



Minnesota Hockey Return To Play Guidelines

As we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic while returning players to the ice, Minnesota Hockey will continue to provide updates to our associations and members. These considerations focus on several phases of returning our members to the rinks throughout the state of Minnesota.



Each association should have its own plan in place for returning to the rink. Local rinks and associations need to follow the guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and its [Guidance for Social Distancing](#), as well as 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 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, Minnesota 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 hockey programming in context of COVID-19. Please know these are not requirements, but are recommendations and ideas to consider when evaluating your programming. As conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, our best advice 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 are thankful to all of those essential workers and first responders who are guiding us and keeping us safe and healthy during this pandemic. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by doing these four things:

- 1. Physical Distance*
- 2. Wash Hands and Practice Safe Hygiene Habits*
- 3. Clean Surfaces & Equipment between uses*
- 4. Staying Home When Sick Or Experiencing Any Symptoms*

Minnesota Hockey will open programming in phases, which are subject to change at all times. They are also subject to restrictions placed by state or local governments.

**** Minnesota Hockey will not sanction on-ice activities prior to restrictions being lifted by the state government.***

*****On-ice activities involving players aged 6 and Under or “Learn to Play” skaters are not recommended in Phase 1***

******The dates listed next to each phase are NOT meant to indicate the transition to that phase will happen on that date. However, Minnesota Hockey will be providing updated guidelines prior to that date if the transition can be made to enter the next phase. Those guidelines will be subject to regulations imposed by the state government, as well as recommendations from the MDH and CDC.***



Phase 1 – Practices, Clinics, Tryouts Only

Phase 1 will open on June 1, per Minnesota's [Stay Safe Phase II Plan](#) and [MDH guidelines](#). The date is subject to change at all times.

***Learn to Play programs and those activities involving players age 6 and Under are not recommended in Phase 1**

Arriving at the Rink

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. Participants should utilize the [Minnesota Symptom Screener Guide](#) prior to any on-ice activity. These screens should be monitored by each association.
3. All participants must be USA Hockey registered for the 2020-21 season to participate in any Minnesota Hockey sanctioned on-ice activity.
4. Players should arrive at the rink no more than 15 minutes before the start of on-ice activities. Anyone arriving earlier than 15 minutes before their start time should wait outside of the facility and be socially distanced from others.
5. If there is an activity occurring at the rink before the team's scheduled start, the incoming team should wait until all players from the prior event have vacated the building. There should not be interaction between the two groups.
6. Players aged 11 and older should be dropped off at the rink, and picked up afterward. Their parents/guardians should not be in the arena. Players aged 10 and under are allowed one parent/guardian in the rink to help with any equipment needs. Those parents/guardians may also be at the rink, socially distanced from others, to provide assistance to the player if needed throughout practice time. Masks are advised, and may be required by the facility for parents/guardians.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Players should arrive to the arena fully dressed with the exception of skates (coming in to 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.



12. 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.
13. Each association and team should have an emergency plan for any positive outbreak within the team, association or community
14. 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.
15. Associations should work with rink partners, and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Stay at Home order being lifted.
16. Dryland activities inside the arena are not advised during Phase 1.
17. 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.

Phase 1 On-Ice Activities for Practices, Clinics and Tryouts:

1. Within the program, create consistent pods of the same staff, volunteers and participants with a maximum number of **10 people in each pod. Ice rinks will be allowed to have two (2) pods of 10 people or less at a time with no mixing between the groups.**
2. 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.
3. Avoid using player benches.
4. Coaches should be keeping players active and engaged at all times. Players should not leave the ice during a practice unless absolutely necessary.
5. The number of coaches on the ice should be kept to a minimum, and it should be noted that each coach will count toward the number of people allowed on the ice as stipulated by the Department of Health.
6. Extra "helpers" or players who are not full-time members of the team should not be on the ice.
7. Drills should be age appropriate (station-based) and non-contact in Phase 1.
8. Coaches should avoid talking face-to-face with players, as well as avoid contact with players whenever possible. Physical contact may be necessary when assisting a young player or a player with a disability (helping up or adjusting equipment), but whenever possible, coaches should provide assistance without physical contact, or ask the player's parent/guardian to assist.
9. Prior to the completion of the ice time, players should be excused from the rink one by one and through different exit points of the rink. Do not ask players to participate in picking up pucks or other equipment from the ice.



After On-Ice Activities are Completed:

1. No on or off ice interaction (socializing, team meetings, dryland activities) should occur following the conclusion of practice. Players should remove skates and helmets and leave the premises within 15 minutes of the end of practice.
2. Parents/Guardians must be made aware of the time when the players will be done. The parents or person assigned to pick up players at the arena must be punctual. Players should not have to wait for a ride.
3. Players should vacate the arena immediately to allow for the next user group to enter.
4. Coaches or other responsible adults should remain until all players are safe and removed from the premises.
5. While at home, players should clean and disinfect gear after each use.

Phase 2 – Local Games and Scrimmages

An announcement on the implementation of Phase 2 is intended to be made by August 1, but is subject to guidance provided by the State. The date of announcement is subject to change at all times.

Please note that many aspects of Phase 1 should also be practiced during Phase 2

***Learn to Play Programs and 6 & Under programs should start on-ice activities at this time, provided there are no severe setbacks during Phase 1**

1. Competitions may begin to occur between teams from within a local geographic area.
2. At the scorer's/announcer's box, best practice would be that one assigned adult will be responsible for clock and scorebook with nobody else allowed in the area.
3. Whenever possible, resurfacing of the ice sheet should only take place before or after a game. During breaks in action, players should remain on the bench.
4. There should be no more than two coaches allowed in the bench area during games. Coaches on benches should be wearing masks.
5. During a stoppage of play caused by a save, the goalie should drop the puck on the ice for the official to retrieve.
6. There should be no pregame or postgame handshakes. Teams should honor each other after the game with a stick salute.
7. A two official system shall be used for games at all levels

Phase 3

An announcement on the implementation of Phase 3 (regular season hockey) is intended to be made by September 1, but is subject to guidance provided by the State. This date of announcement is subject to change at all times.

Phase Overview

Activity	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Tentative Timeline	June 1	Announcement by August 1 (subject to change & MDH guidance)	Announcement by September 1 (subject to change & MDH guidance)
Practice	Open per MDH guidance	Open	Open
Skill Clinics	Open per MDH guidance	Open	Open
Tryouts	Open but not recommended initially per MDH guidance on no contact	Open	Open
Dryland	Closed inside arena	Open per MDH guidance	Open
Local Games/Scrimmages	Closed	Open per MDH guidance	Open
Travel Games	Closed	Closed	Open per MDH guidance
Tournaments	Closed	Closed	Open per MDH guidance

Additional Resources

As stated previously, this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Associations must adhere to guidelines set by the CDC and MDH. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Minnesota Hockey encourages all programs engaging in activities to stay up-to-date on future developments. Below are some additional resources for programs to reference.

Minnesota's Stay Safe Plan - <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>

MDH Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth Sports - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/youthsports.pdf>

CDC Considerations for Youth Sports - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

USA Hockey Coronavirus Information - <https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>

Minnesota Ice Arena Managers Association COVID-19 Resources - <https://miama.org/members/covid-19-reference-page/>