



RETURN TO TRAINING

AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

Prepared for AFL Victoria Affiliated Community
Football Leagues & Clubs
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RETURN TO PLAY TRAINING AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

BACKGROUND:

Returning to training and games in a safe, hygienic and controlled manner is paramount to the AFL. The safety and wellbeing of our participants is our number one priority.

In advance of any training and games recommencing we encourage Leagues, Clubs, umpires, officials and volunteers to digest these protocols, go through an education period and formulate an education and implementation plan to return to training and games safely.

We will continue to work with the Victorian State Government to ensure alignment with their advice. Our primary focus is preparing to return to training and games in a safe environment in a well-prepared and educated manner. In order for a return to training and games to be successful, and in line with Victorian State Government advice, it is essential that Clubs and individuals work within the protocols and do not move ahead of the restrictions in place.

AFL Victoria will continue to follow any direction from the Victorian State Government and align with the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport, so that any resumption of community football activity in Victoria does not compromise the health of individuals or the community.

This document relates specifically to senior and junior community football in Victoria.

If these protocols cannot be achieved, training and competitions should not proceed.

AFL Victoria strongly recommends those attending training and games download the COVIDsafe app.



RETURN TO PLAY TRAINING AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

JUNIORS (PEOPLE AGED 18 YEARS OR UNDER)

Training and games (contact and non-contact) can resume for people aged 18 years or under, provided:

1. All participants in a group are aged 18 years or under
2. It is conducted outdoors
3. No more than the minimum number of participants required to conduct the training or game participate in the activity (e.g. players, necessary coaches, umpires and those required for supervision of young children or to support people with a disability)
4. Spectators follow relevant gathering rules
5. The use of the indoor facilities, other than change rooms and toilet facilities, is not permitted

Participants aged 18 years or under may only participate in training that involve at least one participant aged 19 years or over provided:

1. It is conducted outdoors
2. It is non-contact (i.e. no tackling, no bumping, no marking contests)
3. Social distancing of 1.5m can always be maintained
4. No more than the minimum number of participants required to conduct the training participate in the activity
5. The use of the indoor facilities, other than change rooms and toilet facilities, is not permitted
6. Club rooms and indoor sitting areas remain closed

SENIORS (PEOPLE AGED 19 YEARS OR OVER)

Participants aged 19 years or over may only participate in training provided:

1. It is conducted outdoors
2. It is non-contact (i.e. no tackling, no bumping, no marking contests)
3. Social distancing of 1.5m can always be maintained
4. No more than the minimum number of participants required to conduct the training participate in the activity
5. The use of the indoor facilities, other than change rooms and toilet facilities, is not permitted
6. Club rooms and indoor sitting areas remain closed

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS MUST BE MET BY ALL AFL VICTORIA AFFILIATED COMMUNITY CLUBS

Training and games (contact and non-contact) can resume for people aged 18 years or under, provided:

1. Clubs/teams and umpiring groups/associations must strictly adhere to the current Victorian State Government restrictions.
2. Face coverings must be worn by all Victorians when they leave home unless they have a lawful exception.
3. If you are doing exercise or a physical activity where you are out of breath or puffing, such running, you do not need to wear a face mask. You must wear a face mask before and after you exercise.
4. Coaches and other necessary support staff must wear a face mask.
5. Spectators must wear a face mask.
6. Each Club must nominate at least one COVID Safety Officer who must undertake the free Australian Government online COVID-19 Infection Control Training <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training> prior to recommencement of Club activity. Certificate of completion needs to be emailed to your League Administrator prior to the commencement of activity. Clubs are encouraged to have multiple people take ownership of this role and share the responsibility. In addition, we strongly recommend the COVID Safety Officer completes the AFL's COVID Protocols Course to assist with interpreting the protocols involved in Returning to Community Football in a COVID-19 environment.
7. A log, or register, using the approved AFL Victoria template, League template, or an online app or similar, which clearly identifies all participants and officials in attendance at each training session must be maintained and available upon request by the League, AFL Victoria or health authorities.
8. Sporting clubs that operate a restaurant, café or canteen within its facility should adhere to the restrictions on hospitality venues. Detailed guidelines of the requirements for cafes, restaurants and food and drink facilities to reopen are available on the Business Victoria website.
9. Communal facilities, such as showers, changing rooms and toilets, can open provided participants abide by the Victorian State Government guidelines to limit close contact between individuals, relevant density quotients are met (i.e. four square metre rule) and no more than 20 people per indoor space they must also adhere to cleaning requirements.
10. Signage must be displayed at the entry to each indoor space outlining the maximum number of people allowed at a single time.

SPECTATORS

- Any attendance at community football training by spectators must be strictly compliant with Victorian State Government directions and restrictions including wearing face masks
- Only spectators necessary to support participation should attend training and games and must abide by current group gathering restrictions
- Gathering limits will not apply to participants and those reasonably necessary to conduct the training or competition (e.g. players, necessary coaches, umpires and those required for supervision of young children or to support people with a disability)
- Spectators are allowed if they are supervising children or if needed as support persons for persons with additional needs
- Spectators must keep at least 1.5 metres from others while supervising children
- Where venues allow for vehicle access surrounding the oval, spectators are encouraged to remain in their vehicle (subject to Victorian State Government advice regarding risk for spectators viewing from vehicles, e.g. cohabiting family/household members only)
- Where Reinforcement of social distancing requirements should be displayed prominently by posters or newsletters at all venues and policed by Club officials and Police as required
- Reinforcement of 'good health' requirements would be conveyed by posters at all participating sports venues and through a social media campaign
- It is the participating Clubs' responsibility to monitor crowd social distancing and if required they can liaise with Police to enforce social distancing protocols
- Any non-compliance to the Victorian State Government's direction and restrictions should be reported to Victoria Police

HYGIENE PROTOCOLS FOR RETURN TO TRAINING AND GAMES

The following general hygiene practices for participants and official always apply, in line with Victorian State Government advice.

ILLNESS

- If you, or people you have been in contact with are sick, do not attend training or games and advise your football coach who is responsible for informing the COVID Safety Officer
- Generally, you should be tested for COVID-19 if you develop fever or respiratory symptoms
- Stay home and seek medical treatment when you are sick
- Do not attend training or games if unwell
- People who present to training or games with symptoms should be isolated, sent home immediately and recommended to seek medical assistance
- Any person wishing to attend training or games that has underlying health conditions or is considered a vulnerable person should consult with a healthcare professional prior to attending
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick

POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES

- Localised outbreaks may require clubs to restrict activity and clubs must be ready to respond accordingly. The detection of a positive COVID-19 case in a club will result in a standard public health response, which could include quarantine of a whole team or large group, and close contacts, for the required period.
- Facilities may be closed on the instruction of the local Public Health Authority or the Chief Health Officer. Re-opening of the training facility should only occur after close consultation with the local Public Health Authority.
- It is not possible to provide certainty around the impact on competitions of a positive COVID-19 case as the Public Health Authority will review each case.
- Where there is a positive COVID-19 case, the player or official must notify their Club immediately. The Club must notify their League who will notify AFL Victoria and the Public Health Authority. The Club and League must then follow the advice of the Public Health Authority or Chief Health Officer who will determine requirement for quarantining individuals, groups or teams (and their close contacts) and whether the training facility can be used.

HYGIENE

- Alcohol-based hand sanitisers must be available for all team training sessions and on the interchange bench, with players encouraged to use prior, during and following training/games
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Wash or sanitise your hands before eating
- No high fives or handshakes, and other physical contact
- Do not share drink bottles, helmets or equipment that touches your face or head
- Cover your mouth to cough or sneeze (using your elbow)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Spitting and clearing of nasal/respiratory secretions is not permitted
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect facilities before use (prior to player arrival)
- Clubs must ensure that frequently touched surfaces and objects are cleaned regularly when in use (e.g. tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles) using a regular household detergent and water. In some instances, change rooms may need to be cleaned more regularly and clubs should be monitoring or adjusting cleaning arrangements as required
- Avoid removing mouthguards other than when necessary and take care when removed that no contact is made with another person
- Disinfect mouth guards after each session and ensure they are appropriately stored
- Minimise use of communal facilities (toilet or medical use only with strict social distancing)
- Showers at home where possible
- Hygiene posters displayed (templates available on [Toyota AFL Club Help](#) website)

FIRST AID PERSONNEL/TRAINERS

- All club/team First Aid Personnel/Trainer should complete the Australian Government COVID-19 infection control training available online via <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>
- Medical officials must follow protocols as outlined in infection control training (i.e. disposal of gloves in between treatments, wearing of face masks)
- If you are using shared equipment it should be cleaned and sterilised after you use it

EQUIPMENT

- Strictly no sharing of personal items such as water bottles, food or towels
- Personal items need to be easily distinguishable, labelled and kept separate
- Use your own equipment where possible and minimise sharing of equipment
- Shared equipment, including Club provided footballs, must be wiped with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser prior to and after training and games (do not immerse footballs in water)
- All playing kit and equipment to be cleaned and disinfected between training sessions and games
- Sports medicine staff who share medical equipment must sterilise them between uses, which includes disposable cover/sheet to be used for player massage tables
- Treatment equipment to be wiped down and sanitised before and after each use
- No sharing of food (e.g. lollies, fruit bowls)
- Where modified rules are played, swapping of wristbands is prohibited (players must have their own wristband)
- No sharing of officials' bibs or training bibs
- No sharing of headsets or computer screens/ipads
- Match football will be wiped with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser at each break in the match
- Entry and exit points to the playing surface (e.g. gates) should be cleaned between training sessions and matches

CLEANING

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that frequently touched surfaces accessible to members of the public, including tables, bars, toilets and handrails, are cleaned regularly including when visibly soiled and post events or between groups by wiping the surface with a disinfectant that has anti-viral properties
- Cleaning principles can be found via the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#) which should help as a reference point what cleaning guidelines are recommended

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE TRAINING AND GAMES

- Staggered training and game schedules must be adopted where multiple teams are using the same ground/facilities (e.g. start times, different days, potential of different locations, time between games)
- Clearly defined pick-up/drop-off zones and separating assembly areas for participants
- Only players and officials are allowed on the ground during matches, including breaks, and at training
- No spectators on grounds during breaks or after the match
- Use adequately spaced markers on the floor in toilets to promote physical distancing
- Ensure toilets are in working condition with soap provided and increase cleaning as appropriate
- Specific to Junior Football, parents and/or care givers should limit their person-to-person contact on site when taking their child/children to training or games
- Parents and/or care givers should prepare their child/children for training in accordance with the above principles
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to limit drop-off/pick-up to only one parent/guardian and other dependents as required and necessary. For those staying at venues, social distancing and gathering regulations must be adhered to.
- Only key roles access rooms and bench (e.g. coach, runner, medical support)
- Minimise use of change rooms, bathrooms and communal areas (i.e. toilet, medical only)
- Limit access to change rooms only for players and essential staff only as required (i.e. coach, team manager, trainers – no parents or spectators) with relevant density quotients met (i.e. four square metre rule) and no more than 20 people only are allowed per indoor space
- Where possible, shower at home instead of at training venues
- Between training efforts, maintain at least 1.5m apart
- Any tasks that can be done at home should be done at home (e.g. recovery sessions, online meetings)
- Meetings are preferably conducted outdoors subject to weather
- Where possible any necessary meetings to occur remotely using video technology
- Limit the coming together in tight huddles during training and quarter breaks
- Any necessary meetings to occur remotely using video technology, or in venues where social distancing can be practiced
- Match fixtures and schedules will need to reflect any time between matches to meet any necessary cleaning requirements, as well as limiting the crossover of large groups
- Avoid social gatherings and mingling after training and games
- Use of equipment to be limited to footballs and marking cones
- If pair/group work is required, pairs must be consistent across each training session
- Specific group activity footballs can be used but must be wiped down after each session
- Parents or caregivers for junior participants must remain outside the boundary line and observe social distancing and we strongly recommend junior players have a maximum of 1 parent/caregiver present at training

COVID SAFETY OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring all players, coaches, officials, etc. are aware of the Return to Play Protocols
- Ensuring a club's adherence to these protocols and taking immediate steps to correct any identified breaches of the protocols
- Developing processes or initiatives that will aid a club's adherence to the Return to Play Protocols
- Implementing and maintaining training logs/registers
- Keeping up to date with any changes to the protocols implemented by AFL Victoria and communicating these to all within the club
- Contact point for any questions from club members (e.g. players, coaches, officials, spectators, etc.) relating to the Return to Play Protocols
- We encourage Clubs to have multiple people to take ownership of this role and share the responsibility

EDUCATION PROTOCOLS - REQUIREMENTS

- AFL Victoria strongly recommends community clubs implement a minimum one-week preparation and education phase to ensure clubs undertake the necessary preparations prior to small outdoor group training
- Each club must nominate at least one COVID Safety Officer and as a minimum this person must undertake the free Australian Government online [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) prior to recommencement of Club activity. In addition, we strongly recommend the COVID Safety Officer completes the [AFL's COVID Protocols Course](#) to assist with interpreting the protocols involved for Returning to Community Football in a COVID-19 environment
- It is recommended other club officials also undertake this training. Certificate of completion needs to be emailed to your League Administrator prior to the recommencement of activity
- Where possible, we encourage Clubs to have multiple people to take ownership of this role and share the responsibility
- All players and club officials are strongly encouraged to download the Government's COVID-19 tracing app.
- Protocol briefings (as outlined below) must be held in advance of return to small outdoor group training for players, coaches and officials
- The Australian Football community must lead and promote a strong culture of COVID-19 safety for the health and wellbeing of participants and the broader community

PARTICIPANT BRIEFING

Prior to the recommencement of any activity, clubs to provide a briefing to all participants, coaches, volunteers, parents that includes:

- Intended training dates, times and procedures established to limit team cross-over on ovals.
- Hygiene practices that have been implemented by the club, including hygiene procedures around the venue and equipment.
- Hygiene expectations of all participants.
- What to do if you are feeling unwell or have been into contact with people who are sick.
- Opt-out options for individuals who may not yet feel comfortable returning to small group training, and alternative training options available.
- Measures that the coaches are taking to limit physical contact of players (e.g. social distancing guidelines, no physical contact drills at training, etc.).
- Restrictions on the number of support staff (i.e. assistant coaches, trainers, etc.).
- Restrictions in place on club rooms, changerooms, club gyms, etc.
- Restrictions on people attending the training venue (i.e. no spectators).
- Highlight it is the choice of participants to train, noting that even with adherence to protocols there is some increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 (compared to staying at home), which for some people if contracted, has serious health consequences.

COACHES BRIEFING

Clubs should also brief all coaches on the required expectations as leaders within the club environment, including:

- Importance of the required hygiene protocols and practices.
- No crossover of teams.
- Limiting training drills to be non-contact. Acceptable skills and drills.
- Requirement for players to 'get in, train, get out'
- Responsibility as leaders to influence behaviour change.

ALL FOOTBALL CLUBS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN:

- Reducing the spread of COVID-19
- Promoting good hygiene practices amongst participants
- Adhering to and promoting the State Government requirements around social distancing and gatherings
- Promoting staying close to home to align with DHHS Victoria guidance
- Following the clear protocols and requirements around returning to small outdoor group training.

It is important that clubs are respectful in adhering to the protocols outlined as part of Return to Training and Games protocols, as they form part of the current Government directions, and sanctions can be applied to individuals and to clubs if they are in breach. By every club and individual playing their part in adhering to the protocols it will mean that football would have played its part in the community through a commitment to community health outcomes, but will also improve the opportunity for football to return to play sooner.

This guide has been established to support the return to training and games under the current Victorian Government COVID-19 restrictions. Community clubs and teams have an obligation to strictly adhere to these protocols. The key principle for training must be **'Get in, Participate, Get out'**.

CURRENT RESTRICTIONS

The Club has read and understands the relevant restrictions and protocols relevant to their Club (i.e. metropolitan Melbourne Junior, metropolitan Melbourne Senior, Regional Victoria Junior or Regional Victoria Senior).

SPECTATORS

Only spectators necessary to support participation should attend training and competitions and must abide by current group gathering restrictions.

1.5M SOCIAL DISTANCING

The club has advised its participants, coaches, volunteers and parents that all training must strictly observe social distancing requirements of 1.5m.

FOOTBALLS ALLOWED, BUT NO OTHER EQUIPMENT

The club is aware that footballs can be used for small outdoor group training, however only limited additional equipment is permitted (i.e. field marking cones are permitted).

CLUBS & TEAMS UNDERSTAND THE RETURN TO TRAINING AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

The club and all teams have read, understood, and agree to adhere to the Return to Training and Games Protocols provided by AFL Victoria.

HYGIENE PROTOCOLS ARE IN PLACE

The club has implemented the hygiene protocols as outlined in the Return to Training and Games Protocols document.

AT LEAST ONE COVID SAFETY OFFICER

Nominated Club official(s) has undertaken the Australian Government online [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) and submitted a certificate of completion to their League Administrator contact prior to recommencement of Club activity.

A REGISTER OF PARTICIPANTS

A log, or register, using the approved AFL Victoria template, League template, or an online app or similar, which clearly identifies all participants in attendance at each training session **MUST** be maintained and available upon request by the League, AFL Victoria or health authorities.

COVIDSAFE APP

The club has encouraged all players, volunteers and families to download the COVIDSafe App to help in tracing the spread of COVID-19.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROVAL

The club has received approval from the Local Government to access the oval for small outdoor group training.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

The club and training groups understand that they must always follow the direction and advice of local and state authorities. People who present to training with symptoms to be sent home immediately.

CLUB DEFIBRILLATOR ACCESS

Clubs with a defibrillator has arranged access to their defibrillator for when required, the defibrillator has been tested and is in working order.