



NJ Youth Soccer Return to Play Notice & Guidelines

Version as of January 14, 2021

The purpose of this document is to provide players, parents, coaches, and soccer organizations with guidelines to assist them with developing their return-to-play programming in the context of COVID-19. These guidelines focus on information provided by the NJ Governor’s Office and the “Guidance for Sports Activities” issued by the New Jersey Department of Health.

These guidelines in this document are NOT intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, NJ Youth Soccer makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the completeness of this information. Further, clubs are encouraged to seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials in your area if you have specific questions.

Finally, although the young and healthy may be subject to less severe cases of COVID-19, every case of this disease is potentially life-altering or deadly, particularly in those with risk factors that may occur within our communities. Health consequences may be long-standing and only apparent weeks after initial infection and recovery. Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is no way of eliminating the risk of infection. This should always be at the forefront when designing return-to-activity.

The risks of participation should be clearly communicated to parents and participants in your respective programs (see FAQ’s on section for details on insurance coverage). In addition, educational resources are provided incorporating guidance from US Youth Soccer and US Soccer.



A Phased Approach based on Federal, State and Local Guidelines & Orders

Phase 1: State health authorities require shelter in place, stay at home order.

- Individual training sessions can be held in participant home/residence using their own equipment.
- Coaching occurs virtually. No coaches or other athletes should be present during individual training.

Phase 2: Public health authorities lift shelter in place requirements but continue to prohibit group activities.

- Individual training sessions can be held in participant home/residence or outside (maintaining social distancing) using their own equipment.
- Coaching occurs virtually. No coaches or other athletes physically present during training.

Phase 3: Public health authorities allow contact sports, which includes soccer, with limiting activities exclusively to no-contact drills, practices, and simulations of game situations as of June 22nd.

- See NJ Department of Health's "Guidance for Sports Activities" (pages 3-8)

Phase 4: Public health authorities allow contact sports, which includes soccer, to resume traditional practices and competitions (expected to begin as of July 6th)

- No training or competition restrictions
- No sharing of water or equipment (exception for soccer balls)
- Physical contact should be minimized whenever possible
- Participants remain 6 feet apart off the field whenever possible
- Designated areas for each participant's gear should be clearly marked off the field
- Spectators permitted with proper social or physical distancing and no contact with players or teams. At risk individuals should still take precautions.
- Select guidelines from NJ Department of Health's "Guidance for Sports Activities" (pages 3-7)



Guidance for Sports Activities

The New Jersey Department of Health has published and continues to update its Guidance for Sports Activities. [Click here](#) to view the latest and complete guidance to which NJYS membership is expected to adhere.



From its January 12, 2021 update, the New Jersey Department of Health guidance includes, but is not limited to the following:

Youth and Adult Indoor Sports Pause

Executive Order No. 204 (2020) paused indoor organized and team sports practices and competitions as of December 5, 2020. That pause sunset as of January 2, 2021, so that practices and competitions of organized, competitive, and/or group sports (regardless of the risk level defined elsewhere in this document) at any facility (e.g., school, indoor fitness facility, fieldhouse, sports complex) are permitted to resume subject to the requirements outlined in this document and other applicable orders.

Pursuant to [Executive Order No. 194](#) (2020), all interstate games and tournaments for indoor youth sports, up to and including high school, are prohibited until further notice. "Indoor interstate youth sports competition" includes any sports game, scrimmage, tournament, or similar competition that is conducted indoors with opposing teams or individuals from different states competing against each other and which would require an opposing team or individual to travel from a state outside of New Jersey. It also would prohibit out-of-state teams from hosting competitions in the state. [Administrative Order No. 2020-25](#), issued December 31, 2020, clarified that the restrictions regarding interstate youth sports competitions also apply to youth sports competitions conducted outdoors. These restrictions on interstate competitions remain in effect.

Sports program operators must abide by the following risk assessment chart:

<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Permissible Activities</u>	<u>Prohibited Activities</u>
Medium Risk - Sports that involve some close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that cannot be cleaned between participants.	Lacrosse, hockey, multi-person rowing, multi-person kayaking, multi-person canoeing, water polo, swimming relays, fencing, cycling in a group, running in a close group, group sailing, volleyball, soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, short track.	No-contact and contact practices in indoor and outdoor settings	All activities are permissible as of October 12



Additional Resources:

[NJ Department of Health](#)

[NJYS Phase 3 “Return to Play” Guidelines Video](#)

[NJYS “Return to Play” Infographic](#)

[NJYS “Return to Play” FAQs](#)

[US Youth Soccer](#)

[CDC](#)

[Move United](#)

[Special Olympics](#)

[Federation for Children with Special Needs](#)

[Autism; Wearing a Mask Social Story](#)

Return to Play: At a minimum, the NJYS insurer has advised us that the state association and its member organizations need to adhere to state/local guidelines on resumption of sporting activities. Following these guidelines & directives will position us to operate in a reasonable and prudent manner from a risk management standpoint. NJYS can decide to be more restrictive than the state of New Jersey with respect to return to play but may not be less restrictive. It will be a priority to document the positive actions taken (e.g. at the state, league and club level) to demonstrate that reasonable and prudent steps were undertaken and completed to keep players, staff, and spectators as safe from infection as possible.

Insurance Coverage: NJYS membership (includes clubs, coaches, and players) are provided General Liability and Excess Accident Medical coverage while conducting sanctioned and approved NJYS activities. (e.g. practices, training, scrimmages, clinics, tryouts, games, and tournaments). Effective September 1, 2020, the current NJYS policy has an exclusion for pandemics including COVID. The NJYS Excess Accident Medical policy does not provide coverage for sickness or disease unless the proximate cause of the illness emanated from a covered accidental injury.

