

Upward Sports League MODIFICATIONS

We know that one of the main concerns with youth sports is how to handle the number of people who are present on game days. In speaking with league directors, surveying parents and coaches, and engaging with other organizations, we have uncovered some ideas that may be helpful as you consider what to do next.

Here are some options that can help to limit the number of spectators on game day. Decide if these or any others work best for your situation.

- **Have fewer players per team** to reduce the size of the audience that may be present on game days. Limit team sizes to the number of starters plus two. Players will enjoy more playing time.
- **For this season, limit the number of spectators** that can accompany a player to a game to one or two. This suggestion is one that has come from parents in a league conducted survey.
- **Group players together in pods.** Grouping into pods is a club model where players are on a little larger team. Players would practice as usual and then play intrasquad scrimmages. For example, twelve players practice together and play 3v3 basketball between the four formed teams. Teams could have a 90-minute slot to allow for sixty minutes of practice time and 30 minutes of game time all on one day per week or weekend.

There is some flexibility here as a group of 12 players could eventually be split into two teams of six if regular play were to resume during the season.

- **Push your schedule back** and consider holding spring football or soccer or a basketball league that starts just after the first of the new year. If there are concerns about overlapping into other sports seasons, maybe there is a shorter season this year.
- **What areas do you pause for this year?** Concession stands, post-game gathering rooms, or access to certain areas of facilities. What can be new for this year? Star presentation at practice rather than games? This year might be the year to cut out snacks after games.

Involve parents in your decision-making process by surveying them online. Surveying will help in making decisions and communicates to parents that their voices matter. Below are some questions to ask in a survey that may give you a good idea of where parents stand.

- How do you feel about your child participating this season?
 - » *Answer options: Looking forward to registering, Uncertain at this time, Not ready to participate, Not ready for a league but would consider something else.*
- What modifications, precautions, or adjustments to when the league is conducted should be made for this season?
- What would help ease some of the uncertainty around the upcoming season?

Some questions to think through as you consider what to do this season.

Where is it possible to reduce the number of touchpoints at the beginning of the season?

- Select online player registration only so that parents pay and sign the parent waiver online rather than in person.
- Remove the uniform sizing station from evaluations and choose “Yes” to “Will you ask for uniform size?” in the Online Registration stage of League Setup of MyUpward to allow parents to enter a uniform size when they register online. A sizing chart now appears to assist parents in sizing their participants.
- Extend the time for games on the schedule to allow for cleaning and crowd transitions between games.

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How can I communicate so that parents can make an informed decision?

- On your league website, spell out a specific refund policy. Contact your regional representative to see how they can help your league process refunds.
- Let parents know what cleaning measures will take place at practices and games. Publicizing your plan will help put parent's minds at ease as you outline what you offer for a safe environment.
- Inform families of what is expected of them when they attend practices and games. For example, what is the policy for masks, physical distancing, or the number of attendees per player?
- Remove "late" registration fees and allow parents to register later than usual this season. In one league survey, 31% of parents were uncertain about what to do right now. Give them more time to process their decision.

Evaluations are a busy time with lots of families in one place. Is it possible to conduct evaluations?

- Use a service like SignUpGenius, Boomerang, etc. to have parents sign up for an evaluation time slot. This method will control the number of parents and players who will be on-site at one time.
- Have hand sanitization stations in multiple locations throughout the process.
- Email the PDF welcome flyer to the parents after the evaluation.

Coach and Referee training is an essential time to build the culture of the league. Is it possible to conduct training effectively and still practice physical distancing?

- Use a facility that is large enough to host a live training while in compliance with state, local, and CDC guidelines.
- Hold online training with coaches through a service like Zoom, Uber Conference, or Google Hangouts.
- Email coach training PowerPoint, coach training guides, and any other documentation you provide coaches.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is to remain flexible and adjust along the way.

Parents are willing to be flexible when you communicate clear expectations for the season.

**Consultate with your local, state and CDC guidelines when making decisions with conducting youth sports this season.*