One of the most important responsibilities of a coach is ensuring the physical safety of all players. As youth sports programs return, navigating the new normal of socially distanced practices and COVID-19 regulations is important. Below we've outlined best practices for a safe return to the field or court informed by Center for Disease Control and Prevention and California Department of Public Health's recommendations. They are meant to supplement, not replace, state, local, tribal, community, and program regulations.

**TIPS TO KEEP YOUR PLAYERS SAFE**

**Know Risk Factors**

The following are factors that affect the risk of transmission of COVID-19:

- Level of contact within a sport
- Greater exertion levels (increases rate of breathing and risk of expending/inhaling virus droplets)
- Frequency and duration of close contact
- Mixing of individuals, groups, or teams
- Shared equipment

**Lower Risk**

- Individual skill building

**Medium Risk**

- Small group work

**Higher Risk**

- Within-team competition

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Physical Distancing

Plan practices that pose the least risk possible.

- When possible, plan individual skill building or fitness activities vs. close contact competitions.
- Use drills that keep players spaced out, at least 6 feet apart, and use cones to mark proper distances.
- Keep players spaced out on sidelines.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact in the sport and celebrations (teach players contactless high fives).

Socially Distanced Best Practices

Be Prepared

Gather as much information as you can before your season starts to make sure you are ready for any situation you may encounter.

- Know your state/local/tribal/community and program face covering regulations.
- The CDC recommends that all players, coaches, support staff, and spectators wear masks to lessen the chance of transmission. As a coach, it is your responsibility to communicate and enforce your mask policy with your players and coaches.
- Consider taking players’ temperatures when they arrive at practice.
- Recognize signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and have a plan if a player comes to practice sick.
- Consult with your program about protocols in the event that your team experiences a COVID-19 exposure.

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**Create Team Cohorts**

- Group 3-4 players into cohorts and have them remain at the same work station throughout practice to limit exposure (cohort field division examples below).
- Set-up workstations beforehand so you do not have to get into each cohort’s space.
- Stagger pick-up and drop-off times for each cohort, as well as water breaks.

**Encourage Preventative Hygiene**

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to and after practice.
- Be mindful of shared equipment - can players bring their own? If not, how is shared equipment being disinfected between uses?

**Keep Your Team in the Loop**

- Clearly communicate your expectations and the boundaries that will be in place to your players.
- Keep players and guardians updated with any regulatory revisions.

Information was gathered from the Center for Disease Control’s “Considerations for Youth Sports”, California Department of Public Health’s “Outdoor and Indoor Youth and Recreational Adult Sports”.

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