



MINNESOTA STATE REFEREE COMMITTEE

WWW.MINNESOTASRC.COM

COVID-19 Return to Play Guidelines for Referees (updated 6/21/20)

The Minnesota Department of Health has cleared youth sports for outdoor scrimmages and games beginning June 24, 2020. The state's two youth soccer organizations, MYSA and TCSL, have cancelled their summer seasons but their clubs are organizing practices and may set up inter-club play in July. This document is to provide advice to officials for both any invitations to work scrimmages after June 24, 2020 and fall league play.

The following guidelines and recommendations are adapted from the National Association of Sports Officials' 13-Point Plan. It is important to point out these are RECOMMENDATIONS, not MANDATES.

Pre-Match and Administrative Concerns

- (1) As of publication of this document, it is unknown if the liability policy provided by US Soccer with your certification will include coverage for illness caused by COVID-19. This includes the possibility of a quarantine enforced by the Department of Health, should one of the participants in the match test positive after the match and contact tracing leads to you being considered at-risk for exposure.
- (2) Referees are not virus maintenance workers. Your responsibilities as a soccer match official do not include cleaning of the game ball, corner flags, or goals. The safety of the match environment with regards to surface cleanliness falls upon the host team/club. Referees are not involved with enforcement of health protocols.
- (3) Referees should be given the same safety considerations as players, coaches, fans, and site management. This includes access to hygienic materials (i.e., hand sanitizer) provide by the site. If the site is required to provide safety considerations to participants, the match officials should be included under the umbrella of "participants."
- (4) As an independent contractor, you are not required to accept any officiating assignment that will make you uncomfortable from the standpoint of your personal health. If you choose to turn down or turn back an assignment, do not preach. Turn the assignment down or back, explain why, and move on.
- (5) If you serve as an assignor, please show forbearance toward any official who decided to not accept or turn back an assignment over health concerns. Your respect and thoughtfulness will

make things better.

- (6) If you are feeling ill or are experiencing even a low-grade fever, DO NOT OFFICIATE. Contact the assignor and turn back the assignment. Contact your health provider and ask for guidance on whether you need to schedule a consult or be tested for COVID-19. Do not put others at risk.
- (7) Do not engage in handshakes or fist-bumps as part of the pre-match ritual. While the CDC has recommended elbow-bumping is an acceptable replacement, it is not necessary. Minimizing (and eliminating, if possible) physical contact involving yourself should be the goal.
- (8) Bring your own water bottle and hand sanitizer to each assignment. Do not share. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before departing for the field.

During the Match

- (1) If possible, at halftime, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. Minimize touching your face as best as possible.
- (2) Soccer is a highly aerobic sport. The SRC does not expect or mandate that a mask be worn while officiating, though if you are comfortable exercising in a mask, you are welcome to do so. Regardless, we STRONGLY urge you to use a mask before kickoff, at halftime, and after games. Research is convincingly indicating that mask-wearing significantly reduces the spread of COVID-19. Keep your mask in your pocket, wear it prior to kickoff, during halftime, and immediately after the match ends.
- (3) As you may be unable to wear a mask during the match, understand that you are accepting health risks that are created by doing so.
- (4) Every member of the referee crew should have their own set of assistant referee flags, and assistant referees should use one of their own flags. Matching flags are not considered essential at this time for any reason. Try to avoid using another official's flag. NEVER use another official's whistle.
- (5) Do your best to social distance while working a match. Remind players to respect this when conversing with them.
- (6) Do NOT force players to social distance while playing in the match.

After the Match

- (1) Do not invite or accept handshakes, fist-bumps, or even elbow-bumps. A polite, "No contact please, good game, thank you," should be the extent of your post-game exchanges.

- (2) While clubs and teams are discouraged from a postgame exchange of goodwill via physical contact, it is NOT your job to remind them about this. Let the coaches manage this.
- (3) Your first step once you leave the site (i.e., get into your car, leave the site on a bike or by foot) should be to immediately use hand sanitizer. When you get home, your first step should be to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

At Home

- (1) When COVID-19 testing is available in your community, and if it remains free, get tested as regularly as possible. Some studies have suggested as many as 45% of COVID-19 infections are asymptomatic, but these cases are still capable of transmission. If you have regular contact with a physician or nurse practitioner, explain your role as a match official and ask for their recommendation on if you should be tested regularly.
- (2) When a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, get vaccinated. The SRC will not endorse unvaccinated individuals serving as officials, if/when a protective vaccine exists and is readily available. We cannot “force” anybody to get vaccinated, but we strongly discourage ignoring any health recommendations that exist to decrease the spread of this dangerous disease, and will not support the use of officials who refuse to take any and all measures to do so.

If you have any questions about any of these recommendations, please contact the State Referee Administrator, Paula Hildman, at sra@minnesotasrc.com.