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Howard Huskies COVID-19 FAQ for the 2020-2021 Season

As we prepare for the 2021-2021 youth hockey season, the Huskies organization would like to provide you with a comprehensive FAQ document that outlines our vision for the season and what you can expect. **This document will be updated as guidelines change, once the club leadership has been able to update our policies accordingly, and reflects current guidelines.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is your vision for the season?

Our club is committed to doing whatever it takes to let our kids enjoy the sport of youth hockey. This means we will follow and adhere to all guidelines from USA Hockey, the PVAHA (our local USA Hockey affiliate), and our state and local governments. Flexibility, adaptability, and communication are key.

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, the Huskies leadership will adapt our procedures and protocols and communicate them to our members. Our commitment to our club members is transparency. To that end, we are not health experts and cannot predict the future. Each family must assess their own risks and make their own decisions and choices this season.

Our commitment to you is to share information once we have had time to process and adapt, and to be transparent. We ask in return that you maintain an outlook of flexibility and hold yourself accountable for following the guidelines, recognizing that some processes and procedures may vary across rinks. Please reinforce with your player the importance of adhering to the guidelines not only for their own health, but also for the health of their teammates and coaches.

These are uncharted waters and we are doing everything possible to make the season happen for our players. We all need to do our part and follow the guidelines to keep us as safe as possible. Programming may look different, but this offers an opportunity for creativity and high quality player development. Sports participation promotes a healthy lifestyle through physical, social, emotional, and mental well-being.

Will there be a hockey season?

Our club is planning, preparing, and proceeding as if we will have a modified season. The PVAHA (our local USA Hockey affiliate) governs the local travel and rec leagues, so all decisions regarding continuation of play apply to both leagues. As updates regarding the season are published, we will share it with you. In the meantime, we are focused on getting our players back on the ice for team practices, scrimmages, non league games, and skill development in adherence with current health guidelines.

When will league games be scheduled?

As of September 5, 2020, the PVAHA has informed us that CBHL (travel league) or CCHL (rec league) *league games* will be permitted to begin October 30th, 2020. Until league games begin, tournaments, EJEPL games played in states where games are permitted, and nonleague games in the PVAHA coverage area are permitted (where approved by the county). It is very important that all coaches, managers, players, and their families understand that all games, tournaments and showcases must be USA Hockey sanctioned, without exception. Until league games begin, the Huskies intend to schedule nonleague games. In Maryland, scrimmages and games are approved on a county level.

I heard that a team is now playing games but I thought games were not allowed?

Game play has now been approved by the states of Maryland and Virginia as well as the PVAHA which is outlined in the PVAHA's return to play document which has been published on the Huskies' website. All clubs are required to follow these guidelines without exception. The PVAHA represents MD, VA, and DC. Additionally all teams must only participate in games and tournaments which are USA Hockey sanctioned with no exceptions.

What steps is the club taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19?

We are adhering to federal, state, and local guidelines and following the USA Hockey Return to Play and CDC recommendations. This includes precautions and protocols such as limiting the number of players on the ice; focusing on skills and no contact practices; not sharing equipment; having each player bring their own water bottle; arriving to the rink in full gear; providing training to head coaches and team managers on safety protocols; encouraging hand washing and sanitizing; training coaches on alternatives to locker room talks, team huddles, and pre-game warm ups; following USA Hockey's Return to Play guidelines for small group drills and practices; eliminating the hand shake line and team celebrations; and outlining a process if a coach or player tests positive or is exposed to COVID-19.

All players will be required to self screen before coming to the rink, using the guidelines on page 4 of this document in the question "What do I do if I feel sick?". At this time, our home rink is not screening or taking temperatures at entry.

Why do we have to use Sports Engine?

Now more than ever, consistency is key. Sports Engine (SE) is the communication platform of record for our club. Our club uses SE for team management, scheduling, communications, and registration. SE syncs information from our website with the app on your phone. Throughout the season, we will send club-wide updates through SE. These include important updates on changes in policies and protocols, team notices of potential exposure, etc. These are announcements you do not want to miss.

Additionally, we will require the use of the "RSVP" feature in SE this season. Each player will need to RSVP for all practices and games. This is critical for contact tracing efforts if someone is exposed to or tests positive for COVID-19.

If you haven't already, log onto the Sports Engine account you used to register for rec or tryouts, and make sure to update it with the email addresses and phone numbers of ALL responsible parties and be sure you have "opted in" for email (do not check the box that says "does not receive email").

How are season fees being addressed? What if the season is cancelled?

Payments for season fees are being collected differently this season. After making the deposit, travel teams will be invoiced for the remaining balance in three equal installments on Sept 15, Oct 15, and Nov 15. Rec teams will be invoiced in three equal installments on Oct 5, Nov 5, and Dec 5. If the season is cancelled after all payments are due, you will receive a prorated refund. If the season is cancelled before the payments are due, those invoices will be rescinded.

Can I go inside the rink to watch my player practice?

Spectator policies vary by ice rink and are set by the rink operators, not the hockey club. The Columbia Ice Rink currently allows for one spectator per player for all age groups. The spectator must adhere to all safety guidelines, including social distancing and wearing a mask. If you are practicing at another rink, you are encouraged to check with that rink on their safety protocols.

Should players arrive in full gear?

Locker rooms are not designed for social distancing and due to rink capacity maximums and disinfecting requirements, players need to be able to enter and exit the rink quickly so the next group can enter. Locker room policies vary by county and rink. Your head coach will advise you on the locker room policy for your team's practices.

If you are not using a locker room, hockey equipment bags are not permitted in the rink. Many local rinks allow a small backpack to carry skates, keys, wallet, glasses, etc. Goalies are the exception to this guideline. Goalies may bring their gear bags into the rink and dress in a designated locker room where they can properly practice social distancing due to the fewer number of goalies.

Will we have fewer/shorter practices?

Possibly. In previous seasons, two teams were able to share a one-hour ice slot for a practice. After that practice, ten minutes was allotted to zam and clear out before the next team took the ice. In our new normal, the PVAHA and local guidelines call for 20 minutes in between teams to allow the rink staff to thoroughly disinfect the bench, lobby, and door areas. Also in our new normal, rinks must adhere to a maximum number of players on the ice at one time. Currently Howard County is in phase 3 so the number of players on the ice has been increased however this is a fluid situation and can change at any time. This results in less efficiency in sharing ice slots. As you've noticed, our season fees stayed flat this season. This means our number of ice slots stayed flat. The result is that we have an increased number of teams across the same number of ice slots. Teams that were used to practicing twice a week may have a week with 2 practices followed by a week with only one practice. This will of course evolve when or if restrictions ease. In sum, we are not reducing the number of ice slots we are purchasing and our costs are not decreasing.

What is close contact?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines “close contact” as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before symptoms began (or, for individuals without symptoms, 2 days prior to when they were tested for COVID-19) until the time the infected person begins isolation, regardless of whether either the infected person or close contact is wearing a facemask.

Additional information from the CDC on facemasks and general guidelines for youth sports is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/playing-sports.html>

What do I do if I feel sick?

Being a good team player this season means that you stay home if you are sick. All players, coaches, and spectators who feel sick, or are experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or that have come in contact with infected persons should **stay home** per local health department guidelines. Coaches will require that a player exhibiting signs or symptoms of illness leave practice (this applies in the same way as a suspected concussion).

STAY HOME if you are sick or a member of your immediate household has tested positive for COVID-19. You should not attend practice or a game if:

- 1) You have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- 2) You have any of the following symptoms:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Fever
 - Sore throat
 - Diarrhea
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Repeated shaking or chills
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Vomiting
- 3) You have a temperature higher than 100.4 (a player will not be allowed to participate until they have had 72 hours without fever, and without the use of a fever reducing medicine).

What will happen if someone on my team tests positive for COVID-19?

Our club’s process is to inform you if someone on your roster (or a team with whom you shared ice) tests positive, and you will be expected to follow CDC guidelines and the advice of your provider or local health department. Anyone who had close contact with the positive individual will need to quarantine per CDC guidelines. Our club will follow and communicate the guidance

of the local health department in the event that someone tests positive. Similar to concussion protocol, a written clearance by a healthcare provider or the local health department is required before returning to team activities.

The Huskies have developed a SOP in the event we have a positive COVID-19 case in our club. Head coaches and team managers have been trained on these protocols. The Huskies' Board of Directors has designated a COVID-19 Point of Contact (POC) for our club. The POC will work with your head coach and team manager to gather information that may be requested by the health department. The player's family is also responsible for complying with all state, local, and federal guidelines for reporting positive cases.

If a member of your immediate household has tested positive for COVID-19, inform your head coach immediately and follow the advice from your local health department and health care provider, including complying with all local quarantine guidelines.

If your player has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone who tested positive or is sick with COVID-19, please notify your head coach immediately and provide them with the date that your player was exposed or first experienced symptoms. Your head coach has been trained in the protocol that the Club will follow. The club's POC will serve as the liaison with the local health department and communicate any guidelines provided to us. A written clearance by your healthcare provider is required to be submitted to your head coach before returning to team activities, similar to concussion protocol.

If a player or coach on your team becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive, your team will be notified by the club's POC. In accordance with HIPAA regulations, the coach or player's name will not be shared with the rest of the team by the POC. The team manager will provide a list of RSVP's from SE to the POC for practices/games where potential exposure may have occurred. You may also be contacted by the state's contact tracing system.

If you are concerned about potential exposure, consult with your physician for a recommendation on getting tested. If your team has recently scrimmaged or played a game against a team where a player has tested positive, you may be notified through the local health department or the state's contact tracing system.

If a player or coach on my team tests positive for COVID-19, will my entire team have to quarantine and/or be tested?

Following the guidance from USA Hockey and our PVAHA affiliate, entire teams are not required to quarantine or have universal testing. Teams are adhering to the safety guidelines and practicing social distancing to minimize close contact between team members, decreasing the likelihood of transmission. The CDC's definition of close contact is being within 6 feet of someone for 15 minutes. If teams are following the USA Hockey guidelines for practices and games, close contact should not occur. If an individual player or family is concerned about potential exposure and wants to quarantine or take a test, they should consult with their healthcare provider.

Will all teams receive a notification if a Huskies player or coach tests positive?

We know this is a difficult and uncertain time. To ensure transparency and accuracy of information, the club will receive a general notification in the form of a Sports Engine email when a rostered member of the club has a positive test result. Teams that shared the ice with that player or coach will receive a more detailed email immediately after we are notified of a positive test. Because the rink follows strict disinfection procedures before and after each ice slot, only teammates who shared the ice with that player or coach are considered at risk for potential exposure during the practice or game.

How can I be sure the club is following the proper reporting protocols?

The Howard County Health Department and the PVAHA have reviewed and approved our standard operating procedure for when a rostered member of the club has a positive test result. The Howard County Health Department has approved the cleaning and disinfecting procedures of the Columbia Ice Rink.

If there is a positive test result, will the Columbia Ice Rink close for 24 hours?

Because the local health department has reviewed the disinfection procedures and the management of ice slots and rink traffic, the rink is not required to close for 24 hours in the event that anyone who uses the facility (Huskies hockey players, figure skaters, high school players, program participants) tests positive for COVID-19.

What resources are you using to make decisions about how to conduct the season?

We are closely following guidance from USA Hockey, the PVAHA (our local USA Hockey affiliate), and our state and local governments and will adjust our procedures as information and requirements are updated. We are also drawing on information from the CDC and other athletic resources. One of our Huskies parents, Amy Bell, who is a physician with experience in public health, has volunteered to assist with navigating available guidance and communicating health-related information. This is an unprecedented time and we welcome input from anyone in our community with expertise in these areas. If you are available to assist as we work through procedures related to COVID-19 and the 2020-2021 hockey season, please contact the Huskies at info@howardhuskies.org.

How can I assess the risk level for youth sports?

The Aspen Institute's Return to Organized Sports project has compiled the chart below, based off of CDC recommendations.

The best return to play plans align with [CDC risk categories](#) and take a phased approach, especially with contact sports. Regardless of the phase achieved, your child's program should be prepared to revert to an earlier phase as needed. The CDC risk categories:

Lowest Risk: Skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family.

Increasing Risk: Team-based practice.

More Risk: Within-team competition.

Even More Risk: Competition between teams from same local geographic area.

Highest Risk: Competition between teams from different geographic areas.

Information in this document was compiled from the CDC, USA Hockey, Sports Engine, the Aspen Institute, and the PVAHA.

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, the Howard County Youth Hockey Club makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information.