

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**To:** All Affiliated Members, Clubs and Leagues

Dear football stakeholders;

**Re: Public Health Orders Impacting Return to Sport for Football**

For most clubs and leagues, this period in the football calendar is dedicated to planning games for the spring season (both flag and tackle). As a result, the BCPFA continues to receive an increasing number of enquiries regarding when we might see a move from Phase 2 (Distance Training) to Phase 3 (Cohorts). Additionally, the BCPFA was deeply concerned to hear that some members of the youth football community (both affiliated and non-affiliated) intend to start playing games in the near future. With this in mind, I would like to provide the football community with a detailed clarification on our current restrictions and some observations about when we might see changes to the football playing environment.

**Current Restrictions**

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, the government of BC confirmed the continuation of restrictions that impact the way we train and play the sport of football in British Columbia. The specific text used by the government for youth sport is as follows:

**Youth indoor and outdoor team sports**

All organized indoor and outdoor sports for people 21 years of age and younger should follow [viaSport's Return to Sport Phase 2 guidance](#) with respect to maintaining physical distance for participants. This means games, tournaments and competitions are temporarily suspended for teams.

- Individual drills and modified training activities can continue
- Amateur sports organizations and leagues may implement additional guidelines to ensure the health and safety of participants

All indoor and outdoor team sports for people 22 years of age and older are suspended.

***(The full government announcement can be found [here](#).)***

The BCPFA wishes to clarify, all youth sport (including football) must remain at Phase 2 training as outlined in the BCPFA Return to Sport Guidelines. In addition, the changes/clarifications introduced at the end of 2020 remain in effect:

- Physical distance is classified as 3 metres (not 2m as previously required)
- Players may travel to their home club/team for training.
- The 50-person gathering limit remains in effect (see [PHO](#))
- Teams may not travel outside their local city/municipality for training
  - In cases where a community operates with more than once local government (e.g. North Vancouver, Langley, etc.), these geographic areas are being treated as a single “municipality” for team travel. For example, a team based in the Township of Langley can “travel” for training in the City of Langley.
- Indoor and outdoor football for adults (22 years and older) is suspended.

Please note:

- The government has not identified an end date for these restrictions
- The restrictions apply to all regions of the Province.

### **Factors that Influence Return to Sport Timelines**

The government has publicly (and consistently) identified several factors which led to the current restriction levels being maintained for the foreseeable future. More specifically, the government continues to express concern over the current COVID-19 transmission rates and the presence of COVID-19 Variants of Concern in multiple BC communities.

Based on these factors, the Public Health Officer's previous decisions and recent public statements made by the Premier, **it seems reasonable to conclude that Dr. Bonnie Henry will be reluctant to relax restrictions for sport prior to Spring Break.**

*"When spring break arrives, our advice will be as it has been for months and months and months," he said. "Stay close to home, try and stay within the known bubbles and don't go engaging in reckless behavior."*

Premier Horgan

Additionally, the timing of the Easter Holiday weekend (April 2<sup>nd</sup>) relative to end of Spring Break (March 29<sup>th</sup>) would also point to a further delay in any relaxation of restrictions. With this in mind and assuming we do not see a rapid improvement in the current conditions, **the BCPFA does not anticipate a relaxation in restrictions prior to April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

### **Graduated Return?**

British Columbia's 7 day rolling average for COVID-19 was in the low 100s in September 2020 (when we moved to Phase 3 of our Return to Sport). The current 7-day average for BC is greater than 500. With this in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that a move from Phase 2 (Distance Training) to Phase 3 (Cohort) might happen in gradual steps rather than in a single leap as we saw in September 2020. It would also seem to indicate that the 50-person gathering limit will be a best-case scenario throughout the spring. The prospect of these ongoing restrictions has already led to the cancellation of youth provincial championships in many other sports ([lacrosse](#), [soccer](#), [curling](#), etc.)

As always, the BCPFA will continue to liaise with Sport BC, Via Sport and our colleagues in other sports in order to stay as informed as possible about additional changes or shifts in the interpretation of public health orders.

Sincerely,



Keith Ryan  
Executive Director