

Firebirds SC Return to Play Phasing, Protocol and Responsibilities



Firebirds SC is committed to protecting the health and safety of the players, parents and coaching staff. In light of the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic, Firebirds SC presents this document to provide our coaches, players, parents and families with a guideline to help us all return to the game, and in many respects to life itself, in a safe, thoughtful and responsible manner. Many of the guidelines rely upon rules, regulations or recommendations set forth by Federal agencies (e.g., Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State of Illinois, local public health authorities and the Illinois Youth Soccer Association (IYSA). Firebirds SC must and shall continue to adhere to all Federal, State, Local and IYSA guidelines and requirements.

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. All content, including text, graphics, images and information are provided for general informational purposes only. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Firebirds SC can make no representation and assumes no responsibility for the completeness of this information. Further, you should seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials if you have specific questions about your child's return to training and competition. As the spread of COVID-19 across Illinois is a very fluid and changing environment, these guidelines may change at any time based on new information. These guidelines address early phases on return to play. Additional guidelines will follow as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve.

Finally, although the young and healthy are subject to less severe cases of COVID-19, every case of this disease is potentially life-altering or deadly, particularly in those with risk factors that may occur within our communities. Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed or a cure is found, the risks of infection shall be ever present.

Prior to participation in any Firebird SC activities, players/parents must complete the IYSA Communicable Disease Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement, which can be found at <https://firebirdssc.sportngin.com/register/form/511872578>.

Assessing the Safety Risk Levels of your Situation ([From the CDC](#))

The way soccer is played and the way equipment is shared can influence the spread of COVID-19 among players. Firebirds SC has taken this into consideration in regard to the training of our players.

- **Physical closeness of players**
 - Firebirds SC will comply with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the CDC guidelines on social contact. Firebirds SC will consider the phases of the IPDH [Restore Illinois Plan](#) as it returns to practice, and eventually competitive play.

- The Phases included in the Restore Illinois Plan (Plan) can be found below:
 - Phase 1 – Rapid Spread: The rate of infection among those tested and the number of patients admitted to the hospital is high or rapidly increasing. Strict stay at home and social distancing guidelines are put in place and only essential businesses remain open. Every region has experienced this phase once already, and could return to it if mitigation efforts are unsuccessful.
 - Phase 2 – Flattening: The rate of infection among those tested and the number of patients admitted to the hospital beds and ICU beds increases at an ever-slower rate, moving toward a flat and even a downward trajectory. Nonessential retail stores reopen for curbside pickup and delivery. Illinoisans are directed to wear a face covering when outside the home and can begin enjoying additional outdoor activities like golf, boating and fishing while practicing social distancing. To varying degrees, every region is experiencing flattening as of early May.
 - Phase 3 – Recovery: The rate of infection among those surveillance tested, the number of patients admitted to the hospital and the number of patients needing ICU beds is stable or declining. Manufacturing, offices, retail, barbershops and salons can reopen to the public with capacity and other limits and safety precautions. Gatherings limited to 10 people or fewer are allowed. Face coverings and social distancing are the norm.
 - Phase 4 – Revitalization: The rate of infection among those surveillance tested and the number of patients admitted to the hospital continues to decline. Gatherings of 50 people or fewer are allowed, restaurants and bars reopen, travel resumes and child care and schools reopen under guidance from the IDPH. Face coverings and social distancing are the norm.
 - Phase 5 – Illinois Restored: With a vaccine or highly effective treatment widely available or the elimination of any new cases over a sustained period, the economy fully reopens with safety precautions continuing. Conventions, festivals and large events are permitted, and all businesses, schools and places of recreation can open with new safety guidance and procedures in place reflecting the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until COVID-19 is defeated, this plan also recognizes that just as health metrics will tell us it is safe to move forward, health metrics may also tell us to return to a prior phase. With a vaccine or highly effective treatment not yet available, IDPH will be

closely monitoring key metrics to immediately identify trends in cases and hospitalizations to determine whether a return to a prior phase may become necessary.

- Based upon the Phase of the Plan, Firebirds SC will modify training sessions to ensure compliance with the Plan. Elements of the modified training include, but are not limited to the following:
 - focus on individual skill building versus competition;
 - limit the time players spend close to others by playing full-contact only in game-time situations; and
 - decrease the number of competitions during a season.
- Coaches can also modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups.
- **Amount of necessary touching of shared equipment**
 - To minimize the spread of COVID-19, each player MUST bring their own soccer ball, water bottle, snacks and medication (if necessary).
 - During practices, there will be no use of pinnies.
 - Players will place all material in their own bag.
- **Ability to engage in social**
 - During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, the coaches will ensure that players maintain [social distancing](#) by increasing space between players on the sideline, field or bench.
 - Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.
- **Nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers.** Firebirds SC will limit all nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers during training activities.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread ([From the CDC](#))

Considering the guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and IDPH, Firebirds SC will follow the following protocol while our region is in Phase III of the Plan. As the region moves into Phases IV and Phase V, the protocols will be adjusted.

In order to participate in any soccer activities other than individual activities at home, an individual including, but not limited to, players, coaches and team managers (“participants”) must satisfy the following criteria:

- In the past 14 days, no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and has not been exposed to someone that has been ill.
- Live in Lombard or surrounding community for 14 days prior to beginning group training.
- Take temperature before participating in any soccer activity.
- There shall be no activities that would require direct or indirect contact between players.
- Cleaning schedule/protocol of equipment with disinfectant before, during, and after training.

Club Responsibilities

- Adhere to the [IYSA Return to Activity Protocol](#).
- Create and distribute protocols such as this document to its members.
- Have an effective communication plan in place and identify strategies for working with public health to notify Firebirds SC officials, youth and their families if Firebirds SC or its coaches or team managers learn a participant has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others while at a soccer activity. Confidentiality of the participant must be strictly maintained.
- Have an action plan in place, in case of a positive test.
- All return to play activities must be published as being voluntary. Be sensitive and accommodating to players and parents that many be uncomfortable with returning to play too quickly.
- Train and educate all coaches, Board of Directors and team managers on protocols and requirements, including state and local regulations, CDC recommendations, IYSA protocols and other necessary information.
- Make sure appropriate infection prevention supplies are present in multiple targeted areas (e.g., hand sanitizer, facial tissues, facial coverings, etc.)
- All soccer activities must be outdoors.
- Firebirds SC volunteers and coaches assisting with and participating in any soccer-related activity (e.g., player registration) must wear face masks and observe social distancing at all times except that coaches are not required to wear a face mask when actively coaching as long as they are able to maintain social distance requirements.
- Provide adequate field space for social distancing.

- All Firebirds SC volunteers and coaches must take their temperature before each soccer-related activity and report any high or abnormal temperature to the Firebirds SC President prior to participating.

Coach Responsibilities

- Ensure the health and safety of all players.
- Before each soccer activity, a coach must organize “stations” for each player at or around the bench area that are at least 6 feet apart in which players must keep all of their belongings. This can be done with cones. Players shall be required to return only to their “station” during breaks.
- Before each soccer activity, ask all players how they are feeling and whether they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, fever, or loss of taste or smell). Also ask each player if he/she had his/her temperature checked prior to arrival at practice.
- If a player has any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, he/she should be sent home and instructed to contact his/her healthcare provider.
- Follow all state and local health protocols and ensure social distancing at all times including during team meetings/talks and before, during and after soccer activities.
- Ensure each player has his/her own individual equipment (e.g., ball, water, bag, etc.).
- Coach is the only person to handle all training equipment (e.g., cones, disk, flags, etc.).
- Wear a face mask when not actively coaching and maintain social distance requirements from players based on state and local health requirements.
- Have fun, stay positive – players and parents are looking to coaches to stay calm, supportive and caring during this time.

Parent Responsibilities

- Ensure your child is healthy.
- Check your child’s temperature daily and ask whether he/she is experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, fever, or loss of taste or smell). Temperature checks will NOT be conducted by the coach, team manager or Firebirds SC. Any child with a temperature of 100.4°F or above must be kept home and may not participate.
- Firebirds SC recommend that players do not carpool to practices.
- Parents are not permitted on or near the field.

- Parents must stay inside or in close proximity to their car when at any soccer activity. If outside their car, parents must wear a face mask and must adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Ensure your child's clothing is washed after every training session.
- Ensure all equipment, cleats, ball, shin guards, etc. are washed or sanitized before and after every training.
- Notify your coach and team manager immediately if your child becomes ill for any reason.
- Do not assist your coach with equipment before, during or after training.
- Be sure your child has necessary sanitizer with them at every soccer activity.
- Should parents feel the need to communicate with a coach, it must be done via email, TeamSnap or by telephone.

Player Responsibilities

- Take temperature daily.
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after soccer activity.
- Bring and use hand sanitizer with you to every soccer activity.
- Wear a face covering before and immediately after all soccer activity. Masks are permitted but not required to be worn by the players during training.
- Observe the separation of the "stations" established by the coach at the bench area and make certain to place all of your belongings (e.g., bags, water bottle and equipment) at least 6 feet apart from another player's belongings.
- Do not touch or share anyone else's equipment, water, snack, bag or other items.
- Practice social distancing.
- Wash and sanitize all equipment before and after every soccer activity.
- Observe social distancing. No group celebrations, no high 5's, hugs, handshakes, etc.

Maintaining Healthy Operations ([From the CDC](#))

- **Protections for Coaches and Players at Higher Risk for Severe Illness**
 - Firebirds SC will offer options for individuals at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19, such as virtual coaching and in-home drills that limits their exposure risk.

- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Firebirds SC will monitor the Restore Illinois Phases to determine what limitations and precautions are in place and adjust protocols as needed.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together**
 - Firebirds SC will keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches, and make sure that each group of players and coaches avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - Firebirds SC will stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by team/training group, which will reduce interaction among players.
- **Gatherings, Spectators and Travel**
 - Avoid group events, such as games, competitions or social gatherings where the spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained until clearance is given by the IDPH, CDC and the soccer governing bodies (e.g., IYSA, YSSL and IWSL).
 - Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
 - Avoid activities and events such as off-site competitions or excursions (e.g., watching a professional team compete).
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Firebirds SC have designated Adam Hewitt, Director of Coaching, as the initial point of contact for COVID-19 concerns and Firebirds SC President as the club’s representative for reporting and dissemination of information.
- **Communication Systems**
 - In the case where your player answers ‘yes’ when asked whether he/she is feeling symptoms of COVID-19 or shows symptoms in the opinion of the coach, your child will remain supervised and safe while distanced from other participants. Firebirds SC or the coach will call the player’s parents/emergency contact immediately for the player to be picked up. Firebirds SC strongly encourages the parent to seek medical assistance from a trained physician.
 - Firebirds SC will notify [local health officials](#), coaches and parents with players who have come in contact with any participant who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Firebirds SC advises and strongly encourages those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and to follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick ([From the CDC](#))

Firebirds SC have developed the following protocol to be used if a player or coach gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Sick coaches, players or team managers should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that coaches, players and parents know that sick participants should not attend Firebirds SC activities, and that they should notify the Designated Contacts if they (coaches) or their child (parents) become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19 or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
 - Immediately separate coaches and players with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.) at any Firebirds SC activity. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick. Individuals who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated and sent home as well, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#). If symptoms develop, individuals and families should follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
 - In the event that a player is determined to be sick at practice, the coach will contact the parent and request that the player is picked up from practice.
 - If a player or coach is transported by ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, notify the paramedic of the condition or call the hospital in advance to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - Firebirds SC will notify local health officials, coaches and parents with players who have come in contact with any participant who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
 - Advise those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and to follow CDC guidelines if symptoms develop.