Dear D9HOA Official,

The MSHSL and Youth Hockey Season is about to get underway; we are aware there have been some mixed messages surrounding the use of masks for players, coaches and officials. There are important game day protocols in the MN Hockey Guidance, you need to read it.

Everyone received email guidance from MN Hockey which makes it clear that officials are to wear masks into arenas and keep them on for pregame, game and postgame activities. Practically speaking however, this may become difficult at times. We totally expect that masks will slip, fall and possibly break at some point in hockey contests. It is important that we don't overreact to these situations, and remember we are **not**the mask police.

**FAQ**
Q: Can I pull my mask down to blow my whistle?
A: Yes; you can also get a [whistle bag](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__fox40shopusa.com_collections_whistle-2Dmask-2D1_products_whistle-2Dpouch&d=DwMF-g&c=iYbL5KES21PmbjWGSbiqZg&r=ZHn5xc4lXj4p5HkKggyCP958lK3dcCwr513uFkUiOFk&m=3_9-s0QtmQ4t09vuBDJyy_sos32Tj8C6gDjtCfO5-nc&s=kKeDlz52Yhs77w-WVQl1qIqWb8d3oc-dUDrrQo3j5ms&e=) or use an [electronic whistle](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__fox40shopusa.com_collections_electronic-2Dwhistles&d=DwMF-g&c=iYbL5KES21PmbjWGSbiqZg&r=ZHn5xc4lXj4p5HkKggyCP958lK3dcCwr513uFkUiOFk&m=3_9-s0QtmQ4t09vuBDJyy_sos32Tj8C6gDjtCfO5-nc&s=_mUId6zCF2rzIsj2D8hNIvRC-HMut-qobaYCBj4ATfc&e=)

Q: What about medical exemptions?
A: If a player, coach or official says they have a medical exemption, they are to provide the written note from their medical provider. As officials, if you have a medical exemption, you are required to have it in your possession to show to site supervisors.

Q: What type of mask/gaiter can be worn?
A: The type of mask you wear is up to you.  There are options from [CCM](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__ccmhockey.com_en_product_accessories_player_facemasks-2Dand-2Dmore_skater-2Dgame-2Dmask&d=DwMF-g&c=iYbL5KES21PmbjWGSbiqZg&r=ZHn5xc4lXj4p5HkKggyCP958lK3dcCwr513uFkUiOFk&m=3_9-s0QtmQ4t09vuBDJyy_sos32Tj8C6gDjtCfO5-nc&s=1EtkNehMyyWvYahBaSvDvsHyMHy8uvrnOCd8KRYAcU0&e=), [Bauer](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.bauer.com_en-2DUS_medical-2Dface-2Dshield_bauer-2Dreversible-2Dfabric-2Dface-2Dmask-2D644500.html&d=DwMF-g&c=iYbL5KES21PmbjWGSbiqZg&r=ZHn5xc4lXj4p5HkKggyCP958lK3dcCwr513uFkUiOFk&m=3_9-s0QtmQ4t09vuBDJyy_sos32Tj8C6gDjtCfO5-nc&s=2KHmsDo09fknZ9Yoca3Pynptch8Wy1AbSO59QfpPvQk&e=) or [UnderArmor](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.underarmour.com_en-2Dus_p_ua-2Dsportsmask_195250918950.html&d=DwMF-g&c=iYbL5KES21PmbjWGSbiqZg&r=ZHn5xc4lXj4p5HkKggyCP958lK3dcCwr513uFkUiOFk&m=3_9-s0QtmQ4t09vuBDJyy_sos32Tj8C6gDjtCfO5-nc&s=SW7c_xTCmshxtX7Uokw_TjluQiF0FAcxew4YM8_sPT0&e=" \o "https://www.underarmour.com/en-us/p/ua-sportsmask/195250918950.html); or you can use your own.  As long as it covers the nose and mouth, that is all that is required. You should experiment with your mask and whistle choices before your first game, to ensure you have a workable situation.

Q: Do I have to buy an electronic whistle?

A: No, this is your choice if you want to buy one.

Q: Can I talk with coaches or players?
A: Yes, however; Try to avoid coach and player conversations, unless it’s absolutely necessary or critical.

Q: Is there a penalty for not wearing masks?
A: If a player doesn’t have one on during play or it slides down, there is no penalty or stoppage of play. If player comes onto the ice without a mask before the start of play, send them back to the bench.  Use common sense!

Prior to the game, on-ice or off-ice officials will verify all team players and personnel have the proper mask.

1. If individuals or team is found in violation; the participant will not be allowed to participate until the equipment violation is corrected.

During or after games; on-ice or off-ice officials note any players that continuously fail to keep their masks on.

1. If coach or team personnel is reminded more than **3 times per game**, it will be recorded on the scoresheet and sent to the D9 Board for tracking via a message to the D9 Supervisor of Officials.
2. If a player is shown to be a repeat mask offender, the following actions will be taken:
	1. Officials will send players off ice who don't have masks on (similar to a mouthguard violation)
	2. If a player is warned more than**3 times per game**, it will be recorded on the scoresheet and sent to D9 Board tracking via a message to the D9 Supervisor of Officials.

D9 Executive Board Enforcement

1. Teams found to have violated any part of Section 1 or 2 of this clause will be sent aletter from the Executive Board, notifying association, coaches, players, parents and managers as their official "Team Warning".
2. Any subsequent violations found from Sections 1 or 2 of this clause, will include, but not limited to; association reps, coaches and managers meeting with the D9 Executive Board, with sanctions and possible fines.

How the mask situation will in actuality play out with officials, players and coaches, is anyone’s guess; but the directive is that they be worn at all times, even when play is in progress.

All of this can be overwhelming, and I admit I am definitely feeling overwhelmed. We need to do the best we can, with the tools we have and get through this (very short) hockey season and get onto the next phase of this pandemic.  By April, this will all be a distant thought; nobody will care about that time we wore masks while officiating hockey; and we will look forward to a more normal hockey season this fall.

D9HOA, the D9 Board and I are very grateful for your willingness to officiate this season. We appreciate your flexibility and understanding of the rules we need to adapt to, in order to have a hockey season during this pandemic. During this season, we may see some players or coaching staffs who are less willing to abide by these rules. We can report violations, but enforcement is more of an administrative matter. However, as a group, we officials need to help lead the way and set an example. Let us do our part in following the protocols set forth. Let’s not be the scapegoat, should another stoppage in the season occur due to further spread of COVID-19.

Let me know if you have any other questions.

**Respectfully,**
**Ryan E. Swafford**