



**RETURN  HOCKEY**

COVID-19 RESPONSE

# Safety Guidelines

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## Preface

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In Canada and around the world, COVID-19 transmission is increasing. In response, some jurisdictions are decreasing gathering sizes and suspending activities such as sports to help control the spread of the virus.

To date, Saskatchewan residents have done a good job following public health orders to help manage transmission of COVID-19 in the province. However, positive case numbers are increasing in some communities and there is concern community transmission is starting to take place as we move into the winter season.

If COVID transmission continues to increase in the province, increased public health measures may need to be implemented. This may include limiting gathering sizes in communities or regions that are at higher risk, as well as potentially regionalizing competition or suspending play altogether, if necessary.

To ensure a successful 2021-22 hockey season – from beginning to end – it is the responsibility of every player, coach, team official and spectator to ensure they are following the public health measures and doing their best to control the spread of COVID-19.



## Purpose of Document

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The purpose of this document is to support Hockey Saskatchewan member programs by assisting the development of plans to guide the cautious step-by-step safe Return to Hockey during this pandemic. These guidelines provide information on numerous topics and includes links to additional information and resources that can further support decision making and communication with boards, minor hockey associations, regions, leagues, and sporting members.

## Legal Disclaimer

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The information contained in this document is not intended as a substitute for professional medical prognosis, recommendations, or treatment. Hockey Saskatchewan makes no representation and assumes no responsibility regarding the information concerning COVID – 19 due to the constant updates, and any information on COVID – 19 should be obtained from the Government of Saskatchewan.



## Terms of Reference

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**Inter-Provincial Travel:** Travel outside the province of Saskatchewan

**Intra-Provincial Travel:** Travel within the province of Saskatchewan

**Activity:** Any Hockey Saskatchewan sanctioned training, practice, exhibition game or league game

**Face Covering:** Medical or non-medical mask which covers the mouth and nose. The material can be cloth or other material.

**Minor Hockey Association:** A local association which administers hockey in their center (also referred to as MHA)

**Exhibition Game:** A game which typically takes place prior to League Games. All Exhibition Games must be approved and sanctioned by Hockey Saskatchewan.

**League Game:** A game which takes place as part of a sanctioned league with results recorded for standings

**Training:** Any hockey related activity in a team environment (such as practice or dryland)

**Self-Isolate:** Means staying at home to prevent the spread of infection. If you are sick or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 and are not fully vaccinated, you must self-isolate and seek testing immediately. This will help stop the spread of the virus so that other people don't get sick. Public Health can refer you to supports to help you safely self-isolate during your isolation period.

**Self-Monitor:** Means paying attention to your health and so you can identify signs of sickness. During a pandemic, everyone should be self-monitoring. It is important to know the symptoms of COVID-19 and to act appropriately if you have those symptoms.

**Fully Vaccinated:** Fourteen (14) or more days have passed since the individual received the last of the recommended number of doses.

**Close Contact:** Means an individual who has one of the following forms of contact with an individual with COVID-19 during that individual's infectious period.



## Face Covering Policy

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Effective Friday, September 17, the **Government of Saskatchewan** has mandated an interim [public health order](#) requiring the use of non-medical masks in all indoor public spaces in Saskatchewan.

**Exempt from the masking order will be indoor youth athletics for those under the age of 18 years while they are actively engaged in athletic activity. Masking in venues hosting youth athletics will remain required for general entry and exit into the facility, for athletes and spectators.**

**The above exemption does not apply to Coaches or Officials regardless of age.**

Exempt from the masking order will be Individuals 18 years of age and older while participating in athletic or sports activities, for the duration of the sport or activity only, so long as they are subject to a proof of vaccination policy that is implemented league-wide for all players, team officials, and officials such as the Western Hockey League and Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League.

**NOTE: No league-wide exemptions will be made for minor hockey leagues.**

Information on masks and their use and what qualifies as an indoor public space will be available at <http://www.Saskatchewan.ca/masks>.

It is recommended to use a non-medical mask which covers the mouth and nose. The material can be cloth or other material. Please refer to the Government of Canada - [How to safely use a non-medical mask or face covering](#) for further instructions.

**Bandanas or gaiter masks are not appropriate face coverings. They are ineffective at blocking respiratory droplets.**



### Players:

- It is **required** that **Players** properly wear a face covering when entering the arenas and continue wearing their face covering until they reach the spot where they will finish getting their skates / equipment on (chair, bleacher, dressing room).
- Players that are 18 years of age and older must wear a face covering while on-ice as per the provincial health order.
- It is **required** that **Players** promptly put their face covering back on once they get back to their spot and remove their helmet;
- **It is recommended** **Players** exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting arenas and while putting on their skates / equipment;

### On-Ice Coaches:

- It is **required** that **On-Ice Coaches** properly wear a face covering when entering the arenas and continue wearing their face covering until they reach the spot where they will put their skates on (chair, bleacher, dressing room).
- It is required that **On-Ice Coaches** wear a face covering while on the ice;
- It is recommended that **On-Ice Coaches** exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting arenas and while putting on their skates;

### Bench Coaches/Staff:

- It is **required** that **Bench Coaches/Staff** must be properly wearing a face covering when entering / exiting the arenas and continue properly wearing their face covering at all times - including while on the bench during games;
- It is recommended that **Bench Coaches/Staff** should exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting arenas;



### On-Ice Officials:

- It is **required** that **On-Ice Officials** properly wear a face covering when entering the arenas and continue wearing their face covering until they reach the spot where they will put their skates on.
- It is **required** that **On-Ice Officials**, regardless of age, must wear a face covering while on the ice.
- Exempt from this policy are On-Ice Officials while officiating in a Junior or Senior league that has an approved vaccination policy;
- It is recommended **On-Ice Officials** exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting arenas and while putting on their skates;

### Off-Ice Officials (timekeepers / scorekeepers):

- It is required **Off-Ice Officials** properly wear a face covering when entering / exiting the arenas and continue properly wearing their face covering at all times - including while working in the timekeeper's box / area;
- It is recommended **Off-Ice Officials** practice physical distancing in the timekeeper's box as much as possible;
- It is recommended **Off-Ice Officials** exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting arenas;

### Parents / Spectators:

- It is **required** that **Parents / Spectators** properly wear a face covering when entering / exiting the arenas and continue properly wearing their face covering at all times;
- It is recommended that **Parents / Spectators** exercise physical distancing while entering and exiting the arenas and while sitting or standing inside the arena;

All teams will be required to have a **Team COVID Person** that will be responsible for keeping their teams informed of all applicable protocols and other pertinent information that comes out as the season progresses.





## COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test

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Effective Friday, October 1, 2021, the **Government of Saskatchewan** has issued a [public health order](#) requiring Facilities that are hosting ticketed sporting events to adhere to a 'COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test' requirement. Ticketed sporting events are defined as an event in which:

- A physical or electronic ticket is required to gain entrance into the event; and
- GST is charged on the ticket.

For events that meet the above criteria, we ask that you refer to page 5 of the [public health order](#) issued on September 30, 2021.

Exempt from the 'Covid-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test' requirement are facilities hosting amateur sporting events, including youth athletics and recreational leagues or ticketed events in which GST is **NOT** charged on the ticket and/or a physical or electronic ticket is required to gain entry into the event.

NOTE: Local/rural municipalities may choose to impose a 'COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test' requirement of their own. We recommend that you check with the facility before attending a hockey event.

NOTE: Facilities that operate a canteen where food is being served are **NOT** required to follow the 'COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test' so long as;

- Alcohol/liquor is not being served; and
- Table service is not being offered. (see "fast food restaurant" definition on page 3 of the [public health order](#))

Facilities that operate a licensed canteen or bar where alcohol/liquor is being served must adhere to the 'COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination or Negative Test' requirement in the area in which alcohol/liquor is being served.



## Minor Hockey Association

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### Checklist to Success

#### Review & Follow



- Current [Public Health Orders](#) issued by the Government of Saskatchewan
- Review Hockey Canada: Safety Guidelines
- Review Hockey Saskatchewan: Safety Guidelines
- Review local and provincial facility guidelines

#### Plan



- As per Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines, assign a person from your Association to be the COVID Representative (MHA)
- As per Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines, have each team assign a Team Official to be the COVID Representative (TEAM)
- Speak with your facility regarding; hygiene requirements, physical distancing, dressing rooms, entrance/exit, washrooms, spectators, concessions, etc. (see 'Facilities' section)
- All registered MHA Executive members, Team Officials and On-Ice Officials must complete the 'Planning A Safe Return to Hockey' online course if they did not do so last season
- Ensure that all members are aware and following Safety Guidelines

## MHA COVID Representative

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The assigned Minor Hockey Association (MHA) COVID Representative is responsible for;

- Notify Hockey Saskatchewan by **October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021** of your MHA's COVID Representative;
- Communicate all safety measure and facility guidelines with all Team Safety Personal within your MHAs;
- Notify Hockey Saskatchewan of any positive COVID test within your membership;
- The primary liaison with the local municipality for COVID-19 health and safety matters at each facility;
- Stay up to date on [current Public Health Orders](#) issued by the Government of Saskatchewan;
- Communicate with Arenas to determine individual municipal restrictions that may have been put in place.



## Team COVID Person

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Each team will have a designated “Safety Person” that will be the person responsible for ensuring guidelines and protocols are followed. In addition, this person will be responsible for;

- Organizing a pre-season meeting with all parent/guardians to go over the following;
  - Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines
  - Hockey Saskatchewan Safety Guidelines
  - Local facility Guideline(s)
- Notify your MHA COVID Representative of any positive test within your team.
- Communicate with your MHA COVID Representative any issues with regards to safety procedures

## Team Hygiene

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### Equipment

- Equipment such as water bottles and towels should not be shared.
- Players should label water bottles with their names.
- Water bottles should be filled at home.
- Water bottles should be cleaned thoroughly before and after each event.
- Equipment such as jerseys, pant shells, socks, bandanas/skull caps and compression gear should be washed after each event.
- Equipment that is shared (pucks, pylons, etc.) must only be handled by the owner of the equipment.

### Dressing Room Protocols

- Participants must follow facility guidelines and enforce physical distancing in dressing rooms.
- Only team personnel will be allowed in dressing rooms (coaches, medical staff, and players).
  - If a parent is required, only one parent per player will be permitted. No additional family members will be allowed in dressing rooms.
- Hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN) should be available for players.
- Sharing food or drink is not permitted.
- Individuals may not share clothing, soap, shampoo, or other personal items such as razors and towels.
- Spitting is prohibited.

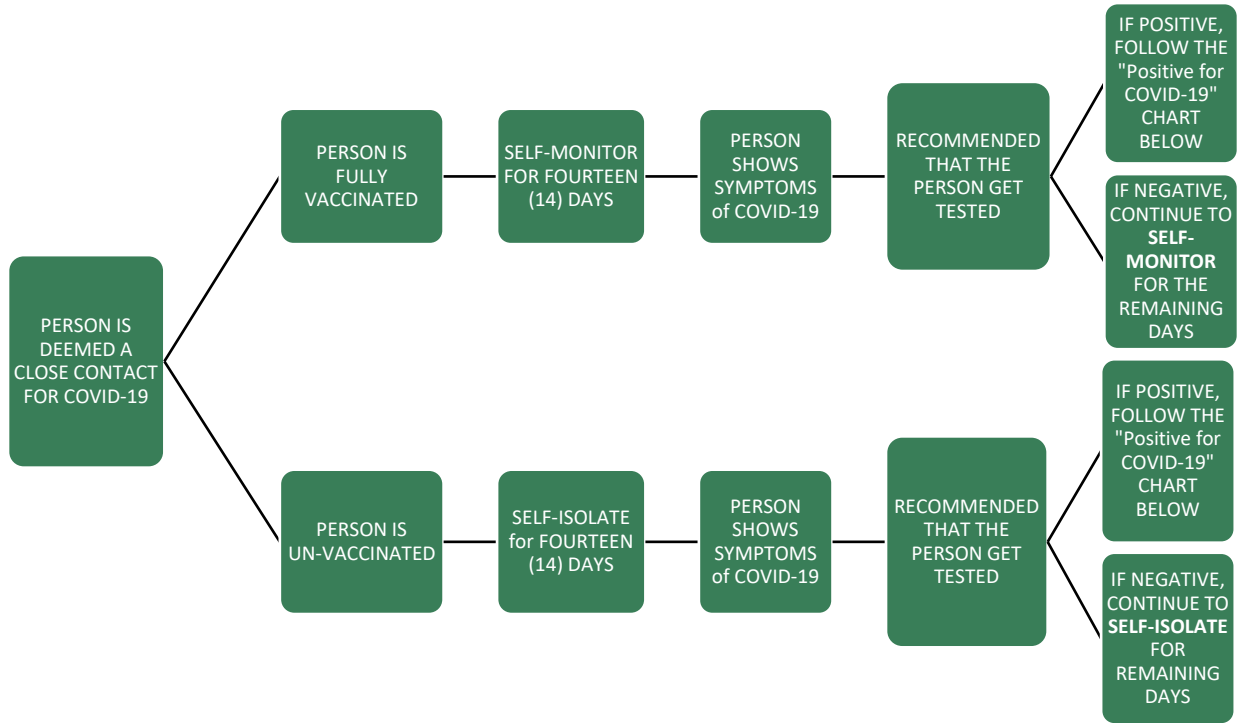


## Symptoms or Positive COVID Test

The current direction from the Ministry of Health and the Saskatchewan Health Authority is that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, is advised to self-isolate immediately at home or in another suitable environment for ten (10) days. Public health will follow up at the end and as needed during the isolation period. Local Public Health Officers have the authority to provide guidance related to additional measures related to quarantine or contact tracing requirements for close contacts.

Information from Ministry of Health related to COVID-19 case and contact management is available here: [LINK](#)

### Person is Deemed a Close Contact for COVID-19



### Person Tests Positive for COVID-19





## Officials

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- Hockey Saskatchewan **recommends** that Officials that are carpooling in the same vehicle for games should wear a face covering when traveling if they are not from the same household.
- Officials are allowed to affiliate and travel between provinces in their role as officials. Please consult with those provinces regarding their COVID protocols regarding face coverings, vaccinations, etc.
- Officials will not shake hands with coaches or players before or after the game.
- Officials should communicate with off-ice officials from a distance or through the gate as opposed to using the hole in the box.
- The linesperson who picks up the puck should drop the puck, avoid extra hand offs.
- Officials should position themselves six feet away from the players benches when possible.
- Officials are directed to not pick up any equipment that may be on the ice (broken/dropped stick, neck guards, mouthguards, gloves etc.)
- Officials should have personal hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes or spray and may also take a small bottle with them on the ice or leave a bottle in the penalty box.
- Officials are encouraged to utilize their whistle to stop play earlier and potentially prevent unnecessary scrums and altercations.

## Off-Ice Officials

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- It is **required** that Timekeepers wear a face covering in the penalty box area.
- It is **required** that Timekeepers wear a face covering while entering/exiting the facility.
- It is recommended Officials should communicate with off-ice officials through the gate as opposed to using the hole in the box.
- It is recommended Timekeepers should remind players in the penalty boxes to physically distance as much as possible.

## Facilities

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It is recommended that communities advise the leagues their teams participate in if their city, town, village, RM have placed any COVID restrictions on their facility.



## Game Protocols

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- It is the responsibility of everyone to reduce the amount of time spent in proximity to others.
  - Once the whistle is blown to stop play, players are expected to immediately leave the area and physically distance on the ice where possible.
- Hockey Canada encourages coaches to promote that participants refrain from spitting at any time during any on-ice activities. This would also include spitting water on the ice or in the bench area.
- It is recommended that all players and the official remain distanced at the top, bottom or to the side of the face-off circle until the official blows the whistle and then move to their appropriate positions for the puck drop.
- All participants (including coaches/staff and officials) should avoid handshakes, fist bumps, hugs or any physical contact, including goal celebrations.
- Players will not shake hands following a game. Teams may line up on respective blue lines and raise their sticks.
- Benches, including penalty boxes, should be sanitized between each use by facility staff.
- Hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN) should be available on the bench provided by each team.
- It is recommended that all participants are asked to maintain social distancing practices while on the bench or in the penalty box as much as possible.
- It is recommended that the same person open/close the gates and wear gloves.
- If the facility has gates between the time-keeper box and penalty boxes, they should remain closed at all times during the game.
- Timekeepers should remind players in the penalty boxes to physically distance as much as possible.
- Officials are encouraged to utilize their whistle to stop play earlier and potentially prevent unnecessary scrums and altercations.
  - Once the whistle is blown to stop play, players are expected to immediately leave the area and physically distance on the ice where possible.



## Team Travel

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There is no restriction placed on Hockey Saskatchewan sanctioned teams to travel outside of the province, however you must abide by any Provincial restrictions within that Province. Therefore, ensure your Team Officials complete their homework on what restrictions exist outside the province.

### Transportation (Bus)

It is recommended that if a bus is used, ensure the following guidelines are in place:

- Ensure physical distancing so players are not sitting next to each other.
- The bus should be professionally cleaned and disinfected prior to each trip. It is recommended to discuss with the bus company what their cleaning procedures are.
- Discuss with the bus company the importance of following all public health authority guidelines.
- Players and staff should wash their hands prior to boarding the bus.
- Players and staff should clean and disinfect their seat and surface area with provided disinfectant wipes after each stop and prior to each departure.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players board and disembark.
- Players and staff should wash their hands as they disembark.
- Have proper waste disposals on the bus to discard used disinfectant wipes.
- If physical distancing is not possible on the bus, **it is recommended** all passengers wear a cloth mask.
- Teams should request increased air circulation on the bus.

### Hotel

If staying at a hotel, consider the following recommendations:

- Ask hotel to remove glasses in rooms and replace with plastic wrapped cups or bring personal cups.
- Bring plates and cutlery.
- Eliminate team buffets. Individual meals should be considered.
- Remember physical-distancing requirements prior to considering any type of meal.
- If eating at a restaurant, follow applicable public health authority guidelines.
- One family per room.

## Team Photos

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Team Photos are permitted, given that face coverings are worn by coaches and staff members prior to and after the photo has been taken.

The person taking the photo is required to wear a face covering at all times while inside the facility.

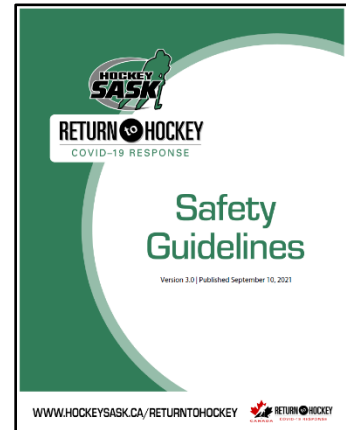


## Communication Strategy

### Safety Guidelines Document

Hockey Saskatchewan’s Safety Guidelines document for ‘Return to Hockey’ will be a fluid document as changes are made or imposed by the Provincial Government and/or Hockey Saskatchewan. The document will be the primary source for all updates to the guidelines as new information becomes available. The most recent document will be identified with “Version #.#” with the revised date listed.

This document will be sent out via email to all Minor Hockey Associations (MHA) and Leagues, posted on social media and housed on the Hockey Saskatchewan website in multiple places including but not limited to; Hockey Saskatchewan’s [‘Return to Hockey’](#) page.

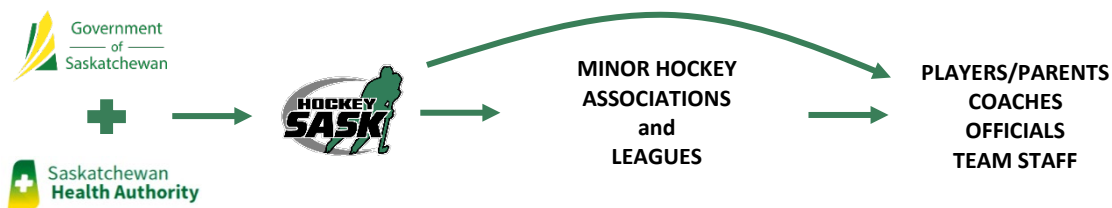


To ensure an effective communication strategy, Hockey Saskatchewan has identified key channels which we feel will properly communicate the most up-to-date guidelines to our membership.

Our focus is to reach all membership, which includes; Players, Parents / Guardians, Coaches, Officials and Team Staff with this multi-facet approach.

### Email Communication

The email communication strategy will be our most direct line to the membership. Through our internal contact list of approximately 200 Minor Hockey Associations and 30 Leagues, this contact list will be important to ensure the MHA and League’ Presidents are aware of any changes to the guidelines as they come about. Additionally, Hockey Saskatchewan has access to the Hockey Canada Registry, a database where all participants of Hockey Saskatchewan are listed with current contact information. The registry includes all teams, players, coaches, team staff and officials that participate as members.







## Return to Hockey Webpage

Hockey Saskatchewan’s [‘Return to Hockey’](#) webpage was launched on of August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This digital space will be the hub for any news bulletins/updates and to view/download the most recent Safety Guidelines from our website.

The homepage will display a permanent link to the ‘Return to Hockey’ page to ensure it won’t be missed by any site visitor. Note, all Minor Hockey Associations have been made aware of the webpage and have been encouraged to post this on their own websites to inform membership.

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## Social Media Awareness

Much like last season, utilizing Hockey Saskatchewan’s social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)) will be a key resource in relaying information and updates to membership and their extended parent groups. All content sent-out will include the Hockey Saskatchewan Return to Hockey graphic and suggested messaging for the Minor Hockey Associations and Leagues to post on their channels.





## Additional Resources

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### Government of Saskatchewan – Interim Public Health Order:

<https://hockeysask.ca/pub/News/Return%20To%20Hockey/provincial-order---provincial-order-september-16-2021.pdf>



### Government of Saskatchewan – COVID-19:

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus>



### Hockey Canada – Safety Guidelines:

[https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC\\_RTH\\_Safety-GUIDELINES\\_EN.pdf](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC_RTH_Safety-GUIDELINES_EN.pdf)



### Hockey Canada – Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/exclusive/return-to-hockey/plans/safety>



### Hockey Canada – Officiating Guidelines:

[https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC\\_RTH\\_Officiating\\_Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC_RTH_Officiating_Guide_EN.pdf)