



NISL COVID-19 RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

Recommendations for Phase 3

of the “RESTORE ILLINOIS - 5 Phases of Illinois’ Reopening Plan”,

Phase 3 currently effective May 29, 2020.

Northern Illinois Soccer strongly believes in the benefits of young people participating in soccer, while also recognizing the need to keep players, coaches, referees, and their families safe. This resource is designed to address the state-wide restrictions outlined in the “5 Phases of Illinois’ Reopening Plan-Phase 3” which is expected to be effective on May 29, 2020. It will be updated as guidance is revised. It does not address further local restrictions that may be applicable and those should be addressed by each member based on their particular location.

When a region is designated Phase 3 by Governor Pritzker and the Public Health authorities of the state of Illinois, gatherings of ten (10) or fewer people are allowed as long as capacity and safety precautions are maintained. Under Phase 3 of the plan, gatherings of 10 or fewer people will be allowed, with masks still required in situations where social distancing is not possible.

Once phase 3 is implemented, it may be possible to hold an in-person tryout or training that meets social distancing guidelines. However, this should not be taken lightly as all aspects of the training environment must be assessed and modified to identify and reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Below we have listed some of these issues, but we recommend you develop and implement a return to play plan that is specific to your training environment.

Guiding Principles:

In addition to the usual requirements, all events must abide by all requirements of local, state, and federal guidelines applicable to the physical location of the **facility where the event will take place**. Among other edicts, the phase 3 order calls for **social distancing of at least 6 feet during its Phase 3 deployment**. Regardless of local guidance this is the minimum standard currently in all Illinois counties.

- All restrictions applicable to the place of play must be followed.
- All participants (players/coaches/parents) **must stay at least 6 ft. apart**, preferably further, at all times.
- Reduce spreading of the virus through the touching of surfaces
- Gatherings are **limited to 10 people** including coaching staff

Arrival and Departure Recommendations

- Training start and end times should be staggered. This becomes an even greater concern if multiple teams will be in the same area. A buffer of at least 15 minutes should be allotted between sessions.

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- The parent/guardian should check the temperature of the players at home before attending practice. Players should not attend practice with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, persistent cough, or other indications of not being well and healthy.
- Players and parents should be monitored as they arrive and depart
- Carpooling should be avoided.
- Parents are encouraged to stay in the car, social distancing must be strictly maintained
- Players should leave the car ready to play (wearing shoes/cleats, shin guards, etc.) to avoid having unnecessary personal belongings on the field
- The Coach should make the following inquiries at the beginning of the practice of all players (as a group is acceptable):
 - Is anyone running a temperature? (If Yes, they should not attend)
 - Does anyone have a persistent cough? (If Yes, they should not attend)
 - Does everyone feel well & healthy? (If no, they should not attend)

Player participation should be based on the answers to these questions.

- Each player should have a unique designated area to put their water bottle and any additional equipment (i.e. backpack) at least 6 feet from other players. This area should be monitored by an asst. coach or manager to ensure proper distancing.
- Players should maintain social distancing during coaching conversation and should be encouraged to leave the training area promptly after sessions.

Training Considerations

- Duration of training should be reduced
 - 10U 45 minutes
 - 11U and older 60 minutes
- The number of players should be modified based on the space available, age of players, and number of coaches available
- The space each player is allowed to occupy should be clearly defined and strictly enforced. The amount of space required for each player will vary depending on the player's age and skill level. Remember- no two players can ever come within 6 ft.
- Scrimmaging, small-sided games, rondos, possession games, etc. all violate social distancing guidelines and must be avoided
- Lines should be avoided when possible and must delineate appropriate distance for players to stand if used.
- Participants may never gather in a huddle or small group, as is common when giving instruction
- All physical contact between players must be monitored and strongly discouraged including high fives and other previously encouraged behaviors
- Foot passes between two or more players that are practicing proper social distancing is allowable under coach supervision with properly sanitized equipment.

General Considerations

- Players need to be monitored closely at all times - arrival through departure
- Do not allow participants to treat spreading the virus as a joke - parents need to be a part of enforcing this
- An RSVP and attendance system should be used both for planning and to record possible interactions in the event of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis

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- Anyone displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19 should not attend and should notify their coach
- Clear communication to and between all participants and their families about expectations and guidelines is essential to successfully implement your return to play plan.
- Signage with guidelines should be prominently displayed within facility
- Parents should remain at the facility in their cars except to assist in responding to injuries or other interactions with players, e.g. making a trip to the restroom
- Any instance of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis of a participant or anyone in attendance of a session, must be immediately reported to the local health authority and the Northern Illinois Soccer League.

Injuries

The potential reaction to a player getting injured is more complicated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The immediate safety of the player must remain the top priority, but care should be taken when addressing small injuries (e.g. handing out band-aids). When possible, a parent/guardian should assist in any care necessary.

Sanitary Conditions

- Coaches should have hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes available
- It is recommended that coaches wear face masks. Keep in mind that many coaches are in contact with multiple groups. Players wearing a mask are at parent discretion.
- Club balls should be sanitized after each use.
- Only coaches should handle equipment (cones, goals, etc.) and these should be sanitized after use
- Players must not share pinnies/bibs or any other equipment

Northern Illinois Soccer League is dedicated to protecting the health and safety of all people. The purpose of this document is to provide athletes, parents, coaches, and soccer organizations with the 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 mark the minimum standard for deliberation among athletes, coaches and staff, who will use this information to create their own unique return to a training plan that is specific to their situation. In addition, there will be other logistical challenges of returning to training following COVID19.

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. 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, Northern Illinois Soccer League make no representation and assume 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. Given the changing pandemic environment, these guidelines may change at any time. These guidelines address early phases on return to play. Additional guidelines will follow as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve.