



# **Return to the Game 2020-21 Season**

**June 2020**

**MAHA Executive Committee Interim Order 2020-001**

# Introduction

As of current day, the State of Michigan remains under restricted guidelines for youth sports activity, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Michigan ice rinks remain closed for business and all hockey activities remain suspended until further notice.

In Spring 2020, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) formulated a MAHA Task Force – a collaboration of 70+ coaches, rink managers, association Board members, District chairs, and officials whose objective was to develop a comprehensive plan for returning to hockey activity. This proactive approach was used to address several key priorities including, but not limited to: Programming, Rink Management, Association Management, Administration, and Policy Setting.

The purpose of this document is to provide member associations, ice rink owners & operators, league administrators, participants and volunteers a summary of recommendations for returning to hockey activity in Michigan. The MAHA Executive Committee is charged with the responsibility of managing the affairs of MAHA between meetings of the Board of Directors. On June 2, 2020, the MAHA Executive Committee adopted this Return to the Game Interim Order under the authority of MAHA Bylaw 6.B.1.a. In addition to the MAHA Task Force collaboration, key contributors include USA Hockey, the United States Ice Rink Association, and the Aspen Institute (Project Play). Furthermore, these recommendations are based upon current guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Michigan Department of Health and other local and State government agencies.

As updates continue to emerge, pertaining to our return to hockey for the 2020-21 season, details of this comprehensive plan are subject to change. Please visit the [MAHA website](#) for these continued updates.

Please be aware that our knowledge surrounding COVID-19 is constantly changing, and circumstances will vary based on geographic region. Therefore, the MAHA strongly encourages all participants to adhere to their state and local guidelines for best practices on COVID-19 prevention.



# State of Michigan

In May 2020, Governor Whitmer introduced her six-phase Michigan Safe Start Plan for re-engaging the State's economy. [Click here to view the complete document.](#)

As of this writing, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association is still awaiting clarity from the State on where indoor recreational facilities, as well as youth sports activities, fall under this phased rollout plan. The MAHA continues to monitor the re-opening guidelines introduced by states / provinces across North America, in order to anticipate the potential state restrictions we will be required to follow.

The Michigan Safe Start Plan includes a map of the state, divided into eight (8) [Michigan Economic Recovery Council \(MERC\) reporting regions](#). We believe this map will be a significant guideline in the process of re-opening the State. Furthermore, we anticipate that future fluctuations in local government restrictions, based on the progress of COVID-19, may occur regionally based on these mapped boundaries. As a result, the MAHA has utilized this map as a tool for shaping its recommendations for planning the 2020-21 hockey season. This is in an effort to minimize potential disruptions in seasonal activity, based on any fluctuations in local government restrictions.

Similar to the re-opening of our state, the MAHA believes a 'phased' return to hockey activity is the most appropriate course of action. The following pages will summarize this phased approach, as well as offer best practices and recommendations for navigating each phase of the return. Please note that the duration of each phase may vary, or fluctuate, based on local and state government restrictions. These restrictions may influence the length of our season, the size of group gatherings, sanitation standards at rinks, team formation and game counts. Nevertheless, we remain committed to providing a safe, best-in-class experience for all participants.



# Season Outline

## Rink Management

### Phase One: Pre-Opening

- **Player Agreement Policy**
- **Off-Ice / Dryland Training (Outdoor)**

### Phase Two: The Re-Opening

- **Rinks are permitted to re-open**
  - **Days 1-14: Rink Preparation**
  - **Days 1-21: Administrative Period (Associations)**
  - **Days 22-30: Players Return to On-Ice Activities**
  - **Days 31-37: Tier I Team Tryouts (Youth & Girls 12U - 19U)**
  - **Days 38-51: Tier II Team Tryouts (Youth & Girls 10U - 19U)**
  - **Days 52-58: Tier III (House Evaluation Skate / Draft)**
- **Rostering Process - begins September 1, 2020**

### Phase Three: Adaptive Play

### Phase Four: Unrestricted Play

**NOTE: As updates are provided, regarding the official day of rinks re-opening, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association will provide immediate feedback on confirmed dates for all activities in this outline. Please continue to visit the MAHA website for news and information, as it becomes available.**



# Rink Management

In an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants and spectators, rink management will be committed to a higher standard of sanitation and day-to-day operational practice. The Rink Management committee of the MAHA Task Force has adopted the [Returning to the Rinks](#) document – a collaborative guide provided by USA Hockey, U.S. Figure Skating and the U.S. Ice Rink Association. This document will serve as the foundation for establishing best practices at each of our rinks across the state.

The following is an outline highlighting key recommendations for Michigan rink management teams, upon their return to business. Details of execution may vary at each facility. As we continue to progress through the phases of our return to activity, certain restrictions may be gradually eased or lifted (as allowed by the State of Michigan).

## Building Access – Entrance to Exit

- **Arrival 10 minutes prior to ice time**
- **Traffic flow – one way in / one way out**
  - Signage / markings for clear definition
- **Parents or caregivers are discouraged from attending practice**
  - If attendance is necessary, proper social distancing (6 ft) must be maintained
- **Masks recommended for all patrons**
  - Not required after entering ice surface
- **Employees to wear masks / gloves as needed**
- **Interior doors propped open to limit surface contact**
- **Online or mobile payments recommended**

## Locker Rooms

- **Locker room / showers *prohibited* during Phase One**
  - Players should plan to come pre-dressed
  - Patrons must adhere to social distancing guidelines

## Ice Utilization

- **Small group training in practice**
  - Focus on individual skills
  - Divided ice – keep small groups separate
- **Face masks recommended for coaches**
- **All participants must leave helmet and gloves on**
- **No player bench usage**
  - No spitting out water or fluids on or around bench areas
- **No penalty box usage**
- **No team water bottle sets**
  - Players must bring their own, fill them at home
- **No community white boards**
  - Coaches must bring their own
  - Limited time at white board recommended



## **Sanitation Practices**

- **Employees to wear masks / gloves as needed**
- **Ice times will be staggered to allow for proper sanitation**
- **Staff will prioritize high-traffic areas (30-60 min intervals) for sanitation**
  - **Front desk**
  - **Doors, door knobs, and floors**
  - **Bleachers**
  - **Bench areas**
  - **On-ice equipment (i.e. coaching aids, cones, pads, & rink dividers)**
- **Restrooms**
  - **Spaced access for social distancing**
- **Mop buckets and disinfectant strategically staged in key areas**
- **Increased access to hand sanitizer**

## **Communication**

Rink managers are encouraged to develop a comprehensive plan for communicating their enhanced standards and practices to their community members. Key messaging should summarize how facility management has made it safe for patrons to return to the rink.

Best practices may include, but not be limited to:

- **In-rink signage**
- **Website updates**
- **Social media**
- **E-mail blast(s)**
  - **Coordinate with local association for distribution**
- **Zoom conference call**
  - **Coordinate with local association for participation**
- **'Welcome Back' Video – rink walk-through**
  - **Distribute through digital / social channels**
- **Employee Re-Training Program – “The New Normal”**

## **Additional Resources**

Maintaining the safety and well-being of all participants, and patrons, of our rinks will require a collaborative effort. We encourage all visitors to continue following best practices in personal hygiene, as well as social distancing, based on local and state government guidelines.

For more information on best practices for COVID-19 prevention, please access the links below:

[CDC – How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)

[MDHHS – COVID-19 Page](#)



# Phase One: Pre-Opening

On June 1, 2020, Governor Whitmer officially lifted the Michigan 'Stay-At-Home' order statewide. As part of this ruling, outdoor athletic practices and training sessions are permitted as long as coaches and participants adhere to social distancing guidelines (6 feet apart). While this is a very positive step forward, in our eventual return to hockey activity, Michigan rinks remain closed until further notice. Nevertheless, Phase One of the MAHA's 'Return to the Game' plan allows for continued progress, by initiating some critical processes for a new season.

## Player Agreement Policy

The gradual re-opening of activity of Michigan causes many challenges to how we initiate a new hockey season. Specifically, the potentially sporadic re-opening of rinks across Michigan hinders our ability to solidify a schedule for team tryouts. This can potentially delay the process of team formation. Ultimately, our goal was to create balanced solutions based upon direct participation in our MAHA Task Force, as well as input from our Leagues, Clubs and Facilities.

Effective the date of this release, the Executive Committee is authorizing its Tier I, Tier II Organizations and Association Member Clubs to commence the offering of Player Agreements according to the schedule indicated below.

### **TIER I YOUTH & GIRLS 12U – 19U**

- June 1, 2020 – May issue early commitments to players within its organization.
- June 15, 2020 – May issue early commitments to players outside its organization.

### **TIER II YOUTH & GIRLS 10U – 19U**

- June 8, 2020 – May issue early commitments to players within its organization.
- June 15, 2020– May issue early commitments to players outside its organization.

The purpose of the MAHA allowing advanced player agreements, prior to team tryouts, is to expedite membership planning for the 2020-21 season. This is also an effort to greatly reduce stress, for participants and families, as to where they will be playing next season. Under these circumstances, ALL advanced player agreements are subject to the following conditions:

- **COVID-19 Financial Hardship Refund Policy** – Player agreements shall be required to include a COVID-19 Financial Hardship Refund Policy. Parents/Guardians of players signing agreements may petition for relief under the following guidelines:
  - Under this policy, hardships must be related to the COVID-19 pandemic, where a family's financial status changed after signing the Player Agreement.

(Continued on next page)



- **Clubs/associations are allowed to charge for the following:**
    - **Durable goods that can't be repurposed (i.e. team uniforms, etc.)**
    - **Ice fees, coaching fees, and expenses prorated to what has actually been used by the player, up to the date the club/association received a written request.**
  - **Participants/families exercising this option will not be permitted to roster with another club at the same tier level for the 2020-2021 season.**
  - **Participants/families may exercise this relief option on, or prior to, September 1, 2020.**
  - **Failure to adhere to the policy guidelines above may result in disciplinary action, due to violation of the following rules (as outlined in the MAHA Guide Book):**
    - **Tryout Rule**
    - **Affiliate Agreement**
- **All Tier I and Tier II teams executing early Player Agreements, prior to a tryout process, are required to register all committed players on the MAHA website. The MAHA will provide specific instructions on how to complete this process.**

## **Off-Ice Training**

**Players are encouraged to resume physical activity during the Phase One period. Players who elect to participate in group physical activity should continue to follow social distancing guidelines (6 feet apart), with an emphasis on individual skills training.**

**As teams begin to assemble through the Player Agreement policy, teams may elect to participate in group physical activity under the following conditions:**

- **All participants (coaches and players) must be registered with USA Hockey.**
- **All participating coaches are required to be current on their SafeSport certification.**
- **All participating players are required to be registered with the team's Association.**

**USA Hockey provides a comprehensive menu of resources for off-ice / dryland training:**

**[Dryland Training – Workout Plans](#)**

**[Age-Specific Training](#)**

**[Off-Ice Stickhandling Skills](#)**



# Phase Two: The Re-Opening

Phase Two of the MAHA's 'Return to the Game' plan will begin with the official announcement of ice rinks being allowed to re-open in Michigan. Please be aware that the re-opening of rinks may begin with high restrictions, in terms of patron capacity and on-ice participation. Progression from Phase Two to Phase Three of this plan will be based on the progression of the allowed maximum capacity per rink, as dictated by the State of Michigan.

## Days 1-30

Upon the official re-opening of rinks in Michigan, the following activities will immediately go into effect:

- Rinks / facilities will be given a grace period of fourteen (14) days for rink preparation.
- Associations will be given a grace period of twenty-one (21) days for administrative considerations (i.e. equipment, uniform orders, etc.)
- Upon completion of these periods, players will be permitted to resume on-ice activity (i.e. open skates, camps / clinics, Sticks & Pucks, cross-ice games, station work, etc.), while adhering to the group gathering guidelines or restrictions dictated by the State of Michigan.

## Team Tryouts

Once local and state governments allow for facilities to re-open and resume on-ice activities, team tryouts will be conducted in the following format:

### **TIER I TRYOUTS - YOUTH & GIRLS 12U - 19U**

Tier I team tryouts may be held no sooner than **30 days** after the initial re-opening of rinks. This is to allow for rink preparation, administrative requirements by associations, and players to return to the ice prior to competing in a tryout process.

### **TIER II TRYOUTS - YOUTH & GIRLS 10U - 19U**

Tier II team tryouts may be held no sooner than **37 days** after the initial re-opening of rinks. This is to allow for rink preparation, administrative requirements by associations, and players to return to the ice prior to competing in a tryout process.

**NOTE:** Once re-opening dates have been confirmed for rinks in Michigan, follow-up communication will be provided by the MAHA to confirm designated team tryout periods.

## Tier III - Evaluations / Draft

Associations may proceed with open registration for Tier III / Recreational hockey. Evaluation skates and team draft processes may take place following the Tier I and Tier II tryout process for the 2020-21 season. Associations should consider developing a COVID-19 Relief Policy for its Tier III hockey participants.



## **Team Practices**

Upon the completion of the tryout process, teams may proceed with on-ice practices while adhering to the capacity restrictions as required by the State of Michigan. It should be noted that limitations in on-ice participation may still exist at this stage. Under these potential circumstances, the MAHA would recommend the following:

- **Coaches should prioritize individual skills and/or station work, emphasizing continued development while adhering to recommended social distancing guidelines.**
- **Coaches are encouraged to develop efficient practice plans, dividing the ice in an effort to keep small groups separate**
  - **USA Hockey will provide further direction on practice formats, based on local government restrictions on group gatherings**
- **Teams may explore opportunities for ‘informal’ inter-association scrimmages with other teams in their association, as allowed by the State.**
- **Coaches are encouraged to use best practices to achieve social distancing as per state, local and arena guidelines.**
  - **Coaches are advised to wear masks during practices and games**
  - **Coaches should keep, distribute and collect practice pucks**
  - **Coaches should bring their own white board to practice. It is recommended that coaches minimize gatherings at the white board. At the end of practice, white boards and markers should be disinfected.**
  - **Coaches should advise players to bring their own water bottles**
- **Coaches are encouraged to educate players / families on best practices pertaining to personal hygiene, social distancing guidelines and common sense practices for staying healthy**
  - **Physical distance**
  - **Wash hands frequently, avoid touching face**
  - **Clean surfaces and equipment between uses**
  - **Staying home when sick or experiencing any symptoms**



# Phase Three: Adaptive Play

As of current day, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) continues to await further direction on our potential return to hockey activity. As we closely monitor the re-opening processes achieved in other states/provinces, we anticipate that our initial return to the rink will be highly restricted in participation. The level of restriction in participation will ultimately determine when we transition from Phase Two to Phase Three of MAHA's 'Return to the Game' plan.

Specifically, Phase Three allows us to return to competitive game play. Since we do not have confirmed information, regarding capacity restrictions on the initial re-opening of rinks, the MAHA must establish its own minimum thresholds of participation required to proceed with competitive game play. Based on these established thresholds, the Programming committee of the MAHA Task Force has outlined several recommended scenarios, which allow for game play to occur.

It should be noted that these scenarios will influence this season's potential roster sizes, ice utilization, and game management. In addition, the details of each recommendation will vary based on age, playing surface, and local government social distancing guidelines. Ultimately, these recommendations are driven by the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic – the goal is to offer quality programming within the parameters of those restrictions.

## Tryout Facilitation

The following outline is a summary of recommendations for facilitating the team tryout process, while remaining conscious of hygienic and social distancing guidelines:

### REGISTRATION

- **Players should pre-register for tryouts online or by phone**
  - Electronic payments recommended – no cash or check exchanges
  - No sign-in tables
- **Pre-determine a player identification system**
  - No distribution of jerseys or pinnies

### ON-ICE GUIDELINES

- **Plan for coach/player ratio in accordance with local government social distancing guidelines**
  - Use dividers and boards as applicable
  - Utilize small-area games and/or station work to maximize player groups
- **Tryout sessions may be staggered based on number of participants allowed on-ice**



## Team Composition

Given the potential group gathering restrictions for facility use, the MAHA Task Force has established a minimum threshold of 25 participants required in order to resume competitive game play.

This theory would allow for team composition of limited numbers (in most cases, 11 players or less), as well as the possibility of practicing and/or playing games with two teams on the ice (25 players or less).

## Competition Structure

In the following pages, the MAHA has recommended several game-play scenarios, based on the parameters for team composition listed above. As previously noted, these scenarios present competitive options based on age, playing surfaces, player development and local government social distancing guidelines.

### SCENARIO #1 – 25 PARTICIPANTS TOTAL ALLOWED IN FACILITY

<b>6U</b>	<b>8U</b>	<b>10U</b>	<b>12U</b>	<b>14U – 18U</b>
<b>3 v 3 Game Play</b>	<b>4 v 4 Game Play</b>	<b>5 v 5 Game Play</b>	<b>5 v 5 Game Play</b>	<b>5 v 5 Game Play</b>
<b>1/6<sup>th</sup> Ice Surface</b>	<b>Cross-Ice Surface</b>	<b>Full Ice Surface</b>	<b>Full Ice Surface</b>	<b>Full Ice Surface</b>
<b>5 players per team (No goalies)</b>	<b>5 players per team (4 players, 1 goalie)</b>	<b>11 players per team (10 players, 1 goalie)</b>	<b>11 players per team (10 players, 1 goalie)</b>	<b>11 players per team (10 players, 1 goalie)</b>
<b>1 Coach per team (serve as referees/game managers)</b>	<b>1 Coach per team (serve as referees/game managers)</b>	<b>1 Coach per team 1 Referee (Running curfew clock)</b>	<b>1 Coach per team 1 Referee (Running curfew clock)</b>	<b>1 Coach per team 1 Referee (Running curfew clock)</b>
<b>Mini nets</b>	<b>Intermediate nets</b>	<b>Regular-size nets</b>	<b>Regular-size nets</b>	<b>Regular-size nets</b>
<b>One-period games 10-12 minutes No warmups</b>	<b>One-period games 10-12 minutes No warmups</b>	<b>50-min ice block 3 periods - 12 mins 3-min warmup</b>	<b>50-min ice block 3 periods - 14 mins 3-min warmup</b>	<b>50-min ice block 3 periods - 15 mins 3-min warmup</b>
<b>4 teams on the ice; two games per ice surface</b>	<b>4 teams on the ice; two games per ice surface</b>	<b>No time between periods (teams switch ends)</b>	<b>No time between periods (teams switch ends)</b>	<b>No time between periods (teams switch ends)</b>
<b>Teams switch opponents after each game</b>	<b>Teams switch opponents after each game</b>	<b>No off-ice officials Penalties served in team bench</b>	<b>No off-ice officials Penalties served in team bench</b>	<b>No off-ice officials Penalties served in team bench</b>
<b>2-3 games per session, depending on scheduled ice</b>	<b>2-3 games per session, depending on scheduled ice</b>	<b>One game per ice session</b>	<b>One game per ice session</b>	<b>One game per ice session</b>
<b>Social distancing on benches</b>	<b>Social distancing on benches</b>	<b>Social distancing on benches</b>	<b>Social distancing on benches</b>	<b>Social distancing on benches</b>



## SCENARIO #2 – 25 PARTICIPANTS TOTAL ALLOWED PER SIDE – SPLIT-SURFACE MODEL

This scenario may only be achieved if the State of Michigan allows a facility to split its ice surface, through use of hard board dividers. This would allow 25 participants per side, more total players on-ice in facility while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

These options allow associations to put more players on the ice during game play, while also reducing ice costs through shared allocation.

6U	8U	10U – 18U
3 v 3 Game Play	4 v 4 Game Play	4 v 4 Game Play
1/6 <sup>th</sup> Ice Surface	Cross-Ice Surface	Half Ice Surface
5 players per team (No goalies)	5 players per team (4 players, 1 goalie)	10 players per team (9 players, 1 goalie)
1 Coach per team (serve as referees/game managers)	1 Coach per team (serve as referees/game managers)	1 Coach per team 1 Referee (Running curfew clock)
Mini nets	Intermediate nets	Regulation nets
One-period games 10-12 minutes No warmups	One-period games 10-12 minutes No warmups	50-min ice block 3 periods – 12 minutes 3-min warmup
8 teams total on-ice; four games being played (two games per side of hard divider)	4 teams on the ice; two games being played (one game per side of hard divider)	4 teams on the ice; two games being played (one game per side of hard divider)
Teams switch opponents after each game	Teams switch opponents after each game	No time between periods (teams switch ends)
2-3 games per session, depending on scheduled ice	2-3 games per session, depending on scheduled ice	1 game per ice session
Social distancing on benches	Social distancing on benches	Social distancing on benches

## SCENARIO #3 – 50 PARTICIPANTS TOTAL ALLOWED IN FACILITY

If the State of Michigan allows for gatherings of 50 people or more in a facility, game structure could return to normal. Participants would still be required to adhere to social distancing guidelines, as dictated by local and state governments. Also, restrictions regarding spectators may still exist.

Also, in this scenario there are some specific conditions that would apply:

- Teams (10U – 18U) that limited their roster size for the 2020-21 season (10 players, 1 goalie) would have the option to combine with another team from their association. This would create a roster of up to 22 players (20 skaters, 2 goalies).
  - When combining rosters, no player can be eliminated from the roster.
  - No more than two (2) coaches.
  - Game play would allow for two (2) on-ice officials.
- **NOTE:** Teams may opt to remain with their original roster, if they choose.



## **RECOMMENDED USA HOCKEY ICE MARKINGS – CROSS-ICE AND HALF-ICE OPTIONS**

Associations that may offer cross-ice and/or half-ice programming options should consider use of the USA Hockey ice markings for the 2020-21 season:

[Recommended USA Hockey Cross-Ice Markings](#)

[Recommended USA Hockey Half-Ice Markings](#)

### **League Play**

Given the gradual re-opening of the State of Michigan, as well as the unforeseeable future of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MAHA recommends that our league partners (i.e. Little Caesars Amateur Hockey League, Adray, etc.) align their divisional play based on the [Michigan Safe Start Plan's MERC map of Michigan](#). This will minimize travel requirements for divisional play, as well as minimize potential disruptions in league play caused by fluctuation in the State's re-opening.

### **Out-of-State Travel / Tournaments**

The MAHA recommends that all teams attempt to minimize their out-of-state travel during the 2020-21 season. Those teams who are traveling outside of Michigan are advised to adhere to local and state government guidelines, as well as CDC regulations, as part of their planning process.

### **Adult Hockey**

The MAHA recommends that Adult Hockey be allowed to resume play, as soon as local rinks are able to accommodate it. Many leagues, which are operated and contained locally in arenas, were disrupted by the emergence of COVID-19. Adult League representatives are encouraged to contact their local rinks, regarding a potential return to play, once rinks have been permitted to re-open in Michigan. Adults will be expected to follow local government social distancing guidelines. Based on capacity restrictions, reduced rosters may be necessary.



# Phase Four: Unrestricted Play

The MAHA is optimistic that our hockey community will eventually advance to Phase Four: Unrestricted Play. At this stage, hockey programming in Michigan would return to its full capacity without restrictions or limitations on participation or spectators.

Although Phase Four has been identified as the next stage in the sequence, the MAHA acknowledges that there may be additional 'phases' required before we achieve unrestricted status. Likewise, based on the progression of COVID-19, we must anticipate that potential fluctuations in progress may occur during the 2020-21 season. While this may prove to be the most difficult phase to achieve, we are confident that the collaborative efforts of our hockey community will bring us closer to this goal.

## Additional Links & Information

The Michigan Amateur Hockey Association's 'Return to the Game' was assembled with valuable information from numerous contributors. In addition to the members of our hockey community, who volunteered their time to participate in the MAHA Task Force, we have relied on the contributions of many outside resources for news, updates, and guidance on planning the 2020-21 season.

For more information, we encourage you to visit the following sites:

### **LOCAL RESOURCES – COVID-19**

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[State of Michigan – COVID-19 Updates](#)

[Michigan Department of Health & Human Services](#)

### **ICE HOCKEY – NEWS AND UPDATES**

[USA Hockey](#)

[Michigan Amateur Hockey Association](#)

### **CORONAVIRUS & YOUTH SPORTS**

[The Aspen Institute's Project Play](#)

