

Letter to Utah's Governor Herbert

Governor Herbert and State of Utah Leaders,

We appreciate your efforts in dealing with the current Covid-19 virus and protecting the citizens of Utah while at the same time looking at ways to help Utah "return to normal." We understand how complex this is and share the concerns for the safety of the citizens, particularly the youth, of Utah. We, as the Utah Youth Soccer Association (UYSA), are looking for ways to assist the State in a cooperative manner to get the youth in Utah back to normal. Consistent with the letter to you from Utah's youth baseball programs, we concur with their arguments in support of moving youth athletics, including youth soccer managed by the UYSA, forward into Phase Two of Utah's Economic Response plan.

UYSA, as the largest youth sports organization in Utah, with over 53,000 competitive and recreational children playing soccer in the State of Utah, agrees with baseball's sentiment that sports, including soccer, are vital as physical and mental outlets for our youth. A safe and reasonable return to playing soccer would provide some normalcy, activity and socialization desperately needed by the youth, especially in light of the recent decisions not to reopen schools this year.

Working with our 57 member organizations (clubs) and through cooperation from the State, we believe we can restart soccer in a manner consistent with the guidance of the State and medical professionals.

For example, UYSA would propose that the clubs be allowed to start practices in small groups and the requirement that the practices take place outdoors. Also, the game of soccer naturally supports social distancing during play, for both players and spectators (when spectators are allowed to attend events).

The following is a list of guidelines that UYSA is considering in an effort to open a dialogue on this subject with the State and other sports organizations. We are open to additional suggestions or requirements deemed necessary.

- Phased Return to Play Approach:
 - Phase I: May- Return to practices, limited to 10-15 players, no scrimmages permitted, limited non-essential contact and families must stay in vehicles.
 - Phase II: June- Return to game matches with limited non-essential contact (no handshakes/fist bumps) and limited spectators
 - Phase III: July- Return to tournaments and larger competitive events, continue to limit spectators
- Healthy participants only: Any players, coaches, spectators or referees who are sick will not be allowed at games or practices. All state COVID-19 guidelines apply.
- Required hand washing: Players required to wash hands or use sanitizer before, at half-time and after the game. Team managers to provide adequate hand sanitizer for every player.

Additionally, the restart of youth soccer will boost the economy in the State significantly. Not only will it put over 1,500 referees back to work, but returning to play for youth soccer would help the 57 member organizations in the State. These member organizations operate as non profit entities and who, taking into consideration the current plan are at great risk of closing their doors and facing bankruptcy effecting the livelihood of hundreds of families should youth soccer take a much longer hiatus.

So, like baseball, UYSA requests that the Governor's task force consider the resumption of youth soccer be moved into Phase Two of Utah's Economic Response Plan. We feel that through working together, we can create a safe plan for a structured return of youth sports. Since your first press conference on COVID-19, UYSA has followed your direction and guidelines for social distancing in Utah. We look forward to continuing to support you as we work to keep Utah safe and healthy. If you have any questions or need for additional information, please feel free to contact us. We would be happy to be part of any committee or task force to discuss moving this idea forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Bryan Attridge, CEO of Utah Youth Soccer Association
Brian Smith, President of Utah Youth Soccer Association