



# **Return To Hockey** **Guidelines**

**This Pandemic has changed how many things operate. Hockey is one of them.**

Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Association, Inc.

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Wisconsin Amateur Hockey is committed to providing information to help keep everyone safe as we return to the ice around the state. We are committed to open programming in phases, using guidelines set forth by Federal and State health experts and USA Hockey. Although these guidelines will change as more information is known, this document and those referenced in this document, are the latest set of guidelines WAHA recommends associations to follow. As you create a return to play plan, please understand that the return is also subject to restrictions placed on associations and facilities by state, county, and local guidelines.

**Current Programing Guidelines** - WAHA will not sanction on-ice activities prior to restrictions being completely lifted by the state government. In addition, on-ice activities involving players aged 6 and under, and any Learn to Skate or Learn to Play programs are not recommended until further notice.

**Disclaimer** - The WAHA Board members are not experts in diseases or disease control. The information in this document is not intended or meant to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are constantly changing and, as such, WAHA makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. Each family and skater participates at their own risk.

### Programming Considerations

WAHA recommends that every association have its own plan in place for returning to the rink. Those associations who do not own the rinks they practice/play on should also consider the guidelines put out by the rink owners when creating their plans.

It is the local association's choice if and when to return to play, and under what circumstances. The initial plan for returning to the rinks should focus on practice and tryouts guidelines. Some areas to consider in making a decision are:

- Practices and the number of people in those practices.
- Sharing with families the association's policies and procedures and asking that they discuss expectations with their children.
  - ***Every family should exercise their own discretion regarding return to play.***
    - ***Learn more about the association's policies and procedures and discuss expectations with their children.***
    - ***Make sure you are comfortable with this information before returning to play.***
    - ***Ultimately it is the parent's choice if, and when to return. Each Family and skater participate at their own risk.***
- Plans to return to play should include but are not limited to, requirements for physical distancing, size of gatherings or number of people permitted in a facility, face coverings (masks), locker room use, bathroom use, coach's requirements in implementing association guidelines, guideline exceptions for special circumstances, etc.
- Making sure that the local hockey association governing board is comfortable with the guidelines before beginning return to play.

**New Board Assignment** – In order to be responsive to families, each association should assign one individual to be responsible to stay current on relevant and updated information and to ensure that information is shared with everyone in the association.



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**Resources** - Wisconsin does not have a statewide re-opening plan. Therefore, local rinks and associations need to follow the guidelines set forth by the following organizations as they determine when and how, to return to the rinks.

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its Considerations For Youth Sports
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services Badger Bounce Back program and its recommendations of public health experts
- State and local government officials

### General Considerations

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. Since each county and municipality have control over restrictions related to COVID-19, It is recommended that hockey associations assign a person who will be responsible to ensure all updated and relevant information is passed on to everyone within their association. Responsibilities can include:
  - a. Monitoring all relevant updates from the CDC, State and Local public health authorities.
  - b. Monitoring all relevant updates from USA Hockey and WAHA.
  - c. Communicating with local facilities on guidelines and updates.
  - d. Ensuring teams are following the prevention guidelines set by the CDC, State and Local public health authorities, USA Hockey and WAHA.
  - e. Ensuring any COVID-19 cases are reported as required by the CDC, State and Local public health authorities, USA Hockey and WAHA.
3. All participants must be USA Hockey registered for the 2020-21 season to participate in any on-ice activity.
4. Each association and team should have an emergency plan for any positive outbreak within the team, association or community.
5. 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.

### Rink Access/Use

1. The initial focus should be on practice and skills sessions only.
2. 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.
3. Incoming groups must wait until the group ahead has completely vacated the facility before entering. There shall not be interaction between the two groups.
4. 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.
5. 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.



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### Rink Access/Use (cont'd)

6. Players should arrive to the arena fully dressed, with the exception of skates (coming into 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.
  - a. Work with rink management to have a common area with marked physical distanced seating common area to put on skates or remove skate guards.
    - i. Limit locker room use as much as possible.
    - ii. When local health protocol allows use of locker rooms, work to have players appropriately physically distanced (using multiple locker rooms could help).
    - iii. For age groups where parents need to assist players with equipment, limit the number of parents in the locker room at any one time.
7. Promote a more flexible policy around supporting and not punishing a player if they decide not attend training sessions.
8. 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.
- 9. Associations should work with rink partners and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Safer at Home order being lifted. All coaches, players and parents are expected to follow all guidelines set by the rink facilities.**
10. Dry land activities inside the arena are not advised.
11. 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.

### Parents/Spectators

1. Parent/Guardians access to rinks will be governed by local health departments and the individual facilities.
2. Families should be asked to minimize the number of parents/spectators that come with the player in order to limit the number of people in the facility. Work with the local rink partner to determine what is best for that facility.
3. Communicate with families to make sure they're aware of the facility's spectator rules around physical distancing.



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### On Ice Activities

1. 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.
2. 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
3. Each session should have two Pods and they should be consistent in terms of same staff and participants. Each Pod should consist of half the number of participants allowed under local health department and rink guidelines. For example, if the maximum number of participants on the ice at one time is 20, each Pod should have 10 participants. There shall be no mixing between groups.
4. 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.
5. Avoid using player benches.
6. Coaches should be keeping players active and engaged at all times. Players should not leave the ice during a practice unless absolutely necessary.
7. Minimize chalk talk sessions where players could congregate.
8. Utilize non-contact drills.
9. 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 Local Government or local Department of Health.
10. Extra “helpers” or players who are not full-time members of the team should not be on the ice.
11. Drills should be age appropriate (station-based) and non-contact.
12. 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
13. 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 Practice

1. Encourage participants to minimize their time in or around the facility.
2. Have players put on their shoes or skate guards so that they can leave quickly in the same marked common space.
3. Remind players and parents are to follow physical distancing guidelines when leaving the facility.
4. Players should disinfect helmets, sticks and skates after each training session.
5. Wash cloths (jerseys, pant shells, socks and gloves) with high temperature after each training session.



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### Sample Activities

USA Hockey's ADM Department has produced a number of documents that can be used to design on-ice drills that incorporate social distancing, number of players, equipment and practice themes. They can be found using this link:

[https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/5da9-2178463/Early\\_Return\\_On-Ice\\_Activity\\_Samples.pdf#\\_ga=2.205735703.588301908.1591386624-1677397096.1549135653](https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/5da9-2178463/Early_Return_On-Ice_Activity_Samples.pdf#_ga=2.205735703.588301908.1591386624-1677397096.1549135653)

### Equipment Usage

Information from USA Hockey regarding wearing masks and Clear Full Face Shields versus Half Shields or Cages can be found using this link:

[https://cdn4.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a86d-2166147/FullShield.FaceMasks.COVID19.May26.2020.pdf#\\_ga=2.35407909.588301908.1591386624-1677397096.1549135653](https://cdn4.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a86d-2166147/FullShield.FaceMasks.COVID19.May26.2020.pdf#_ga=2.35407909.588301908.1591386624-1677397096.1549135653)

### Additional USA Hockey Resources

**Return to the Rink publication and Return to the Rink Tool Kit**

<https://www.usahockey.com/page/show/4965656-resources>

### Quick Summary of Important Changes to Consider

- Follow local and state guidelines.
- Make sure that all players and coaches follow all USA Hockey equipment rules.
- Limit exposure to the virus by staying focused on practices.
- Limit traveling to rinks outside of an association's home facility, especially to areas where COVID-19 cases are still prevalent.
- Practice safety recommendations. Some examples: physical distancing and eliminating handshakes and hugs after goal celebrations.
- Create an emergency plan for a possible outbreak.

Most importantly, work with a rink partner to make this a safe but also a fun environment for the participants, **while still abiding by SafeSport guidelines.**



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**Closing** - This document is intended to provide general guidelines for associations preparing to return to the rink while living in a COVID-19 environment. Please know these are not requirements but are recommendations and ideas to consider when evaluating association programming. Until COVID-19 is either eradicated or a vaccine is developed there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of infection. Since conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, the best advice is to follow the resources indicated in this document and to follow the guidelines that are recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, state and local governments and USA Hockey.

*WAHA is thankful for those essential workers and first responders who are guiding us and keeping us safe. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by:*

- *Staying Home When Sick or Experiencing Any Symptoms*
- *Practicing Physical Distancing*
- *Washing and/or Sanitizing Hands and Practicing Safe Hygiene Habits*
- *Cleaning and Sanitizing Surfaces & Equipment between uses.*

**The *Return to Hockey Guidelines* can also be found on the WAHA web site at [wahahockey.com](http://wahahockey.com). It will be updated as more information and guidance becomes available.**