



Referee Return to Play Protocol

With Responsibilities & Guidelines

Mississippi Soccer State Referee Committee

in cooperation with

Mississippi Soccer Association

Revised: July 31, 2020

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These responsibilities and guidelines have been promulgated by the Mississippi Referee Committee with the intention of adhering to the following guiding principles:

1. **Respect for the autonomy of every match official** regarding their personal health concerns. No match official should feel pressured to accept any assignment if they believe that doing so puts themselves or others at undue risk.
2. **Adherence to all applicable regulations, guidelines or best practices** promulgated by federal, state and local government and health entities, the U.S. Soccer Federation, US Youth Soccer, the Mississippi Soccer Association (in deference to their national governing bodies), and to the requirements or restrictions of the facility/venue at which each game is played. When in conflict, the most restrictive of any of these guidelines must be adhered to. If, for example, a facility / venue imposes a lower cap on the number of spectators than does the state government, then that lower cap must be honored.
3. **Participant awareness of potential exposures** to the novel coronavirus or other communicable diseases **balanced with confidentiality** with regards to the personal health information of any particular individual.
4. **Shared responsibility** among all stakeholders for the maintenance of a safe and healthy playing environment.

5. **Acknowledgement of an evolving environment of risk.** If you believe that these guidelines do not represent prudent measures to address the risks of COVID-19 or other, communicable diseases, please share your concerns with the State Referee Committee by contacting Tim Clements, the State Referee Administrator, at Sra@mssoccer.org or Bob Thunelius, the State Youth Referee Administrator, at syra@mssoccer.org.

MATCH OFFICIAL* RESPONSIBILITIES

** or parent / guardian, if youth match official (any official under 18)*

- Provide full, candid and honest responses to the [MSRA Screening Tool](#) and decline or turn back assignments if your responses to that screening tool warrant.
- Adhere to these guidelines, as well as state and local health department regulations, and to requirements of the facility / venue to reduce the spread of viruses.
- Notify your assignor(s) for both recent and future assignments as appropriate in the event you are quarantined for observation, are awaiting a pending test result, test positive or are otherwise diagnosed with COVID-19.

ASSIGNOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be sensitive, respectful and accommodating to match officials (and the parents of youth match officials) who may be uncomfortable with returning to play at this time.
- Create and distribute these and other relevant responsibilities and guidelines to all match officials, instructors, assessors, mentors and referee coaches working the competition.
- Have an effective communication and action plan in place and identify strategies for working with public health officials to notify match officials (and the families of youth officials) if the assignor learns that a participant has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others, while maintaining that participant's confidentiality.

COMPETITION / FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Obtain sanction and approval for the competition from the MISSISSIPPI Soccer Association or other, applicable member organization of the U.S. Soccer Federation.
- Contact insurers to ensure all coverages.
- Have an effective communication and action plan in place and identify strategies for working with public health officials to notify match officials (and the families of youth officials) if the assignor learns that a participant has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others, while maintaining that participant's confidentiality.
- Train and educate all competition staff to protocols and requirements, including state and local regulations, CDC recommendations, facility / venue guidelines and other necessary information.
- Be prepared to shut down and stop the competition. Develop plans for temporary closure of indoor facilities and for cancelation of outdoor activities to properly disinfect and ensure participants are not infected.

- Provide adequate space for appropriate social distancing throughout the competition venue, including but not limited to spectator areas, technical areas and areas designated for match officials (e.g., referee tent or building).
- Provide hand sanitizing stations and waste receptacles at fields.
- Develop a relationship and a dialog with local health officials and facility / venue staff.

BEHAVING TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF VIRUSES

MANDATORY PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Wash with soap and water or use hand sanitizer before and after games and during halftime.	X		
Do not share food, drinks, towels (or other personal hygiene items), whistles, flags, referee uniform items or other equipment. Note: the assistant referees' flags do not need to match each other in appearance if each match official prefers to use their own flag.	X		
Wash uniform and sanitize other equipment after each match day.	X		
Provide for space and maintain appropriate social distancing in referee tent or room.	X		X
Match officials should avoid participating in handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, or other contact among participants before or after the match. Note: match officials are not responsible for policing such behavior of players or team officials.	X		
Follow local, state, and federal guidelines. Recommend to maintain appropriate social distancing and wear a face mask when approaching and departing from the field as well as during the pre-game field, player and roster inspections, the pre-game conference among match officials, preliminary activities with team captains, and after the game.	X		
RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Post signage reminding match officials to practice good hygiene.		X	X
Message match officials with reminders about good hygiene.		X	
Disinfect non-washable, personal equipment like shoes, whistles, flags, etc. after every match.	X		
Promptly leave after matches.	X		
Bring your own water bottle; do not share.	X		
Avoid carpooling with others who are not in your immediate family.	X		
Shower immediately upon returning home.	X		
Bring and use hand sanitizer to every game.	X		
Consider changing jerseys between games when feasible. At the grassroots competition level, match officials are empowered to adopt this practice even if it results in members of a crew wearing different jersey colors.	X		
Bring a separate bag in which to place used uniform items or other equipment to keep them apart from unused items.	X		
Match officials may, but are not required, to wear face masks and/or use electronic whistles during the match.	X		

* or parent / guardian, if youth match official

CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

MANDATORY PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Handwashing facilities should be available when possible.			X
Game schedule should allow adequate time between games for cleaning of field equipment and surrounding area (including the technical area) by home club or competition / facility staff prior to the arrival of the teams for the next match.		X	X
Restrooms should be cleaned regularly (minimum hourly) using disinfecting cleaners; use should be as directed by the manufacturer.			X
Record all match official assignments, including name & contact info of the match officials, date, time, venue and name & contact info of participating teams. Maintain this record for at least three (3) months following the competition. This practice will aid in tracking if needed by public health authorities.		X	
Provide full, candid and honest responses to the MSRA Screening Tool and decline or turn back assignments if those screening responses warrant. (Responses must be provided by a parent or guardian if the match official is a youth.)	X		
Develop and implement a process to complete and collect the MSRA Screening Tool for each assigned match official before each match (or before the first match of the day if the match official does not leave the facility). Screening Tool responses may be submitted electronically. The assignor should maintain this record for at least three (3) months following the competition.		X	
RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Avoid indoor competitions, but when allowed be sure the area is well-ventilated with good air flow.			X
Spectators are permitted at games. Those from the same home may sit together. Those from different homes must sit 6 feet apart. They should remain in their cars until shortly before kick-off and return to their cars immediately following the final whistle.			X
Referees are not responsible for the enforcement of return to play guidelines and responsibilities of players, team officials (coaches), or spectators at a match.	X		

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UTILIZING HEALTHY OPERATIONS

MANDATORY PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Home club or venue facility staff will clean field equipment and surrounding area (including the technical area) prior to the arrival of the teams for the next match.			X
Assure match officials that they are not obligated or pressured to accept assignments. Do not base future assignments on a match official's willingness to accept assignments during this pandemic.		X	
Publish a notice to all match officials (and parents of youth match officials) players, outlining the risks of returning and detailing how the competition intends to minimize or eradicate those risks.		X	X
Provide hand sanitizer at each technical area for all games.			X
All state and local health guidelines and protocols must be followed, as must any guidelines and protocols required by the facility or venue IF they are MORE restrictive than those of the state and local health department.	X	X	X
Permission to travel will still be granted to referees for out of state competitions. Please request permission from the State Referee Administrator at sra@mssoccer.org	X		
RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Consider assigning match officials together as cohesive crews for multiple games in the same day to reduce interaction with other match officials.		X	

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RESPONDING TO ILLNESS

MANDATORY PRECAUTIONS	Match Official*	Assignor	Competition / Facility
Have a notification plan in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to notify match officials (and parents of youth match officials) if the competition becomes aware that a participant or a coach/admin has developed COVID-19 and may have been infectious to others while at the competition. • Maintain participant confidentiality regarding health status. • Prepare to notify applicable local health department(s) in the event of a match official’s positive COVID-19 test result. 		X	
Train and educate all staff on protocols and requirements, including state and local regulations, CDC recommendations and other necessary safety information.			X
Be prepared to shut down and stop operations.			X
Develop plans for temporary closure of indoor facilities and cancellation of outdoor competitions or activities for proper disinfection.			X
Notify your assignor for all potentially affected upcoming assignments if you are awaiting a pending COVID-19 test result or are quarantined for observation. Do not accept future assignments until you are cleared by an appropriate health care professional.	X		
Notify all assignors for all recent assignments per the guidance of your local health department if you test positive for or are diagnosed with COVID-19.	X		

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