



Bethlehem Soccer Club's Return to Play Guidelines.

June 22nd, 2020 (Ver.1)

This document is designed to be a starting point and framework for our athletes, parents, coaches and assistants to use as a guideline for Bethlehem Soccer Club's return to play. This document is by no means a blanket permission to return to the fields and playing soccer. Each club member is expected to strictly follow state and local guidelines for the resumption of play as individual counties and jurisdictions may have additional restrictions in place that affect return to play.

PLEASE NOTE: UNDERSTAND THAT BSC'S INSURANCE (through EPYSA) IS ONLY IN EFFECT IF OUR ACTIVITIES ARE CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES AND THE COUNTY IS IN THE GOVERNOR'S GREEN PHASE OR BETTER.

**Please also note that the purpose of this document is to provide athletes, parents, coaches, and assistants with information they can use to assist them with developing their return to training programs in the context of CoVid-19. As a guideline meant to be used by athletes and organizations with vastly different resources, this document cannot be prescriptive; rather, it should spark thoughtful deliberation among athletes, parents, coaches, and assistants, who will use this information to create their own unique return to training plan that is specific to their situation. Many of the recommendations rely upon rules and regulations set forth by public health authorities, which will/may be different across the country, state and county. In addition, there will be other logistical challenges of returning to training following CoVid-19.

The information contained in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment or even parents' own family decisions. All content, including text, graphics, images, and information, are provided for general informational purposes only. The knowledge and circumstances around CoVid-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Bethlehem Soccer Club and Hanover Township (Northampton County) makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the completeness of this information. Further, you should seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials if you have specific questions about your return to training and competition.

Finally, although the young and healthy may be subject to less severe cases of CoVid-19, every case of this disease is potentially life-altering or deadly, particularly in those with risk factors that may occur within our communities. Until CoVid-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is

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no way of eliminating the risk of infection. This should always be in the forefront when deciding and considering your return to training and play.

Implementing the Return-to-Play Guidelines presented here will require a cooperative relationship between the Club, Coach, Parent, and Player. While the Club and Coach will take reasonable efforts to create a safe environment, the Club cannot guarantee safety of the participants. The Parent must make the decision for their child to return to play.

Whereas there are many that will be excited to return to play, there are others who may be apprehensive. If a player, parent, or family is not comfortable returning to play – **THEY SHOULDN'T**. We must demonstrate respect and courtesy for everyone's feelings during this time and ensure that we provide a safe environment as we return to play.

The following are recommendations for returning to play in phases designed to help keep all participants and our community safe.

1. The following should be applied *regardless of the Return to Play phase*:

- a. Participation in any group activities is only allowed if you have had no signs or symptoms of CoVid-19, no signs/symptoms that may have been CoVid-19, or have not been exposed to someone who has had signs or symptoms of CoVid-19 for a minimum period of 14 days before participation.
- b. If you are sick or feel sick, **STAY HOME**.
- c. At-risk individuals, youth or adult, **STAY HOME** (if you are unsure if you are considered at-risk, please consult your medical provider directly).
- d. Anyone who self-reports a temperature of 100.3 or more should be sent home and not allowed to participate until cleared by a medical professional.
- e. A "station" will be assigned for each player to place their equipment and only their equipment, and they should return to their "station" during breaks. Stations will be painted 10-feet apart along the sidelines for all players during Phase I – V should allow for adequate distance per these guidelines.
- f. Each player must utilize their own equipment, including their own soccer ball in Phases I – II. Shared soccer balls are allowed (some with caveats or restrictions) in Phases III – V, but they must be disinfected after each session as well as during sessions when possible.
- g. In **ALL** Phases, no one is to share water, towels, or any personal equipment. This includes, but not limited to:
 - i. Shin guards, tape, hairbands.
 - ii. Jersey/uniform.
 - iii. Pinnies or bibs of any kind.

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1. A pinnie/bib will be assigned to each player to take home and care for OR each player will be asked to bring/wear their own alternative color shirt.
 - iv. soccer balls in some phases phase I and II.
- h. No centralized hydration or refreshment stations.
- i. Spectators at events should be limited and must maintain maximum social or physical distancing (and should not include at risk populations) by remaining in vehicles within sightline of fields or socially distancing from others away from the field sidelines. No spectator should be within 15 feet of sidelines. BSC recommends spectators wear a mask when social distancing is not possible.
- j. Parents should provide the following sanitizing options for their children to decrease the sharing of bottles/containers. The club will have a limited amount specifically for shared club equipment.
 - i. Hand sanitizer
 - ii. Disinfectant wipes to be used to wipe down all equipment
- k. Respect for each individual's choices must be the top priority. If a participant wishes to wear a face mask, this should be allowed, and accommodations made if needed.
- l. Recommended to encourage coaches and assistants to wear face masks whenever possible

2. It is important to note that these Phases may not always proceed linearly; a step backwards in Phases may be required following continuous review of the ongoing situation and environment and further guidance from state or local authorities.

a. **PHASE I (individual training group sizes of 10 or less):**

Focused on return to activity with individual training (one player with their own ball) within small groups

1. A maximum of two coaches allowed per half of field during practices (head, assistant, and GK coaches included).
 - If your team does not have a second coach, a volunteer parent is recommended to assist with maintaining these guidelines (especially with younger teams); however, if there is not a parent volunteer available, practice/game may need to be cancelled or rescheduled.
2. No more than 8 players to be present on each half of the field at a scheduled time (group size of 10 or less per half of field).
3. No physical contact should occur.
4. Groups on a half field should not exceed 10 people.
5. No sharing of water or equipment, including soccer balls.
6. Each player should sanitize all individual gear between trainings:

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- Only the coach may handle cones, disks, etc. on their half of the field.

7. Participants are to remain a minimum of 10 feet apart.

- This includes on and off the field.
- Designated areas for each attendee's gear should be clearly marked off the field.
- While CDC and other authorities recommended 6 feet for social or physical distancing purposes, due to the nature of physical activity and sports, our recommendation is to increase the distance for soccer to 10 feet.

8. Practice times should be set to maximize social or physical distancing to include 'turnover' time between different teams.

9. Spectators at events should be limited and must maintain maximum social or physical distancing (and should not include at risk populations) by remaining in vehicles within sightline of fields or socially distancing from others away from the field sidelines. No spectator should be within 15 feet of sidelines. BSC recommends spectators wear a mask when social distancing is not possible.

b. PHASE II (individual training group size 15):

Focused on return to activity with individual/small group training (multiple players, one ball, no contact) within larger groups (group size 15)

1. A maximum of two coaches/staff allowed per half field during practices (head, assistant, and GK coaches included).

- If your team does not have a second coach, a volunteer parent is recommended to assist with maintaining these guidelines (especially with younger teams); however, if there is not a parent volunteer available, practice/game may need to be cancelled or rescheduled.

2. No more than 12 players to be present on each half of the field at a scheduled time (group size of 15 or less).

3. No physical contact should occur.

4. Groups on a half field should not exceed 15 people.

5. No sharing of water or equipment. Soccer balls are excluded.

- All soccer balls should be sanitized before next practice/scrimmage/game.
- If possible, soccer balls should be sanitized at halftime and whenever convenient during training.

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- Soccer balls may be shared but should not be touched with the hands.
- Soccer balls that come in contact with head, shoulder, or upper chest area more frequently will require additional and more frequent disinfection.
- Only the coach may handle cones, disks, goals, etc.

6. Each player and coach should sanitize all of their individual gear between each training session.

7. Participants are to remain 6 feet apart off of the field.

- Designated areas for each attendee's gear should be clearly marked off the field.

8. Practice times should be set to maximize social or physical distancing to include 'turnover' time between different teams.

9. Spectators at events should be limited and must maintain maximum social or physical distancing (and should not include at risk populations) by remaining in vehicles within sightline of fields or socially distancing from others away from the field sidelines. No spectator should be within 15 feet of sidelines. BSC recommends spectators wear a mask when social distancing is not possible.

c. **PHASE III (team training group size 15)**

Focused on team training with controlled scrimmages/small-sided games and some physical contact allowed.

1. A maximum number of coaches/staff allowed per half field during practices (head, assistant, and GK coaches included) is to be determined based on group sizes.

- If your team does not have a second coach, a volunteer parent is recommended to assist with maintaining these guidelines (especially with younger teams). ; however, if there is not a parent volunteer available, practice/game may need to be cancelled or rescheduled.

2. Only two coaches/managers allowed for scrimmage / practice games per team per half of field.

3. Physical contact that is necessary for training may occur; whenever possible, it should be limited.

- This includes limiting close group discussions, no 'high fives', no embracing, etc.

4. No sharing of water or equipment; Soccer balls are excluded.

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- All soccer balls should be sanitized before next practice/scrimmage/game.
- If possible, soccer balls should be sanitized at halftime and whenever convenient during training.
- Soccer balls that come in contact with head, shoulder, or upper chest area more frequently will require additional and more frequent disinfection.
- Only the coach may handle cones, disks, goals, etc.

5. Participants are to remain 6 feet apart off of the field.

- Designated areas for each attendee's gear should be clearly marked off the field.

6. Spectators are allowed, but with proper social or physical distancing and no contact with players or teams. Spectators should be located a minimum of 15 feet away from sidelines.

d. **PHASE IV (training and group size unrestricted)**

Full return to play

1. No training restrictions.

2. Physical contact should be minimized whenever possible.

- No physical contact should occur outside of what is necessary for training / games.
- This includes limiting close group discussions, no 'high fives', no embracing etc.

3. Participants are to remain 6 feet apart off of the field.

- Designated areas for each attendee's gear should be clearly marked off the field.

4. No sharing of water or equipment; Soccer balls are excluded.

- All soccer balls should be sanitized before next practice/scrimmage/game.
- If possible, soccer balls should be sanitized at halftime and whenever convenient during training.
- Soccer balls that come in contact with head, shoulder, or upper chest area more frequently will require additional and more frequent disinfection.

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- Only the coach may handle cones.

5. Spectators are allowed but with proper social or physical distancing and no contact with players or teams. At-risk individuals should still take precautions. Spectators should be located a minimum of 15 feet away from sidelines.

Additional Recommendations

(This information is provided for guidance only and should not be considered exhaustive)

CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Create and distribute protocols to members.
- Contact insurers to confirm all coverages and communicate that information to participants prior to commencement of initial training.
- Have an effective communication plan in place.
- Identify strategies for working with public health officials to notify adult leaders, youth and their families if the organization becomes aware of a participant or adult leader has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others while at a youth activity.
- Maintain participant confidentiality regarding health status.
- Be sensitive and accommodating to parents who may be uncomfortable with returning to play at this time.
- Have an action plan in place, in case of notification of a positive test result.
- Train and educate all coaches on protocols and requirements, including state and local regulations, CDC recommendations, and other necessary safety information.
- Be prepared to shut down and stop operations.
- Provide adequate field space for social or physical distancing.
- Provide sanitizing items to coaches to disinfect shared equipment.
- Develop a relationship and a dialogue with local health officials.

COACH RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Promote the health and safety of the participants.
- Inquire how the athletes are feeling. Send home anyone you believe acts or looks ill.
- Follow all state and local health protocols and guidelines.
- Ensure all athletes have their own individual equipment (ball, water, bag, etc.)

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- Ensure coach is the only person to handle equipment (e.g. cones, disks, etc.); do not enlist parental or attendee assistance unless they are the designated volunteer coach.
- All training should be conducted outdoors and compliant with social or physical distancing per state or local health guidelines.
- Always wear a face mask, even when not actively coaching.
- Coaches should maintain social distance requirements from players based on state and local health requirements. While instructing, coaches should maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet due to higher level voices/yelling and potential for increased particle distance.
- Have fun, stay positive – players and parents are looking to you for leadership.
- The use of communal scrimmage vests, or pinnies, is not recommended at this time. Pinnies will be assigned to each player.
- Respect players, parents, and families by accommodating those that may not yet be comfortable with returning.
- Wash masks daily.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- If you are not comfortable with returning to play, **DON'T**. You are the only one who will make the decision when your child returns to play.
- Ensure your child is healthy and check your child's temperature before activities with others.
- Do not carpool or limit carpooling to specific families.
- During practices, scrimmages, and games stay in car or adhere to social distance requirements, based on state and local health requirements.
- When at training, wear a mask if outside your car.
- Ensure child's clothing is washed after every training.
- Ensure all equipment (cleats, ball, shin guards etc.) are sanitized before and after every training. Sanitization/disinfection should consist of cleaning/wiping down equipment with a diluted bleach solution or a minimum 70% alcohol solution.
- Notify your club immediately if your child becomes ill for any reason.
- Do not assist your coach with equipment before or after training.
- Be sure your child has necessary hand sanitizing and disinfecting products with them at every training.
- Wash masks daily.

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PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- If you are not comfortable with returning to play, **DON'T**.
- Take your temperature daily and especially before activities with others.
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after training.
- Bring, and use, hand sanitizer with you at every training.
- Wear mask before and immediately after all training.
- Wash masks daily.
- Do not touch or share anyone else's equipment, water, food or bags.
- Practice social or physical distancing, place bags and equipment at least 6 feet apart.
- Wash and sanitize all equipment before and after every training. Sanitization/disinfection should consist of cleaning/wiping down equipment with a diluted bleach solution or a minimum 70% alcohol solution.
- No group celebrations, high-fives, hugs, handshakes, fist-bumps, etc.
- Follow all CDC guidelines as well those of your local health authorities.

Please note that any information contained herein is for informational purposes only and may not be construed as a directive, edict, or in place of medical or legal advice. This document may only be used in the spirit for which it was intended.

- CDC Guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

- EPYSA Guidelines

<https://www.epysa.org/return-to-play-protocols/>