

MassRef Return to Play Guidelines

Dear MassRef Community:

We would like to extend our well wishes to you and your family. To say it has been a trying time in our history is an understatement. We wish each and everyone of you good health and happiness. In all cases, while we are returning to play, do not put the game of soccer ahead of the safety and well being of you or your family members. Soccer will be here when you are ready, and we welcome you back wholeheartedly and unconditionally.

In late July 2020, the organized youth and adult sport of soccer was reclassified as a “moderate risk” by the Massachusetts Department of Health (DPH) which allows a return to play with strict guidelines. Purpose of this communication is to outline referee guidelines regarding the safe return to play for MassRef certified referees, assessors, assignors, instructors, and others. In all cases, the safety and well-being of the referee community is paramount to MassRef and is reflected in these guidelines.

In general, each referee is advised to review the most recent [Reopening Massachusetts Youth and Adult Sport memorandum](#) in addition to the [Mass Youth Soccer Return to Soccer Activities guidelines](#). Please note, this guidance while in effect as of this writing, is fluid in nature and is expected to change as circumstances evolve. Further, each referee should also review the MA Youth Soccer presentation on return to soccer activities, found on the web page from the hyperlink above, as it is an excellent example of how players, coaches, and staff are being guided.

Following is a timeline of activity modification for before, during, and after a match to comply with the current DPH guidance.

In general:

Monitor your health! If you do not feel well, [review the CDC information regarding COVID-19](#), and contact a licensed medical professional for guidance.

If you are sick, recovering from being sick, or under a quarantine order, you may not participate in refereeing soccer matches in Massachusetts.

If you are traveling from another state, read, understand, and comply with [travel guidance provided by the Massachusetts DPH](#). Note some states can gain entry and be available immediately, others require a quarantine period, still others require a medical test prior to entry. Be familiar with your circumstances and act accordingly.

Before arriving at a match:

- Take a refresher class!! MassRef will be providing webinars regarding the 2020 LOTG changes as a refresher and providing a brief COVID-19 update as well. Goto the MassRef website for details.
- Self monitor your health for any changes. If you are sick, recovering from being sick, or under a quarantine order, you may not participate in refereeing soccer matches in Massachusetts. Simply decline any assignment.

There will be no stigma attached to declining any match at any time, and a referee need not provide a reason why they are declining any match, or any health information at any time. Any assigner who asks for a reason why a referee is or is not available may be referred to MassRef for further action.

The following guidance has been adopted from the generally applicable COVID-19 safety rules as published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

During a match:

- Referees must wear a face covering at all times before, during, and after the match. Please review [CDC guidance on how to effectively wear a face covering](#).
- Keep between 6 and 10 feet away from any participant at all times before, during, and after the match. This includes, but is not limited to, pre-match inspections, during active play, half-time intervals, and at the conclusion of the match.
- Provide your full legal name to the teams before the start of the match. This is a requirement for the DPH regarding contact tracing. Each referee must provide their full legal name in the event the DPH requires information from them.
- Allow flexibility on spectator placement. While any spectator must be a minimum of 6 feet from the field, they may require additional spaces around the field to watch a match. Please be flexible in this regard.
- Referees must use a signaling device that does not produce respiratory droplets. Whistles that require the expulsion of air, also expel respiratory particles (both pea and pealess), are not permitted under the current guidance unless those droplets are contained (e.g. behind a mask), or a whistle that produces none (e.g. an electronic whistle). Further, the LOTG only requires a signaling device, not specifically a whistle.
- Do not share referee equipment with other referees. Flags, whistles, coins, misconduct cards, electronic whistles etc. must not be shared with other referees unless properly cleaned prior to an exchange. [Please review the CDC guidance for cleaning objects](#).
- Do not engage in any post match celebrations such as a handshake line. While guidance has been given to teams in this regard, please do your part and do not participate if this does occur.

After a match:

- File a match report in a timely fashion. Note any non-compliance from teams regarding facial coverings or other COVID-19 related procedures IN THE REPORT. Our role in the field is to manage the match at hand, not as an arm of the DPH to mandate compliance regarding guidance. **DO NOT engage ANYONE regarding face coverings or social distancing guidelines, simply report the issue to the competition authority.**
- Self monitor your health for any changes. If you get sick after a match seek medical attention.

Members of MassRef are taking our return very seriously and need your help to make it a success. Our failure to adhere to these guidelines places our ability to return to play in jeopardy. As such, any reported breach of this guidance will be referred to the MassRef COVID Officer for further action.

If you have any questions concerning return to play guidelines, please reach out to covidquestions@massref.net to ensure your question is received by the appropriate members of the Massachusetts Referee Committee.

Stay safe,
MassRef Executive Committee

Cc: MassRef Executive Leadership
MA Youth Soccer Executive Leadership
MA Adult Soccer Executive Leadership
League Executive Leadership
Club Executive Leadership