



Middletown Athletic Association Soccer COVID-19 Return to Play Best Practices Guide

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Introduction

The **Middletown Athletic Association** (MAA) has put together the following plan to reduce the risk of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and ensure we have a safe and successful Fall season. This plan has been developed based on the guidelines set forth by Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer, which was created in consultation with US Soccer, US Youth Soccer, the CDC, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Plans from other agencies and sport organizations were also reviewed.

Questions regarding the following information should be sent to maasoccer13@gmail.com.

We ask that you review all information contained within the guide. Prior to using MAA facilities, home or away, it is implied that you have read and understand these guidelines.

Because information regarding the pandemic is constantly evolving the plan will be updated as needed. We thank you for your patience, understanding, and compliance.

General Safety Guidelines

Middletown Athletic Association (MAA) will follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and all local and state guidelines for facilities and events protocols for Return to Play.

Note: Although guidance and safeguards are being implemented by MAA to limit the spread of COVID-19, these precautions **cannot guarantee** that a player, family member, or spectator will not contract COVID-19.

This section discusses general safety guidelines that will help Middletown Athletic Association comply with Return to Play requirements.

Hygiene

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Do **not** share food or water.
- Always carry personal hand sanitizer with you.

Facemask usage

- Per the PA Department of Health, face coverings must be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators **at all times**, except for the following individuals:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old.
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.
- Per EPYSA, players are **not required** to wear face coverings when **actively engaged in workouts and competition** that prevent the wearing of face coverings.
- Players are required to wear a face covering when not involved in soccer activities or on the sideline.
- Teach and reinforce the use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from person to person. Face



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coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports.

Illness

- No player, coach, or guardian can attend training sessions, practices, or games if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
 - Any additional symptoms as outlined by the CDC.
- Sick players and coaches must **quarantine** as required by the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health and can only return to MAA with a doctor's written approval. A copy of the approval must be provided to the club before resuming any club activities.

Social distancing

- Maintain social distancing (6 ft. apart) as much as possible.
- Avoid unnecessary bodily contact (including, but not limited to, hand shaking, high fives, fist bumps, and hugs).
- Coaches and players should minimize contact with other teams before, during, and after each session.
- Only one coach may attend to an injured player and must be wearing a mask and gloves.

Soccer equipment

- Do **not** share soccer equipment.
- Coaches must disinfect **all training equipment** including cones, goals, flags, and so on.
- Scrimmage vests are considered personal equipment. Once issued by the coach, each player **must** wash their vest after every session.
- Each soccer ball must be sanitized **before and after** every practice and game.

Note: Only coaches should touch or move equipment.

Club Guidelines

In preparation for the upcoming season, MAA will:

- Engage with property owners (Middletown Township and Neshaminy School District) and comply with their policies and procedures.
- Designate an email account (maasoccer13@gmail.com) to receive and communicate any necessary information regarding potential COVID-19 exposure.



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- Assign a member of the Board of Directors to inform the necessary coaches, players, teams, and opposing club (if applicable) via maasoccer13@gmail.com about possible COVID-19 exposures.

Note: MAA will **not** shut down a league, division, team, or games due to a positive COVID-19 test and will instead rely on contact tracing to mitigate the spread.

- Rely on parents and guardians to determine a player's level of participation.
- Monitor players and if a coach or member of the Board of Directors observes a player presenting any COVID-19-related symptoms, they will be required to:
 - Leave the current activity (training, game, and so on) with their parent or guardian.
 - Seek the advice of a medical professional.
 - Provide MAA with documentation from a medical professional that they have been cleared to resume soccer activity.
- Recommend spectators not attend training sessions, unless accompanying a younger player.
- Provide separate sidelines for teams and their supporters during games and warmups.
- Monitor active COVID-19 case counts within the club and be prepared to stop operations, if necessary.
- Determine additional guidelines in accordance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as the "Phase Out" stage approaches.

Parent Guidelines

In preparation for the upcoming season, parents and guardians are expected to:

- Comply with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer, and any additional Middletown Athletic Association directives or requirements.
- Share the information** in this guide with your child.
- Determine if their child will wear a face mask during training.
- Sanitize and wash **all equipment** and uniforms after each training.
- Supply their child with a mask and hand sanitizer when attend trainings, practices, and games.
- Direct their child to **never share** water, snacks, or equipment.
- Ensure their child has enough water for the **entire training session or game**.
- Limit carpooling with other players and families.
- Comply with mask directives set by the PA Department of Health.
- Determine their child's level of participation in training sessions and communicate that to the coach.
- Adhere to rules of the club regarding attending training sessions.
- Refrain from attending training sessions, unless accompanying a younger player.
- Abide by a 1:1 parent/player ratio during times of restricted gatherings.
- Sit on the same sideline as their child's team and their supporters during games and warmups while maintaining social distancing efforts (minimum of 6 ft. between members of different households).
- Refrain from assisting the coach (or coaches) with equipment at the beginning or end of practice.
- Refrain from touching the ball if it leaves the field. Instead, allow either the player or coach to retrieve the ball.
- Notify the club and the coach if your child becomes ill.



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- Keep their child home if they are sick or if a member of their household is experiencing and COVID-19-related symptoms.
- Seek medical guidance if their child is experiencing and COVID-19-related symptoms.
- Provide MAA with documentation from a medical professional that their child has been cleared to resume soccer activity.

Coaching Guidelines

In preparation for the upcoming season, coaches are expected to:

- Comply with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer, and any additional Middletown Athletic Association directives or requirements.
- Reinforce directives, policies, and protocols as necessary with parents and players.
- Inquire how players are feeling as they arrive. If they are ill or appear to be ill, send them home and notify the club of the illness.
- Supply their medical kit or bag with gloves, extra masks, sanitizer, and facial tissues.
- Bring their medical kit or bag to every training session and game.
- Be positive, fun, and engaging. Help the children acclimate and reintegrate.
- Always implement social distancing.
- Set up player areas using cones six feet apart. This is where the players will keep their equipment during practice or game.
- Always wear a mask.
- Remind players that they may wear masks during training at their discretion. However, they must wear a mask when not engaged in soccer activity, including sitting on the bench.
- Move training equipment (cones and so on). Players must not touch or move any equipment that does not belong to them.
- Avoid bodily contact in training.
- Avoid activities involving lines, maintain social distancing in training.

Recommendation Guide for additional information.

- Sanitize all equipment after training.
- Minimize interaction with other teams that train before or after your session.
- Emphasize that players should go straight to their cars after a training session or game.
- Ensure their sideline and bench area is cleaned upon arrival and departure.
- Advise goalies to use their own equipment and clean or sanitize their hands immediately after a training session or game.

Player Guidelines

In preparation for the upcoming season, players are expected to:

- Follow all CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines.
- Take their temperature daily before activities with others.
- Wash their hands thoroughly before and after every training session.
- Bring and use hand sanitizer at every training session.
- Wear a mask before and immediately after all training sessions.
- Refrain from touching or sharing anyone else's equipment, water, food, or bag.



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- Practice social distancing by placing bags and equipment at least 6 feet apart.
- Wash and sanitize all equipment before and after every training session.
- Avoid group celebrations (for example, high fives, hugs, handshakes, fist-bumps, and so on).
- Refrain from spitting on the field of play during any training session or game. Referees will handle game discipline, if necessary.
- Only have one captain from each team during the pregame coin toss. The captain will stand on the outside circle.
- Use their own goalie equipment and clean or sanitize their hands immediately after a training session or game.

Game Guidelines

In preparation for this season, the following game guidelines have been adopted by the MAA Board of Directors:

- Follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and all local and state guidelines for facilities and events protocols for Return to Play.
- Follow Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Association (EPYSA) laws of the game unless MAA has adopted modified game rules.
- One team and their supporters will sit on the same sideline during games and warmups while maintaining social distancing efforts (minimum of 6 ft. between members of different households). The Other team will do the same on the opposite sideline
- Abide by a 1:1 parent/player ratio during times of restricted gatherings.
- No handshakes. No walk outs. No team huddles.
- Individual goal celebrations and team sportsmanship without contact is strongly encouraged.
- Only have one captain from each team during the pregame coin toss. The captain will stand on the outside circle. The referee will maintain possession of the coin.
- No spitting. Spitting may result in automatic removal from the field.
- Players must always keep proper social distance from referees.
- Only a team captain can approach the referee to ask questions and gain clarification.
- Teams must leave the field immediately after their game concludes. Teams will have 10 minutes to vacate the bench area.
- Game time slots will be expanded to allow for an incoming team to avoid personal contact with a team that has just played.
- Last game on a field is responsible for collecting flags and placing them in the appropriate shed.

Additional Resources

For additional information on content covered in this Return to Play, see below.

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- EPYSA: <https://www.epysa.org/stages-within-the-green-phase/>
- PA Department of Health: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-cov/community/schoolschildcare/youth-sports.html>