



U.S. SOCCER
PLAY ON

PHASE III
GRASSROOTS SOCCER
RECOMMENDATIONS GUIDE



U.S. Soccer PLAY ON Phase III Grassroots Soccer Recommendations Guide

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction to Phase III: Letter from Dr. George Chiampas, U.S. Soccer Chief Medical Officer
- II. Medical Considerations
 - Medical Clearance To Participate In Trainings Or Matches
 - Daily Medical Considerations To Participate In Trainings Or Matches
 - Additional Health & Safety Protocol for Referees
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE, Masks, Face Covers) Recommendations
- III. Preparing For Trainings Or Competitions
 - Considerations for All Trainings & Competitions
 - Contact Tracing: Exposure Tracking & Alerting
 - Getting Ready For Training or Competitions
 - Travel to Trainings Or Competitions
 - Arrival and Check-In Protocols For Trainings & Events
 - Recommendations for Parents and Guardians
- IV. Site Management & Facilities
 - Facility Sanitation & Safety Protocols
 - Access To Water Or Water Fountains
 - Signage
 - Field Layout (Including Benches)
 - Individual Prep Areas For Trainings & Matches
 - Concessions Management
- V. Equipment Management for Trainings & Competitions
 - Shared Equipment
 - Individual Equipment
- VI. Competitions Considerations
 - Participating in Competitions & Tournaments
 - Warm-Ups
 - Referee Considerations
 - Pre-Game Activities
 - Game Time
 - Hydration / Cool-Down / Sanitation Breaks
 - Halftime
 - Considerations In The Case Of Injuries
 - Post-Game
 - Inclement Weather
- VII. Training Considerations - Updates for Phase III
 - Training Sessions Considerations



- Considering Players with Physical Disabilities
- Training Activities
- Communication During Trainings
- Gym and Strength Workouts

VIII. PLAY ON Safety Protocols & Resources - Continued From Previous Phases

- A. Return-To-Play Phases Overview
- B. General Hygiene Code of Conduct
- C. Wellness Resources
 - Hydration
 - Heat Considerations
 - Nutrition Strategies to Support Activities & Immune Function
 - Mental Wellness
- D. Additional Resources

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, U.S. Soccer makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or 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.



I. Letter from Dr. George Chiampas, U.S. Soccer Chief Medical Officer

Dear Soccer Players, Coaches, Parents, Referees and Administrators,

In June of this year, U.S. Soccer launched PLAY ON, a broad educational campaign to unite and support the soccer community during this global pandemic. Our approach is divided into five phases, from Phase 0 (no activities or play) to Phase IV (no COVID-19 related restrictions). Phases are outlined in detail in the “resources” section of this document.

Phase III allows for the continuation of full-team training and the addition of full-team competitions, provided:

- COVID-19 prevention and response protocols are of course still in place and actively followed
- Social distancing is maintained, with limited exceptions as part of training activities and competitions as outlined
- Teams are recommended to participate only in local / regional and single day events that avoid significant travel or overnight stays
- All policies and decisions are guided by local and state recommendations

While trainings and the addition of competitions may continue to make things look more “normal,” in consideration of how COVID-19 is transmitted, it is vitally important that everyone involved in the process of return-to-play does so with extreme diligence and attention to the widely-agreed-upon standards and guidelines.

As we have consistently shared and emphasized, these guidelines and best practices are intended for use WHEN AND IF your local authorities have deemed it safe to gather in groups and at no time should competitions include more individuals (players, substitutes, coaches, referees and parents/guardians) than is locally allowed. U.S. Soccer is in no way endorsing holding practices or games in violation of any federal, state or local mandates.

We want to emphasize that Phase III should only be instituted following a successful Phase I reintegration, and after an appropriate progression from small groups to full team training and fitness in Phase II. The suggested durations of Phase I and II are 4-6 weeks and 3-6 weeks, respectively.

Regardless of which phase a Club is operating in, everyone should be prepared to take a step back and revert to an earlier phase if needed as a response to increased risk, cluster outbreaks, updates to public health guidelines, or an inability to safely maintain COVID-19 prevention and response protocols. It is important to remain vigilant and nimble as we prepare for every eventuality. By prioritizing the safety of your soccer community, you can preserve the health of those around us and help ensure soccer can remain part of our lives at this time.

At the outset and throughout the return-to-play process, please remember each participant and their families should stay informed and make educated choices about when they are ready to play. No one should feel pressured – or pressure others – into a decision.



On behalf of U.S. Soccer and all those involved in our sport, I sincerely thank you and our entire soccer community for your active participation and efforts around safe return to play. Together, we will move forward and thrive. We are, and will remain, "One Nation and One Team."

Yours in Soccer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Chiampas'.

Dr. George Chiampas
U.S. Soccer Chief Medical Officer



II. Medical Considerations

Medical Clearance To Participate In Trainings Or Matches

1. As Phase III includes increased activities and exposure risks, any individuals with a pre-existing medical condition is recommended to provide UPDATED written clearance from a physician to participate.
2. For individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, provide written confirmation of COVID-19 negative status and/or clearance from your physician following the most up-to-date CDC guidelines to participate and return to activities.
3. For individuals (including players, coaches, referees, volunteers and administrators) who have experienced known COVID-19 exposure in the past 14 days, the following is recommended:
 - a. Home quarantine for 14 days
 - b. Written confirmation of COVID-19 clearance from your physician following the most up-to-date CDC guidelines
4. For individuals who experienced any illness during shelter-in-place, written clearance from your physician that you are COVID-free and fit to participate in trainings and competitions is recommended.
5. Be prepared to report the onset of any new symptoms immediately. Contact your physician and follow the recommendations above for return to play.
6. Individuals who may be at increased risk of COVID-19 (including but not limited to age >65y/o, chronic cardiac or respiratory conditions including hypertension or diabetes, or have an immunocompromised state) should seek guidance by their physician as to their participation.

Daily Medical Considerations To Participate In Trainings Or Matches

1. The participant (including players, coaches, referees, volunteers and administrators) should conduct a daily temperature check for low grade fever (>100.4.) at home before training. If you have a fever, do not go to training.
 - a. If thermometers are not available, conduct a daily health questionnaire online with the "Coronavirus Self-Checker," made available by the CDC.
2. Do not participate in activities if you have any of the symptoms listed below.
 - a. COVID-19 exposure in past 14 days
 - b. Sore throat
 - c. Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
 - d. Fever >100.4 F
 - e. Chills
 - f. Headache
 - g. Sinus congestion
 - h. Cough persistent and/or productive
 - i. Joint aches and soreness
 - j. Vomiting or diarrhoea
 - k. Rash
3. Do not go to training/competition facilities or fields with any of the above symptoms.
4. Remotely communicate your health status to coaches, instructors, team administrators, or medical staff within 24 hours of your training session or competition.



- a. Parents (and not the minor player) should communicate with the club or coach, in accordance with the Safe Soccer Framework and the U.S. Center for SafeSport policies and guidance. Speak to a physician and follow CDC guidelines on self-quarantine.
5. Should a member of your household be experiencing the symptoms above, the family member should consult a physician. Follow the recommendations listed for medical clearance outlined in this document. Maintain all recommended hygiene habits outlined by the CDC.

Additional Health & Safety Protocol for Referees

1. Be conscious when accepting game assignments.
 - a. Do not accept a game if you are experiencing any symptoms.
 - i. As an independent contractor you are not required to accept a game. It is your choice and you should take into consideration your health and comfort level.
 - b. If you decline a game, be respectful to the assignor and notify them as soon as possible to allow time for a replacement.
2. If you start to exhibit symptoms after accepting a game, communicate immediately with your assignor and cancel your assignment. Do not participate in any matches if you are feeling unwell or exhibiting the symptoms outlined.
 - a. Assignors should consider having regular “back-ups” available in case a referee needs to cancel an assignment due to health reasons.
3. Before leaving for the field, referees should answer the following questions for their assignor. If the referee answers yes to any of these questions, they should notify their assignor and refrain from officiating the game.
 - a. Have you knowingly come into contact with anyone who has, is being tested for, or is exhibiting signs of coronavirus? (Yes or No)
 - b. Are you exhibiting any of the following symptoms? (Yes or No)
 - i. COVID-19 exposure in past 14 days
 - ii. Sore throat
 - iii. Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
 - iv. Fever >100.4 F
 - v. Chills
 - vi. Headache
 - vii. Sinus congestion
 - viii. Cough persistent and/or productive
 - ix. Joint aches and soreness
 - x. Vomiting or diarrhoea
 - xi. Rash

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE, Masks, Face Covers) Recommendations

1. All participants (coaches, players, referees, instructors, administrators) are recommended to wear new or clean PPE upon arrival, departure and when not physically active for any training or match.
 - a. For the duration of the match, coaches and substitute players should wear masks on the sidelines.
 - b. Referees are reminded to wear PPE for arrival and pre-game field inspection.



- i. If a fourth official is present, he or she should wear PPE while at the fourth official's table or designated area.
2. PPE should cover the nose and mouth, be breathable, consist of cotton or wick-type material and follow CDC guidelines.
3. PPE should be new or clean for each training session or match and disposed or thoroughly cleaned after each training session or match.
4. Provided all screening, hygiene and social distancing measures are followed, masks are not mandatory for players/coaches/referees/instructors/participants during exertional moments of training or competition (i.e. when physically active at training or during game play).
 - a. PPE may obscure vision, increase respiratory challenges, or increase other injury risk while being physically active.
5. For players, referees or staff who choose to wear PPE while physically exerting themselves, the following should be considered:
 - a. Discuss with your primary care physician if any medical conditions pre-dispose you to avoid the use of a face cover while participating in physical activity.
 - b. PPE should be breathable and not prevent or disrupt ventilation.
 - c. PPE should not obscure the individual's vision.
 - d. PPE should not pose a risk to another participant.
 - e. PPE should be in good maintenance, at the responsibility of the individual.
6. Spectators should wear PPE.
7. As we head into summer, heat and humidity may lead to increased discomfort or respiratory challenges wearing masks throughout the day. Coaches, referees and spectators are recommended to take "PPE breaks" throughout training or game day.
 - a. To take a PPE break, simply ensure you are more than 10 feet away from another participant and remove your mask.
 - i. Should another participant move within 10 feet, return your mask to covering your nose and mouth.
8. Consider having a replacement mask available if your PPE becomes wet due to sweat or environmental conditions.
 - a. Sanitize your hands following the removal of a used mask and replacement of clean mask.
9. Recommendations may change based on evolving medical and health information, as well as local, state or federal guidelines.



III. Preparing for Trainings Or Competitions

Considerations for All Trainings & Competitions

1. Adhere to all state/local regulations.
2. Only outdoor trainings and competitions should be considered in Phase III.
3. Consider creating “team pods” to limit crossover exposure risk that may come from increased interactions in Phase III.
 - a. Per team, maintain the same coaches, administrators, instructors and staff for all team activities.
 - b. If possible, limit coaches, administrators, instructors and staff to only one team.
4. Limit coaches, referees, administrators, instructors and staff attendance at training and competitions to allow for social distancing.
5. Survey your space. If possible, carefully consider what “maximum capacity” would ensure social distancing remains possible through all activities.
 - a. Consider implementing protocol to track the number of participants and spectators in your space at a given time. Restrict additional people entering the facility or space after reaching “maximum capacity.”
6. Communicate your UPDATED health & safety guidelines to all participants, including players, coaches, referees, administrators, parents and opposing teams.
 - a. For matches, the home team is responsible for communicating and maintaining health and safety protocols.
 - i. Visiting team should thoroughly review and follow all health & safety guidelines outlined by the home team or hosting organization.

Contact Tracing: Exposure Tracking & Alerting

1. For contact tracing purposes, maintain a list of all facility users, participants and attendees at trainings or matches.
2. For privacy purposes, the list should be securely stored and not shared publicly.
3. In the event that someone participating in your activities becomes ill, refer to this list for “tracking or tracing” to determine who may have been directly exposed to illness, and alert them immediately.
4. It is recommended that lists should be available for a minimum of 21 days to account for the period of time of COVID-19 presentation of symptoms and illness.
5. Include the items below in your contact tracing list. For minors, use a parent’s contact information.
 - a. Date
 - b. Venue
 - c. Name
 - d. Phone
 - e. Email Address of participants

Getting Ready For Training or Competitions

1. All participants, including players, coaches and referees, should prepare and pack individual water bottles.



- a. Pack at least two bottles of water for training or matches, to limit the need for refills. You should not share water bottles and should avoid public water fountains if possible.
 - b. Clearly mark your name on your water bottle.
2. Get dressed at home in your gear so that you can arrive to the training/match site ready to play, coach or ref, without needing to use locker rooms or changing areas.
 - c. Coaches should confirm uniforms with their players in advance of competitions, so players can avoid changing on site.
 - d. Referees are recommended to wear gold referee uniforms to avoid clashing with most team uniforms. Consider communicating with the coaches or competition organizers in advance to determine appropriate colors and avoid changing on site. If necessary, bring spare colors to prepare for conflicts.
3. Participants are recommended to pack and bring to personal sanitizing supplies to training and competitions, including hand sanitizers. Sanitizing materials should be clearly marked and not shared.
4. Avoid bringing any unnecessary belongings to the training or competition.
5. Follow PPE (face mask) procedures outlined.
6. Wash your hands before departing for training or competitions.
7. Conduct a daily temperature check for low grade fever (>100.4.) at home before training or competitions. If you have a fever or feel ill, do not go to training. Consult your physician.

Travel to Trainings Or Competitions

1. Travel to trainings and competitions with as few people as possible. It is recommended to only travel with members of your immediate family or household.
2. Should carpooling or ride sharing be necessary, consider the following:
 - a. Only rideshare with a family or individual who has practiced appropriate distancing and sheltering requirements established by their local government or public health officials.
 - b. Rideshare with the same individuals for each training or competition.
 - c. Ensure that all passengers have passed both the preliminary and daily clearance requirements outlined in this recommendations guide.
 - d. Maintain safe distancing during loading and unloading, and while in transit if possible.
 - e. Limit the number of stops between departure site and training destination.
 - f. Wear PPE in the vehicle.
3. In accordance with the Safe Soccer Framework and the U.S. Center for SafeSport policies and guidance, a minor and an adult who is not the minor player's parent/legal guardian may not be alone in the vehicle together.

Arrival and Check-In Protocols For Trainings & Events

1. Carefully consider and design your arrival and check-in protocols for trainings and matches to fit your facility layout, the size of your site and the activities taking place.
2. Consider the following recommendations for all participants. Participants includes players, coaches, referees and volunteers actively involved in training or game play (such as ball kids).



- a. If the facility has a minimal number of fields, consider having a single-entry access and check-in point for all participants at trainings or competitions.
 - i. Participants should move through check in one-at-a-time to maintain social distance.
 1. Ground markings should be used in order for the queue to keep social distancing. These marks should be at least 6-feet apart.
 - ii. Hand sanitizer or a hand washing station should be available at the location.
 - iii. Upon arrival, all participants should be asked a series of health screening questions, aligned with the CDC's "Coronavirus Self-Checker", to affirm medical clearance to participate.
 - iv. If available, Clubs may consider using a no-touch thermometer to quickly confirm temperatures of participants. (Reminder that extreme heat can impact a body temperature reading.)
 - v. The coach, a staff member or a designated "Safety Officer" can be responsible for asking health screening questions.
 - vi. Confirm all participants have brought adequate hydration from home.
 - vii. Collect all information needed for contact tracing requirements (details outlined above in Section III of this document).
3. Consider the following recommendations for spectators and non-participants at competitions.
 - a. Establish a separate entrance for all spectators and non-participants.
 - i. All non-participants should be educated on competition safety guidelines and the importance of only attending the competition if they have no COVID-19 symptoms. Spectators follow PPE recommendations by wearing PPE at all times.
 - b. If possible, the names and information of all spectators and non-participants should still be recorded to follow contact-tracing recommendations outlined above in Section III.
 - c. Spectators should immediately proceed to the designated spectator area / socially distanced "Family Zones" outlined below in Section IV.
 - d. Spectators should socially distance at all times and avoid congregating.
 - e. As a reminder, as with Phase II, spectators are not encouraged to attend trainings. It is recommended that only the participant departs the vehicle upon arrival to training. The driver is recommended to either leave the training facility or stay in the parking lot, remaining in the vehicle and observing all social distancing guidelines to avoid unnecessary exposure to participants.
4. If facility has many fields, the facility can consider:
 - a. Organizing multiple check-in points following the procedures above
 - b. Establishing a virtual check-in process for participants and spectators
 - c. (In the case of competitions) Having each participating team conduct health screening questions to confirm no one is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and provide contact tracing information for all participants and attendees upon arrival.
5. Clubs are encouraged to assign specific arrival times for all event-specific participants (ex: for event staff, per team, for referees) to limit congestion during check-in and accessing the field.
 - a. Participants should wait in their cars until their specific time to enter the facility or field.



Recommendations for Parents and Guardians

1. Parents and guardians should be thoroughly aware of all safety recommendations for both their home club and as visitors in organized competitions. At all times, parents should ensure their family follows safety recommendations, including for PPE.
2. Parents and guardians should support the coach and organization in adhering to all safety recommendations.
3. Parents and guardians are not encouraged to attend trainings.
 - a. Should parents and guardians attend a competition, they should carefully follow spectator check-in policies and watch from areas specifically designated for viewing.
4. Parents should not congregate together and should follow social distancing guidelines.
5. Parents or guardians watching the match should never enter the team bench area.
6. Parents or guardians should have the contact information of relevant staff.



IV. Site Management & Facilities

Facility Sanitation & Safety Protocols

1. Maintain your schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection that had previously been established in Phase I and Phase II.
 - a. Clean and disinfect your facilities according to CDC hygiene standards, paying particular care to high-traffic areas, such as restrooms.
2. Implement conscientious cleaning plans around competitions to prepare for and manage increased traffic. It's important for cleaning staff to have a visible presence around the facility.
 - a. Facilities should be completely disinfected and cleaned before and after each competition day.
 - b. Facilities should be constantly cleaned and sanitized throughout competition days with focus on high-touch areas such as restrooms and bleachers.
3. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations should be located around the facility and very easily identifiable.
4. If there are gates or doors around the facility, consider permanently propping them open during competition days to decrease the chance of virus spread.
5. Restroom operations should be adjusted to allow for social distancing and prevent the spread of the virus.
 - a. If restroom is small, consider making it a single-occupant restroom or limiting the number of people inside. Individuals need to properly social distance while in the restroom.
 - i. Ground markings should be used to indicate socially distanced queuing. These marks should be at least 6-feet apart.
 - b. Restrooms with multiple doors should have clearly marked entry and exit doors in order to control the flow of traffic.
 - i. Floor markings can be used to encourage a one-way flow of traffic.
 - c. If porta-potties are used, place them so that doors are not adjacent to each other.
 - i. Ground markings should be used to indicate socially distanced queuing.
 - ii. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations should be located outside of the porta-potties.
 - d. Consider adding a porta-potty for each field for use by players only.
6. Meeting rooms should not be used. Consider holding any meetings outside to allow for proper social distancing.
7. The use of locker rooms can be considered in Phase III if necessary, but if possible, should be avoided.
 - a. Locker rooms must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized after each use.
 - b. A limited number of people should be able to access the locker room at a single time in order to maintain social distancing.
 - i. Signage should be considered to encourage social distancing inside the locker room.
 - c. The locker room should remain locked when not in use.

Access To Water Or Water Fountains

1. Ensure appropriate hydration policies are in place with all participants and spectators having unlimited access to water for trainings and matches, especially in warm climates.



- a. Participants are first and foremost encouraged to bring a minimum of two personally labeled bottles to training and competitions. Participants should not share their personal water bottles.
2. As alternatives when a participant or spectator does not have their own water bottles, the Club should carefully consider and plan how it can safely make water available.
 - a. Water fountains should be cleaned and sanitized constantly, especially during the summer months when use is more frequent.
 - i. Consider only allowing water bottles to be filled up at water fountains to eliminate possible contact between patrons and the spout.
 - ii. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations should be located next to each water fountain for use after filling or drinking from the fountain.
 - b. As able, consider pre-poured individual disposal cups, or disposable water bottles, arranged by an adult wearing gloves. Set up the cups or bottles on a table or at individual prep stations. Avoid passing the cups or bottles by hand.

Signage

1. Facility policies and procedures, as it related to any COVID-19 mitigation measures, should be posted at each entrance and/or at the arrival/check-in location.
 - a. This should include clear signage indicating PPE should be worn.
2. General social distancing signage should be posted around the facility including field areas.
3. To manage inclement weather:
 - a. If forecasted, consider posting specific protocols at entrances to the facility.
 - b. Post occupancy limits for any rooms that could be used for shelter in place protocols.
4. Restrooms should have the following signage:
 - a. [CDC recommended](#) hand washing procedures above each sink.
 - b. Signage limiting the number of people in each restroom.
 - c. Floor markings to encourage a one-way flow of traffic.
 - d. External ground markings to indicate restroom queuing that maintains social distancing. These marks should be at least 6-feet apart.
5. Concession stands should have the following signage:
 - a. Ground markings to indicate concession queuing that maintains social distancing. These marks should be at least 6-feet apart.
 - b. Signage for cashless transactions, as needed.
6. Locker rooms should have the following signage:
 - a. Signage limiting the number of people in each locker room.
 - b. General signage encouraging social distancing.

Field Layout (Including Benches)

1. Survey your site and carefully design a customized layout that will ensure teams, participants and spectators can appropriately socially distance in various stages of activities and play.
2. Designate clearly marked “entry” and “exit” points to your facilities and fields, coordinating with check-in locations for arrivals. Foot traffic should flow IN the entry and OUT the exit at all times.
3. For arrival to both trainings and matches, create “personal prep stations” - individual areas for players, coaches and referees.



- a. Set up a line of cones 6-feet apart in an area to the side of the field of play.
- b. Arrange one cone per participant (player, coach, referee)
- c. When a participant arrives, designate a cone as their “personal prep station” for the duration of the training session or pre-game activities. The individual should place their bags, water bottles, towels, etc. at this cone.
4. Align team benches so they are not within close proximity to each other.
 - a. If fields are close together, move team benches for adjacent fields to opposite sides of the field to eliminate four team benches on one sideline in close proximity.
5. Expand benches to allow for six feet of space between each player and coach during the match.
 - a. If inventory does not allow for extended benches, similar to “personal prep stations,” create a line of cones 6-feet apart (or use paint or other markings to clearly delineate) where players can sit socially distanced along the bench-side sideline.
6. Use signage, paint or other markings to delineate team areas and spectator areas.
7. Designate a spectator area with socially distance “Family Zones” for members of the same household to watch a match or training.
 - a. Clearly mark and space these zones at least six feet from the next family’s zone.
 - b. Where possible, the zones should be 10 feet from the field of play and assistant referees on the sidelines.
 - c. Spectator areas or family zones should be positioned on the side of the field opposite the benches.
 - i. In cases where adjacent fields mean benches are located on both sidelines, spectator areas may be relocated to the end lines.
8. If fields have a compact layout, consider creating one-way walking paths to the fields.
 - a. Paths should be created for both team benches and spectator areas.
9. If necessary, consider training and match-day schedules that avoid the use of adjacent fields at the same time.
10. Plan for extra time between matches and trainings to accommodate arrivals, departures, and equipment cleaning.

Concessions Management

1. While concession stands are not prohibited, they should be carefully adjusted to allow for social distancing and follow safety protocols that will help prevent the spread of the virus.
 - a. All food and drinks should be pre-packaged. No food should be prepared on-site.
 - b. Staff should wear proper PPE including face coverings and gloves.
 - c. Plexiglass walls should be installed between staff member and line.
 - d. The counter should be wiped down after each customer.
 - e. Cash transactions should be avoided, if possible.
 - f. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations should be located by the point of sale for patrons to use either before or after making a purchase.
 - g. Ground markings should be used in order for concession queue to keep social distancing. These marks should be at least 6-feet apart.



V. Equipment Management for Trainings & Competitions

Shared Equipment

1. Field set-up for trainings or match warm-ups should aim to use minimal equipment to limit exposure and transmission of COVID-19.
2. Be vigilant about sterilization procedures. All equipment (e.g. flags, balls and cones) should be disinfected prior to the start of the session or match activities with anti-bacterial of at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol.
 - a. Allow extra time between matches taking place in succession on the same field to ensure that all equipment is cleaned and sanitized between competitions. This includes equipment such as corner flags, goals, and balls, as well as benches.
3. Participants should not pick-up field equipment, move goals or handle other equipment.
4. Where able, clubs are recommended to provide soccer balls for training. As usual, the hosting team or organization should provide match balls for competition.
 - a. The club or coach should ensure that the balls are sanitized before and after each training and competition.
 - b. Players are not recommended to bring their own balls. Should the training be structured whereby players bring their own balls, a parent or adult should ensure it is sanitized before and after training.
5. Players are not required to have an individual designated ball for training.
6. Goalkeepers should wear gloves when handling balls.
7. Where possible, general team bibs should not be used for training or matches.
 - a. Opposing teams should agree on uniform colors in advance of the match so that players can be notified accordingly and avoid the unnecessary need for bibs.
 - b. The coach/instructor is recommended to make a plan in advance of training and as necessary suggest a specific training gear color for players to arrive in.
 - i. Alternatively, clubs/organizers could temporarily issue team bibs to players. Participants would be responsible for bringing these bibs to training or matches and washing them after training or matches. Issued bibs should be clearly labeled and not shared or rotated amongst participants during training.
 - c. If team bibs are used, they should only be used by one participant and not shared or rotated amongst participants.
 - d. If team bibs are used, they should be placed at personal station ahead of participant arrivals, instead of handed out by coaches/staff.
 - e. Any team bibs used should be washed by the club/organizers afterwards in order to decrease the transmission of COVID-19.
8. It is not recommended to use shared or team cold tubs for recovery sessions. Players should consider using bathtubs at home for cold tub soak.

Individual Equipment

1. All individual training gear should be cleaned and disinfected after every session.
2. Where possible, players are not recommended to bring their own balls.
 - a. If balls are brought by the individual player, a parent or adult should ensure it is sanitized before and after training.
3. All participants should arrive in their gear.



- a. All personal apparel should be cleaned, disinfected and properly stored after every training or competition. This includes cleats, shin guards and headbands (if reusable).
4. For players who use mouthguards, once the mouthguard is placed in mouth, it should never be taken out during practice to limit the transmission of virus.
 - a. If for some reason the mouth guard has been in contact with hands or the floor/ground, the mouthguard should not be re-used until it has been washed thoroughly. Wash your hands thoroughly after washing the mouthguard.
5. Coaching tools or equipment (ex. clipboards) should only be used by one coach and should not be shared amongst coaching staff.
6. Referee tools or equipment (ex. whistles, cards) should only be used by one referee and should not be shared.



VI. Competitions Considerations

Participating in Competitions & Tournaments

1. Teams are recommended to only participate in local or regional single-day, outdoor events to avoid travel and especially overnight stays during Phase III.
2. If travel is required to non-local competition or tournament, Phase III travel recommendations (outlined in Section III) should be followed.

Warm-Ups

1. Warm-ups should not begin until previous teams have left the field and equipment and benches have been cleaned and sanitized. Allow for extra time between matches to accommodate as necessary.
2. Competition warm-up recommendations follow Phase III training recommendations outlined below in this Section VI.
 - a. Coaches should not be within six feet of any player
 - b. Progressions between warm-up drills should be set up prior to players arriving to field. The players should not touch any equipment.
 - c. In general, maintain as much social distance as possible during warm-up activities.
3. Participants should avoid intentionally touching each other before or after competitions. This includes hugs, high-fives, or huddles.
4. If match balls are used during warm-up, they should be re-sanitized before the match.

Referee Considerations

1. Fields should still be walked.
2. Physical items (nets, goals, corner flags etc.) should be inspected visually.
3. If issues are identified - for example a goal net needs to be repaired or an object needs to be removed from the field of play - the referees should sanitize his or hands after managing.
4. Referees should maintain at least six feet distance when communicating with their referee crew, players and coaches.
5. If a fourth official is present, they should maintain six feet distance when communicating with coaches, players or their fellow referees.
 - a. If a fourth official's table is provided, the referee should check that it is six feet away from either bench or coaching area.
 - b. The fourth official should wear a mask for the duration of the match.

Pre-Game Activities

1. The coin toss should be socially distanced.
 - a. Only one referee and one representative per team should take part in the coin toss.
 - ii. Only the owner of the coin should touch the coin.
 - b. All participants involved in the coin toss should wear a mask, following recommendations that masks should be worn at all times excepting moments of physical exertion.
2. No pre-game handshakes shall take place.
3. Uniform or jewelry checks should be visible checks only, maintaining 6-ft between the referee and player.



4. Team pre-game meetings should be kept brief.
 - a. All participants should wear proper PPE and endeavor to maintain space between themselves and others. Prolonged proximity, even with masks should be avoided.
 - b. Huddles should be avoided.
5. Formalize a plan to communicate rosters in a way to minimize direct handoff to referees.
 - a. Discuss with your league if match reports can be provided to referees ahead of time.
 - b. If rosters cannot be provided in advance, the coach may place the roster at the end of the bench to minimize close contact.

Game Time

1. Players and coaches at the bench, as well as referees at the fourth official's table, are reminded to wear PPE for the duration of the match.
2. No handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, chest bumps, huddles, group celebrations, etc., should take place, including when goals are scored, or when substitutions are leaving or entering the field.
3. The following modifications to substitutions protocols are suggested:
 - a. When subbing into the game, players should maintain distance from the referees and other players who are also subbing into the game.
 - b. If a player is subbed out of the game, the player should stand at least 6-feet away from other individuals while recovering before, putting on facemask.
4. For throw ins, active players are recommended to collect the balls.
 - a. Clean and sanitized balls may be readily available for use, in the case of the ball not being easily retrievable. It is the responsibility of the home team or competition organizer to supply all sanitized balls.
5. When possible during breaks in play, consider making sanitized balls available to replace used balls.
6. Avoid delays in start of play, so that players do not have pro-longed periods of standing in close proximity. For example, encourage all participants to conduct free kicks and set plays with efficiency so players do not have prolonged periods in shoulder-to-shoulder defense walls.

Hydration / Cool-Down / Sanitation Breaks

1. Competition organizers are strongly encouraged to consider and follow the necessary steps for approval to incorporate hydration / cool-down / or "sanitation" breaks during matches.
2. Consideration should be taken to incorporating these at the mid-way point of any half lasting thirty minutes or longer.
3. During this break:
 - a. Players should hydrate while socially distanced. This will also provide the brief opportunity for cooling down, which may not happen throughout the match while efficiency is enforced in game activities.
 - b. Players should sanitize their hands.
 - c. The hosting competition can sanitize game balls for use during the match.



Halftime

1. During halftime, referees, players and coaches should maintain at least six feet distance between each other.
2. All players and coaches should be wearing proper PPE.
 - a. If a player needs to recover before participating in halftime activities, player should stand 12 ft away from other individuals while recovering before putting on their face covering or mask.
3. Players should sanitize their hands.
4. Coaches should limit the amount of time the entire team is near the bench area at one time.
5. Referees should sanitize their own equipment (whistle, flags, etc.).

Considerations In The Case Of Injuries

1. As able, the Referee should keep a six-foot distance from the injured player while determining if medical attention is necessary
2. If needed, allow a coach or medical professional from the injured player's team to enter the field and attend to the player. The coach or medical professional should wear PPE and gloves while attending the player.
3. The Referee should remind other players to keep their distance from each other, and the injured player, during the break in play. Players should not congregate.

Post-Game

1. No post-game handshakes should take place. Consider other forms of sportsmanship or instituting new acknowledgement traditions, such as clapping, etc.
2. If a referee needs the coach's signature for a roster, place the paper down on the end of the bench and step away to have them sign it.
3. Teams should pack-up and immediately leave the field following the game, exiting at the designated exit point.
 - a. Post-game meetings should be kept brief, if any meeting is held at all.
 - i. All participants should wear proper PPE and endeavor to maintain space between themselves and others. Prolonged proximity, even with masks should be avoided.
 - ii. Huddles should be avoided.
4. Do not have a team snack that is shared among the team members.
5. Players should not take off any equipment until they have left the facility.
6. Teams should clean up bench area so that it is clean of ALL trash.
7. Competition hosts should ensure all equipment, including benches, balls, flags, etc. are sanitized.
8. Spectators are encouraged to maintain social distancing following the game while waiting for their child.
 - a. Dependent on field layout, spectators may need to wait further away from the field.
9. Referees should leave field immediately following the game and referee duties have been completed assuming they have no other games to officiate.
 - b. Referee debrief sessions should be a conducted in a space where the referees can social distance but still in view of the game field.



- c. If referees are working later in the day, the referee should stay away from other individuals, may consider departing the facility or using their personal vehicle as a place to take a break in between games.

Inclement Weather

1. Facilities should have a plan in place in the event of inclement weather.
 - a. As this plan may be different from pre-COVID-19 protocols, it should be adjusted and then communicated with all teams in advance of competitions.
 - b. If inclement weather is forecasted, consider posting protocols at all entrances and arrival/check-in locations.
2. Social distancing must be observed during any shelter-in-place or evacuation protocols.
 - a. PPE should be worn throughout the delay.
 - b. Participants should not take off their equipment during the delay.
3. Encourage all participants and spectators to return to their vehicles in the event of inclement weather.
 - a. When possible, individuals in the car should be limited to members of the immediate family. If non-family members must be present in the vehicle, everyone in the vehicle should wear PPE.
 - b. If possible, have a back-up option for those who were dropped off or do not have a vehicle on-site. This location should only be used as a last resort.
 - i. The number of people in these locations should be pre-determined and posted on the wall.
 - ii. In accordance with the Safe Soccer Framework and the U.S. Center for SafeSport policies and guidance, a minor and an adult who is not the minor player's parent/legal guardian may not be alone in a room together.
4. If inclement weather is forecasted, depending on the size of the field complex, the competition hosts may consider taking a conservative approach by communicating game delays or cancellations well in advance of match time.

VII. Training Considerations - Updates for Phase III

Training Sessions Considerations

1. As in Phase II, full team trainings are allowed.
 - a. One full team per regulation sized field is recommended.
 - b. To minimize exposure risks, separate teams/age groups should not mix
 - c. Full scrimmages (inter-squad, across the club or outside the club) are not recommended unless all mitigation measures are and can be implemented.
2. Training sessions should be returned to full length and intensity.
3. Coaches should not be within six feet of any player.
 - a. Any coach who manages multiple teams should be especially vigilant to maintain social distancing.
 - i. Between training sessions with different teams, the coach should sanitize their hands and consider using clean PPE.
4. Progressions between activities should be set up prior to players arriving to enable smooth transition and negate the need for players to move equipment. The players should not move or set up equipment.
5. Whenever possible, and if space allows, assign areas for warm up and cool down.



6. Participants should avoid intentionally touching each other before, after or during training, except as a necessary part of the training exercise.

Considering Players with Physical Disabilities

1. While planning and delivering sessions, it is essential to remember that each player's disability can impact them differently and that, in some cases, their level of impairment can even fluctuate throughout the day.
2. Coaches and parents of players should follow ALL the recommendations provided in this guide as they prepare to #PlayON.
3. Coaches and parents of players should collaborate to understand the impact of each player's disability on the player at this time, and plan ahead to manage safety protocols and health considerations.

Training Activities

1. In Phase III, it is not necessary to socially distance as part of training exercises. Conditioning games of different lengths, across different field sizes, and with varying player densities can be incorporated.
2. Acknowledge that these activities are not socially distanced. Players may come in contact with one another and should be vigilant about following the General Hygiene Code of Conduct outlined below to promote the safety of all those involved in the activity.
 - a. If a player does not feel comfortable participating, do not pressure the player to join. Allow the player to watch from a socially distanced vantage point where he or she can still learn from the training activity.
3. As much as possible until high-player density training activities begin, players should remain socially distanced. (i.e. during explanation of the activity, they should remain a minimum of six feet apart). During any break in play, the players should again revert to socially distance themselves.
4. Consider using technology or props to provide initial overviews or reinforcements of player locations and movements during an activity or set play training exercise, to avoid extensive modelling that may bring players into extended contact with one another.

Communication During Trainings

1. Speakers should maintain use of PPE and not remove their mask when communicating.
2. Where possible, avoid holding team meetings in confined spaces and/or closed environments.
 - a. If a team talk must take place indoors:
 - i. Maintain social distancing at all times.
 - ii. All participants should wear PPE.
3. Consider providing tactical discussions in digital format, if possible.
 - a. During on-field set-play tactics discussions (minimal movement / not live play), participating players may consider wearing PPE.

Gym and Strength Workouts

1. The use of gyms and confined indoor training spaces should be limited or excluded in Phase III.



- a. Strength and conditioning work that may normally be carried out in a gym could be adapted and conducted on the outside field.
 - b. In order to limit equipment use, body-weight and plyometric exercises are encouraged. Minimal equipment should be used whenever possible.
2. Equipment should be sanitized after every use.
 - a. A 10 to 15-minute break between indoor gym work-out sessions is recommended to allow time for cleaning equipment and the room.
3. If indoor gym workouts must take place, all participants should follow social distancing guidelines.
 - a. Participants should wear PPE throughout indoor training, except in moments of significant exertion whereby a face covering might increase respiratory challenges, obscure vision or increase other injury risk.
 - b. If utilizing a public facility, maintain social distancing with other patrons and disinfecting guidelines.
4. Evaluate the available space to determine maximum number of participants capable of utilizing facility at one time in advance.
 - a. Maintain consistency of partners or members of small group during facility use including spotting.
5. Accessible hand sanitizer should be available in the gym for use.

VIII. PLAY ON Safety Protocols & Resources - Continued From Previous Phases

A. Return-To-Play Phases Overview

This phases overview provides structure for a gradual approach to return to play during this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Included within, and between, the phases are specific steps to be considered and implemented.

U.S. Soccer recommends approaching your return-to-play activities sequentially through five phases. It is critical to assure processes, habits and strict compliance to your current phase, before advancing to the next.

It needs to be recognized that across the country at any given time, teams, clubs and organizations in different regions will be operating under differing state and local regulations - and thus will be operating in different phases. All phases must be first based on, and compliant, with your region's regulations.

Lastly, a minimum amount of time is suggested to remain within each phase. This time provides the opportunity to build up the physical endurance, strength and hygiene habits necessary for each phase. The time also allows for the ability to isolate and track any COVID related events.

Clubs should carefully consider the conditions necessary to advance to the next phase and be prepared, if necessary, to stay in the current phase for longer than the timeline indicated or revert to an earlier phase to ensure the safety of all participants.

Do not proceed to the next phase if it is not compliant with your region's social distancing policies or if within your club consistent and compliant habits cannot be met.



PHASES DETAILS

Phase 0: Stay and Shelter

Duration: Based on state and local regulations

Core features

- Stay and shelter in place via CDC, state and local regulations and guidelines
- No organized trainings or competitions
- Virtual options can be considered

During this phase, since there is no ability to host in-person trainings or competitions, virtual communications are a good option to use to keep in touch with coaches, players, parents and others.

Phase I: Individual and Small Group Training

Suggested Duration: 4-6 weeks

Core features

- State and/or local stay and shelter regulations lifted
- Only small group trainings with maximum of nine (9) players and one (1) coach allowed (or less, based on state/local social distancing guidelines)
- Maintain social distancing during training
- COVID-19 prevention and response protocols in place and followed
- Allow adequate time for good habits and compliance with Covid-19 protocol
- No competitions or tournaments
- Injury risk prevention strategy

During this phase, small group trainings can begin with a maximum of nine (9) players and one (1) coach (or less, based on state/local social distancing guidelines). Group sizes based on age and assurance of social distancing measures should be considered to avoid any cluster outbreaks.

With this first step back on the field, COVID-19 prevention and response protocols need to be implemented prior to when trainings begin. Keep in mind that implementing these new COVID-19 habits and processes for players, parents, coaches and clubs will require adequate time for understanding and compliance.

During this time, it is also important to consider injury risk strategies as endurance, strength and soccer skills come back into focus.

Phase II: Full Team Training

Suggested Duration: 3-6 weeks

Core features

- Full team training allowed only if Phase I compliance and protocols met
- Continue to maintain social distancing
- COVID-19 prevention and response protocols in place and followed
- Allow three (3) weeks for tracing and tracking purposes



- Guided by local and state recommendations

During this phase, full team trainings are allowed, but COVID-19 prevention and response protocols should continue to be maintained. A minimum three-week duration during this stage allows for the ability to isolate and/or track any possible symptoms in individuals, and also assures continued compliance in following the regulations and processes in place.

In the build-up to competitive play in the next phase (Phase III), there should be a continued acclimatization process strategy to reduce possible injury risk.

Phase III: Full Team Competitions

Duration: Indefinite

Core features

- Full team competitions can occur
- Continue with COVID-19 mitigation strategies
- Consider local and single day competitions
- Large events should be guided by local and/or state public health authorities

During this phase, full team competitions, such as tournaments, may take place, as long as mitigation strategies and processes for COVID-19 are being implemented. Teams are recommended to only participate in local events and resist the urge to participate in events in other regions that may require travel or overnight stays. As always, all events should follow local and/or state public health authority recommendations.

Phase IV: No Restrictions

COVID-19 is no longer a public health matter and there are no restrictions directed by federal, state and local authorities. Please refer to www.recognizetorecover.org for general health and safety recommendations from U.S. Soccer.

Reverting To An Earlier Phase

Regardless of which phase you are in, you should be prepared to step back and revert to an earlier phase if any of the following occur. Follow local public health official guidelines at all times.

- Cluster of infections occur
- Inability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and response protocols
- Inability to track and/or isolate players or staff
- External factor exposes a COVID-19 risk to your team or club
- Changes to local public health official guidelines regarding group gatherings

B. General Hygiene Code of Conduct

The following recommendations should guide decision-making in Phase I through Phase III. As a reminder, returning to play is a personal choice, and you should feel comfortable determining for yourself if you would like to resume activities in a full-team environment.



We recommend all participants (coaches, parents, players, administrators, etc.) communicate with their club or coaches to better understand the safety policies in place and work together to protect against the spread of COVID-19.

General Health

1. If you are sick or have symptoms of an illness:
 - a. Stay home. Stay home regardless of what is causing your illness.
 - b. If you are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, practice self-quarantine measures as guided by the CDC and contact your physician.
 - c. To discontinue quarantine and return to sport, obtain appropriate clearance to return to soccer and sport from your physician.
2. If you have been in close contact (within 6 feet) with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19:
 - a. Begin self-quarantine for 14 days and follow the most up to date [CDC guidelines](#).
3. Advise your instructor, club or coach immediately if any possible exposures have occurred in your team, training or club environment. Parents (and not the minor player) should communicate with the club, coach or SRC, in accordance with the Safe Soccer Framework and the U.S. Center for SafeSport policies and guidance.

Physical Interaction

1. Maintain “social distancing” of at least six feet.
2. Avoid activities involving high levels of group interaction (ex: team huddles).
3. Avoid general physical interaction including hugging, “high fives” or passing objects by hand.
4. Participants and any additional persons on site (employee, volunteer, parent) should avoid close contacts and follow all social-distancing guidelines.
5. Distance yourself from anyone exhibiting signs of sickness.

General Hygiene

1. Avoid touching your eyes/mouth/nose as much as possible.
2. Wash or sanitize your hands often and after close contacts.
 - a. Use soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.
 - b. When soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
 - a. Follow with washing or sanitizing your hands.
 - b. Dispose of tissues in a sealed trash can.
4. Avoid spitting and coughing.
 - a. Goalkeepers should not spit into their gloves.
5. Follow recommendations on wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment - masks or face covers) outlined above.

Equipment & Training Gear

1. Where possible, use individual equipment.
 - a. Do not share personal equipment or gear (e.g. water bottles, towels, flags, etc.).



- b. Soccer balls may be shared.
 - c. See the Equipment section of this document for details.
2. Sanitize sports or exercise equipment before and after each training session.
3. Wash all training gear after each training session.

Communal Areas

1. Clean and disinfect high-trafficked areas of your facility regularly.
2. If doors and/or gates are used to access the training field, plan to prop them open during usage hours.
 - a. If doors cannot be propped open, use a sleeve/covered hand or elbow to open.
 - b. Sanitize hands following contact with door handles/gates.

C. Wellness Resources

Parents, guardians, coaches, referees and players are encouraged to refer to U.S. Soccer's 'Recognize to Recover Nutrition and Hydration Guidelines' for a full overview on nutritional and hydration practices. Learn more about the 3 R's of recovery from play (rehydrate, refuel and rebuild). <http://www.recognizetorecover.org/nutrition-hydration#supplements>

Hydration

1. Participants should clearly label their water bottles with their own name.
 - a. Participants should not touch anyone else's bottle.
 - b. It is recommended that each participant brings at least two drink bottles to training (e.g. 2 x 32oz bottles). This will limit the need to refill bottles onsite.
2. If the club provides fluids, establish protocol to limit multiple "touching" of hydration source.
 - a. If a refill station is necessary, ensure there is a handwashing station nearby or provide hand sanitizer to use before refilling.
3. Single-use bottles should be discarded or immediately on site
4. During training sessions, fluid breaks are recommended at least once every 15 minutes but will largely be dictated by the duration/intensity of the session. Breaks should be planned in advance and communicated to players.
5. Water breaks for both trainings and games should adhere to social distancing guidelines. When there is a water break, participants should make their way to their personal station, and drink only from their own bottle.
6. As we head into summer, all organizations, clubs, teams, coaches and players should follow the heat policy outlined by Recognize to Recover [here](#).

Heat Considerations

1. As we head into summer, all organizations, clubs, teams, coaches and players should follow the heat policy outlined by Recognize to Recover [here](#).
 - a. Heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and exertional heat stroke (EHS), can be serious and potentially life-threatening conditions which can be brought on or intensified by physical activity.
 - b. Recognizing the signs and symptoms as early as possible allows for treatment and rapid recovery with hydration and onsite immediate cooling down the individual.



- c. Educate staff on the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and early management.
- d. Follow heat acclimatization guidelines during practices and conditioning. Acclimatization is the body's natural adaptation to exercising in the heat. This process typically takes 10-14 days.
- e. Avoid the hottest part of the day for training sessions (11am-4pm) and matches when possible.
- f. Ensure appropriate hydration policies are in place with all participants having unlimited access to water, especially in warm climates (outlined in the "Hydration" section above and "Access To Water Or Water Fountains" in Section IV.)
- g. Be conscientious about how PPE impacts breathing or causes heat and discomfort. Players are not encouraged to wear PPE during active training and coaches should consider taking a "PPE break" by moving safely 10 feet away from other participants. Follow PPE recommendations provided above.

Nutrition Strategies to Support Activities & Immune Function

1. Consume enough calories to meet training/daily life needs.
 - a. Show up for training and matches adequately fueled.
 - b. If a player brings a snack, he or she are not recommended to share.
 - i. If you must share, any food should be packaged individually.
 - ii. Protein: maintain adequate intake throughout the day (main meals and snacks).
 - iii. Carbohydrate: adjust intake to training duration/intensity and prevent low carbohydrate situations.
2. After strenuous exercise, athletes enter a brief period of time in which they experience weakened immune resistance and may be more susceptible to viral and bacterial infections.
3. Vitamin D is one of the most important markers in immune health and Vitamin C has been found to support immune health during intense/lengthy training periods. Daily consumption of food sources that are high in Vitamin C and Vitamin D are encouraged to further support immune health.
 - a. Foods high in Vitamin C include: kiwi fruit, bell peppers, strawberries, oranges, broccoli, tomatoes, kale.
 - b. Foods high in Vitamin D include: salmon, mackerel, eggs, mushrooms, cow's milk, yoghurt, fortified cereals, fortified orange juice.

Mental Wellness

1. During this unprecedented time, our lives have been disrupted. Training, playing and even watching sports is different in our current landscape. This crisis can cause negative impacts on our mental and emotional wellbeing. It is important to be aware of the impact this can have on our health so we can help ourselves. Self-care and knowledge of resources that are available are helpful in times of crisis. You may be experiencing a range of emotions, including:
 - a. Anxiety
 - b. Stress
 - c. Sadness
 - d. Worry or fear
 - e. Loneliness



- f. Or other uncomfortable emotions
2. Social distancing can feel like you have to be socially isolated, but it's important to remember that this is not the case.
 - a. You can still safely talk and interact with teammates and colleagues while following simple safety guidelines:
 - i. Staying 6ft apart where possible
 - ii. Maintaining good hygiene
 - iii. Avoid physical contact (ex: use Air-high fives as opposed to regular contact high fives)
 - iv. Stay home when you are sick
3. You can find additional resources for mental health during COVID 19 at [U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover web page](#).

D. Additional Resources

- [USOPC Coronavirus Resources](#)
- [USOPC - Coping with the Impact of Coronavirus for Athletes](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus Updates](#)
- [CDC Advice - How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)
- [CDC - Consideration for Youth Sports](#)
- [CDC - Workplace Decision Tree](#)
- [CDC - Camp Decision Tree](#)
- [CDC - Deciding to Go Out](#)
- [CDC - Community Mitigation Strategies](#)
- [FIFA COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [WHO Hand Washing Steps \(Video\)](#)
- [WHO Mass Gathering Guidelines Worksheet](#)
- [WHO Advice for Public](#)
- [US Center for Safe Sport Digital Safety](#)
- [US Soccer Recognize to Recover - COVID-19 and Mental Health](#)

Contributions Recognition

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