

Manitoba Soccer Association Inc.

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Dear Manitoba Soccer Community,

The Manitoba Soccer Association announced on April 21st that starting immediately, no spectators are permitted at any youth (U9-U18) or senior (U18+) practice, training session, exhibition, or league game. We are providing you with a list of Frequently Asked Questions to help you through the announcement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why are spectators not permitted?

The Provincial Health Orders state: “All persons are prohibited from assembling in a gathering of more than 10 persons at an outdoor place.”

Furthermore, gathering is defined as “a grouping of persons in general proximity to each other who have assembled for a common purpose or reason.”

A soccer practice, training session, exhibition, or league game would be a common purpose or reason for gathering as it is an organized event.

2. Why not allow 10 persons to gather? Or multiple groups of 10 distanced from each other?

With 22 players on a field (11 v 11) it would be impossible to determine which 10 spectators from those 22 players would be allowed to gather, and which would not.

It is also impossible to monitor and ensure that only 10 spectators are gathering in a group, and that they are properly following physical distancing. An indoor facility has staff on site, with one entrance and one exit and the ability to collect contact tracing information from those entering, an open outdoor soccer field does not.

Many soccer complexes also have multiple fields, with multiple games going on at the same time which further increases the gathering numbers.

3. Why can multiple players, coaches and referees gather on field, but I cannot watch from the sideline?

The Provincial Health Orders state that “Persons must not engage in outdoor sporting activities as part of a group of more than 10 persons, unless all persons in the group are participating in an organized practice, game or competition at an outdoor sporting facility.”

In addition, contact tracing for the participants through the game sheets does not put additional strain on resources as players, coaches, and referees must be on the game sheet as per procedure.

4. Why can I gather at a mall, grocery store or park with more than 10 persons but not at a sporting event?

The Provincial Health Orders have different restrictions in place for different sectors such as retail businesses. Showing up to a park for a walk is not an organized event, and such would not be a “common purpose or reason.” An organized sporting event, like a soccer practice, training session, exhibition or league game would be a gathering where persons would assemble for a “common purpose or reason.”

5. Why can mini players (U3-U8) have one parent remain with them?

Parents are always encouraged to be involved on field in the Active Start and FUNdamentals stages of soccer with their child to create a more welcoming and enjoyable environment. The parent will only be in contact with their own child, who they would already be a close contact with. Parents at these ages must be actively engaged in the session and are not permitted to gather in groups on the sidelines. Designated coaches and designated small-sided games as per a usual training session will still take place.

Active Start – U4/U5 & U6	FUNdamentals – U7 & U8
<p>1 Player + 1 Parent/Guardian/Sibling</p> <p>Children at this age may struggle to maintain physical distancing and complete technical based activities. We cannot expect young children to be responsible for maintaining physical distancing.</p> <p>Using a parent or sibling will aid the coaches to deliver different activities as the child will have a parent/guardian/sibling to help manage them and some of the logistics to ensure physical distancing is maintained. Physical distancing does not need to be maintained by people from the same household. This will help create opportunities to plan activities that include a partner or opposition.</p>	<p>1 Player + 1 Parent/Guardian/Sibling</p> <p>Children at this age often need interaction with someone to remain engaged and complete technical based activities. We cannot expect young children to be responsible for maintaining physical distancing.</p> <p>Players may not have yet developed focus to find isolated practices with a ball enjoyable. Therefore, utilizing a parent/guardian/sibling to partake in the practice will provide a more fulfilling experience as it will increase the number of different activities the athlete can experience as physical distancing does not need to be maintained by people from the same household. This will help create opportunities to plan activities that include a partner or opposition.</p>

6. How does the MSA have the authority to ban gatherings on public property?

The Manitoba Soccer Association provides guidelines and recommendations for the sport of soccer in our province, which are done in collaboration with Sport Manitoba and the provincial health authorities. These guidelines and recommendations are put in place to keep our participants safe and to allow participants to continue to play, which is the number one priority.

Member Organizations take out permits for different facilities and rent facilities at which time they can set the parameters for the activities in those locations and must follow the policies, rules and regulations, and By-Laws of the MSA.

7. Will no spectators be in effect for the entirety of the outdoor season?

The Manitoba Soccer Association reviews our Return to Play protocols as new Public Health Orders are released from the provincial health authorities. The current restrictions are in effect until May 12th, 2021, at which time the new restrictions will once again be reviewed with our Return to Play.

It is our hope that the pandemic situation improves and that the health orders increase the number of persons allowed at gatherings so that we may consider the return of spectators to games.

8. Where do I wait for my child if I cannot watch from the sidelines? What if there is an emergency?

The Manitoba Soccer Association recommends that parents stay on site in their vehicles in case of emergency. It is extremely important that there is no gathering of groups in the parking lot. Coaches and Referees are on field with the players and can tend to an emergency immediately if one occurs.

9. How can coaches be left unsupervised with children?

All youth soccer organizations in Manitoba, as part of the Club Licensing Program, have Safe Sport protocols in place for coaches such as the Rule of Two, and all team officials requiring to have a cleared Criminal Record Check. Information on the Rule of Two can be found here: https://canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CanadaSoccer_RuleOfTwo_EN.pdf. The work done by your Organization to become a Quality Soccer Provider and follow the Safe Sport protocols is one of the ways to show you that your child will be in a safe space while playing soccer. Parents are also encouraged to stay on site in their vehicles.

10. Who did the MSA consult in making this decision?

The Manitoba Soccer Association is in constant communication with Sport Manitoba and the provincial health authorities. In addition, we also consult with Member Organizations as much as possible. Everyone involved in the discussions supports the decisions made.

11. Why is soccer making this decision when other sports may not be?

The Manitoba Soccer Association cannot speak for other sports organizations, but we can confirm that the direction from the provincial health authorities to all sports has been to not have spectators as they add additional interactions that drive up potential exposures and to be stricter than the general orders as if case numbers continue to rise sports could be shut down. Other outdoor sports in Manitoba have made the same decision on no spectators, as has soccer in other provinces.

We must prioritize the ability for children to participate over our desire to be present.

12. How will the MSA police no spectators allowed at the games?

The referee of the match will not start or continue the game if there are spectators in attendance. The referee will ask for the assistance of the coaches to ensure spectators leave the area. If the spectators refuse, the referee will abandon the match and provide a report to the league. As per the MSA rules and regulations, spectators are the responsibility of the teams and not the referee. We encourage parents to take this into account and avoid having games abandoned.

13. Are masks required for participants outdoors (players, coaches, referees)?

Masks are not mandatory for the participants outdoors. However, at the recommendations of the provincial health authorities, we suggest persons in the technical areas should consider wearing a mask.