FOOTBALL NSW

COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN

RETURN TO PLAY

LEVEL C

APPLICABLE TO ALL LEVELS OF OUTDOOR FOOTBALL AS OF 1 MARCH 2021

CONTENTS

Introduction 3

Prior to Attending Training, games or other football activities 4

Level C Training - What is permitted? 5

Level C Playing - What is permitted? 6

Conditions and Guidelines for Return to Training, playing or other football activities 7

Other Considerations 8

General Safeguards 10

INTRODUCTION

The impact of COVID-19 previously resulted in the suspension of all football activities for the months of April and May 2020. This followed a national directive by Football Federation Australia on 1 April 2020.

Since this time, the priority of Football NSW has been to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the community and to undertake its social responsibility to do everything it can to slow down the spread of COVID-19. The key point of reference in all our considerations and guidelines has been the measures recommended and implemented by both the Federal and State Governments.

COVID-19 is mostly likely spread through direct close contact with a person while they are infectious (usually face to face contact for at least 15 minutes; or being in the same closed space for at least 2 hours). Given that football is played outdoors, the risk of infection through playing sport is minimal, and now with the rate of infection greatly reduced, it is time to cautiously reintroduce football related activity in a staged approach.

FOOTBALL NSW'S THREE PHASED APPROACH

Football NSW is following and implementing the AIS's 'Framework for Rebooting Sport' with its three levels A, B and C. These levels can be succinctly summarised with the below graphic depicting a traffic light system of 'stop, get ready, go';

LEVEL B – RETURN TO TRAIN

On 21 May 2020, and in line with the NSW Government's updating of the Public Health Order (of 15 May 2020), Football NSW lifted the 'temporary suspension' as it related to training. At this time, it released its Return to Training Guidelines and a series of resources for Associations, Clubs, Teams, Players and Parents to follow and implement. The conditions set out in that document were in line with government directions at the time.

LEVEL C – RETURN TO PLAY

The first edition of these 'Return to Play' Guidelines issued in June 2020 provided for the resumption of full competitive matches and other football activities at all ages and for all levels across the various leagues and competitions in New South Wales.

With the easing of restrictions in January 2021, we have amended these guidelines to take account of the current Public Health Orders.

These are guidelines, not regulations and are provided to ensure the health and safety of everyone involved in our game.

Please note: Under Public Health Orders, there must be a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place for community sporting competitions and full training activities. A Football NSW developed Template for the benefit of Associations/Clubs can be found on the Football NSW website.

To further aid the fight against COVID-19, Football NSW supports the Australian Government's COVIDSafe app and strongly encourage all members of the football community to get behind this initiative.

The app can be downloaded from the Apple App store and Google Play.

PRIOR TO ATTENDING TRAINING, GAMES OR OTHER FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES

Before participating in any football activity, participants should not attend training or play in a match, if in the past 14 days they have:

- **been unwell or had any flu-like symptoms, or**
- **been in contact with a known or suspected case of COVID-19, or**
- **any sudden loss of smell or loss of taste, or**
- **are at a high risk from a health perspective, including the elderly and those with pre-existing medical heath conditions.**

Check the NSW Government website link advice regarding the full list of symptoms associated with COVID-19 infection: https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND OTHER RESOURCES

Football NSW encourages the regular use of the following resources and websites in order to obtain accurate information:

Australian Government Department of Health
https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert

NSW Government Department of Health
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/default.aspx

World Health Organisation:
https://www.who.int/

Australian Institute of Sport:
https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19

Sport Australia:
https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport

A range of COVID-19 "campaign resources' produced by the Federal Government, including posters outlining hygiene practices (e.g. promoting regular and thorough hand washing) can be found at:
https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-campaign-resources

LEVEL C TRAINING - WHAT IS PERMITTED?

LEVEL B - TRAINING	LEVEL C - TRAINING
Football training to be conducted in small groups of no more than 20 people (including coaching personnel)	Full squad training is allowed
Social distancing of 1.5 metres between players	Full competitive training with no restrictions is allowed
Non-contact skills training such as kicking/passing/ shooting	Training/friendly matches allowed
No contact (e.g. no tackling or challenges) is permitted	All skills/techniques training is allowed
Minimise sharing of equipment such as footballs, cones, skipping ropes, weights, agility training	Body Contact – through tackling and challenges – is allowed
If training bibs are used, each individual player is to be allocated a bib and each player is required to take the bib home and wash.	Sharing of equipment is allowed however continue to maintain cleaning and disinfectant measures
Use of Changerooms is not permitted	If training bibs are used, each individual player is to be allocated a bib and each player is required to take the bib home and wash.
No use of communal facilities (e.g. gym)	Use of changerooms or wet areas should be limited to players and team staff and thorough cleaning is recommended
No social activity is to occur once training has concluded	Return to full use of sporting facilities is permitted
	Once training has concluded, social activity should be limited to essential activities

ORGANISING TRAINING SESSIONS

Full squad training is allowed. The amount of space that a team trains within is up to the club and ground allocations. For all intents and purposes, the organisation of training sessions – as they were prior to COVID-19 - can be resumed. That said, Football NSW continues to encourage practices of good hygiene.

Maintain attendance records

Ensure toilets are open and have soap and sanitiser.

Provide regular breaks for hydration and hand sanitising

NO SPITTING permitted

Normal coaching and gatherings permitted

LEVEL C PLAYING - WHAT IS PERMITTED?

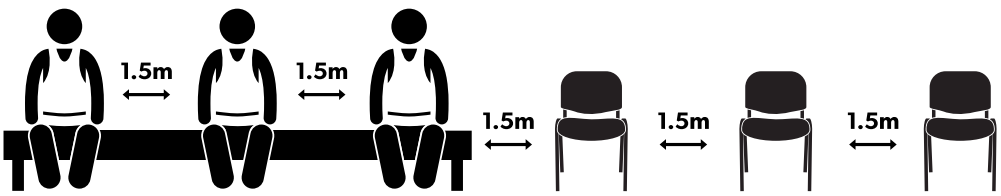
LEVEL B - TRAINING	LEVEL C - PLAYING
No football games – training, friendly or competitive – are permitted	Full competitive matches permitted within the normal Laws of the Game
	Training/friendly matches now allowed
	Full football activities conducted at all levels (MiniRoos, 7v7, 9v9 or 11v11)
	Team benches organised to ensure 1.5 metres between coaching staff & substitutes
	Match fixturing and pitch allocations to be arranged to maximise spaces between pitches
	Social distancing of 1.5 metre between spectators (e.g. parents)
	Competitions, Leagues and Tournaments permitted
	Changerooms and/or wet areas limited to players and team staff and thorough cleaning between use recommended

LEVEL C PLAYING - WHAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED?

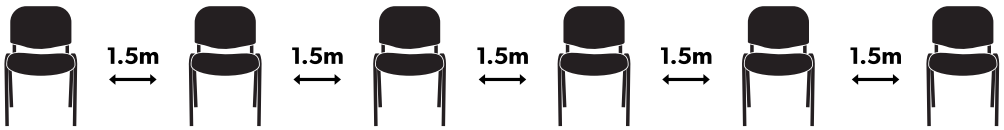
- Team handshakes prior to kick-off
- Team huddles, handshakes and high fives
- Multiplayer goal celebrations
- Spitting

ORGANISATION OF TEAM BENCHES

Where team benches are permanent (fixed), limit number of seats to ensure 1.5 metres between member of the coaching staff and substitutes. Where possible, mark seats with masking tape. If necessary, provide additional seats to extend the length of the bench.



Where team benches are made up of plastic/other moveable chairs, position these so that those seated are at least 1.5 metres apart. Ensure these chairs remain at the required distance apart during and between matches.



CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR RETURN TO TRAINING, PLAYING OR OTHER FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES

These are the steps Football NSW recommend that clubs take to ensure they keep participants and their families safe.

WHEN CONDUCTING TRAINING, GAMES OR OTHER FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE COACH/CLUB OFFICIAL:

- Where practical, some degree of social distancing should be considered where feasible.
- Any handling of equipment is to be kept to a minimum.
- Use of changerooms, gym, wet or inside areas should be limited to players and team staff and thorough cleaning is recommended between use.
- If bibs are used, each individual player is to be allocated a bib and each player is required to take the bib home and wash.
- Regular breaks are to be provided for the purpose of rehydrating and hand sanitising.
- Toilets are to be open for use. Clear signage indicating the restrictions of the number of people (dependent on the space of the amenities) entering the toilet at one time should be displayed.
- Soap and sanitiser to be available in the toilets at all times.
- Social activity once training sessions or games have concluded should be limited to essential gatherings and within government guidelines.

WHEN PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING SESSIONS, THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE PLAYER/PARENT:

- Ideally, players are to come already prepared to train.
- Players should bring their own clearly labelled drink bottle. No sharing of drink bottles is permitted.
- Players should leave the venue as swiftly as possible once their training session has concluded.

Apply a gradual return to training/competition for participants so as to mitigate injury risk from sudden increases in training loads.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

ONGOING COMMUNICATION AMONGST MEMBERS

Ensure your club is regularly communicating with all members and stakeholders. As much as possible, provide clear and coordinated guidance to participants and stakeholders across a range of communication channels on how your 'return to play' will be managed.

Reinforce clear messaging and actions across your Club's digital media (e.g. website or Facebook page). This enables you to share timely and accurate information to members quickly. Teams should communicate via traditional platforms such as SMS/email/WhatsApp or through TeamApp - whatever method your team would normally discuss fixtures, cancellations, half-time oranges and so on.

Use every opportunity to remind and encourage participants to maintain good hygiene behaviours so as to reduce risk of transmission.

Advise players, coaches and others not to attend training or games if unwell, if they have travelled overseas or if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the preceding 14 days or if they are an "at risk" individual due to age or medical condition.

Display posters and distribute information about COVID-19 across both your digital channels and at appropriate spots around your club house or venue; and

Where appropriate, identify and address potential language, cultural and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to players, members and other stakeholders.

TRANSPORT AND ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

As much as possible, try to organise match fixtures and training days and times, so as to minimise contact, cross-over and large avoidable gatherings of players, family members and staff. Consider scheduling time between games/training sessions, to enable all attendees to arrive and exit the venue safely, with minimal contact with others.

Where feasible, consider staggered arrival and/or departure times for different groups and teams, and ideally, manage venue entries and exits to ensure a seamless flow of players/coaching staff and parents/attendees through the venue to limit the risk of overlap and congestion - all subject to maximum attendee number restrictions. Where a club has a fully fenced venue, where possible try to establish separate entry and exit points to avoid pinch points and people congregating.

Restrict travel on buses and carpools to football activities where possible.

ATTENDANCE

Parents/spectators may attend games upon full resumption of competitive football activities provided precautions are taken to minimise transmission risk such as spreading spectators throughout viewing areas and designating the use of specific seats/areas that meet physical distancing requirements.

Football NSW has provided QR codes to a number of organisations and venues already and where these are in place, we encourage you to continue to promote the effective use of these QR codes.

If clubs do not yet have a QR code system but are looking to implement one, please see below instructions on how to get set up with a Service NSW COVID Safe Check In (https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/novel-coronavirus-covid-19#Service%20NSW%20COVID%20Safe%20Check%20In).

In addition, all players, coaches, team officials, match officials and volunteers are required to register and provide contact details through Football Federation Australia's National online registration system - PlayFootball. All fixtures are administered through an online Competition Management System (CMS). If required the Competition Administrator can identify which clubs, specific teams, players, team officials and match officials participated in any given fixture. The CMS is also complemented by team sheets.

For the purposes of contact tracing, accompanying parents/spectators will be able to be contacted through the relevant players' mandatory online registration. All participants are encouraged to download the COVIDSafe App.

FACILITIES

Liaise and work with venue/facility owners - e.g. Local Councils, schools (public/private), or private owners to comply with any specific requirements they may have.

Determine physical distancing protocols to be used within shared facility spaces (e.g. bar/canteen, change rooms, toilets, spectator viewing areas, entrance foyers, corridors and club house/rooms), and where necessary, clearly demonstrate these protocols through marking tape and/or signage.

Encourage individuals to be respectful of shared space, minimise time spent in these areas and observe physical distancing measures.

Consider whether to permit bar/canteen operations – if so:

- Implement queuing requirements to maintain physical distancing;
- Ensure appropriate food/beverage and cash handling arrangements;
- Implement low(er) risk menu options such as those requiring less direct food handling/contact); and
- Implement hygiene measures including hand sanitiser at point of sale, gloves and facemasks for bar/canteen volunteers and consider the use of protective physical barriers/shields. Ensure volunteers understand the protocol of regularly changing gloves between customers.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Implement arrangements to minimise the shared use of equipment where possible.

For the immediate future, players should be responsible for the cleaning of their own playing and training strip (including bibs). Collective washing and sharing of laundry duties should be avoided.

Also, avoid sharing of articles of clothing such as volunteer high visibility vests (jacketed marshals should take their own vest home to wash).

Players and coaching staff should not share personal equipment including playing equipment, playing kits, bibs, drink bottles and towels and should not leave personal equipment on surfaces.

Avoid sharing of stationery (pens, clip boards etc.), other personal IT equipment (laptops, iPads, headphones, etc.); and other clearly match officials should not share whistles, flags and other equipment.

Where possible, shared equipment (particularly balls) should be rotated, washed or wiped with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser prior to and after each use and at each activity break.

Personal equipment bags should be arranged to permit physical distancing of participants (> 1.5 metres).

GENERAL SAFEGUARDS

In addition to the conditions outlined above for training and the playing of competitive matches, it is recommended that everyone involved in football continue to practice good hygiene by implementing the following measures:

HYGIENE - CLUBS

- Ensure spaces at each facility, surfaces and objects are regularly cleaned with disinfectant.
- Provide hand washing guidance to all participants and volunteers (http://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/).
- Promote regular and thorough hand washing by volunteers and participants.
- Provide sanitising hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the venue.
- Ensure sanitising hand rub dispensers are regularly refilled.
- Ensure soap dispensers in toilets are regularly refilled.
- Ensure bins are provided around the venue.

HYGIENE - INDIVIDUALS

- Players, officials, volunteers and/or their parents/carers should carry hand sanitiser on their person in order to enable good personal hygiene.
- If using tissues, place them directly in the bins provided.
- Seek to avoid the use of public toilets, however if necessary, ensure hands are washed thoroughly.
- Each participant is to provide their own drink bottle that is clearly labelled and is only used by that individual. No sharing of drink bottles.
- Each participant is to take their bib home to wash individually.
- No sharing of pens or clip boards, each volunteer must bring their own to venues.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.

BEHAVIOUR

- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash hands with soap and water often.
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- No spitting at any time.
- Wipe down all surfaces and objects with appropriate anti-bacterial/disinfectant wipes or soap, particularly those frequently touched. This includes door handles, light switches, kitchen surfaces, bathroom surface, phones, remote controls and any other high touch areas.
- Do not share drink bottles.
- Practice social distancing. If someone comes and stand next to you, move around the field and ensure you implement social distancing requirements.

FOOTBALL
NSW