

## Recommendations for Match Officials

All Match Officials must be registered with Ontario Soccer before returning to any phase of play.

A game cannot be played without players violating social distance guidelines as set out in this documentation and/or the provincial health authority directives. Match Officials (Referees) will most likely operate within the distance of almost all players at some points throughout the game. Therefore, safe distance will be very difficult to enforce and maintain.

In order to practice sound risk management protocols during [Return to Play phases](#), be aware of the following possible return outcomes for Match Officials:

- Modified and/or condensed officiating schedules.
- Mixed levels of physical preparation following extended time off.
- Potential risks of injury and overtraining.
- Potential weight gain, weight loss, and changes to body composition.
- Potential slowed or interrupted progress with individual rehabilitation programs.
- Travel restrictions could impose financial issues for larger leagues.

**Note:** It is recommended that all Match Officials utilize the “Self-Check” on [Ontario COVID-19 Self-Assessment App](#)

### **Phase 1: Return to Training (modified training)**

- Canada Soccer/Ontario Soccer and the Government of Ontario have approved a Return to Training order.
- All match officiating activities must be aligned with Canada Soccer/Ontario Soccer recommended safety guidelines
- No games will be played or officiated during this phase.
- ***It is imperative that Match Officials commence physical training during this phase so they are physically prepared for Phases 2 and 3.***
- Any soccer activity must comply with the social distancing measures and recommendations, along with any gathering restrictions issued by the Province of Ontario health authorities, including the arrival and departure of players (except for family members or persons residing in the same household).

## **Phase 2: Return to Training and Modified Games (enhanced training & modified games)**

### **Discipline Adjustments**

- Automatic cautions for any players who are involved in face-to-face (but non-mass confrontation) interactions. Shoving, jostling, and fighting for space will result in a straight Yellow Card for Unsportsmanlike Behavior. Match Officials should stay away and allow the emotional situation to deescalate before engaging from a safe distance.
- Serious physical altercations will result in an automatic red card.
- Mass confrontations will result in automatic dismissals for all involved.
- **There will be ZERO tolerance for spitting on or around the field of play.** If spitting is seen by one of the match officials, the following procedure will be followed:

If aimed/directed towards an individual it is an automatic red card and send off as per IFAB Laws of the Game.

For all other types of spitting, if a player or technical staff is seen to be spitting on or around the field of play:

- The First incident will result in a verbal warning.
- Second incident by that same person, a Yellow Card/Caution for Unsporting Behavior will be issued.
- Third incident by the same person will result in a second yellow card and therefore dismissal from the game.

Coaches are responsible for ensuring players are aware of the Spitting Zero Tolerance requirement, and the importance of following Covid-19 guidelines.

### **Modified Game Rule Adjustments (to be used with Laws of the Game 2019-2020)**

- To reduce body fluid transfer onto ball surface, heading of the ball has been removed for this phase. After the first verbal warning, heading of ball will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team.
- Throw-ins are not permitted. The ball must be kicked into play (kick-in). All other requirements of Throw-In Law will still be applied. After the first verbal warning, failure to comply will result in a kick-in to opposing team.
- The drop ball requirement has been removed to reduce handling of the ball and has been converted to an indirect free kick. If the drop ball is inside the penalty area, the ball automatically goes to the Goalkeeper. The Referee leaves the ball on the ground, and the Goalkeeper picks it up.
- Match Officials will allow substitutes to wear non-clashing colours (to the players on the field of play). They are not required to be official pinnies.

## Process Adjustments

- The Thunder and Lightning Policy will be adjusted to read that if the game is stopped for severe weather, then the game is over in order to avoid gathering of participants in confined areas, and will not be rescheduled due to availability of fields/officials etc.
- Match Officials may come dressed in appropriate officiating gear to the game/training as dressing rooms may be closed during this stage.
- With modified games, a field marshal should be appointed to ensure compliance with social distancing rules and safety protocols. The field marshal should be a recognized authority within the soccer organization. This is not the role of Match Officials.
- Recommendation that Clubs/Academies and/or Districts provide some fitness and law refresher courses for Match Officials prior to Return to Play Phase 3. These sessions must adhere to the physical distancing measures and recommendations, along with any gathering restrictions issued by the provincial government health authorities.
- Teams are permitted unlimited player substitutions. The Coach will be responsible for tracking substitutions. The Coach can take a photo of the sub-sheet and submit to required authorities. Match Officials do not have to touch substitution forms.
- It is recommended that when travelling together to games, maximum in a car is two individuals; one in the front seat and one in the back seat.
- Where accommodations for games are required, maximum of one person per room is permitted.
- Match Officials will be assigned to more local games. Therefore, they may see similar teams more often. Note: The Grading Protocol will be flexible in 2020 to accommodate this reality.
- When a player is injured, Match Officials may only observe and refer assistance to the applicable team bench. There is to be no Match Official contact with the player. Only team medical personnel, following proper health and safety protocols may assist the injured player.
- There will be no handshakes or high 5's between players, match officials, coaches before, during or after the game.
- Parents are not permitted to enter the playing field at the end of game or during training. If this occurs, it is an expectation that the team coach will address with the parent(s).
- When Match Officials are taking part in practical training sessions, they must follow Canada Soccer/Ontario Soccer return to play as well as the Province of Ontario health and safety guidelines.
- It is recommended that there be no cash payment to Match Officials at games. Clubs/Academies/Districts/ Leagues will advise Match Officials of their payment process and method.

- Parents/Guardians of youth Match Officials are considered general spectators, therefore at any facility, they must adhere to social distancing rules and all other health and safety protocols. Parents of Match Officials are not permitted to enter the field of play at any time (before, during or after games).
- Match Official assessors and mentors need to respect social distancing guidelines. These activities should take place away from the spectator side of the field of play.
- Where applicable, use of Ball Boys/Girls is not permitted until further notice. Players are therefore responsible for retrieving out of play balls.
- Postgame discussions between the officiating crew must respect social distancing rules.
- Where applicable, team physiotherapy should be set up at the end of the team benches towards the corner flags. This provides more space in the middle for the 4th Match Official and game announcer/convener.
- It is recommended that Match Officials take the necessary safety precautions to limit the risk of infection for themselves. Match Officials may use the COVID-19 self-assessment App.
- It is recommended that spectators need to be six (6) meters back from the touchlines. This allows room for the Assistant Referee to run the full line and still have the required two (2) meters distance.

### **Safety Adjustments**

- Match Officials to regularly complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment through [Ontario COVID-19 Self-Assessment App](#).
- Match Officials to thoroughly wash equipment, towels, clothes, bags, water bottles, and other items after use.
- Individuals to bring a full personal use water bottle(s) and avoid touching or using public water fountains.
- Use new grip or fresh tape on flags if possible.
- Do not share pens, cards etc.
- Consider wearing a mask or a face shield when you are officiating. Use this [reference](#) to help with your decision.
- Wash hands prior to leaving for games; bring personal use hand sanitizer to the fields.
- It is recommended that gloves are worn to the field and individuals avoid touching gates, fences, benches, etc. Wear latex (or similar) gloves and discard after each game, or purchase gloves that can be washed.
- After games and at half time, limit your distance to two (2) meters (6 feet) from others.
- Avoid contact with others, such as hand shaking, fist bumps and high fives.
- Leave the field as soon as reasonably possible after training or games.
- Avoid post training/game socializing as much as possible.

- Match Officials have the right to abandon any game where the required COVID-19 protocols are not being followed. In these cases, it must be reported on a Special Incident Report to the appropriate authorities.
- It is recommended that hydration breaks be increased to allow for players and match officials that may be wearing masks/shields to take time to refresh. Please ensure coaches are aware at the start of each game as to the timing of the breaks.

### **Officiating Adjustments**

- Pre-game meetings with Coaches and/or Assessors can take place, if following the physical distancing measures and recommendations along with any gathering restrictions issued by the provincial government health authorities.
- Player inspections may still be completed, but must be at a distance of no less than two (2) meters (6 feet).
- Assistant Referees must stand a minimum of two (2) meters (6 feet) from the kicker during corner kicks.
- Match Officials are to use their foot to pass the ball when transferring to a player (i.e. free kicks), or direct the player to retrieve the ball themselves.
- It is optional for Assistant Referees to wear face shields as they are positioned closer to spectators and benches. This provides an additional level of protection.
- Clubs/Districts/Academies/Leagues may determine they need to reduce number of Match Officials needed for a game. League1 Ontario, League1 Ontario Reserve, OUA, OCAA, OPDL, Ontario Cup Semi-finals and Finals will have priority for three (3) officials.