** – Communities/organizations are required to have the parent or legal guardian of every player sign a COVID related informed acknowledgement of risk and waiver before participating in any practices or games. The COVID related acknowledgment of risk and waiver can be integrated into an existing general football injury acknowledgement of risk and waiver, or can be a separate document. All communities/organizations are also encouraged to communicate the risks of COVID infection and the steps the League and its participants are taking to minimize those risks to parents in multiple ways. These communications include, but are not necessarily limited to: team parent meetings, website information pages, and handouts. If team parent meetings that include COVID discussion are conducted, the community/organization's COVID control director should make note of the meeting and the topics discussed at the meeting.
2. **Community/Organization COVID control/communication Directors** – Each community/organization is required to have a designated person (or persons) responsible for COVID prevention compliance and COVID related communication to the League Director and the directors of other League communities/organizations. Each individual team is also required to have a designated person or persons (coach or parent) responsible for that particular team's daily COVID screening and general COVID related communications to the parents of that particular teams players and to that particular teams community/organization COVID compliance and communication director. All instances of COVID infection must be immediately reported to the community/organization COVID compliance and communication director, and then immediately reported to the Minnesota Department of Health, the League Director, and the directors of any other communities who have come into recent contact with the infected individual.

3. **Practice Scheduling Restrictions** – Organized team practices may not start until Monday, August 17. Communities/organizations that conduct player evaluation sessions for the purpose of dividing teams may conduct these sessions prior to August 17, but are required to conduct these sessions in accordance with NFHS Phase II guidelines.

Week One The first week of organized team practices (August 17 – 23) must be conducted without full pads, (players may practice with shells – helmets, shoulder pads, and shorts – or in just shorts, at the discretion of each individual coach) and practices must be conducted with as much distancing between players as possible.

The League Director recognizes that work on huddles, formations, defensive alignments, and the execution of basic plays is necessary and allowed in week one, but encourages as much distancing as possible for individual and position drills. When team drills are conducted, they should be limited to fifteen (15) minutes or less at any one time. In other words, after fifteen (15) minutes of team offensive plays against cones or markers, the team should move to another set of drills that involve more distancing for at least fifteen (15) minutes before going back to team drills. Coaches must strive to keep players not directly involved in drills a safe distance from each other. All of these distancing guidelines remain in effect for the entire season. Additional guidance is available from USA Football materials.

Weeks Two, Three and Four Beginning August 24, through the start of games (games will begin the weekend of September 12-13), practices may include full pads and **contact a maximum of two (2) times per week** (not including one live scrimmage). **No more than five (5) total events for a week** (Monday – Sunday) are permitted during weeks two, three and four. *For example, during the week of August 24, a team is permitted to conduct two full pad practices, two no pad or shell practices (helmets, shoulder pads and shorts), and also participate in one of the full contact scrimmage/previews that will be conducted the weekend of August 29-30.*

Week Five and Thereafter **After games start, teams are restricted to no more than four (4) events per week (Monday – Sunday), including practices and games. No more than two (2) of these events may include full pads and contact.** Practice distancing guidelines remain in effect for the entire season. *For example, if a team is scheduled for one game during a week, a team may conduct three practices, one (1) of which may include full pads and contact. If a team is scheduled for two (2) games during a week, the team may conduct two (2) practices, but both practices may not involve full pads and contact.*

4. Practice and Game Screening and Safety

Parent Obligations Parents are obligated to monitor their child's symptoms on a daily basis and must exercise extreme caution if their child exhibits COVID symptoms. **Parents must screen their child for COVID symptoms before every practice and game and must report any known or possible exposure immediately to the team COVID control person.** Immediate communication is the key to controlling any exposures or infections. While the League Director understands that some car pooling is occasionally a necessity, this should be kept to a minimum, and parents must take extreme caution to assure that distancing precautions are maintained to the extent possible, and that passengers wear masks during the drives to and from football. Parents must wash/clean all clothing and equipment worn by their child after each practice or game that the child wears the clothing and equipment.

Team Obligations **All players who attend a practice or game must also be screened by the designated team COVID compliance person before participating in the practice or game.** Each player must be asked if he or she has experienced any COVID related symptoms, and if any family members or close contacts has become infected. Screening questions should include, at a minimum:

1. **Have you had a temperature greater than 100.4 within the last 7 days?**
2. **Have you had any muscle aches or soreness not associated with exercise within the last 7 days?**
3. **Have you had any shortness of breath within the last 7 days?**
4. **Have you had any new or unusual cough, within the last 7 days?**

Screeners should also conduct a physical test on each player, (distance thermometer is the most highly used device, but other methods, such as screening for sense of smell can be effective) and record each players' answers and test result each day. Individual teams are responsible for maintaining an accurate screening log. The operative evaluation standard is: ***"When in doubt, sit the player out and send the player home."***

All coaches, assistants, and sideline personnel are required to wear masks (which can be face masks, shields, or any similar protective device) during all practices and games. Coaches and assistants can pull the masks down from time to time for the purposes of communicating to the team, as long as proper distancing is maintained. Any time coaches address the entire team, whether during practices or games, distancing is required to the extent possible. Spectators, whether parents or others, must not be allowed in close proximity to the team during practices. **Spectators who choose to remain at a practice must stay a reasonable distance from the practice and must practice distancing from other spectators.** All equipment used at practice should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected both before and after practice. Player equipment should be cleaned/disinfected after every contact practice or game – pants and jerseys should be washed, and equipment should be disinfected. **Players and coaches must not share food, water, water bottles or other drinks during games and practices and must not engage in spitting, chewing gum, eating sunflower seeds, and similar activities.**

Players and coaches must also avoid, to the extent possible, any unnecessary physical contact with teammates and other individuals (including handshakes, high fives and similar activity). Players are encouraged to wear full finger athletic gloves, and also wear masks when not directly participating in game or practice activity. As always, all participants are encouraged to thoroughly wash their hands before and after practices and games.

5. **Game Guidelines** - During games, **the ten foot restraining line between teams and spectators established last year must be strictly enforced.** Doing so allows team members and coaches on the sideline to remain separated, and also establishes separation between the teams and spectators. Spectators should be dispersed along the sidelines and end zones (or in the stands where high school stadiums are used) to the extent possible, and, in addition, all local (city or school) restrictions must be followed. **The League suggests, for games not conducted on a high school field, that spectators should not be allowed between the thirty (30) yard lines on both sidelines.** Spectators would therefore be limited to the areas behind the end zones and from the thirty (30) yard lines to the goal line. Note that the outdoor gathering limitation of two hundred fifty (250) people is still in effect. Generally, this should allow at least four (4) spectators for each participant. At this time, spectators are encouraged, but not required (unless local rules require it) to wear face masks but must maintain six foot distancing. Teams that are scheduled to play the following game should warm up as far from the game as possible, and their spectators should remain in their vehicle or stay away from the game field until the preceding game has finished and the teams and their spectators have completely vacated the proximate area of the game field. If possible, teams and spectators should enter and leave the game field through different entrances/exits. The League has increased the time between games this year to allow teams and spectators to completely vacate the field before the teams and spectators for the following game enter the field. The host team is responsible for crowd control, and in the event that spectators are not adhering to distancing guidelines, the host team site supervisor has the authority to request that the officials terminate the game immediately.

Prior to the pre-game coin toss, coaches from each team must certify to the officials that all participants have been screened, and to their knowledge, no infected players or players exhibiting COVID symptoms are participating. The League has given officials and site supervisors broad discretion to not play or terminate a game if it is clear to them that participants, coaches, or spectators are complying with League and individual community guidelines. All coaches and sideline personnel are required to wear masks from the time warm-ups begin until their team has left the game site. Chain gang personnel are also required to wear masks during the game. Coaches should, to the extent possible, maintain distancing among players, coaches, and sideline personnel while the game is underway, and should, to the extent possible, maintain distancing during time outs and halftime. Teams are encouraged to utilize alternatives to the traditional offensive huddle (no huddle or “quick huddle”) We are going to extend time between quarters a minute and extend halftime by three minutes in order to increase the time that players are distanced. Game balls should be cleaned/disinfected before the game, at halftime, and after the game. There should be no post game handshake line. Teams are encouraged to develop alternative post-game sportsmanship methods.

- 6. Reporting and Handling Infections** – Any team who discovers that a player, coach, or other sideline personnel is infected or has been directly exposed to an infected person is required to notify its community/organization designated COVID control director immediately and remove the infected person, his or her team, and any team who had contact with the infected person from all participation for a minimum of fourteen (14) days from the date of exposure. The community/organization designated COVID director is required to notify the League Director, the Minnesota Department of Health, and any other community/organization director of the infection immediately upon receiving notice of the infection. Parents must be clearly informed of their obligation to immediately inform the designated COVID control person of a child's infection or exposure to an infected person.

For example, there is a doubleheader at Blaine Baseball Complex on a Sunday afternoon that includes two Blaine teams, an Andover team, and a Spring Lake Park team. On Tuesday, the Spring Lake Park team becomes aware that one of its players has become infected. The Spring Lake Park team representative should notify the Spring Lake Park COVID control director immediately, and in turn the COVID control director should notify the Minnesota Department of Health, the League Director, the Blaine director and the Andover director no later than Tuesday evening. The League Director will follow through with each individual community/organization to assure that the infected individual, his or her team and the team's opponent are removed from participation for the appropriate time, and that all community/organizations have been notified and have taken appropriate precautionary measures.

- 7. Multiple Infections on a Team** - In the event a team has multiple player infections and has determined that it does not have an adequate number of players to play an upcoming game or games, the team's Area Director or COVID control director should notify the League Director and the Area Directors of affected upcoming opponents immediately to assure that appropriate schedule adjustments are taken. In the event that a team must terminate its season because of multiple infections, the League Director will authorize a partial refund of the team's registration fee.

IF WE ARE ALLOWED TO PLAY, IT IS CRITICAL THAT EVERYBODY, DIRECTORS, COACHES, PLAYERS, AND PARENTS, ARE ON BOARD WITH THIS POLICY. INDIVIDUALS WHO INDICATE THAT THEY ARE NOT ON BOARD, REGARDLESS OF ROLE, SHOULD HAVE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN OUR PROGRAM TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY. IF WE COMMUNICATE AND TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION IN EACH INSTANCE OF AN INFECTED PARTICIPANT, WE CAN HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SEASON.

KEEP IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT IT ONLY TAKES ONE PERSON WHO DOESN'T TAKE COVID SERIOUSLY TO CREATE A POTENTIALLY DISASTEROUS SITUATION.

Definitions & Clarifications:

- **Symptoms of COVID-19 Infection** – Individuals with COVID-19 can exhibit symptoms ranging from the following:
 - Most common symptoms:
 - Fever (equal or greater than 100.4 degrees F)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of Breath
 - Less common symptoms:
 - Sore Throat
 - Congestion
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Headache
 - Muscle/Joint pain
 - Sudden loss of taste or smell
 - Chills
 - *Note: Some people do not have symptoms or have very mild symptoms. Persons with COVID-19 may be infectious two days prior to symptom onset.*
 - **What to do if you're waiting for COVID-19 test results -**
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/waiting.pdf>

Close Contact and Exposure – **close contact and/or exposure** means any one of the following:

- Caring for a sick person with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection; or
- Living in the same household as an individual with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection; or
- An individual who has had close contact (less than 6 feet) for greater than or equal to 15 cumulative minutes with a person with known or suspected COVID-19 or possible COVID-19 infection.

In the cases of the first two bullets above, the League should consider the quarantine/self-isolation “automatic”. In the case of the third bullet above, the quarantine/self-isolation decision will be made by the League Director after consultation with MDH and the community COVID control director of the individual involved.

If you are absolutely sure an individual had 15 or more minutes of close (less than 6 feet) contact with a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, please ensure that the individual self isolates for 14 days from the last contact with the infected person.

If a community COVID control person has questions about whether an individual needs to self-isolate, he or she should follow the following steps:

1. Have that individual self-isolate (No on-site/in-person team activities);
2. Email health.Sports.Covid19@state.mn.us and explain your exposure story. It's ok to reach out to your local health officials instead, if you prefer;
3. Don't allow that individual return to team activities until you've received a recommendation from a state or local health official, and follow their recommendations carefully;

RESOURCES:

- 1. MDH Return to Play Guidelines;**
- 2. MDH Website;**
- 3. MSHSL Return to Play Guidelines;**
- 4. NFHS Return to Play Guidelines;**
- 5. USA Football Return to Play Guidelines;**