

May 31, 2021

MEMORANDUM

Return to Play Reminders

Alberta Soccer is excited to get back on the field along with all of district members, clubs, players, coaches, referees, and parents in the coming weeks. The announcement by the Government of Alberta (GOA) that we could see a return to contact training and competition by mid-June is extremely exciting after 8 months of difficult lockdowns and lack of soccer for everyone.

As we return to distanced training, with the expectation that we could begin competitive play as early as June 10th, we wanted to provide the following considerations for all members planning their return to play.

STAGE 1 - Youth and Adult Group of 10 training

The 8 & 2 training model of 18 years and under and the Group of 10 training for 19 years and older will remain as they were previously published in early May. Please remind your teams of the Covid protocols that are still in place around **social distancing, mask wearing for coaches, tracking attendance for the purposes of contact tracing and sanitizing of shared equipment.**

The full policies can be found on our website (<https://albertasoccer.com/covid-19-updates-2-2/>)

STAGE 2 – Return to Competition / Contact Training

The current GOA and Alberta Health Services (AHS) guidance is that the game on the field will return with no restrictions but that we will still have Covid protocols in place in order to keep participants as safe as possible. Their guidance still quotes “Distancing and masking requirements remain in effect” on the public facing site today.

The health order that will guide our protocols normally comes out very close to the opening of the new stage so our best path forward is to prepare for the Covid protocols that were in place during the summer and fall of 2020 in order to be as ready as possible. It will be much easier for our teams to ease back on the protocols if the health order allows rather than scrambling at the last minute if we prepare like it is 2019.

Our current expectation is that the following protocols will be place when we return to competition and contact training;

- Mask wearing and social distancing (2 meters) on sidelines / benches.
 - o Athletes will remove masks once they begin to play and/or train;
 - o Coaches will wear masks at all times.
- Shared equipment will be sanitized by teams.
 - o This will be the responsibility of the teams on site for their practices.
 - o This includes game balls provided by the home teams on game day.

- Covid Symptom Monitoring, Attendance Tracking and Contact Tracing
 - o There will still be an expectation that Covid health checks are completed prior to each practice or game, attendance is known for any active participants in a practice or game and that contact tracing assistance will be provided to AHS as required.
- Spectators and Gathering
 - o The restrictions on spectators and gatherings outside of the actual practice or game will be limited by the AHS health order. Our expectation is that spectators will be socially distanced, limited by facility standards and possibly restricted by outdoor gathering limits depending on the space.
 - o Teams and groups will be expected to gather and disperse quickly from their practices and games to avoid breach of AHS guidelines for outdoor social gatherings that will be limited to 20 people socially distanced during Stage 2.

STAGE 3 – Lifting of Restrictions

Little is known at this time, but we expect that the lifting of restrictions will still require Covid protocols to be respected. We will do our best to address what this stage will look like as we get closer to this stage but we must understand it is not a return to a new normal, it is a stage of that process.

Referee Registration & Availability

Thank you to those people who participated in the referee town hall yesterday. With the sudden shift in opening, our focus right now is on getting as many referees as possible trained to accommodate games as soon as possible in June. It had been difficult to positively message referee recruitment language when so much was unknown about the return to play, cohorts and levels of a registration within districts to guarantee games.

Our current registration levels for entry level officials are around 33% of 2019 targets. We know we need to grow that number to match the expected return of players for this summer and we will all have to work together to make that happen. We will be messaging out to our referees who have not returned since 2019 and 2018 to ask about their willingness to participate. I would encourage all districts to start asking around to those who have traditionally refereed in our communities about their availability to return again.

We have to respect that this return to play is not a return to normal and we will still have risks to consider for all participants in recruiting new referees and encouraging referees to return. Our messaging needs to be positive and demonstrate our understanding of the role the referee will play in this successful return to competition.

Here is an example of the kind of language we can use to encourage new and returning referees;

Referees needed!

It is exciting to finally see the return of soccer here in Alberta! Clubs and Districts are quickly assembling teams and the Alberta Soccer Association is in need of referees. WE ARE READY to return to the most fun, safe and inclusive sport in the province and that time is nearly here!

Refereeing is a great way to stay fit, get outside, make some extra income and join a unique, tightly knit community!

If you feel you could help referee matches, we have a full list of training opportunities for you to take a look at. This link will help get you started:
<https://albertasoccer.com/referee/become-a-referee>

We are very excited to get started on this next step to our sport returning and we will be working hard with all of you to make it as simple as possible.

Sincerely,



Richard Adams
Executive Director
Alberta Soccer