

NorCal Return to Play Guidelines for Referees

Summary of Guidelines:

Referees, you are responsible for **Only Your Behavior** and should expect cooperation from all others.

Your assignor will provide you with any local, City or other specific requirements. Please make sure you are clear on what the expectations are.

The Assignment:

- You are not required to accept any game. As an independent contractor you are not required to accept a game. It is your choice and you should take into consideration your comfort level.
- Be conscience when accepting game assignments and do not accept a game if you are experiencing any symptoms.
- If you decline a game, be respectful to the assignor and notify them as soon as possible to allow time for a replacement.
- If you start to exhibit COVID symptoms after accepting a game, be in communication with your assignor and consider if you should decline the game at that time.
- If you are the assignor, please be understanding if a referee declines a game due to health concerns.

Prior to the Game:

- Before leaving for the field, Referees should ask themselves the following questions:
 1. Have you knowingly come into contact with anyone who has, is being tested for, or is exhibiting signs of coronavirus? (Yes or No)
 2. Are you exhibiting any of the following symptoms which are not caused by any other condition? (Yes or No)
- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat

- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If the referee answers yes to any of these questions, they should notify their assignor and refrain from officiating the game.

Pre-Game:

Personal Stations for referees

- The referee crew should set up their belongings in an area away from all others while maintaining 6-ft/2-yd space from each other
- Referees should not bring any unnecessary belongings to the field.
- Referees are expected to arrive to the field fully dressed. Gold referee jersey is the recommended color to avoid clashing. In case of a conflict with the teams, alternate color jerseys should be on hand.
- Assistant referees are expected to bring their own flags to the field. The flags don't need to match each other.
- Referee equipment should not be shared, but if shared, it should be sanitized before and after the match.
- Wear a mask at all times during competition of pre-game and post-game duties.
- Wear a mask as much as possible during the match.
- If you are not able to physically complete your duties while wearing a mask (breathing, etc.), lower your mask when necessary
- Use of electronic whistle is optional; lower mask to blow whistle if needed (be aware that some participants in the game will struggle to hear the electronic whistle at times).
- Referees MUST carry hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes for their own personal use.
- During the referee crew pregame discussion, continue to maintain 6-ft/2-yd space and insure all COVID-19 protocols are discussed.

Field and Equipment Inspection:

- Field should still be walked. Visual inspection only of the goals, nets and flags. If an item needs to be fixed or removed from the field, notify the home team as soon as possible.
- The referee should inspect all game balls, but without handling them. For better efficiency, it is recommended there be more than one game ball. Referees are NOT BE RESPONSIBLE for sanitizing the game balls.

Player Check-In: Rosters

- If possible, try to receive the roster or match report electronically ahead of time.
- If not, have the coach place the roster at the end of the bench to minimize close contact.
- Leagues that require player passes, are pictures printed on the rosters? Then no need for player passes. If not, have the coach (or team manager) read the player passes. \ AND HAVE THE PLAYER STEP FORWARD
- Uniform/Jewelry checks –should be visual check only maintaining proper physical distance between referee and players.
- If you encounter team(s) that do not have matching uniforms, please allow them to play and report your findings on the game card. NorCal will be allowing more flexibility for these Return to Play events. Teams may wear the same color shirt and do whatever necessary to put numbers on them.

Coin Toss:

- No coin toss. While maintaining 6-ftspace, the Home team picks direction to attack. Away team gets kick-off.
- No player walkouts or handshakes prior or after the game OR OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT

During the Game:

- Face coverings to be worn by players when not participating (e.g. on the sidelines).
- Face coverings to be worn by participants during practice, conditioning and competition, even during heavy exertion as tolerated. (You may pull your mask down to help you catch your breath if need be.)
- Face coverings to be worn by coaches, support staff, and observers at all times, and in compliance with the CDPH [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#).
- Clubs may be subject to stricter county or facility provider requirements regarding face coverings.
- It is not the referee's responsibility to ensure players are wearing a face covering. (Practice social distancing whenever approaching someone without a mask on)
- Communicate with the coaches if anyone is not maintaining the proper distance from the touchline.
- If the problem persists, have a conversation with the full crew and both coaches to try to resolve the issue.
- If at any time the referee crew does not feel safe during a match because proper distancing by spectators from the crew is not being followed, you can end the match due to safety concerns.
- Try to maintain recommended distancing during the match. (Whenever possible)

- Drop Ball –no referee handling, ensure all except one player maintain a 4.5 yd. distance from the ball and restart with an IDFK (Indirect Free Kick) and a whistle.
- Penalty kicks –do not handle the ball. Monitor the placement of the ball on the mark by the kicker.
- Medical Situations –
- Remain 6 ft. away from the injured player while determining if medical attention is needed.
- If so, the team trainer or a coach from the player's team should attend to the injured player.

Halftime:

- Masks should be worn during halftime.
- Referees should maintain proper distancing during the halftime conversation.
- It is recommended referees use hand sanitizer and sanitize all referee equipment again during halftime.

After the Game:

- No handshakes, fist bumps, or high fives after the game. This can be replaced with a wave.
- Coach's signature is NOT required on the match report.
- If you are required to leave a match report for the team(s), leave at the end of the team bench.
- When debriefing with the referee crew, find a space where everyone can be seen and heard, while allowing for proper distancing.
- If working multiple games, wipe down and sanitize your equipment between your matches.
- Once the game is over and the crew has debriefed, leave the field. Do not congregate around the field.
- Should you encounter any difficulty implementing these protocols, please complete a supplemental report and notify your assignor.
- Assignors, please notify the proper club administrators if a referee crew should encounter any problems implementing the protocols.
- For contact tracing purposes, if a referee is to test positive for COVID after a match, they need to notify the assignor immediately. The assignor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate club official.

Resources:

- NorCal Return to Play Competition Policies/FAQ:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AJBfPfk9caENjGtD-9UIFaKcdNkvc_ztdvPDfZAx0GE/edit
- Courtesy of USSF: USSF Phase 3:
<https://www.ussoccer.com/playon/guides/phase-3-grassroots> **Additional Health & Safety Protocol for Referees (page 7 & 8).**
- Courtesy of CNRA: “Return to Play Recommendations):
<https://files.constantcontact.com/f1253d72701/f4ba4977-2193-4c75-900e-0f0651db89ee.pdf>
- Courtesy of Washington Soccer Referees:
[http://www.wareferees.org/Documents/Return%20to%20Play%20-%20Match%20Officials%20\(Jan2021\).pdf](http://www.wareferees.org/Documents/Return%20to%20Play%20-%20Match%20Officials%20(Jan2021).pdf)
- Courtesy of Cal-South: <https://calsouth.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CSTF-RTP-CS-Phases-and-Responsibilities.pdf>