



# NCSL Return to Play Guidelines

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Fall 2020 Season

# INTRODUCTION

NCSL prides itself on creating a safe match-day environment for its member club teams. To that end, the league has compiled the following list of guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at NCSL matches. While the guidelines reflect the general best practices and protocols outlined by the CDC, state and local governments, and state soccer associations, they do not supersede individual county restrictions. In addition, we are relying on each club and their teams to abide and enforce the guidelines. We all wish for safe and successful return to play this fall and thank our member clubs in advance for promoting a safe return to play!

# INTRODUCTION

- This document is based on current recommendations and subject to change. As local jurisdictions gather more data and information, we'll continue to update based on their recommendations.
- The following guidelines do not supersede governmental requirements. Member clubs should continually abide by all applicable restrictions in their community.
- The document is divided into several sections for pre-travel, arrival, match play, post-match, and confirmed infection protocols. In each section is divided into minimal requirements and recommendations. Not all recommendations are appropriate or practicable for each environment. However, home and visiting teams are encouraged to follow recommendations when possible to maximize the safety of their members.
- If a hosting club's/venue's protocols are stricter than the traveling club, the traveling club will still respect the hosting club's /venue's protocols.

# PRE-TRAVEL GUIDELINES

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## Requirements

- Before attending game, each player should check his or her temperature at home, and refrain from participation if he or she has a fever ( $\geq 100.4$  degrees F) along with completing pre-session screening questions:
  - a) Have you had a documented case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
  - b) Have you had any close contact with a sick individual or anyone with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19?
  - c) Are you currently feeling sick, or having or suffering from any COVID-19 symptoms?
  - **If a player answers yes to any question or exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, he/she will not be permitted to play**
- Team officials must communicate with one another at least 48 hours before game
- Goalkeepers must sanitize/wash their gloves before arriving to the match.
- All coaches/players must use only their own water bottles.
- Parents must not allow their children to play if they are uncomfortable with or refuse to follow league or game day procedures.

# PRE-TRAVEL GUIDELINES

## **Recommendations**

- Home team sent out a welcome email and visiting team acknowledge it with any questions/requests.
- Clubs are encouraged to use a team app to track who will attend matches, which they can instruct their players will serve as certification that the player is medically clear. Only players that have marked “yes” to attend may come to the field and play.
- Coaches/players are encouraged to bring and use their own hand sanitizer before, during halftime, and after each match.

# FACILITY & ARRIVAL GUIDELINES

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## Requirements

- Arriving team officials are responsible for making sure their team does not enter the field area until participants of previous game(s) exit.
- Each club must have a clear entry/exit plan for each facility, which is communicated to visiting teams
- All participants (coaches/players/referees/spectators) must wear masks while entering and leaving the facility.
- Clubs are authorized to require additional facility entrance requirements, which must be communicated before the game. It is recommended that these requirement be communicated at least 48 hours before the game.
- The home club remains responsible for providing game balls, which must be sanitized before providing to the referee for play.



# FACILITY & ARRIVAL GUIDELINES

## **Recommendations**

- The league recommends each club have a staff member(s) at each facility to manage the entry/exit process.
- Where applicable, each team should sanitize their own bench area before games.

# MATCH GUIDELINES

# PRE-MATCH GUIDELINES

## Requirements

- The referee must maintain appropriate social distance from players during the team check-in process.
- Team officials must provide a game roster to the referee prior to the game that includes the first and last names of all players who will play in the game, along with each player's jersey number.
- Team officials must present player cards to the referee for check in. The player cards may be presented electronically.
- Warm-up equipment should be washed/disinfected between matches.
- Cones must not be handled by players.
- Only one captain may participate in the coin flip and must maintain appropriate social distance with all parties involved.
- Visual field inspections must still take place.

# MATCH GUIDELINES | SUBSTITUTIONS

## Substitution Requirements

- Substitutes on the bench must wear masks and must maintain social distancing to the extent practicable.
- Entering substitutes must maintain social distance near the halfway line.
- Players must avoid physical contact when subbing on or off the field.
- If one player is waiting to sub near the halfway line, and the referee invites the player onto the field to substitute, both teams may request that the referee allow them to make additional substitutions “from the bench” so as to not have crowding at the halfway line.
- Players on the bench must wear masks (unless impracticable for health reasons) and must maintain social distancing to the extent practicable

# MATCH GUIDELINES | SPECTATORS

## **Spectator Requirements**

- Spectators are allowed to attend games as a privilege and not as a right
- Parents/spectators must wear masks and make every attempt to adhere to 6ft social distance, except within groups from the same family.

## **Spectator Recommendations**

- Spectators should be at least 10ft from touchline to avoid contact with assistant referee.

# MATCH GUIDELINES | REFEREES

## **Referee Requirements**

- Except during play, referees must maintain 10ft social distance with players.
- Referees must use their own equipment, including their own whistles, flags, coins, etc.
- Visual field inspections (no touching surfaces) still take place.

## **Referee Recommendations**

- Referees are encouraged to use electronic/alternative noisemakers vs. whistles

# MATCH GUIDELINES | PLAYERS/COACHES

## **Player/Coach Requirements**

- Coaches/players on the sideline must wear masks and maintain social distance.
- Players are allowed to use the space along the sideline in order to maintain social distance.
- In the event of injury, team staff may assess injured individuals in accordance with first aid management while wearing a masks. Family members may assist as necessary. All others must maintain at least 10ft social distance.

## **Player/Coach Recommendations**

- All team officials and players must be at least 10ft from touchline to avoid contact with assistant referee.

# POST-MATCH GUIDELINES



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## Requirements

- Teams must exit the field area quickly to allow for arriving teams to enter the facility (postpone post-game “talks”).
- No post-match line-ups and high fives; recommend general “thumbs up” and “good game” between team players and staff
- Both teams must clear their sideline area from any trash before exiting the field/facility.
- Clubs should report matches in which protocols are not followed to the NCSL Rules & Discipline Department
- Club coaches are responsible for making sure teams efficiently exit the field.

# CONFIRMED INFECTION PROTOCOLS

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## Requirements

- Any assignor who learns that an NCSL referee has a confirmed case of COVID-19 must notify the league and provide game history for the last 14 days.
- Any club with a confirmed case of COVID-19 of a player/coach/official who participated in an NCSL match must notify the league.
- Clubs must have protocols in place to require any players/parents/officials with COVID-19 to quarantine as outlined by their state and local health departments.
- If an infection is reported, it is recommended that the diagnosed individual not be allowed to return to play until the club receives written COVID-19 clearance from a physician.