



Alaska Youth Soccer Association

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To: Mayor Ethan Berkowitz
Office of the Mayor

Re: Save Our Sports

Amidst this global pandemic, Alaskans are struggling to find work, protect their health, and ensure their family's wellness and security. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every facet of daily life, and sports is no exception.

As leaders of our respective sports organizations, we are continually pursuing ways to better ourselves and our members through the innumerable benefits of sports. With thousands of Alaskan children and their families participating in sports, our efforts significantly impact our communities. Study after study shows the benefits of sport are critical to human development, and it is our responsibility to advocate for sport as a vital factor for the successful resurgence of our state.

Alaska Youth Soccer Association affirms that it is in our state interest to maintain **open access** to sports and ensure the survivability of our sports institutions, clubs, and leagues. Not only will jobs be saved, but we can regain the critical physical, social, and emotional benefits that are lost to haphazard sports and facility closures and shutdowns. Sports help shape who we are by teaching values like perseverance, determination, fair play, work-ethic, and the pursuit of excellence. These values can help our state navigate the current challenges we face by emphasizing that we are all on **one team** working toward **one goal**...the safety and betterment of all Alaskans.

In that spirit of unity and teamwork, **Alaska Youth Soccer** must ask why local government policymakers are not crafting their policies based on input from the organizations that are best equipped to support and defend these decisions? Youth sports organizations across the state are the most experienced and capable groups to support research and analyses that could uniformly guide the development of safe, fact-based **Return-to-Play guidelines**. Many sport's National Governing Bodies are empowered by Congress through the Amateur Sports Act to oversee all development activities around their specific sport from pure recreational play to international and Olympic teams.

Alaska Youth Soccer Association's priority is to provide a **SAFE PROGRAM** for our youth participants and their families. Our programs in the **Anchorage** Municipality have followed an exhaustive Return to Play **Mitigation Plan** since the middle of May. Detailed Protocols and Compliance have been instituted at the club level for every activity including practices and league games. Thousands of youth soccer players from five years old through Seniors in High School have participated throughout the summer. **We have had zero sports-related cases within our programs.**

The Anchorage Public Health Emergency Orders EO-15, EO-14v2, has stopped our membership from completing our outdoor season of league games and has hindered our ability to practice normally. The **six-foot rule** impedes our ability to play soccer. In the GATHERING LIMITATIONS EXCEPTIONS, I am requesting that ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS is included as you have outlined daycares, day camps, and educational institutions to be **exceptions**.

Our ask is simple. Where is the logic behind **eliminating youth sports**, but keeping the doors open for so many other activities and industries? Why is something as critical as sport left to the whims of those least informed about its benefits?

Current federal legislative initiatives have provided temporary financial help during this crisis. Still, without a plan to provide uniform guidance on a **Return-to-Play**, many of our sports organizations, clubs and leagues will not survive much longer. Varying local, state, and federal guidelines have created a fragmented environment that limits organizational effectiveness and the ability to maintain programming and keep doors open.

Anchorage clubs and leagues have followed every mandate to the letter to ensure compliance daily.

Alaska Youth Soccer is asked why we are complying when others are not fully complying. Parents are confused by varying local policies and regulations. The continued lack of future preparedness and unification will make any resumption of sports sluggish, and in some communities, **non-existent**.

The **uncertainties** have made it impossible to allow for **clubs and leagues** to prepare for the indoor sessions starting in October. Alaska Youth Soccer has assured the facilities available allows for social distancing, larger spaces than a confined classroom, along with a significantly greater volume of air being circulated within the facility. The clubs and leagues will maintain the same detailed Protocols and Compliance with their Return to Play Mitigation Plans,

including **limiting spectators**. The total number of participants, players, coaches, and referees **will not exceed** municipal or facility requirements.

The indoor sessions will adapt to the overall landscape within our communities, ensuring the health-and-safety for all within the programs. The clubs and leagues will maintain a **controlled environment** for practices and league games allowing flexibility to stagger schedules with greater time between end and start time to reduce people on site.

Modified and enhance layouts will be implemented to allow for social distancing between fields, teams and staff providing sufficient space between groups of people to reduce crowding.

Please help us maintain and deploy **safe programming**, full employment, and open facilities so we can sustain the athletic dreams of thousands of Alaskans. When the GO button is pressed, youth sports can be an essential part of our state rebuilding. We hope you will work collaboratively with **Alaska Youth Soccer** and our clubs and leagues.

On behalf of the largest youth soccer organization in Alaska, and with the full alignment and support of the **sports organizations** [listed](#) below, we ask that decision-makers adjust the **GATHERING LIMITATIONS EXCEPTIONS** in current and future Public Health Emergency Orders to **include ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS**.

The future of our state, and the future of our next great generation, depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Linda J. Burke

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http://www.alaskayouthsoccer.org/_2020

AYSA Anchorage Clubs and Leagues

[Alaska Rush](#)

[Anchorage Youth Soccer](#)

[Chugiak Soccer](#)

[Cook Inlet Soccer Club](#)

[UAYSL- Anchorage League](#)

AYSA Statewide Affiliate Clubs and Leagues

[Fairbanks Eclipse Soccer Club](#)

[Homer \(TOPSoccer\)](#)

[Homer United F.C.](#)

[Kenai Peninsula Soccer Club](#)

[Crossfire- MSC](#)

[Palmer Soccer Club](#)

[Juneau Soccer Club](#)

[Ketchikan Youth Soccer League](#)

[Tongass Timbers Ketchikan](#)

[Valley Revolution Wasilla](#)