

SPRING 2021

Protocols, Guidelines and Orders from
the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
on COVID-19



Since we returned to play in 2020, the information and guidelines continued to evolve. As stated from the from last Summer, the conditions of this pandemic will continue to change and we must adapt with it.

For certain, the risks of infection still exists. In recent weeks, thanks to the introduction of vaccines and continued diligence and compliance with the various public health orders and guidelines, we are in a better state than we were only a few months ago. By no means are we completely safe from the virus. We must continue to proceed cautiously and continue to monitor and comply with the Governor's office, PA Department of Health, and any other federal or local regulations.

The purpose of this document is to consolidate the most current orders and guidelines. There have been many changes over the past 12 months. Our goal is to provide what is necessary to know today as you prepare for a local spring season, the State Cups, regional leagues or tournaments. To be clear, each time the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- either from the Governor or the Department of Health- the most recent order takes precedent over any prior ones. At this point in the pandemic, these orders are generally widely and publically communicated, but still may lake clarity or cause confusion

To be clear, as we have been since this outbreak began, we will adhere to and comply with, the orders of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The guidelines and orders contained within this document are in compliance with the Commonwealth and are not the creation of this Association.



We also must reinforce the importance of notification and communication to your organizational members and partners.

We must work together and comply with the prescribed mitigation and protection standards to safely play soccer. Social distancing, quarantines and masks are the tools we have and we need to use them.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please consult the Pennsylvania Department of Health <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx> or call them at 1-877-PA HEALTH

In addition, there are six county (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Erie, Montgomery, Philadelphia) and four municipal (Allentown, Bethlehem, Wiles-Barre, York) health departments that may serve you. <https://www.health.pa.gov/About/Pages/County-Municipal%20Health%20Depts.aspx>

GENERAL HYGIENE AND SAFETY PROTOCLS

- Regularly disinfect all training equipment- cones, goals (all sizes), flags etc... Only coaches should handle equipment
- Hand sanitizer available for all at training or games
- Goalkeeper gloves must be sanitized before/after games and training.
- Never share GK gloves or jerseys. Keep spares.
- Scrimmage vests washed after every training session or game. Should consider it personal equipment, and provide each player with their own.
- No shaking hands, high fives, fist bump, hugs, etc.
- Each player with their own labeled water bottles and directed to never share with teammates.
- Each ball sanitized before/after every practice or game.
- No player or coach can attend if they are feeling sick.
- Coaches must screen and monitor athletes for symptoms prior to and during games and practices. If individuals participating have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, or are sick, they must be sent home.**
- Sick players or coaches must quarantine as required by CDC/PA Dept. of Health. **Regardless of the illness being COVID related or not, it must be determined by a medical professional, they can only return with a signed note from that medical professional.** Must show notice to the club.
- Coaches to wear a face mask as per PA Dept. of Health at all times
- Players to wear face mask when on the bench as per PA Dept. of Health
- Social distancing = 6 feet apart
- Only one coach may attend to an injured player. Must wear mask and gloves.

PENNSYLVANIA MASKING ORDER

July 2020	Universal Face Covering order
November 18, 2020	Updated Order Requiring Universal Face Coverings
November 23, 2020	Second Update

Summary: This order requires that people within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania wear a face covering in all public spaces, indoor and outdoor to mitigate the spread of Covid-19.

The order applies to everyone participating in sports activities including athletes, coaches and spectators, unless they fall under the exception in Section 3 of the Order.

The updated Order is effective immediately (*Nov. 18, 2020*) and will remain in effect until the Secretary of Health determines the public health risk is sufficiently reduced so that face coverings are no longer necessary as a widely utilized public health tool.

Exemptions from the Order can be found in Section 3 of the Order. When a customer or visitor claims to be exempt due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, **businesses may not require proof of the condition or disability or require customers or visitors to explain the nature of their condition.**¹

¹ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/Universal-Masking-FAQ.aspx>

PENNSYLVANIA MASKING ORDER

Can an athlete remove their mask during play if the mask causes a medical condition, including respiratory issues that impede breathing?

Yes, the Order provides an exception in section 3 that provides that if wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability. **The order indicates all alternatives to wearing a face covering, including the use of a face shield, should be exhausted before an individual is excepted from this Order.**

Using football as an example, wearing a mask in addition to a mouth guard and a helmet would likely create a medical issue for the athlete whether the athlete is a professional or youth player even if a previous medical issue was not present. For example, the CDC says that "wearing a mask with these types of protective equipment is not safe if it makes it hard to breathe." **There are other sports where there are similar concerns that a mask would create a medical issue where one would otherwise not exist in an athlete.** For example, it should also be obvious that wearing a mask while swimming presents an imminent health issue.

According to Section 3, the athlete would be asked to work through alternatives that would reduce or eliminate the respiratory droplets that would impact others in proximity. **If the sport, equipment, or exertion level does not allow for face covering to be worn safely then the athlete should not wear a face covering.**

There are no exemptions for specific sports, leagues, teams, or levels. We know that some people don't like masks. We are asking everyone to please give this their best effort so we can continue these activities and others as we all unite to fight COVID-19.²

² <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/Universal-Masking-FAQ.aspx>

PENNSYLVANIA MASKING ORDER

Section 3: Exceptions to Covering Requirement ³

The following are exceptions to the face covering requirements in Section 2. All alternatives to wearing a face covering, including the use of a face shield, should be exhausted before an individual is excepted from this Order.

- A. If wearing a face covering while working would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- B. If wearing a face covering **would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing**, a mental health condition or a disability.
- C. When necessary to confirm the individual's identity.
- D. While obtaining a service that requires the temporary removal of the face covering, such as dental services.
- E. When working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction.
- F. If an individual is communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

³<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Updated%20Order%20of%20the%20Secretary%20Requiring%20Universal%20Face%20Coverings.pdf>

PENNSYLVANIA MASKING ORDER

In summary, the Order has been in effect since November 2020. It has not updated since then. Athletes should exhaust all options before being excepted from the order. Under Section 3, the player would not be required show proof of the condition or explain the nature of their condition.

Many of our clubs and teams had ended their season prior to this order being implemented in late November. As those clubs and teams are preparing for the spring season, it may seem new, but to be clear it is not.

As teams may still be training indoors, it is permitted, but teams must follow the rules of the facility. A facility must comply with Commonwealth orders, but have the right to be more restrictive. The same would apply to rental of private fields for the Spring. The field owner, whether private or public, may be me more restrictive than the Commonwealth. Those are the conditions a club/team would need to comply with as a condition of their rental agreement.

We are aware that local municipalities may issue their own statements regarding wearing masks during play. We would remind you that Section 3 of the Order exists for those that opt for the exception and take off their mask during play. No order can keep you from wearing a mask if you choose to. We simply ask that everyone respect the decisions of any individual that opts for the exception.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

As of March 1, 2021, the travel order requiring testing and quarantine is no longer in effect. Travelers should still practice appropriate public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 such as masking, physical distancing and hand hygiene.

CROWD SIZE & SPECTATORS

November 23, 2020 Order for Mitigation and Enforcement

March 1, 2021 Amended Order

Outdoor events and gatherings may have up to 20% of their maximum capacity. Maximum occupancy includes staff, as well as spectators, coaches and athletes. Fields and facilities may be more restrictive if they choose.

Physical Distancing at six feet apart is still required of spectators and players not participating in the game. Masks must be worn by spectators, coaches and athletes (see previous regarding athletes and masks)

Best practices on timed entry and exit, multiple entry and exit, multiple rest rooms and hand sanitizing stations should still be implemented. Update your local action plan and be sure to communicate with all visitors to your fields.

Updated Quarantine Guidelines

CDC continues to endorse quarantine for 14 days and recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. CDC will continue to evaluate new information and update recommendations as needed. Quarantine should ideally be for 14 days from the last time they had contact with you; however, for individuals who do not develop symptoms, quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing or after Day 7 if a specimen collected after Day 5 tests negative on a diagnostic test (i.e., PCR, antigen).

Options to reduce quarantine

Reducing the length of quarantine may make it easier for people to quarantine by reducing the time they cannot work. A shorter quarantine period also can lessen stress on the public health system, especially when new infections are rapidly rising.

Your local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last, based on local conditions and needs. Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if you need to quarantine.

Options they will consider include stopping quarantine:

- **After day 10 without testing**
- **After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later)**

After stopping quarantine, you should watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.

If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your local public health authority or healthcare provider.

Wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet from others, wash your hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

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RESOURCES

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

- ❑ <https://www.governor.pa.gov/plan-for-pennsylvania/>

Pennsylvania Department of Health

- ❑ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
- ❑ <https://www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19/sports-guidance/>
- ❑ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/Universal-Masking-FAQ.aspx#:~:text=The%20Secretary's%20Order%20requires%20individuals,place%2C%20or%20near%20others%20at>

CDC Considerations for Youth Sports

- ❑ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

United States Olympic Committee and Paralympic Committee

- ❑ <https://www.teamusa.org/coronavirus>

US Youth Soccer

- ❑ https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/6/usys_rta_notice_051920.pdf