



## Media Release

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### **COVID-19 update: Next steps in a safe return to sport**

Athletes and sports enthusiasts across BC have an updated set of tools to gradually and safely reintroduce competitive play to organized sport activities.

On August 24, the *viaSport Phase 3 Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.* was released, providing recommendations for provincial and local sport organizations to “carefully increase the number of (personal) contacts and (physical) contact intensity in sport.”

viaSport is a provincial not-for-profit that is working closely with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture to provide oversight and direction for the development and delivery of amateur sport in B.C. The organization has outlined how various sports can safely add modified activities to increase training opportunities and add league and game play, while continuing to abide by current Public Health Orders. Competition play, contact activities, cohorts (or groups of players), high-performance training, and travel are addressed in the guidelines.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have heard from many people about the important role that sport plays in their physical and mental well-being,” said Doug Ross, Director, Recreation Services. “The health and safety of our citizens is our absolute top priority, so we are pleased to see these new guidelines, which take into account the safety of players, parents, coaches, volunteers and community members, while also providing sound guidance to re-engage with healthy and fun activities that are important to so many people.”

The [online](#) document discusses various sport categories and considerations to protect participants. In Phase 3, increased levels of competition are being allowed, if done within established cohorts.

As per the Provincial Health Officer’s orders, physical distancing is still encouraged when possible and gatherings must not exceed 50 people.

The new guidelines state: “it is imperative that sport organizations consult and collaborate with their municipal and facility partners before resuming and adding activities. Municipalities and facility operators will have their own policies and procedures that also need to be adhered to.”

Greater Vernon Recreation Services is now revising its *COVID-19 Safety Plan* to align with the updated *Return to Sport Guidelines*. Once the plan is approved, it will be distributed to all user

groups who are, in turn, expected to update their own *Safe Return to Play* plans and submit them to Recreation Services for review.

“We understand and appreciate the work that volunteers are having to do to prepare their plans; some of them for a second time,” said Ross. “With the provincial orders and so many different guidelines for each of the various sports to navigate, we wish to thank our user groups for their cooperation, understanding and patience as we work to update our own plan, and in turn review theirs in a timely manner. We look forward to seeing our community members on the local pitches, diamonds, courts, and in our arenas enjoying the sports they love to play.”

More information will be provided about recreation facility reopening plans as it becomes available. To stay up-to-date on recreation opportunities in the Greater Vernon area, please visit [www.gvrec.ca](http://www.gvrec.ca).