



Minnesota Hockey Return To Play Rules & Guidelines

Phase 4 -- Updated December 28, 2020

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 must 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. As conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, associations must follow local government guidelines in addition to [recommendations from the CDC and MDH](#). 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 five things:

- 1. Physical Distance*
- 2. Wear a Cloth Mask/Face Covering*
- 3. Wash Hands and Practice Safe Hygiene Habits*
- 4. Clean Surfaces & Equipment between uses*
- 5. 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.

****The latest updates to this document from its original form are shown in red font.***



Phase 4 – Minnesota Hockey's Return From Six-Week Pause

Phase 4 will open on Monday January 4 and follows Minnesota's Stay Safe Phase III Plan and MDH guidelines. Phase 5 guidelines which will go into effect when games resume on January 14 will be announced after the State of Minnesota releases its guidelines for game play.

New Rules implemented by the State of Minnesota and/or Minnesota Hockey Board of Directors for the 2020-21 season only will be effective on January 4. Some may be adjusted as the season progresses and games are allowed. These new rules include:

1. Per the state mandate, cloth face coverings (masks) must be worn by everyone inside an arena at all times. This includes participants during on-ice practice and game play.
2. Locker rooms may not be used. Players should put skates on in designated areas of the arena that provide for social distancing.
3. No equipment bags will be allowed in facilities with the exception of goalies.
4. All players must arrive to the arena fully dressed, with the exception of skates, helmet and gloves. Goalies are allowed to arrive half dressed.
5. Players must not enter the arena prior to 10 minutes before the start of their scheduled ice time. They must exit the arena no later than 10 minutes following the conclusion of their ice time.
6. Spectators will not be allowed in arenas for Phase 4, with the exception of Mites/8U players and below and Disabled Hockey players who will be allowed one parent/guardian/support person per player. These spectators must be masked and socially distanced from others. **More guidance on spectators will be provided when games are allowed to take place.**
7. Dryland activities will not be allowed inside the arenas.

Rules already implemented for the 2020-21 season that remain in effect are:

1. A maximum of two coaches are allowed on the bench during game play. Please note that game play will not be in effect until Phase 5.
2. Only active players and the two coaches are allowed on the bench during game play. Players who are unable to participate may not be on the bench.
3. Coaches must wear a mask while on the ice or on the bench for all games and practices, unless they have a pre-existing medical condition which should be communicated to their association leadership in advance.
4. Players who are instructed to quarantine by public health will be considered ineligible for participation for the duration of their quarantine period. If a player instructed to quarantine plays in a game, rules subject to playing an ineligible player shall be enforced.



Arriving at the Rink

1. Any players, coaches or spectators exhibiting symptoms or signs of an illness should reference the [MDH COVID-19 Decision Tree](#) and follow its guidance prior to entering any facility or participating in on-ice activity.
2. Participants should utilize the [Minnesota Symptom Screener Guide](#) prior to any on-ice activity. These screens should be monitored by each association. Associations and teams are also encouraged to use a "Quick Entry Check In" or "Check In and Tracking Protocol," which will be provided by Minnesota Hockey.
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 cannot arrive at the rink prior to 10 minutes before the start of on-ice activities. Anyone arriving earlier than 10 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. **For practices or clinics, players at the Squirt/10U levels and above should be dropped off at the rink, and picked up afterward. Their parents/guardians should not be in the arena. Mite/8U players 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 required for any spectators, per the MDH mandate.**
7. While it is important to limit the number of people in the facility as much as possible, there may be circumstances in which a parent or guardian must also bring in young siblings. This will be allowed, but should be limited as much as possible.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. **Players must 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 must arrive a minimum of half dressed.**
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. Each association and team must have an emergency plan for any positive cases within the team or association. If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you and is a part of your organization or team, report the case to the Minnesota Department of Health at



health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us and local health officials. MDH or local public health will work with you to identify close contacts and do follow-up with your team. Minnesota Hockey provides [Guidelines for Confirmed Cases](#) within teams and associations.

15. Each association and team must have a designated contact who is responsible for concerns and communications related to COVID-19. All team and association members should know who this person is and how to contact them
16. Each association and team must maintain accurate rosters of teams or pods and be prepared to support local public health contact tracing efforts.
17. Associations should work with rink partners, and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Stay at Home order being lifted.
18. **Dryland activities inside the arena are not allowed during Phase 4.**
19. 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 **must not be any** unsupervised one-on-one interaction between a player and a coach.

Phase 4 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 **25 people in each pod. Ice rinks will be allowed to have two (2) pods of 25 people or less at a time with no mixing between the groups.**
2. Players need to maintain as much separation as possible during practices. 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 during practices.
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. Each coach and on-ice helper counts toward the number of people allowed on the ice as stipulated by the MDH.
6. Reduce contact between players as much as possible.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. There should be no spitting by any player or coach at any time inside the arena, including on the ice surface.
10. Coaches must be wearing masks at all times before, during and after practice.



After On-Ice Activities are Complete

1. No on or off ice interaction (socializing, team meetings, dryland activities) should occur following the conclusion of practice. Players must remove skates and helmets and leave the premises within 10 minutes of the end of practice.
2. Players **must** vacate the arena immediately to allow for the next user group to enter.
3. 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.
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 4 – Local Games and Scrimmages

Games and scrimmages will not be allowed during Phase 4. Guidance for local games and scrimmages will be provided in Phase 5.

Phase 4 Regulations Across State

Phase 4 is the re-introduction of hockey following the state mandated six-week pause. There must be no games or scrimmages during Phase 4. All associations and members should be aware that changes or adjustments may be made based on the status of COVID-19 in Minnesota.



Phase Overview

Activity	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Timeline	June 1	June 24	September 1	January 4
Practice	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance
Skill Clinics	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance
Tryouts	Open but not recommended per MDH guidance on no contact	Open per MDH Guidance	Open per MDH guidance	Open per MDH guidance
Dryland	Closed inside arena	Recommend outdoors	Recommend outdoors	Closed inside arena
Inter-Team Scrimmages	Closed	Open after June 24	Open per MDH guidance	Closed
Local Games	Closed	Open after July 8	Open per MDH guidance	Closed
Travel Games	Closed	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance	Closed
Tournaments	Closed	Open after July 22	Open per MDH guidance	Closed
Inter-State Travel	Closed	Not recommended per MDH guidance.	Not recommended per MDH guidance. Requires District Director approval.	Closed

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 Sports – <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.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/>