



Connecticut Hockey Return To Play Rules & Guidelines

Updated January 16, 2021

As we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic while returning players to the ice, Connecticut Hockey will continue to provide updates to our associations and members. These considerations focus on several phases of returning our members to the rinks throughout the state of Connecticut.



Each association should have its own plan in place for returning to the rink. Local rinks and associations must follow the guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) and its [Guidance for Social Distancing](#), as well as state and local government rules in determining when, and how, it is appropriate to return to the rinks, including requirements or guidelines for physical distancing, size of gatherings or number of people permitted in a facility, or wearing masks, etc.

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Connecticut Hockey makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. These rules and guidelines may change at any time based on guidelines and rules from the state, health department or USA Hockey.

As you plan for a return to the ice, below are some recommendations to consider to assist with developing a return to hockey programming in context of COVID-19. As conditions and requirements may vary throughout the state, associations must follow local government guidelines in addition to [recommendations from the CDC and DPH](#). Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed and distributed, and/or a cure is found, there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of infection.

We are thankful to all of those essential workers and first responders who are guiding us and keeping us safe and healthy during this pandemic. Remember that we can contribute to helping eliminate COVID-19 by doing these five things:

- 1. Physical Distance of at least 6 ft. from people you don't live with*
- 2. Wear a Cloth Mask/Face Covering anytime you are outside of your home*
- 3. Wash Hands and Practice Safe Hygiene Habits*
- 4. Clean Surfaces & Equipment between uses*
- 5. Staying Home When Sick Or Experiencing Any Symptoms*

Connecticut Hockey will open programming in phases, which are subject to change at all times. They are also subject to restrictions placed by state ([DECD Sector Rules](#)) or local governments or USA Hockey.



Step 1 – Connecticut Hockey's Return From Seven-Week Pause

Step 1 will open on Tuesday January 19 and follows DPH guidelines. Step 2 guidelines will go into effect when games resume on February 1.

New Rules implemented by the State of Connecticut for the 2020-21 season only will be effective on January 19. Some may be adjusted as the season progresses and games are allowed. Based on these new rules, the following protocols and rules will be required:

1. Per the state mandate, cloth face coverings (masks) must be worn by everyone inside an arena at all times. This includes participants during on-ice practice and game play.
2. Locker rooms may not be used for dressing or for equipment storage during step 1.
3. LiveBarn, or any live streaming service, may not be used during step 1.
4. No equipment bags will be allowed in an arena with the exception of goalies and officials.
5. All players must arrive to the arena fully dressed, with the exception of skates, helmet and gloves. Goalies are allowed to arrive half dressed.
6. Players must not enter the arena prior to 10 minutes before the start of their scheduled ice time. They must exit the arena no later than 10 minutes following the conclusion of their ice time.
7. In accordance with State of CT Reopening Youth Sports, one (1) spectator, per player, will be allowed in arena during Step 1.
8. Dryland activities will not be allowed inside the arena common areas.

Protocols and rules already implemented for the 2020-21 season that remain in effect are:

1. A maximum of three coaches are allowed on the bench during game play. Please note that game play will not be in effect until Phase 2.
2. Only active players and the three coaches are allowed on the bench during game play. Players who are unable to participate may not be on the bench.
3. Coaches must wear a mask while on the ice or on the bench for all games and practices, unless they have a pre-existing medical condition which should be communicated to their association leadership in advance. Leagues will encourage coaches who have a medical condition that precludes them from wearing a mask to temporarily step away from coaching during this time due to the risks posed not only to other participants but also themselves, since they would be more at risk for COVID-19 complications due to their underlying medical condition.
4. Players who are instructed to quarantine by public health officials will be considered ineligible for participation for the duration of their quarantine period. If a player instructed to quarantine plays in a game, rules subject to playing an ineligible player shall be enforced.
5. Coaches should use electronic whistles.
6. Carpooling is not recommended.



Arriving at the Rink

1. Any players, coaches or spectators exhibiting symptoms or signs of an illness should reference the [MDH COVID-19 Decision Tree](#) and follow its guidance prior to entering any facility or participating in on-ice activity.
2. All participants must be USA Hockey registered for the 2020-21 season to participate in any Connecticut Hockey sanctioned on-ice activity.
3. Players cannot arrive at the rink prior to 10 minutes before the start of on-ice activities. Anyone arriving earlier than 10 minutes before their start time should wait outside of the facility and be socially distanced from others.
4. The parking lot shall not be used as informal meeting spaces for teams or parents prior to, during and after events. Congregating in groups larger than 6 is prohibited by state mandate.
5. If there is an activity occurring at the rink before the team's scheduled start, the incoming team should wait until all players from the prior event have vacated the building. There should not be interaction between the two groups.
6. For practices or clinics, players are allowed one parent/guardian in the rink to help with any equipment needs. Those parents/guardians may also be at the rink, socially distanced from others, to provide assistance to the player if needed throughout practice time. Masks are required for any spectators, per the DPH mandate.
7. While it is important to limit the number of people in the facility as much as possible, there may be circumstances in which a parent or guardian must also bring in young siblings. This will be allowed, but should be limited as much as possible. Children over the age of 2 should be wearing masks at all times and should not be interacting with other children or adults outside of their household while inside the facility.
8. Families should provide coach/team manager with accurate contact information in the event of emergency while the player is at the arena. This information **MUST** be accurate and the responsible party **MUST** be able to reach the designated person if the need arises.
9. Whenever possible, players should use the restroom at home prior to leaving for the rink in an effort to limit bathroom use at the facility.
10. Players must arrive to the arena fully dressed with the exception of skates (coming into the arena with skate guards on is ideal), gloves and helmets. Exceptions may be made for goalies, who must arrive a minimum of half dressed.
11. Players should be bringing their own rehydration liquids to the rink in clearly marked or labeled containers with the player's identity. The container should be re-sealable. Players should **NOT** plan on refilling their containers at the rink.
12. Prior to the first on-ice session, coaches and/or association leaders should host a virtual meeting to explain procedures to parents, and to answer any questions.
13. Coaches should be as prepared as possible to ensure complete utilization of the allowed ice time. This also helps ensure that players are not distracted and know they need to be on time and ready to go, not engaged in other areas of the building.
14. Each association and team must have an emergency, and notification, plan for any positive cases within the team or association. If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you and is a part of your



organization, you must report to your local health officials. DPH or local public health officials will work with you to identify close contacts and do follow-up with your team.

Each association and team must have a designated contact who is responsible for concerns and communications related to COVID-19. All team and association members should know who this person is and how to contact them

15. Each association and team must maintain accurate rosters of teams or pods and be prepared to support local public health contact tracing efforts.
16. Associations should work with rink partners, and be aware that some communities may not open rinks despite the Stay at Home order being lifted.
17. Dryland activities inside the common areas of the arena are not allowed during Step 1.
18. SafeSport policies will continue to be in effect in all phases. There should always be a minimum of two adults at every on-ice event, and there must not be any unsupervised one-on-one interaction between a player and a coach.

Step 1 On-Ice Activities for Practices, Clinics and Tryouts:

1. Ice rinks will be allowed 25% capacity on a playing surface. 25% capacity limit coincides with Phase 2.1 guidelines from the State of CT.
2. Ice rinks can be divided as long as capacity limits are adhered to.
3. Players need to maintain as much separation as possible during practices. Whenever possible, coaches should be promoting social distancing on the ice, while recognizing that there may be times of close contact by players.
4. Avoid using player benches during practices.
5. Coaches should be keeping players active and engaged at all times. Players should not leave the ice during a practice unless absolutely necessary.
6. Each coach and on-ice helper counts toward the number of people allowed on the ice as stipulated by the DPH.
7. Reduce contact between players as much as possible.
8. Coaches should avoid talking face-to-face with players, as well as avoid contact with players whenever possible. Physical contact may be necessary when assisting a young player or a player with a disability (helping up or adjusting equipment), but whenever possible, coaches should provide assistance without physical contact, or ask the player's parent/guardian to assist.
9. Prior to the completion of the ice time, players should be excused from the rink one by one and through different exit points of the rink. Do not ask players to participate in picking up pucks or other equipment from the ice.
10. There should be no spitting by any player or coach at any time inside the arena, including on the ice surface.
11. Coaches, athletes and other participants must be wearing masks at all times before, during and after practice.
12. Organizations and participant families are required to cooperate with contact tracing and information sharing with health authorities.



After On-Ice Activities are Completed:

1. No on or off ice interaction (socializing, team meetings, dryland activities) should occur following the conclusion of practice. Players must remove skates and helmets and leave the premises within 10 minutes of the end of practice.
2. Players must vacate the arena immediately to allow for the next user group to enter.
3. Parents/Guardians must be made aware of the time when the players will be done. The parents or person assigned to pick up players at the arena must be punctual. Players should not have to wait for a ride.
4. Coaches or other responsible adults should remain until all players are safe and removed from the premises.
5. While at home, players should clean and disinfect gear after each use.

Step 1 – Local Games and Scrimmages

Games and scrimmages will not be allowed during Step 1. Guidance for local games and scrimmages will be provided in Step 2.

Step 1 Regulations Across State

Step 1 is the re-introduction of hockey following the state mandated seven-week pause. There must be no games or scrimmages during Step 1. All associations and members should be aware that changes or adjustments may be made based on the status of COVID-19 in Connecticut.

The requirements listed in these Return To Play Rules & Guidelines are the minimum requirements that each facility must adhere to. Some organizations may impose stricter limitations.



Phase Overview

Activity	Step 1	Step 2		
	January 19	February 1		
Practice	Open per DPH guidance	Open per DPH guidance		
Skill Clinics	Open per DPH guidance	Open per DPH guidance		
Tryouts	Open but not recommended per DPH guidance on no contact	Open but not recommended per DPH guidance on no contact		
Dryland	Closed inside arena	Closed inside arena		
Inter-Team Scrimmages	Closed	Open per DPH guidance		
Local Games	Closed	Open per DPH guidance		
Travel Games	Closed	Open per DPH guidance		
Tournaments	Closed	Closed		
Inter-State Travel	Closed	Closed		

Additional Resources

As stated previously, this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Associations must adhere to guidelines set by the CDC and DPH. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, Connecticut Hockey encourages all programs engaging in activities to stay up-to-date on future developments. Below are some additional resources for programs to reference.

DPH Guidance for Sports – <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Communications/Guidance/General-Guidance-for-Youth-and--Amateur-Sport-Activities-during-COVID-19-Pandemic>

CDC Considerations for Youth Sports - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

USA Hockey Coronavirus Information - <https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>