



RETURN TO TRAINING

PROTOCOLS

**Prepared for AFL Victoria Affiliated Community
Football Leagues & Clubs
as at September 10, 2021**



RETURN TO TRAINING PROTOCOLS

BACKGROUND:

Returning to training 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 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 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 in a safe environment in a well-prepared and educated manner. In order for a return to training 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 download the COVIDsafe app.



RETURN TO TRAINING PROTOCOLS

This guide has been established to support the return to training 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 AND GREATER SHEPPARTON

In line with the current Victorian State Government advice, training and games cannot occur in metropolitan Melbourne and Greater Shepparton for juniors or seniors.

REGIONAL VICTORIA (EXCEPT FOR GREATER SHEPPARTON)

1. It is conducted outdoors
2. Matches and competition does not take place including practice matches
3. Is conducted in Regional Victoria (except for Greater Shepparton)
4. It does not involve a participant who ordinarily resides in Metropolitan Melbourne and Greater Shepparton
5. A density quotient of 1 per 4 square metres for outdoor and indoor setting applies
6. No more than the minimum number of people required to conduct the training participate in the activity
7. People to conduct the training include those who need to accompany children, such as parents, guardians and carers, as well as teachers, instructors, trainers, coaches, can attend training
8. One parent or guardian is permitted for the purposes of supervising children or dependents and should not gather in groups of more than 10
9. General spectators are not permitted
10. The use of the indoor facilities, other toilet facilities, is not permitted
11. Club rooms and indoor sitting areas remain closed
12. A COVID Check-in Marshal is present at all entrances to the facility open to members of the public whenever the facility is operational
13. Canteens/kiosks are not permitted to be open
14. Face masks must be worn by all Victorians over the age of 12 indoors and outdoors unless they have a lawful exception
15. 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.

COVID CHECK-IN MARSHAL

1. COVID Check-in Marshal means an employee, or employees or volunteers at a facility who monitors compliance with the record keeping requirement at all entrances to the facility open to members of the public by checking whether patrons have provided their details prior to entry
2. **The Victorian Government is requiring clubs who operate out of outdoor physical recreation facilities to confirm a person is not a resident of Metropolitan Melbourne or Greater Shepparton**

QR CODES

1. QR Codes are mandatory and need to be used for all in attendance at the relevant venues
2. 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>
3. Check-in signs must be displayed through the venue including at all entrances to the ground, pavilions, and change rooms.



RETURN TO TRAINING PROTOCOLS

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. Face masks must be worn by all Victorians when indoors and outdoors 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. All clubs must have a COVIDSafe Plan (A template can be found on AFL Victoria's website)
5. Clubs utilising venues with a capacity of over 500 people must publish their COVIDSafe Plan on their website
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.
7. Signage must be displayed at the entry to each indoor space outlining the maximum number of people allowed at a single time

BORDER COMMUNITIES

- For any border communities please refer to the relevant State government regulations and guidelines applicable for these areas.
- Please see the relevant link for further information in relation to cross border communities' regulations and guidelines. <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/information-cross-border-communities>

SPECTATORS

- Spectators are not permitted.
- Any attendance at community football training, 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.
- Only one parent and caregivers necessary to support participation should attend training and must abide by current group gathering restrictions
- 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

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
- 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 (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

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO MANAGE TRAINING

- Staggered training 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
- 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)
- 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

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 commencement 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 commencement 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 commencement 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.

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 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.

SPECTATORS

One parent or guardian is permitted for the purposes of supervising children or dependents. General Spectators are not permitted.

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 PROTOCOLS

The club and all teams have read, understood, and agree to adhere to the Return to Training 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 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.

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.