**Mt. Lebanon Soccer Association**

**Return-to-Play Guidelines**

Last updated: June 17, 2020

1. **General**

* The point of contact for any COVID-19 related concerns is Lisa Dorn at community@mlsa.org.
* MLSA will follow the current CDC guidelines and update these Return-To-Play Guidelines as necessary to comport with CDC recommendations.
* MLSA will post signage reminding members to practice good hygiene.
* MLSA will message members with reminders about good hygiene.
* MLSA will make handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) available at every game.
* MLSA will communicate any COVID-19 news related to a player, coach or spectator contracting the illness through its website ([www.mlsa.org](http://www.mlsa.org)), via social media, via email from MLSA, and via communication from your team’s coach (if applicable).
* MLSA will communicate any positive test results for COVID-19 to the Municipality and the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Department (without disclosing the individual’s name) so that fields or facilities may be closed, cleaned or otherwise addressed, as necessary.
* MLSA will maintain the confidentiality of any individual who tests positive for COVID-19.
* MLSA will schedule games and practices such that there is adequate time for the location to be cleaned (as appropriate) and vacated in time for the next MLSA event.
* MLSA will not be running concession stands for the foreseeable future.
* MLSA will post entrance and egress requirements for all game and practice fields on mlsa.org

1. **All Game or Practice Attendees**

The following guidelines apply to coaches, players, referees, parents and spectators at games. For practices, parents should drop off players and either leave the practice area or remain in their car for the duration of practice.

* Disinfect non-washable equipment like cleats, balls, guards and gloves.
* Leave the field promptly after games and practices.
* Avoid using locker rooms (i.e., come to games dressed to play).
* Bring your own water bottle; do not share.
* Avoid carpooling.
* Shower immediately upon returning home.
* Bring hand sanitizer to every game and practice, and use it before starting, at halftime and other breaks, and after the game.
* Activities that increase the risk of exposure to saliva are prohibited; this includes, but is not limited to: chewing gum, spitting, licking fingers, and eating sunflower seeds.
* Wear a mask when not participating (playing, officiating or coaching).

1. **Players**

* No group celebrations with players closer than six feet, no high fives, hugs, cheers, etc.
* Do not touch or share anyone else’s equipment.
* Bring your own ball to training, and label it as your own.
* Practice social distancing, and place bags and other equipment at least six feet apart from your teammates’ equipment during sessions.
* Wash and sanitize all equipment before and after every training session.
* Water bottles: to minimize accidental sharing of water, players must keep their water bottles in their own bag when not in use.

1. **Coaches**

* Notify your program coordinator immediately if you, any member of your family or anyone who has been in contact with your family contracts COVID-19.
* Coaches should track attendance at any game or practice. If anyone later tests positive for COVID-19, such lists will be key to determining who needs to self-quarantine.
* Coaches should remind players to stand apart during breaks at practice or when warming up, during team huddles on game day, and when waiting to be substituting in a match.
* Actively promote the health and safety of your players. Inquire how the athletes are feeling, and send them home if they act or discuss feeling ill. Specifically ask if anyone they know has contracted COVID-19, if they feel feverish or have recently registered a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, have a cough, or have lost their sense of smell or taste.
* Follow all established federal, state, and local protocols.
* MLSA will post entrance and egress requirements for all game and practice fields on mlsa.org; Coaches must familiarize themselves with these requirements and ensure adherence.
* Coaches must establish a plan for enforcement in the event that such rules are ignored.
* Ensure that all athletes have their individual equipment (ball, water bottles, bag, etc.) and prohibit them from sharing anything. Equipment placement should be spaced at least six feet apart.
* The coach is the only person to handle cones, disks, etc.
* All training must be outdoors, and coaches must strictly enforce social distancing per the current phase guidelines.
* Wash and sanitize your own equipment after every session.
* The use of scrimmage vests/pinnies is not permitted, so athletes will need to wear distinguishing apparel during scrimmages.
* Increase your communication with parents – they need to know what you are doing as a coach and what the MLSA is doing as a club to maintain their kids’ safety.
* Have fun and stay positive – players and parents are looking to you to stay calm, supportive, and caring during this challenging time.
* Coaches are required to maintain the confidentiality of any individual who contracts COVID-19, but the MLSA will need to let the Municipality and the Rec Department know (without disclosing the individual’s name) so that they can take any necessary health steps with any affected facilities.
* *Thank you for coaching!* And if you have further thoughts on methods of improving health, safety and/or morale, your program chair and the MLSA board would be interested to hear them.

1. **Parents**

* Notify your team’s coach immediately if you, any member of your family or anyone who has been in contact with your family contracts COVID-19.
* DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO PRACTICE OR A GAME IF HE OR SHE ISN’T FEELING WELL.
* Ensure athletes are healthy – check their temperature daily.
* Avoid carpooling.  Drop-off/pick-up: if possible, parents should remain in the car for drop-off and pick-up. All spectators must remain at least six feet apart from other non-household members.
* Wear a mask at all times when outside your car.
* Ensure that your child’s clothing is washed and equipment is sanitized after every practice and game.
* Label your child’s equipment to guard against cross-contamination.
* Notify your coach and the MLSA immediately if your child becomes ill for any reason (unless you are able to affirmatively determine that it is not Covid-19), and do not bring them into contact with coaches or other players.
* Do not assist coaches with equipment before or after games or training (although your good intentions are deeply appreciated).
* Be sure your child has necessary sanitizer and cleaning supplies with them at every game.

1. **Spectators**

* Two-person limit per player at any game – this number includes siblings.
* On-field spectators are prohibited at practices.
* Maintain social distancing (at least six feet) from non-household members
* Spectators must stand or be seated at least 10 feet back from the field.
* **In this challenging time at which many peoples’ nerves are deeply frayed, please refrain from critical comments or behavior toward players, coaches, referees and other spectators. As always, but at this time in particular, soccer serves as a temporary respite from everyday worries – please do your best to allow soccer to serve that critical purpose.**

1. **After Games/Practices:**

* Eliminate traditional post-game handshakes and encourage teams to come up with creative ways to show sportsmanship to their opponents after a match.
* Continue to observe distancing rules when gathering personal gear.
* Leave the ﬁeld as soon as reasonably possible, avoiding congregating and minimizing extra-curricular or other social activity not pertaining to the training session or match. Consider having a Zoom call as a team to discuss post-game, rather than a meeting at the field post-game.
* Coaches or other designated individuals should clean and disinfect balls and other team equipment as soon as feasible, ideally while wearing disposable gloves.
* Players should clean and disinfect their own gear, especially anything touched by another individual.
* All participants should wash their hands thoroughly or use a hand sanitizer as soon as possible after coming off the ﬁeld.

1. **Lebo Cup-specific Restrictions**

* Decrease on-field play to 5v5 from 7v7.
* Implement team roster limit to 10 (previously 14).
* Limit of two coaches per team.
* No throw-ins; instead, all play will resume with a kick.

1. **Practices Drills**

* One practice per week, no longer than 75 minutes.
* Avoid drills that involve constant contact.
* It is already a best practice to avoid drills that involve players standing in lines. When lines or grouping of players is necessary for a particular drill, ensure that the activity is designed to allow appropriate space between players.
* Remind players to stand apart during breaks when training.
* Instruct players to leave space between their personal gear on the sidelines.
* Drills should be limited to those focusing on conditioning and non-contact skills.
* Please refer to the MLSA Website ([www.mlsa.org](http://www.mlsa.org)) for preferred drills. [Needs to be developed]

1. **Practice Fields**

* New “Rules of Engagement” signs have been developed and placed at each field location.  Post adequate signage for all relevant protocols in any areas necessary to ensure that all participants are aware of your mitigation plan.
* Be proactive in making distancing rules easy to follow by any available means, such as spacing in areas for spectators, teams, concessions, restrooms, etc.  Volunteers can be asked to monitor and remind participants of distancing rules, especially during peak hours of activity. This can be similar, or as added duties, to a “field marshal” type role.  Coaches must establish a plan for enforcement in the event that such rules are ignored.
* Pod limits are strictly set at 12 total players and coaches per pod.
* Estimated pods per field illustration:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Field | Size | Pods per Session | Pod Limit | Total Limit |
| Rockpile | Full Field | 4 | 12 | 48 |
| Middle | 9v9 Field | 3 | 12 | 36 |
| Wildcat | 9v9 Field | 3 | 12 | 36 |
| Jefferson Oval | Full Field | 4 | 12 | 48 |
| Jefferson Pony1 | 7V7 Field | 1 | 12 | 12 |
| Jefferson Pony2 | 9v9 Field | 2 | 12 | 24 |
| Brafferton FD | 7V7 Field | 2 | 12 | 24 |
| Brafferton CT | 5v5 Field | 1 | 12 | 12 |
| Howe | 7V7 Field | 2 | 12 | 24 |
| Bird Park | Full Field | 4 | 12 | 48 |
| Foster | 9v9 Field | 2 | 12 | 24 |

1. **Equipment Grid:** *Only coaches should handle team equipment.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Game** | **Practice** |  |  | **Ball** | **First Aid** |  |
| **Program** | **Ball** | **Balls** | **Cones** | **Pinneys** | **Pump** | **Kit** | **Sanitizer** |
| **Lebo Cup** | **2** | **2** | **10** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |
| **Top Soccer** | **2** | **2** | **10** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |
| **RT19** | **2** | **2** | **10** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |
| **Travel** | **3** | **2** | **15** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |
| **U9 Academy** | **2** | **2** | **10** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |
| **Development Academy** | **N/A** | **2** | **10** | **Use is prohibited** | **1** | **1** | **1** |

**Additional FAQs**

**Is it safe for players to wear masks and play at the same time? Especially in the heat?**

Understanding that masks can inhibit a player’s ability to breathe during exercise, players will only be asked to wear masks to and from the field.

**Do we limit drill time for contact drills?**

At least until Allegheny County is free of any contact restrictions, we will encourage non-contact activities, and instead focus on technical and tactical skills. For training sessions, coaches will be encouraged to have their players engage in non-contact activities until a full return to play is better known.

**What guidelines or advice formed the basis for this document?**

MLSA has followed, and will continue to follow, CDC guidelines and PA West directives regarding the transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

**Why, when certain statistics seem to demonstrate at this point that healthy youth are no more likely to succumb to protracted health issues from COVID-19 than any other illness, are we to be expected to radically alter our way of life to a "new normal" both within and without the circle of soccer?**

Because kids can be carriers and will interact with other at-risk individuals, and they may pass the virus on to others unknowingly. Additionally, just as we Honor the Game in soccer, which means following the rules even when you can get away without following them, we choose to partner with our Governor and local officials and follow all mandates to protect the safety of all in our community.

**Should parents be allowed to stay and watch games?**

Yes, but we ask that they wear masks and practice social distancing, according to the current phase of return to play. Phase 3 has a maximum of 50 people at events, as long as it’s under 50% capacity for the venue. Each player may have only two spectators, including siblings, until further notice.

**There have been discussions around taking temperatures of players and attendees prior to attending sporting events. What does this look like?**

Yes, but we ask that they wear masks and social distance, according to the current phase of return to play. Phase 3 has a max of 50 people at events, as long as it’s under 50% capacity for the venue.

**Are there going to be any safety precautions for the referees?**

Referees will follow the same protocol as players

**There are youth with asthma or allergies that take the risk to play soccer despite the outdoor nature. Are we to expect them to wear masks in case they happen to wheeze or sneeze?**

Coaches and sidelines observers will be asked to wear masks initially, but players will only need to wear them to and from the car to the field.

**The biggest challenge may be what happens if someone on a team gets infected? That could cause a domino effect of things to follow with the entire team being quarantined, and possibly any opposing teams that may have come into contact within the period of time they were contagious.**

Players with symptoms should stay home to limit the spread of any illness. If a person is diagnosed with COVID-19, the entire group must return to self-isolation until symptom free for 14 days and follow CDC Guidelines.

**Parents and players need to have a clear understanding of rules put in place to protect them. How will we keep updated?**

All our policies will be shared on all members association websites, as well as the Mt Lebanon Soccer Association website.  Communication is key and MLSA will routinely update our members with information and reminders.

**My main concern is that there will be no soccer season. The basic view seems to be that children are disease vectors and we should just lock them up for the duration. How are you speaking up for the rights of children to get outside and resume team sports?**

Players come first. Their physical and mental health are important to us. Being outside in the fresh air and with their team safely is our goal. We will also follow federal, state, and local guidelines.

**What is the MLSA’s liability if a player or coach is diagnosed with COVID-19?**

The MLSA does not accept liability for exposure of players, coaches or others to Covid-19 (or, for that matter, injuries from play). Healthcare for illnesses and injuries is expected to be covered by health insurance of participants’ families, not the MLSA. When a player participates, they (and their parents or guardians, if applicable) are willingly accepting the potential risks (including both injury and illness) that come along with soccer.