

USA CURLING—RETURN TO CURLING

COVID-19 CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS

July 23, 2020

CLUB OPENING

The decision-making process to open a club to curling must be done in consultation and compliance with all relevant and appropriate state and local health agencies and authorities given the complexities in the variation of timelines and requirements for opening that exist from state-to-state and city-to-city.

CLUB OPERATING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pre-Curling Club Opening

- **Prioritize Membership:** USA Curling understands that not all clubs are on the same operational or opening timelines, but what we know is that you have a membership that is the core and spirit of your club. We feel that in addition to developing a plan to open, the most important thing to be doing right now is focusing on your members. Membership should be considered top priority when looking at your upcoming season, as it is essential to be respectful of their needs, concerns, current situations, and level of tolerance regarding their social exposures. Be proactive, engage them and plan your re-opening with their safety in mind.
- **Engage Membership**
 - **Club Forecasting Calls:** Phone calls to each member saying, “Thank you for curling and being a member.” Ask them what their plans are for the upcoming season, if they are intending to bring the same team back, if they are losing a player and ask how they are feeling about curling in general. Once established, share your club’s plan with members and explain how it was constructed with the safety of members at the forefront.
 - **Friends and Family:** Recruit from your current membership’s family members and friends through a “Friends and Family” league.
 - **Projects to Celebrate Membership:** Digitize old club photos, search archives for old club news for a club history project, or if needed, find more content providers for your social media accounts to increase engagement. Ask club members to provide the oral histories of the club, update or create an operations manual, or even personalize the outreach video that was created by the Four Seasons Curling Club ([found here](#)) to photos and messages for your club.
 - **League “Zoomstacking”:** Invite members to specially designed league video conference calls. Many curlers depend on leagues for socialization and activity, so providing a place for members to connect will reignite that sense of camaraderie. This will serve as a great opportunity to discuss the upcoming plan for the club’s re-opening and gather important feedback.

- **Membership Assistance**
 - **Installment Payment Support:** Members are the lifeblood of every curling club and they are all seeking the camaraderie of being on the ice. Some might have fallen on short-term financial difficulties. Consider helping by implementing things like installment payments for dues over a certain period.
 - **Adopt-A-Curler:** If your club has philanthropic members who are willing to assist members financially, an “Adopt-a-Curler” program would be extremely beneficial financially as well as socially. Anything you can do to assist a member will reinforce the fact that the spirit and community of a curling club extends far beyond the ice.
- **Return to Curling**
 - This section will address what elements should be considered when planning for your club’s re-opening, including what the flow might look like from arrival at the ice rink, the locker room, through the curling game and conclude with departure.
 - Curling is played on a sheet of ice 147 feet long and approximately 14 feet wide (2,058sq ft of ice) with eight people participating (257 sq ft/of ice per person). There is ample space to curl while maintaining a typically recommended, socially-distant six feet of space. Curling is also non-contact and participants oftentimes have their bodies fully covered with warmer clothing.
 - **Locker rooms:** With the combination of extra sanitization requirements and most clubs operating with volunteers, we recommend initially closing off access to locker rooms but if the decision is to keep them open, follow your local and state guidelines in place for gyms and health clubs.
 - **Arrive Prepared to Curl:** Dressed, stretched and with a duffle bag for a change of shoes.
 - **Rock Color/Hammer:** Have league chairs determine the rock color/hammer assignments before games or find an alternative method of determining these factors that will avoid the coin flip.
 - **Beverages on the ice:** If your club allows beverages on the ice, implement rules that they must be clearly marked and sealable containers that are stored at a safe distance away from other beverage containers.
 - **Masks:** Based on USA Curling’s consultations with medical professionals such as the USOPC Chief Medical Officer, along with the recommendations of the CDC, USA Curling recommends that the wearing of a mask should be required when curling. COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets, thus making it imperative to minimize the transmission of these droplets to fellow curlers by wearing a cloth face covering, especially when competing. To learn more about cloth face coverings, please click [here](#).
 - **Stagger Game Start Times:** Much like the structure of golf tee times, this allows a league to be scheduled from start to finish. Staggered start times relieves the potential of congestion in the warm room that could occur if all games began at the same time.
 - **Game Start Positions - Alternate End Game Starts:** Assign games to start at alternating ends of the ice to reduce pre-game congestion behind the hacks and backboard areas. Developed and clearly defined pathways through a unique

entrance point onto the ice and to these starting points will allow curlers to arrive at their starting position without crossing paths.

- **Handshakes:** Forego the traditional pre and post-game handshakes, as well as the popular alternative of elbow taps and broom taps. Opponents and teammates should be wished a good game or “Good Curling” from a safe social distance that does not involve any contact.
- **Designated Player Positions:** Clearly define where each player on the ice should be located. Meaning, all players should know exactly where to be positioned depending on whether it is their team’s turn to throw. Since remembering these physical positions will take practice, it is recommended to have ice-techs install markings within the ice.
- **Sweepers:** Teams should only utilize one sweeper at a time. The other sweeper can be stationed at a location that will allow them to time the ice and be an active participant in the shot, just in a different way. To eliminate any gray area regarding social distancing precautions that might arise as a shot enters the house, eliminate any sweeping behind the tee line. To reduce congestion, the throwing team will be the only team sweeping during their throw. Impacted stones can be swept by the throwing team if it is their stone that is impacted and is above the tee.
- **Rock Timing (alternative to the second sweeper):** An opportunity exists with the “second sweeper” to keep teams of 4 intact and the fourth position active on the ice. The player who is non-sweeping can be located at an appropriate distance from their teammates and equipped with a stopwatch to time rocks (one stopwatch should be used per person). USA Curling will provide an instructional video of rock timing techniques for clubs to use for this option.
- **Game Flow:** As the delivering team begins to throw, the alternate team should then begin to approach the throwing positions from their waiting positions. Once the team has thrown, they will then occupy the waiting position in a socially-distanced flow.
- **Shortened Games:** Consider shortening the number of ends played if air circulation on the ice is of concern.
- **Benches:** If your club has benches or seating in the icehouse, it is recommended that this seating be reserved for only those who need it to participate in the game. Sanitization products should be located at each seating location, and after each use, the player will disinfect the surface.
- **Score Marking:** Have only one score marker per game. Sanitation should be located by each scoreboard and at the conclusion of each game, the scoring numbers should be disinfected. An alternative option is to utilize disposable paper to keep score or produce a second set of hanging numbers that can be alternated between games (while the other set is being sanitized).
- **Exiting the Ice:** Implement timing restrictions that will create a “hard stop” of the draw-time at a buzzer. This will alleviate random exits via the backboards of other sheets that could disrupt play and invade social distancing space then allow proper time to sanitize before the next draw or the end of curling for the evening.
- **Between Leagues:** If locker room access has been closed, club members will need space to change shoes. Have a designated area where this can occur, along with proper sanitization supplies so that each spot can be cleaned before the next member enters. Extra time should be allowed for league crossover to ensure that departures and arrivals do not create congestion that would interfere with occupancy requirements and proper social distancing.

- **Sanitation:** Sanitizing should occur before, during and after play. Seating areas, broom handles, shared equipment, rock handles, measuring devices, doors and door handles, and scoring numbers should all be included.
 - **Sanitation “Dry Run”:** As part of your club’s planning, do a full walk-through of sanitizing that will need to occur before, during and after draws to assist with timeline planning and better evaluate cost estimates for sanitation products.
 - **Equipment:** If the club will continue utilizing club brooms, stabilizers and other shared equipment, consider color coding stones and this equipment with colored tape. For example, all leads will use red tape, seconds will use green tape, etc. If the club has decided to not make brooms and stabilizers available, consider offering membership a rental option for the season or make purchase available.
 - [Click here](#) for step-by-step instructions on how to build your own stabilizer.
 - **Ice Preparation:** Consult your ice crew to determine a schedule of when ice preparation and maintenance can occur.
- **Post-Curling**
 - **Broomstacking and Socialization**
 - **Broomstacking is not recommended in its usual form, as it would require a 22ft diameter table for eight people to sit socially distanced.**
 - Knowing that this is a big part of the sport of curling, and to many, a big part of why they choose to curl, attention should be given to this important social aspect of the sport. USA Curling currently feels that traditional broomstacking is not a viable option and strongly urges clubs to follow their local and state guidelines for restaurants and bars. Below are some things to consider for clubs to still incorporate this social aspect of the game.
 - Utilize outdoor space at your club where people could socialize further apart.
 - Team up with a few local restaurants or bars that can provide adequate space for this type of social interaction.
 - Consider adding Virtual League Zoomstacking.
 - Consider scheduled broomstacking for a few league teams each week with byes for the others and have the appropriate setup in your warm room.
 - Consider how many curlers you can seat in your clubroom in a socially-distanced manner and then schedule the appropriate number of games with staggered start times. As each scheduled group of games ends, those people could participate in broomstacking if they desired until the next scheduled group of league games end.
 - Prohibit the sharing of food and ice buckets at the table.
- **Curling Club Opening - Secondary Considerations**
 - USA Curling understands the importance that the following events have in the sharing of our sport in your communities, welcoming other curlers to your club, gaining new members and generating club revenue. They are often the highlights on any club’s calendar, but it is important to understand that bringing additional people into your facility poses a risk and

that risk can vary depending on where arrived from and how they traveled. Making informed decisions now could help your club avoid further setbacks during the season, as well as to best ensure the health of your members.

- **Large Open Houses/Recruiting Learn2Curls**

- Postpone large recruiting events until permitted by local government.
 - Consider hosting smaller, but more frequent Learn2Curls.
 - Consider virtual open houses to initially introduce the club.
 - Club tour
 - Curling Rules 101
 - Curling Strategy 101
 - A virtual tutorial (Facebook live) of how to curl
 - Post expectations on upcoming events on your website and social media and continue to recruit.
 - Sell gift certificates now for Learn2Curls in the future.

- **Bonspiels/Competitions**

- **Summer:** USA Curling recommends postponing summer bonspiels.
- **Fall:** If possible, consider rescheduling these events for the spring and be wary of committing resources to the event early in case of cancellation. Take into consideration the likelihood of attendance by contacting past participants. Any bonspiel play should follow the same rules you enforce for your leagues, with proper social distancing procedures in place and proper restaurant and bar guidelines provided by your local and state authorities.
- **Spring:** It is difficult to project what spring will look like, but USA Curling is confident that responsible decision making by clubs will play a role in how quickly wider event-hosting returns to our sport.
- **Proposed Ideas:**
 - Organize and host a virtual bonspiel utilizing the current online curling games.
 - Consider having more inner-club events with proper policy applications.
 - Consider having smaller, local and more frequent Learn2Curls.
- **Alternate Revenue Sources:** Many clubs rely on more than dues income for operations. With bar, group outings and bonspiel revenue subject to decline, it is recommended that clubs dedicate resources, time, and imagination to alternative revenue streams. If your club is 501c3, explore fundraising
- possibilities with raffles and donations. Consider a Learn2Curl Gift Certificate Drive for the holidays for future events—demand will be high for social activities as economies open.

- **Club Planning and Resources**

- **COVID-19 Response Team:** If you have not already done so, include your treasurer, membership chair, ice tech/crew, club manager (if applicable) as well as your club board and executives. Recruit volunteers. Utilize this document and USA Curling resources to develop your plan. The guiding driver of your club's plan will be the requirements for businesses to reopen provided by your local and state governments. The USA Curling COVID Resource page found [here](#).

- If/when your COVID response team establishes a “Return to Curling Plan,” consider presenting this personalized plan to membership via video meeting and having available documentation of the plan on any digital media platforms that your club has.
 - Consider creating a “member contract” and have it prepared for members to sign indicating that they agree to the plan that the club has created and will abide by the precautions as long as the plan is in place.
 - Implement a plan to effectively conduct contact tracing in the event a club member contracts COVID-19. The first step of this plan should be taking the attendance of everyone who enters the club.
- **USA Curling Treasurer Roundtable:** A newly implemented resource for the sharing of best practices and ideas from club treasurer-types across the country. Please let us know in which format you would find this resource to be most beneficial by voting [here](#).
 - **Webinars:** Delivered on the 1st of every month with timely subject matter. Invites are sent initially to club presidents and are then archived for public access. Past archived topics include: How to do a Club “Forecasting” Call to Membership, How to Set Up Zoom Meetings and How to Create a Virtual Online Bonspiel. The archived webinars can be found [here](#).
 - **Monday Member Services Minute:** A bi-weekly newsletter provided by the USA Curling member services team. This newsletter of important news, deadlines and FYIs is delivered to club presidents via email.

This document is designed to be living and updated as needed given the changes in health authority guidelines and the progression of the pandemic. It will also be updated as new or better ideas are brought forward from our clubs across the United States. We encourage you to use it as a tool in conjunction with your local and state health authority guidelines to assist your clubs to “Return to Curling” and we encourage your feedback and ideas.