



MJHL RETURN TO PLAY | PHASE II GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Manitoba Junior Hockey League (MJHL) and its 11 member teams continue to closely monitor the situation in Manitoba as it relates to COVID-19. In early June, Hockey Canada determined that the best approach for a return to hockey in Canada is to allow each member and organization the opportunity to work with health authorities in their respective province to determine when it is safe to return to hockey activities.

With Manitoba easing restrictions and allowing indoor and outdoor sporting activities and games to operate once again, the MJHL has prepared our Return to Play (RTP) – Phase II Guidelines for review.

Please Note:

The following guidelines are to allow the MJHL, member teams, facilities and stakeholders the ability to prepare for and concentrate on the necessary planning involved for the upcoming 2020/21 MJHL season.

The following guidelines have been prepared in accordance to the Hockey Canada Return to Hockey Safety Guidelines as they pertain to Junior Hockey.

The following guidelines have been prepared in accordance to the recommendations of the necessary provincial health authorities.

The following guidelines are an extension of the MJHL Return to Play – Phase I Guidelines which were successfully approved on June 26th, 2020.

The following guidelines will framework how the MJHL and eleven member teams plan to return to full hockey in September, 2020.

The following guidelines will framework how members of the public may attend games at each MJHL facility starting in September, 2020.

The following guidelines will framework how MJHL facilities will operate during MJHL games in September, 2020.

The objective of the MJHL Return to Play | Phase II Guidelines is to demonstrate how the MJHL and its member teams plan to return to play games with spectators in a safe, structured and responsible manner in accordance with necessary health restrictions and facility guidelines.

As a result, the following clearly defined RTP guidelines have been recommended to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, staff, stakeholders and fans - The health and safety for everyone involved is our number one priority.

About the Manitoba Junior Hockey League

The Manitoba Junior Hockey League (MJHL) is a Junior 'A' ice hockey league made up of eleven member teams operating exclusively in the province of Manitoba.

The goal of the MJHL is to develop elite players and ultimately have them develop into elite citizens who make a positive contribution to their community. To provide fans, communities and supporters with the best possible hockey product through dedication to improvement in all areas of the game both on and off the ice.

MISSION STATEMENT - To provide each MJHL player with an elite hockey development experience with a strong emphasis on education and positive citizenship. To deliver exciting Junior 'A' hockey action to fans throughout the province and enhance Manitoba communities in the spirit of sports excellence and goodwill.

MJHL PHASE II Guidelines – Return to Hockey (September 1st)

Players, coaches, managers, training staff, gameday staff, volunteers and medical personnel employed by, affiliated with or invited by a MJHL team or the MJHL may attend approved MJHL facilities for the purposes of off-ice training activity, on-ice training activity and games.

Limited numbers of non-participating members of the public may attend MJHL facilities as spectators to view MJHL games.

MJHL facility operators will be required to implement measures to ensure non-participating members of the public attending the facility to view games can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres, except for brief exchanges.

All necessary public health authority guidelines and facility COVID-19 safety protocols will be strictly followed.

All out-of-province travel restrictions and guidelines as outlined by the provincial and federal health authorities will be followed.

FACILITY OPERATIONS GUIDELINES

All MJHL facilities are required to comply fully with all COVID-19 regulations and directives as outlined by the provincial health authorities. In addition, the following guidelines are to be implemented by the MJHL:

Seating Capacity

The MJHL objective is to maximize seating capacity for members of the public attending MJHL games while respecting all necessary health and safety guidelines as they relate to COVID-19.

The MJHL recommends the following escalating scale for fan attendance at MJHL facilities:

- Up to 35% of facility capacity for MJHL pre-season games played from September 1, 2020 to September 24th, 2020.
- Up to 50% of facility capacity to begin the MJHL regular season on September 25th, 2020.
- All standing room tickets will meet physical distancing guidelines.

*The escalating scale is to allow MJHL teams, staff, volunteers and facility management the opportunity to apply the guidelines outlined in this document in a regulated and controlled approach.

Facilities must ensure all cleaning and sanitizing guidelines established by health authorities and the MJHL RTP guidelines are implemented – before, during and following each event.

Parking

Players and staff parking to be located as close as possible to the team building entrance.

Visiting Team bus to be parked and unloaded as close as possible to the team building entrance.

Spectator parking to follow necessary physical distancing guidelines.

Suites

Only spectators with tickets for a specific suite will be permitted in a suite.

All suites will be provided with a hand sanitize and / or wipe station.

Food and beverage can be delivered to suites.

Buffet style food service will not be permitted.

In-Arena Team Stores

The number of people allowed inside the team store to be limited based on physical distancing guidelines.

Stanchions and/or spacing markers placed both inside and outside of stores if necessary to maintain physical distancing.

Public Address Announcements and Signage

Signage to be located throughout building outlining spectator movement and behavior where necessary.

Public address announcements outlining spectator requirements will occur frequently during the game.

Video Board messaging outlining spectator requirements will occur frequently during every game at each facility.

Promotions

Autograph sessions with players and team personnel will not be permitted.

Promotional items should not be tossed into the seating area or presented to fans.

Intermission activities to follow physical distancing and safety rules.

Ceremonial puck drops to follow physical distancing and safety rules.

Opening ceremony presentations to be limited for physical distancing.

Anthem singer to follow physical distancing and safety rules.

In-stand Announcers and game crews to maintain physical distancing.

Media / Broadcasting Areas

Access to the press box will be strictly enforced

Press Box seating will be based on physical distancing guidelines

Plexiglass cubicles may be built to accommodate physical separation

On-Ice Officials

Personal towels only.

Hands to be washed prior to start of each period (officials can carry a small bottle of sanitizer with them on the ice).

To have personal hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes.

Teams to supply hand sanitizer in the penalty box and dressing room for officials to use.

Physical distancing is required in dressing rooms as much as possible. Teams to work with facility staff to see if more rooms are available, as well marked space/stalls within the dressing rooms. If the dressing room is small, a rotation system to be considered.

Only game officials should be in the dressing room – no visitors.

It is prohibited for officials to drink from water bottles belonging to skaters or goaltenders. If officials require water during a game, they will have their own water bottle at the penalty bench.

Referees should verbally greet coaches as they generally do, but are not to shake hands.

When reporting penalties, officials are not to speak through the hole in the glass – work from a distance.

Are to maintain a two-meter distance from all coaches and off-ice officials.

Reduce the amount of time players spend in close proximity by quickly blowing the whistle if the puck is not moving with multiple players engaged.

Communicate to players to immediately separate once the whistle is blown.

Equipment should be washed (jerseys, pant shells, etc.) after each session, following manufacturer guidelines. It is important that officials ensure equipment is kept clean.

Teams to work with the facility to ensure the dressing room can be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

Off-Ice Officials

Penalty-box attendants encouraged to wear a mask inside the building (it may be required by the facility). Continue to monitor public health authority guidelines specific to the wearing of masks.

Teams/Facility to supply Off-ice officials with hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to wipe down and disinfect the score clock equipment/penalty bench prior to, during and after each game. Handles to doors going to the ice are high-touch areas and proper hygiene and cleaning is important.

Physical distancing must be practiced, and it is important to work with the facility to plan the best way to incorporate into the space being used.

Benches

Teams will work with facility staff to ensure the bench area is wiped down and disinfected before and after each session.

High touch areas should be wiped down and disinfected during each intermission.

For all on-ice activity including practices or games, bench capacity will be monitored to allow for social distancing as much as possible. Examples include adding another bench, limiting staff, etc.

Players are to have a labeled water bottle and are to use only that water bottle when participating in the activity.

Disposable gloves and disinfectant to be made available on benches for players and staff if necessary.

Ensure a non-touch garbage can or plastic garbage bag is available on the bench.

It is recommended that the same person for the entire game open/close the gates and wear gloves

On-Ice/Off-Ice Warm-Ups

Players and staff must have their own personal towel.

Players and staff must use their own water bottles (cleaned after each practice and game).

Additional towels and a laundry basket must be available (towels cleaned and replaced after each use).

Players are to warm-up for training/practice sessions individually as opposed to in groups.

Sanitary tissues and a non-touch waste basket to be made available.

Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to be made available.

Cleaning of jerseys, face shields and mouthguards must take place before and after every practice and game.

Spacing in areas where individuals congregate (e.g. line ups, spacing of players sitting on benches, and/or dressing rooms) will be monitored and modified where applicable to ensure social distancing.

Team huddles of any kind, handshakes, hugs, high fives, etc to be eliminated.

Physical distancing between coaches, participants, spectators, on ice and off ice officials to be monitored and enforced.

Team Travel (Practice/Games)

Players and staff will be encouraged to travel separately to all practice sessions and home games when possible.

Players from the same household should drive together to practice sessions and home games.

Carpooling is recommended to be kept to two people with each sitting in a different row and on opposite sides of the vehicle where possible.

If individuals choose to carpool together, they should not carpool with different individuals.

The interior of the carpooling vehicle should be disinfected frequently, especially high-touch areas like door handles, interior and exterior, steering wheels, dashboard controls, seat belts, etc.

Buses

The bus should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected professionally prior to each trip.

It is recommended that each team discuss with the bus company what their cleaning procedures are.

Teams to discuss with the bus company the importance of following all public health guidelines.

If the team owns the bus, a cleaning log of who cleaned the bus and when to be kept.

Players and staff encouraged to wash their hands prior to boarding the bus.

Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to be available as players board and disembark.

Players and staff encouraged to clean and disinfect their seat and surface area with provided disinfectant wipes after each stop and prior to each departure.

Players and staff encouraged to wash their hands as they disembark.

Players from the same household should always sit together when social distancing is not possible.

Have non-touch waste disposals on the bus to discard used disinfectant wipes.

Cloth masks to be available for use by all players and staff. If physical distancing is not possible at all times on the bus, it is recommended all passengers wear a cloth mask.

Teams should request increased air circulation on the bus.

Hotel Accommodations

Hotel stays will be limited for teams for the upcoming season as much as possible.

Maximum of two players per room.

Players from the same household should always stay together when in a hotel.

Cloth masks to be made available for all players and staff if necessary.

Teams to ask hotel to remove glasses in rooms and replace with plastic wrapped cups, and/or bring some.

When booking hotels teams should ask the hotel what their cleaning rituals are and how they're managing physical distancing.

Teams should also ask the hotel if they're leaving rooms empty for a period of time after each guest has stayed there.

Upon check-in and daily, players/staff recommended to wipe down the following with disinfectant wipes to disinfect all commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, taps, handles, remote controls, and other commonly touched surfaces.

Enquire with the hotel to find out if cleaning supplies will be provided in the room

Meals

Players and staff must wash hands before and after each meal. Players to be reminded to disinfect their phones regularly.

To go meals to be provided when possible/applicable.

Restaurant should have a private room and dedicated person to serve meals to players and staff. Buffet-style food services should not be permitted. Beverages should be single-serve and not jug-style service.

Players and staff are not to share food or drink at any time.

Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to be made available as players enter and leave. Cloth masks to be made available for all players and staff if necessary.

Arrange seating and tables to ensure physical distancing.

PROTOCOL FOR SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Should a player or staff member who exhibits symptoms such as a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, and has a suspected case of COVID-19, the individual must adhere to the following protocol:

Notify the Head Coach or a Team Medical Staff member immediately;

The individual will be instructed to be isolated and the Team Doctor notified;

The individual must contact the local health authority to determine if a COVID-19 test is required;

The individual will remain in isolation until a negative test result is received and/or a minimum period of 14 days;

If the test result is negative, but symptoms continue, the individual will remain isolated until such time the Team Doctor agrees that he can return to train.

Should a player or staff member test positive for COVID-19, the individual must adhere to the following protocol:

Upon notification by the health department of a positive test, the individual must notify the Head Coach or a Team Staff member immediately;

The Team General Manager must notify the MJHL Office immediately of the positive test;

Any team that has been in contact with the positive case must have all members of that team tested immediately;

The individual must self-isolate for 14 days or should symptoms get worse notify a Team Staff member or call 911;

The Club and the MJHL Office will cooperate fully with health authorities while they perform case management and contact tracing (all individuals who have been in close contact in the 48 hours prior to when the symptoms started);

The Team and MJHL Office will follow any other additional prevention and control measures as required by the local health authority

The Team and Facility management will ensure all areas of the facility, where the infected individual has been, are disinfected in accordance to the procedures and protocols provided by the health officials;

The individual will remain in isolation for a period of 14 days or until such time he is approved for return to play by the Team Doctor.

Additional Safety Measures

Players and staff will be leaders in practicing physical distancing off the ice.

The Head Coach of each member club will have the responsibility of monitoring player and staff compliance while at the facility as outlined in the MJHL RTP Guidelines.

Any violation may result in the player or staff member being subject to team and/or league discipline. The MJHL Commissioner will make in-person presentations to all member teams before the start of the MJHL regular season.

Every MJHL team, staff, player and facility will be provided with the MJHL RTP Guidelines for review before September.

Every player will be required to read and sign the MJHL Player Disclosure Form (Appendix A).

Every team will be required to read and sign the MJHL Team Disclosure Form (Appendix B).

Every facility will be required read and sign the MJHL Facility Disclosure Form (Appendix C).

Every MJHL Head Coach will be required to complete a Hockey Canada COVID-19 safety course.

Insurance

Under Hockey Canada's current General Liability policy, the following is the definition for 'bodily injury': "Bodily Injury" means bodily injury, sickness, disease, mental injury, mental anguish or nervous shock sustained by a person, including death resulting from any of these at any time. As it relates to COVID-19, that would fall within the definition – more specifically, under disease.

Liability claims against Hockey Canada always need to be proven by the third party, so continuing to update and enforce risk management guidelines as new risks emerge, such as COVID-19, are imperative. Understand that Hockey Canada and its Members are actively working on updating risk-management protocols related to Return to Hockey guidelines post-COVID-19. As with all claim scenarios, the insurance company would investigate all claims presented against any Member of Hockey Canada that falls within the 'bodily injury' definition and would confirm coverage based on the framing of the allegations. It will also be important to review new municipal rink/private rink facility contracts post-COVID-19 for all rentals; in all likelihood, they will now contain a new clause which absolves the municipality/private facility owners of any liability related to COVID-19.

New lease agreements will need to be carefully scrutinized given that organizations will potentially have little control over cleaning/sanitizing of rented premises and shouldn't be expected to take on all liability related to COVID-19 in these facilities.

Finally, it should be noted that many insurance companies are implementing Communicable Disease/COVID-19 exclusions on all policies either immediately, or upon renewal. Hockey Canada can advise that AIG, who is Hockey Canada's primary General Liability insurer, has agreed to waive this exclusion in the General Liability policy until Sept. 1, 2023.

New Health Regulations and Directives

The MJHL and member teams will continue to monitor any new regulations and directives introduced by Provincial Health Authorities, Hockey Canada and Sport Manitoba and, if applicable, will be incorporated into the MJHL Return to Play Guidelines.

Conclusion

These uncertain times have necessitated specific measures to allow us to return to the sport we love. We fundamentally believe the MJHL RTP guidelines, if adhered to, put the MJHL, its Member Teams and everyone involved in the best position to return to and enjoy hockey in a safe and healthy manner.

As information regarding COVID – 19 virus changes, our RTP Guidelines will remain fluid and flexible to accommodate the necessary response to advice from the Provincial Health Authorities.

Together, we can return to this amazing sport and do so in an environment that is as safeguarded as possible.

APPENDIX A – Player Disclosure Form

This certifies that I agree to abide by the following points while I am a player in the MJHL.

I understand the policies and guidelines outlined in the MJHL Return to Play document.

I agree to abide by the policies and guidelines outlined in the MJHL Return to Play document.

I agree to symptom screening checks, and will notify the team I have experience any COVID-19 symptoms.

I agree to stay home when/if feeling ill.

I understand that if I do not abide by the policies and guidelines outlined in the MJHL Return to Play document, that I may be asked to leave the team activity immediately for up to 14 days.

I acknowledge that continued abuse of the policies and guidelines outlined in the MJHL Return to Play document may result in further sanctions.

I acknowledge that there are risks associated with entering team facilities and/or participating in team activities, and that the measures taken by the MJHL, team, facilities and participants, including those set out in the policies and guidelines outlined in the MJHL Return to Play document, will not entirely eliminate those risks.

DATE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX B – Team Disclosure Form

TEAM:

The purpose of this document is to ensure that all MJHL member teams will adhere to the appropriate policies and guidelines for the 2020/21 season to the best of their ability as outlined in the MJHL Return To Play Guidelines. The policies and guidelines shall be followed in conjunction with the provisions of the provincial health authorities and the facilities involved.

DATE:

NAME/POSITION:

SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX C – Facility Disclosure Form

MJHL TEAM:

FACILITY:

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the above MJHL facility will adhere to the appropriate policies and guidelines for the 2020/21 season to the best of their ability as outlined in the MJHL Return To Play Guidelines. The policies and guidelines shall be followed in conjunction with the provisions and recommendations of the provincial health authorities.

DATE:

NAME/POSITION:

SIGNATURE: