



RETURN TO TRAINING

AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

Prepared for AFL Victoria Affiliated Community
Football Leagues & Clubs
as at June 18, 2021



RETURN TO 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.

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 games and training must be 'Get in, Participate, Get out'.

METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE JUNIORS & SENIORS

Training and games (contact and non-contact) can resume for juniors and seniors, provided:

1. It is conducted outdoors
2. A density quotient of 1 per 4 square metres for outdoor and indoor setting applies
3. Change rooms are permitted to be open however the total number of people permitted in all indoor spaces at the facility combined at any time does not exceed the indoor venue cap of 50 (with infants under one year of age not counting towards this limit)
4. Does not exceed the outdoor venue cap of 1000 (please note; the venue cap is only for participants and those required to facilitate the activity only. General spectators are not permitted).
5. No more than the minimum number of participants required to conduct the training or games participate in the activity.
6. People necessary for events and participation, including those who need to accompany children, such as parents, guardians, and carers, as well as teachers, instructors, trainers, coaches, and umpires, can attend matches and training
7. Spectators are only permitted for the purposes of supervising children or dependents and should not gather in groups of more than 20
8. **General spectators are not permitted**
9. **Get in and Get out** approach to playing and training
10. Canteens/kiosks are permitted to be open and must abide by density quotients and total number of people permitted in an indoor space
11. Face masks are recommended to be worn outdoors by all Victorians where social distancing cannot be achieved.
12. Face masks must be worn by all Victorians over the age of 12 when indoors unless they have a lawful exception.
13. 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.

REGIONAL VICTORIA JUNIORS & SENIORS

Training and games (contact and non-contact) can resume for juniors and seniors, provided:

1. It is conducted outdoors
2. A density quotient of 1 per 4 square metres for outdoor and indoor setting applies
3. A patron cap of 1000 people applies to community outdoor sport. This cap includes participants, coaches, volunteers, officials, and spectators
4. The number of people in each indoor space at the facility at any one time is limited to 300 (with infants under one year old not counting towards this limit)
5. The number of members of the public in each seated outdoor space is limited to 75 per cent of the maximum seated capacity for that space
6. Canteens/kiosks are permitted to be open and must abide by density quotients and total number of people permitted in an indoor space
7. Face masks are recommended to be worn outdoors by all Victorians where social distancing cannot be achieved.
8. Face masks must be worn by all Victorians over the age of 12 when indoors unless they have a lawful exception.
9. 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.

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS MUST BE MET BY ALL AFL VICTORIA AFFILIATED COMMUNITY CLUBS WHILST TRAINING AND PLAYING IN THE STATE OF VICTORIA

1. Clubs/teams and umpiring groups/associations must strictly adhere to the current Victorian State Government restrictions.
2. All clubs must have a COVIDSafe Plan (A template can be found on AFL Victoria's website)
3. Clubs utilising venues with a capacity of over 500 people must publish their COVIDSafe Plan on their website.
4. 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.
5. QR Codes are mandatory and need to be used for all in attendance at the relevant venues. All venues must use the free Victorian Government QR Service for record keeping <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/register-to-use-vic-gov-qr-code-service>
6. Signs must be displayed through the venue including at entrances to the ground and change rooms
7. A log, or register, using the approved AFL Victoria template, League template should be available for those without access to mobile phones which clearly identifies all participants and officials in attendance at each training/playing 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. 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, games and programs by spectators must be strictly compliant with Victorian State Government directions and restrictions and follow all requirements for contact tracing procedures including scanning QR codes.
- Where allowed, only parents and caregivers necessary to support participation should attend training and games and must abide by current group gathering restrictions
- Spectators must keep at least 1.5 metres from others
- 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 should 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 may 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.
- 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
- Do not share drink bottles, helmets or equipment that touches your face or head
- Cover your mouth to cough or sneeze (using your elbow)
- 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)
- Shower at home
- 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, or towels
- Personal items need to be easily distinguishable, labelled and kept separate
- 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
- Where modified rules are played, swapping of wristbands is prohibited (players must have their own wristband)
- Where possible, no sharing of officials' bibs or training bibs without sanitisation.
- Match football will be wiped with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser at each break in the match

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 where possible should be adopted where multiple teams are using the same ground/facilities (e.g. start times, different days, potential of different locations, time between games)
- Where possible, clearly define pick-up/drop-off zones and separate assembly areas for participants
- Use adequately spaced markers as required promote physical distancing
- No spectators on grounds during breaks or after the match
- Only players and officials are allowed on the ground during matches, including breaks, and at training
- Sanitisation products to be made available to all patrons
- 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.
- Parents and/or care givers should prepare their child/children for training in accordance with the above principles
- Social distancing and gathering regulations must be adhered to on and off the field.
- Only key roles access rooms and bench (e.g. coach, runner, medical support)

- Match fixtures and schedules where possible, will need to reflect any time between matches to meet any necessary cleaning requirements, as well as limiting the crossover of large groups
- 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)
- Avoid social gatherings and mingling after training and games

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 returning to training, games and programs
- 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
- 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 training and matches 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 training, and alternative training options available.
- Restrictions on the number of support staff (i.e. assistant coaches, trainers, etc.).
- Restrictions in place on club rooms, changerooms, club gyms, etc.
- 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.
- Limit crossover of teams.
- Responsibility as leaders to influence behaviour change.



RETURN TO TRAINING AND GAMES PROTOCOLS

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

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.



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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 AND EQUIPMENT ALLOWED

The club is aware that footballs and equipment can be used but must be cleaned between groups.

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.

CLUBS HAVE DEVELOPED A COVIDSAFE PLAN

The club has developed a COVIDSafe Plan and have communicated the plan throughout the club. Clubs utilising venues with a capacity of over 500 people must publish their COVIDSafe Plan on their website.

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

All venues must use the free Victorian Government QR Service
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/register-to-use-vic-gov-qr-code-service>

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 training and games.

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.