



# COVID-19 Return to Play Protocol

## Introduction

This Return to Play Protocol is meant as a guide to return responsibly to the game. It is based upon the science behind the phasing process outlined in the COVID-19 Task Force's *Guidelines Opening Up America Again*.

As your State Association, LSA is charged with guiding our clubs and soccer families on how we can get back on the field in a manner that reduces risks of infection and supports the State's policies on insuring we do not suffer a resurgence of this hideous pandemic.

## Phases

The Guidelines set forth in the *Guidelines Opening Up America Again* establish a measured, gradual, science-based game plan to return to normalcy. There are 3 Phases and stringent 14-day Gating Criteria that must be achieved before a State, a Region or, in this case, a state-wide sport association can move from one phase to the next. Governor Edwards extended the Stay at Home Order through May 15<sup>th</sup> because the State failed to meet these Gateway Criteria.

LSA shall adhere to the Governor's determination of phasing. We have translated those Phases into our Return to Play Protocol. Where soccer falls in the Phasing process is directly reflected in how much control can be maintained in insuring that mitigation practices are being followed.

## Phase One

Phase One calls for maximizing social distancing when in public and calls for avoiding groups of 10 or more in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Strict adherence to these criteria is impossible in any soccer environment. Phase One also continues the prohibition on non-essential travel and isolation following travel. Finally, Phase One specifically states that "Organized Youth Activities that are currently closed should remain closed".

Hence, when the Governor announces that the Louisiana has satisfied all of its Gating Criteria and will be allowed to enter Phase One, the LSA Comprehensive Ban on ALL activities and events (e.g. practices of any kind, scrimmages, friendlies, games and tournaments) at all levels of play (e.g. recreational, Academy and Classic) shall remain in full force and effect unless and until the Governor announces Louisiana may enter Phase Two.

## Phase Two

Phase Two begins the gradual re-opening of many activities, but is, once again, limited by the ability to maintain control over the particular environment. We are all reminded that by returning to work or another activity, individuals could carry the virus back home to vulnerable individuals. Phase Two calls for maximizing social distancing when in public and for avoiding groups of 50 or more in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. LSA is interpreting Phase Two as permitting extremely limited activities so long as every possible measures are taken.

### Activities permitted in Phase Two

- Practices of single teams on each field. And no more than 50 players and coaches present on adjoining fields
- Tryouts

### Activities NOT permitted in Phase Two

These shall not be permitted because enforcing adherence to health safety protocols and guidelines is impossible.

- Games, scrimmages or friendlies
- Tournaments or jamborees

### Limitations on Phase Two Activities

#### Club Responsibilities

- Before a Club may begin to return to play, it must publish a notice to all players, parents and soccer families outlining the risks of returning and detailing how the Club intends to minimize or eradicate those risks.
- All return to play activities must be published as being voluntary. For example, if a child chooses not to attend tryouts for Classic teams, the Club must accommodate that child's return at a later date.
- All Club personnel and Coaches must wear face masks.
- Clubs must provide hand sanitizer at each bench area
- Clubs must organize "stations" for each player at or around the bench area that are at least 6 feet apart in which players must keep all of their belongings. They shall be required to return to their "station" only during breaks. ILLUSTRATION

#### Coach Responsibilities

- Before any and all activity (e.g. practice, tryout session, etc...) the temperature of each coach and player must be checked with an infrared thermometer and each individual must be asked and answer these questions
    - Have you been in contact with a person with COVID 19?
    - Have you had a cough, fever, or loss of taste or smell?
- If anyone answers YES to any of these questions, they shall not be permitted to participate.
- Activities must be limited in size (e.g. 3 v. 3 or 4 v. 4) so as to avoid large groups competing in a small space.
  - It is highly recommended that activities last no more than one (1) hour. Fatigue brought on by physical activity renders an individual more vulnerable to the virus. Excessive activities, especially in the heat of the summer, should be avoided.
  - Coaches alone shall be permitted to touch training discs and cones.
  - If training bibs or pinnies are needed, players must bring their own colored shirts. For example, a coach should require each player to bring or wear a dark and a light t-shirt to play. If for any reason a training bib or pinnie is used by a player, it must be immediately isolated (put into a separate laundry bag) and not used again by any other individual unless and until it is laundered.
  - Physical contact outside the game must be strictly avoided.
  - Players must use their own soccer ball. There will be no throw-ins and no activity will include picking up a ball with your hands. Players will be discouraged from touching any soccer ball other than their own.

### Player Responsibilities

- Players must wear masks prior to and immediately after training
- Players must observe social distancing when not in play.
- Players shall be required to wash or sanitize their hands prior to and after training
- Players must wash their clothes immediately up returning home.
- Players must NOT share drinks, food, equipment or clothing at any time
- Contact outside of play (e.g. high 5s, hugs, etc.) shall be avoided at all times

### Parents

- Parents should have hand sanitizer available for their children before and after each session.
- Parent shall remain in their cars during all activities. They may not congregate at or around the field. If they leave their car for any reason (e.g. to use a restroom) they must wear a face mask and observe social distancing.
- Should parents feel the need to communicate with a coach, it must be done via telecommunications or email.

### Phase Three

Only after the Gateway Criteria are met in Phase Two, Phase Three will commence. Again, entering Phase Three is not accomplished by throwing a switch. It must be done responsibly given the nature of the soccer environment. The protocols set forth in Phase Two and before such as social distancing must not simply be abandoned.

### Activities permitted in Phase Three

- Practices of single teams on each field
- Games, friendlies and scrimmages
- Tryouts

### Activities NOT permitted in Phase Three

- Tournaments or jamborees
- Travel to tournaments outside Louisiana shall be handled on a case by case basis.

Tournaments pose a high risk because there is virtually no way to maintain control over protocol such as social distancing by and between players and supporters or spectators. The tournament environment is essentially a petri dish in which the virus can flourish.