



To: MSA Club Presidents, Executive Directors, and Directors of Coaching
From: Kay Bouler, Executive Director
CC: MSA Council
Date: August 31, 2020

Subject: Mississippi Soccer Association (MSA) – Return-to-Play Update

The Mississippi Soccer Association (MSA) and its members have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the community and returning to play in a methodical manner. Effective September 1, 2020, MSA will move into Phase IV of our Return-to-Play guidelines. Phase IV is defined by the following activities and restrictions:

Restrictions

- Attendee capacity (coach, player, spectator, team official) at each field not to exceed what has been defined by state, county, municipal, or facility requirements.
- No sharing of water or equipment.
- Overnight travel should be avoided whenever possible.
- Masks required for coaches at all times.
- Masks required for players transit to/from the field and while not participating in play.
- Masks required for all non-players transit to/from the field and while not sitting stationary in a designated area. However, if there is going to be cheering from the sidelines, a mask should be worn.
- No tents allowed in spectator areas for MSA games/tournaments.
- Limitations on participants per field to be in accordance with state and municipality proclamations/requirement.
- Practice/Game times should be set to maximize social distancing.
 - Recommend a minimum of 30 minutes between end time of one session and the start time of the next.
 - If youth need supervision while waiting to pickup, adults should be at least six (6) feet apart.

Activities Permitted

- Participation in MSA league games and sanctioned tournaments.
- Participation in all recreation/competitive friendlies/games.
- **Out-of-State Travel permitted only to those states in Phase III or higher.**
- **Guidelines/Protocols for the state being traveled to must be followed. It is the team's responsibility to understand and adhere to these.**
- **Notification of Travel required for all out-of-state travel until further notice.**

Current Phases, by State, as of 8/31/20

Louisiana - Phase II
Arkansas - Phase III
Tennessee - Phase III
Alabama - Phase IV
N. TX & S. TX - Phase III

Florida - Phase I, II, and III depending on area of state
To verify status of play for any states, contact the respective USYS state office for confirmation.

Moving into Phase IV comes with great responsibility and is a decision that is not being made lightly. MSA has continued to monitor the developments in Mississippi and have sought input from various organizations at the state, county, and municipal levels, as well as with other state associations nationally who have returned to play. We are confident that moving to Phase IV is appropriate based on the downward trends in COVID cases, the fact that Mississippi has seen the R Naught score continue to decline, and the commitment of the MSA membership to adhere to defined guidelines and protocols.

Although in Phase IV, we must continue to respect and recognize that there are statewide Executive Orders, as well as county and municipal directives and proclamations that must be adhered to. MSA developed a three-step Return-to-Competition guidelines which will be implemented for all MSA managed leagues and sanctioned tournaments. They are:



MISSISSIPPI SOCCER Return-To-Play Update –

MSA will enter Phase IV and follow Step 2 guidelines effective September 1, 2020

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Attendance (Includes players, coaches/team officials, referees, and staff)	<p>No Spectators.</p> <p>Total number of attendees (players, coaches/team officials, referees, and staff) will not exceed state, county municipal or facility requirements.</p> <p>NOTE: The Governor's Executive Order regarding youth sports does not allow for more than 100 people per event. An event would be considered a full-size soccer field.</p>	<p>Spectators allowed. All spectators must wear a mask at all times and maintain social distance.</p> <p>Total number of attendees (players, coaches/team officials, referees, and staff) will not exceed state, county municipal or facility requirements.</p> <p>NOTE: The Governor's Executive Order regarding youth sports does not allow for more than 100 people per event. An event would be considered a full-size soccer field.</p>	No restrictions
Coaches/Team Officials	<p>Required to wear masks at all times</p> <p>Responsible for ensuring adherence to all requirements.</p>	<p>Required to wear masks at all times</p> <p>Responsible for ensuring adherence to all requirements.</p>	No restrictions
Players	Required to wear masks to/from field and when not playing.	Required to wear masks to/from field and when not playing.	No restrictions
Team and Parent/Spectator Seating	Teams will sit on opposite sides of the field from each other, behind the Assistant Referee or as defined by league or tournament requirements	<p>Teams will sit on opposite sides of the field from each other, behind the Assistant Referee.</p> <p>Spectators will sit on the same side of the field as their team but the opposite half of the field away from the Assistant Referee.</p>	No restrictions
Referees	<p>If not feeling well – STAY HOME.</p> <p>Maintain six (6) feet from other officials when game is not being played.</p> <p>Requirement to wear mask to/from the field.</p> <p>If a player is injured to not get within six (6) feet; call coach/team official on to address player injury.</p> <p>No pre/post game handshakes.</p>	<p>If not feeling well – STAY HOME.</p> <p>Maintain six (6) feet from other officials when game is not being played.</p> <p>Requirement to wear mask to/from the field.</p> <p>If a player is injured to not get within six (6) feet; call coach/team official on to address player injury.</p> <p>No pre/post game handshakes.</p>	No restrictions
Game Schedules	Games will be scheduled with greater time between end and start time to minimize unnecessary contact.	Games will be scheduled with greater time between end and start time to minimize unnecessary contact.	No restrictions
Game Day Operations	<p>MSA staff, when present, to wear masks always.</p> <p>Gloves to be worn by staff when picking up trash or sanitizing equipment.</p> <p>No pre-game coin toss; Home team chooses direction</p> <p>No Benches</p> <p>No pre/post game handshakes</p> <p>Pop-up tents may be used for players only. Recommend teams have multiple pop-up tents in order to maximize social distancing.</p> <p>Sanitization plans to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Game balls - Game day signage - Goalposts, corner flags 	<p>MSA staff, when present, to wear masks always.</p> <p>Gloves to be worn by staff when picking up trash or sanitizing equipment.</p> <p>No pre-game coin toss; Home team chooses direction</p> <p>No Benches</p> <p>No pre/post game handshakes</p> <p>Pop-up tents may be used for players only. Recommend teams have multiple pop-up tents in order to maximize social distancing.</p> <p>Sanitization plans to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Game balls - Game day signage - Goalposts, corner flags 	No restrictions
Out-of-State Travel	Out-of-State travel not permitted	<p>Out-of-State Travel Allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teams may only travel to those states operating in Phase III or higher. - Teams must follow receiving state guidelines. It is the team's responsibility to identify these guidelines. - Notification of Travel is required for all Out-of-State Travel until further notice. - Overnight travel should be avoided whenever possible 	No restrictions

Every league must meet the minimum requirements of their State and local directives.



Movement from Step 2 to Step 3 will be determined based on the continued evolution of the pandemic as well as any changes to state, county, and local directives.

Along with the three-step Return-to-Competition, MSA has developed the protocols and communications for if an individual is exposed, has symptoms, or receives a positive result. These protocols and communications have been developed with guidance from the CDC, MS Department of Health Services, and best practices from around the country where competitions have already returned and will be available on the MSA website.

It is imperative that we do not lose our discipline and continue our diligence in wearing masks, remaining socially distant, and practicing good hygiene by washing our hands. Even with that the following remains true:

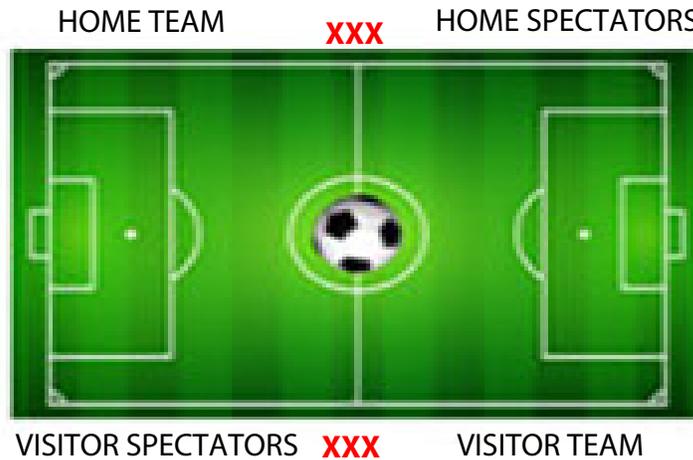
- If you are sick or feel sick, **STAY HOME**
- At risk individuals, youth or adult, **STAY HOME**
- Assign a “station” for each player to place their equipment, and that they should return to during breaks
- **Masks are a requirement:**
 - Player – Wear mask to/from the field and when on the bench/not playing
 - Referee – Wear mask to/from the field and when not officiating the match.
 - Coach/Team Official – Wear mask at all times.
 - Spectator – Wear mask at all times
- No high 5’s, handshakes, knuckles, group celebrations, or exchanges that involve person-to-person contact.
- Each player must have their own ball and equipment; all equipment should be disinfected after every game
- No one is to share water, towels, or any equipment. This includes, but not limited to:
 - GK Gloves; GK’s should only use water on their gloves, never saliva.
 - Shoes, Socks, or Shin Guards
 - Jersey/Uniform
 - Only coaches should place and pick-up cones
 - Practice Vest/Pinnies; At minimum these **must** be washed after each use.
- No centralized hydration or refreshment stations
- Recommend having sanitizing options available. This may include:
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Disinfectant wipes to be used to wipe down all equipment
- 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

Ultimately, if you are not comfortable with returning to play – **DON’T**. There is no single answer or decision that will be supported by all. But, it is our intention to continue to demonstrate a commitment to adhering to the defined guidelines and develop confidence in the community that playing soccer and returning to competition will be done as safely as possible and that MSA and its membership are doing everything we can to be thoughtful in our decisions with player, coach, family and community safety being our top priority.

MSA, its staff, and our member Clubs and Leagues are absolutely focused on the safety and well-being of everyone involved in our great game but it will be the responsibility of EVERYONE to work together to adhere to these guidelines. We are in a tremendous position to be able to get kids throughout Mississippi back on the field and playing the game they love. Now that we are in that position **EVERYONE**, especially the adults must demonstrate the appropriate commitment and discipline to adhering to the defined guidelines. Let us all work together to show all of Mississippi that the soccer community will do whatever it takes to allow our kids to play this great game.

FOR THE 2020-21 MSA SEASON:

**ALL GAMES (RECREATIONAL/COMPETITIVE)
ARE TO BE STRUCTURED IN THIS FORMAT**



The following additional guidelines apply to all MSA sanctioned tournaments, leagues (recreational/competitive) as well as any gathering of teams greater than four (4) at any given time.

- 1) Display signs at the entrance of the complex(es) outlining mask requirements per MSA, state, local and CDC Guidelines. Masks should be worn on the sidelines to help prevent transmission of COVID19 or other communicable diseases.
- 2) Tents, tarps or large group structures should not be permitted in the spectator areas of sidelines (Only within technical areas for players and coaches)
- 3) Coaches must wear masks until further notice.
- 4) Teams should sit on the end with the AR and their respective families/spectators must sit as outlined in the above diagram. No one may sit or stand at the mid line for any reason, nor behind goals. Family/spectators must stay on their respective side of the field and allow for social distancing whenever possible. It is advised to keep family/spectators to a minimum when possible.
- 5) Fields being used should be alternated where possible. Game times should be altered, when possible, to eliminate large gatherings for multiple games.
- 6) Players not participating in the games must wear masks. Once a player comes off the field, they are allowed a proper/reasonable amount of time to cool down before putting on a mask.
- 7) MSA Sanctioned tournaments may not accept teams into their event(s) unless the teams' home state allows out-of-state travel. It is up to the tournament host to confirm this prior to acceptance.