

The following HFA 21/22 Soccer Season Return-To-Play Recommendations and COVID-19 Protocols are an attempt by HFA to take the latest city and county requirements, as well as the latest USSSA and facility requirements, and combine them with the latest and best safety practices; all in an attempt to provide our members with a comprehensive and easy to follow set of guidelines and recommendations.

**\*\*\*Please note that no set of recommendations or guidelines can completely eliminate the risk of COVID transmission and each player must make the decision for themselves that playing is the prudent choice for their situation\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Please also note that all the data available at this time overwhelmingly indicates that it is extremely unlikely that transmission of COVID-19 will occur between individuals participating in sports at an outdoor venue. Furthermore, there has been extensive attention focused on athletes and those sports that continued to play during the first year of the pandemic. Contact tracing, while not perfect, has led to an almost universal understanding that athletes that have tested positive for COVID-19 were not infected during the act of participating in an athletic event. There is also scant evidence that attending a sporting event, as a spectator, in an outdoor venue, will lead to COVID-19 being transmitted between spectators. This is all very positive news, but there are no guarantees when it comes to viruses, and if you have concerns about playing soccer with HFA, you should consult your Physician immediately in order to seek professional medical advice with someone that has intimate knowledge of your medical history\*\*\***

The first portion of these recommendations are mandatory guidelines (as deemed by our rental agreements per local and state recommendations) and then we will follow-up with some very strongly recommended recommendations and practices. Please understand that we are all in this together and the more stringently that we all adhere to the guidelines, recommendations and best practices found in this document, the safer we will all be!

**Mandatory Guidelines – This is non-negotiable and must be observed pursuant to city and county guidelines as well as HFA Policy and we are required to notify you according to our rental agreements:**

- **IF YOU FEEL SICK OR ARE SHOWING SYMPTOMS OF HAVING CONTRACTED COVID, STAY HOME!!!**
  - According to the CDC, COVID symptoms include - Fever or chills, Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Fatigue, Muscle or body aches, Headache, New loss of taste or smell, Sore throat, Congestion or runny nose, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea.
  - A study conducted by the University of Southern California identified that the onset of COVID symptoms tends to follow a specific order as follows:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> symptom – Fever
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> symptom – Cough
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> symptom – Nausea or Vomiting

- 4<sup>th</sup> symptom – Diarrhea
  - The study found that patients with seasonal flu more commonly developed a cough before the onset of fever.
  - Experts with frontline experience emphasize that this commonly found progression isn't always how the disease progresses, but it's still a useful guide for healthcare providers and those potentially afflicted.
- **Mandatory Guidelines Regarding the Referees:**
  - Players must always keep proper social distancing (6ft) from the center referee and both linesmen at all times. NO EXCUSES, do not get within six feet of an HFA Match Official ever.
  - HFA strongly suggests that team managers write down their players' numbers on the Game Day Roster before the Referee conducts the pre-game check-in, in order to minimize the amount of time that the Referees, managers, and players are in close contact with each other.
    - If players are masking prior to the match then those players will be required to momentarily expose their face to the referee during the check in process. Once the referee has confirmed a player's identity, that player can put their face mask back on until they enter the field of play during the match.
  - One player per team shall be allowed at the coin toss with the referee to begin a game. The referee shall always be in possession of the coin.
  - Only a team manager or on-field captain should approach the referee. Please make sure to maintain proper social distancing (6ft) to ask questions and gain clarification.

## General Recommendations – Social Distancing, Masks, Playing In A Match, Team Technical Areas, Referee Interactions, Etc.:

- **Social Distancing** - Social Distancing is a key component in minimizing the spread of COVID-19. It is recommended that managers and players not gather in larger groups when possible, minimize extended close quarters in-person contact with others, and should try to maintain 6 feet of separation from individuals when navigating the soccer facilities. The facilities that we rent from kindly request that participants try to observe the following guidelines:
  - 6ft social distancing games when possible.
  - No extended gathering in common areas or parking lots.
  - All attendees should ensure that they are maximizing the distance between team areas on the sideline of a match.
  - All attendees should leave the soccer complex in a timely manner after their game ends.

- **Face Coverings:**  
**Face coverings/masks are no longer mandatory.** Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but are intended to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Face coverings can be made of cloth materials or medical grade.
  - Soccer Facilities recommend that managers, players, and spectators wear face coverings while at the facility; this includes while walking to/from the field and while on the sideline. This is not mandatory, but strongly suggested.
  - Players are **NOT ALLOWED** to wear face coverings while participating in games (i.e., while on the field), to prevent unnecessary risk of injury or potential medical situations.
  
- **Guidelines Regarding the Field of Play:**
  - Team should establish their bench area with more than 10ft of distance between each team's area on the sideline.
    - All attendees should remain at least 6' back from the sideline.
  - Social distancing on the sidelines is highly recommended.
    - It is recommended that Substitutes and Managers attempt to social distance while on the sideline and masking is recommended, but not required.
  - No spitting (spitting on someone is an automatic Violent Conduct Red Card) ever!
  - Please instruct you player to cough or sneeze away from other participants.
  - You should seek to avoid handshakes, fist bumps, or high fives.
  - Teams should make an attempt to leave the field in a timely manner after their game concludes.
    - All facilities are asking that managers, players and spectators to not linger after your match has concluded. If you are going to stay, please gather your items and have everyone leave the technical area of the field that you just finished your game. Make sure to set up in an area away from the other teams that are playing.
  
- **Recommendations Regarding Equipment**
  - Each player should provide their own equipment – The sharing of equipment is not recommended.
  - It has been recommended that the match ball to be cleaned/sanitized/ disinfected, at the end of each half and as needed during play.
  - Players should avoid licking their fingers before handling the ball.
  - Each player should bring their own water bottle or sports drink bottle.
  
- **Recommendations Regarding Food and Drinks**
  - Each player should bring their own water bottle or sports drink bottle.
  - It is recommended that any team snacks (like energy bars) and/or drinks (energy drinks) shared among teammates should be pre-packaged and sealed.

- Separate from health recommendations, grilling food at facilities is prohibited.

### **Attendance Tracking:**

Knowing who attends HFA League games can help ensure that the spread of COVID-19 is minimized, please make every effort to ensure that you know who is in attendance at each of your games this season. While spectators are allowed to attend, most facilities are strongly recommending that spectators are kept to a minimum

- Spectators are permitted to attend HFA games; this includes family members. Please note that this is completely reliant on the policies of the fields we rent and if they decide at any point in the future that they will not prohibit spectators, then we will have to follow guidance of the facilities requirements.
- Captains must bring a printed roster to each game.
  - All players must be checked in to the game; captains should make sure that the Referee checks in any players who arrive late at the field.
  - If any players are present at the game but are not checked in, then captains should note these on the printed team roster as present by not participating.

### **HFA COVID-19 Protocol for when a Player Tests Positive:**

- Managers must report to the HFA League Administrator if any manager or player who has attended their game has been exposed to the coronavirus, is being tested for COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19.
- HFA will then send a notification to the teams and referees who were at that game so all participants involved are notified of potential exposure.
- If the player is registered with multiple teams (Regular, O30, and/or O40), HFA will notify any other teams that may be affected.
- If an affected team has a game scheduled for the following Sunday, HFA will notify the opposing team; both teams will have the option to postpone the game, meaning the game will be rescheduled in an overabundance of caution.
- Any player identified as being exposed to COVID-19 will be required to follow these steps:
  - Player must tell their manager and the manager must report to the HFA League Administrator the dates/times when an individual last played in an HFA match, when the individual suspects they contracted COVID-19 and if the player is being tested.
  - At this point the player will be suspended in TeamConnect pending confirmation that the player has tested negative for COVID-19 or has sat out the required minimum number of days for the virus to expire.
    - Managers or players who have tested positive for COVID-19 must remain off facility grounds for a minimum of 10 days or until a negative result has been provided.