CPG MEMBER COUNTRY PGA CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 JOINT GUIDELINES

As a collective, **Member Country PGAs** of the **Confederation of Professional Golf (CPG)** are united in supporting and strictly adhering to the respective Coronavirus government policies and measures, and, where applicable, are either practicing the safe playing of golf and/or are adhering to social distancing requirements.

This document contains a set of collaborative guidelines, agreed by the collective of **CPG Member Country PGAs**, designed to allow PGAs to utilise appropriate information and support for dealing with the implications of the crisis on their organisations, and in turn provide their own Members with consistent and clear advice and support.

The guidelines aim to help and guide all Member Country PGAs, whilst still recognising that each country is in its own position in the pandemic with a variety of measures and guidelines being in place that do or do not allow golf to be played. The information should also allow PGAs and PGA Members to be prepared for when golf can re-open in countries where it is not currently possible and the potential increased traffic/play that will surge whilst also recognising the opportunity to gain new players who are looking for outdoor activities to engage in.

The guidelines assess ways in which PGAs and PGA Members can:

- Engage with local and national government
- Engage with and unify golf stakeholders and governing bodies in their country
- Engage with their Member Professionals
- Promote the safe playing of golf
- Promote the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of golf

General advice on minimising the risk of spread of Coronavirus, along with links to various useful resources from the WHO and Golf & Health are detailed towards the end of this guide.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT

A key stakeholder group during this time is local and national and local government in a country. As the collective joint statement from CPG Member Country PGAs reinforces, a government's policies and measures are fully supported and respected by PGAs and their Member Professionals.

It is important that a PGA stays up to date with all the measures given by a government regarding how their business can and should operate, as well as those relevant to their Memberships.

Open lines of communication with the relevant government body (often the sports-related ministry/department) are key to being able to access relevant information and updates.

Key points for Government stakeholder relations:

- Ensure that government understand that golf is ready and willing to open only when the time is right.
- Emphasise that government-led guidelines/measures that the government has or put in place are adhered to first and foremost.
- Emphasise that golf is working collaboratively across all of its national stakeholders (and internationally with bodies such as the CPG, EGA, etc.).
- Ensure that plans are clear and are considered locally and nationally with all of the relevant stakeholders involved (more info in next section) – the PGA, national Federation, facility owners and managers, greenkeepers, etc.

When the time is right – as strictly dictated by local/national government – then golf can be in a position to positively begin again. The various benefits that golf can bring, combined with the ability to play in outdoor open space, could allow it to be opened up earlier than other sports and as such be able to bring exercise and health benefits to populations that in many cases are under restrictions.

There are a number of key areas that golf can focus on when the time is right to promote the opening of golf:

- Focus on the health benefits of golf – physical, mental and social benefits of playing (more info at golfandhealth.org).
- Emphasise the ability to share these benefits (resources, documents, research, etc.) with relevant stakeholders such as government, Members, players, etc.
- Emphasise the outdoor/green space benefits of golf that provide people with an opportunity to exercise, gain fresh air, etc. whilst still being able to follow measures that may well still be in place such as social distancing.
- Recognise the overall benefits of playing that, if done safely, outweigh the potential risks.
- Emphasise that Members, facilities, and golfers will responsibly follow all guidelines and ensure that everything is done to mitigate any related risks.
- Emphasise that golf can be played safely and can be done so without a clubhouse facility needing to be fully operational if required.

HOW TO UNIFY WITH, AND SUPPORT, OTHER GOLF STAKEHOLDERS GOVERNING BODIES IN COUNTRY

For the sport to work effectively together through any time of crisis then it is important to provide a united voice. The CPG encourage all of its Member Country PGAs to work closely with the other relevant bodies in their country such as the national Federation, owners, managers, greenkeepers, etc.

Key ways in which PGAs can unify and collaborate with other stakeholders:

- Create, or foster, clear lines of communication with the leaderships of the relevant bodies in your country.
- Either create, or if applicable repurpose, a 'crisis response' group that is made up of key representatives from each of the stakeholders.
- Act early to establish specific lines of communication regarding the pandemic.
- Communicate often with the stakeholders through both structured and unstructured channels,
- Create clear plans with pathways that can help the sport to communicate with government etc. and communicate information and messaging with the people these stakeholders represent.
- Ensure that all plans are adaptable to the changing/evolving situation.
- Understand that each stakeholder group will have their own focus, emphasis and objectives from the collaboration and be respectful of this to ensure a productive, collaborative relationship.

Any roadmaps, pathways and plans need to be/have:

- Clear regarding the aims / outputs of the plan and the timeframes these should follow.
- Clear about how each stakeholder can and should input, what role they can play and what responsibilities they have.
- Clear monitoring and reporting regarding the discussions and progress around plans.
- Full agreement amongst all stakeholders with plans/activities.

EXAMPLE:

The PGA of Sweden have joined together with their other related organisations in golf across the country to create a 'crisis group' that includes the PGA, the national Federation, greenkeepers, and Managers.

Together, this group meet almost daily and are able to make decisions for, and recommendations to, their relevant groups very quickly in response to the changing situations.

The group have been able to create collaborative rulings/measures for how golf clubs should handle the crisis, how PGA Members can safely engage in lessons and operations, how players can safely still play, etc.

The group are also looking towards future for post-pandemic activity with, for example, the creation of a national campaign focusing on encouraging people to play golf.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PGA MEMBERS

It is vitally important for all Member Country PGAs to keep their individual Members engaged during the Coronavirus pandemic. It is the responsibility of a PGA to ensure that all of its Members' are cared for, whilst also representing their interests on a local and national level.

This will likely be the most difficult time your Members will ever have experienced or may experience in the future, and therefore it is hugely important that you do your best as a PGA to support them. Consistent, frequent and clear communication, along with empathy and compassion, is key to being able to do this.

The following are key elements to think about with regard to engaging and informing your Members:

- Be proactive with communication where possible – do not wait for Members to contact you before you contact them.
- Keep in regular communication – regular updates and the provision of information will ensure Members are kept informed of what is going on and what they need to do.
- Keep it personal – personal communication direct from individual PGA representatives to Members helps to ensure they are aware that you treat every Member as an individual. Every Member will be experiencing a different scenario so it will pay off to keep that in mind.
- Consider individual contact to every single PGA Member at least by email and ideally by phone. This will allow you to get a hugely detailed picture of the challenges faced by all Members and will also engage them directly with the PGA to make sure they feel valued, listened to and can voice their concerns, feedback, ideas, etc.
- Share resources, content, guides, etc. with Members to empower them in their marketing and planning for when golf can take place again. For example, providing them with messaging around the health benefits of golf, combined with the safe playing of the sport and coaching practices, can be useful for them in promoting its restarting.

The following are key things to ensure your Members are thinking about:

- Ensure they follow the relevant government guidelines above all else and play their part in reducing the impact of the pandemic.
- For those still able to operate in their normal work environment, ensure they do so as safely as possible.
- For those unable to work in their normal environment, then ensure they make the most of the downtime by developing themselves and their businesses. Encourage them to make use of online/distance learning and use the time wisely to build plans and strategies for when they are able to work again.
- Encourage Members to stay in touch with their clients and customers to ensure they remain engaged with them as well.
- Encourage Members to ensure their own businesses/employers are also carrying out these measures and adhering to the government measures and guidelines.
- Encourage Members to plan for, and utilise, the resources available to them to promote the benefits of the sport, as well as the messaging around the safe playing of golf when there are still restrictions/measures in place.

EXAMPLES:

- PGA of Belgium – Created a whole-membership WhatsApp group to share communications.
- PGA of Germany – continually communicating information to Members, adjusted Membership subscription dates to August to allow additional months grace period, create specific webinars about the Coronavirus pandemic, provided information regarding the different local government requirements/assistance packages.
- PGA of Italy – preparing guidelines for Members to use when out of lockdown measures, frequent communication with Members, organisation of online learning, provision of information around finance support available from government.
- PGA of Sweden – created a checklist of criteria for Members to follow when working and coaching, providing various e-learning opportunities for Members, telephoning all Members to see how they are, gain feedback and create strong relationships,
- PGA of Switzerland – providing direct administrative assistance in the coordination of financial help from government.

PROMOTING SAFE PLAYING OF GOLF (INCLUDING COACHING)

When the time is right, golf can be played safely with precautions taken to minimise the risk as much as possible.

SAFE PLAY:

The Golf & Health Project have created a series of guidelines to promote the safe playing of golf:

- **Any players with any symptoms of COVID-19, should not play**
- **Any players from a household with someone with any symptoms of COVID-19 should not play**
- Book online, so reducing contacts in and around the Clubhouse
- Change shoes in the car park and avoid the Clubhouse, or changing areas, whenever possible
- Use social distancing (2metre rule) on the putting green
- Meet on the first tee with modified greetings at a distance
- Insist on social distancing (2 metres rule) on tees, greens and throughout the rounds
- Golf buggies should only be used by single individuals and cleaned afterwards
- Golfers should only pick their own ball up
- Handle your own scorecard only
- Do not use public drinking fonts and ball cleaners, bring own refreshments, towels and ball cleaners if needed
- Do not touch on-course furniture/items such as benches, distance markers, etc.
- Leave the flag in place while putting, or add a pipe to the bottom of the hole/pull up the cup above the ground line so there is reduced need to put a hand into a hole to retrieve the ball (could also consider removing holes altogether and simply adding a target area with a fixed flag in the green to mark the area, and/or implementing a 0.5m gimmie rule)
- Sort out the sand in the bunker with a club (or your own rake!)
- Do not use airlines for cleaning shoes or equipment following the round
- Players should use hand sanitiser on the way round and at the end
- No handshakes on 18th green (do not hand over money either??)
- Keep distanced when using practice facilities and use your own practice balls where possible
- Avoid the Clubhouse, whenever possible
- Finish and go home!

For all those who are self-isolating as a result of contact with an infected person or in families who are self-isolating, it would not be appropriate to visit a facility and play golf at this time.

Nevertheless, playing shots in your own garden and putting in the living room will encourage people to reduce the sitting time which we know is an independent risk factor and needs addressing.

SAFE COACHING:

Again, when the time is right, coaching can take place whilst minimising the risk of spread of Coronavirus. The following are guidelines that could help PGA Members to coach ensuring they and their clients are safe once able to do so:

- Ensure you and any colleagues at your facility maintain high standards of hygiene, including washing hands, cleaning the facility regularly, providing hand sanitser, etc.
- Keep a minimum of 2 metres apart from people
- Avoid the use of shared equipment, or if unavoidable then make sure there is a cleaning/disinfecting protocol in place
- Encourage playing lessons on the course to reduce need for close proximity between coach and student and encourage social distancing
- Whatever the coaching environment then ensure there is limited opportunity for 'through-traffic' or other social interaction and that it is safe and has measures in place to reduce the need to touch surfaces, door handles, flags, etc. (e.g. PGA of Denmark suggesting that driving range places are booked through GolfBox to ensure control of traffic flow)
- Avoid indoor gatherings / lessons wherever possible
- Customise lessons to reduce the need for any physical contact between coach and student – alter coaching methods and practice routines to allow for reduced physical interaction and perhaps utilise alignment sticks as a means for direction/manual movement with a player
- If group lessons are taking place then reduce/limit numbers and ensure setup/layout of equipment etc. allows for required levels of social distancing (e.g. by introducing a 2m 'exclusion zone'/specifically marked area around any individual practicing/being coached)
- Communication with students:
    - Create a protocol for sending out information and guidelines in advance of lessons about how to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and to show that you are doing what you can to ensure their and their fellow golfers' safety
    - Ensure that no student comes to the facility if they, or a member of their household, shows any symptoms of Coronavirus – request a confirmation from the student directly before they leave for the facility
    - Communicate the measures that you as a coach, and the facility overall, are taking to minimize risk and create a safe environment

PROMOTING GOLF'S HEALTH AND WELLNESS BENEFITS

In those countries where the population has not been told to fully self-isolate then golf can provide health enhancing physical activity and safe social interaction in a low risk environment.

Here the Golf & Health Project, that is supported by the World Golf Foundation and aims to academically study the many and varied health & wellbeing benefits of golf, outlines how and why golf can be beneficial for physical and mental wellbeing:

Simply put, golfers live longer, have better overall physical health, and gain wellness/ mental health benefits. These associations are likely due to the golden combination of walking, muscular activity, and social interaction (amongst other factors). So whether you are young or old; a scratch golfer or have never picked up a club before, there are now even more reasons to head to your nearest course!

GENERAL BENEFITS:

- Playing/ involvement with golf can positively influence health for individuals with disability
- The best available evidence suggests playing golf regularly is associated with increased longevity, healthy and active ageing, providing physical and mental health, cognitive, social, functional and other benefits
- Those that play golf live 5 years longer, than those that do not play - likely due to physical activity/ exercise gained playing
- Our Chief Medical Officers and policy makers including the World Health Organisation (WHO) urge all adults to take at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week. Golf can be conclusively shown to be a moderate intensity physical activity

PHYSICAL BENEFITS:

- Regular physical activity/ exercise decreases the risk of over 40 major chronic diseases, like type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, strokes, colon and breast cancer
- Golf would be expected to have these benefits, and golf specific studies have shown positive impacts on cholesterol, body composition, metabolism, and longevity
- Golfers are at moderate risk of injuries, few of which are serious
- Golf is likely to help reduce the risk of falls and help older people live independently

MENTAL BENEFITS:

- Playing golf is associated with mental well-being benefits which can include improved self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy and social connections.

- As a physical activity, golf is likely to reduce the risk of over 40 chronic conditions including depression and dementia
- Physical activity (such as golf) is known to be effective in treating mild-moderate depression
- Regular golf can help reduce anxiety, improve confidence and boost self-esteem, all of which contribute to improved mental wellbeing

SOCIAL BENEFITS:

- Golf is known to boost self-identity and social connections
- Golf provides an opportunity to interact and connect with people of all ages

RESOURCES:

GolfandHealth.org contains a variety of free-to-use resources that PGAs, PGA Members, golf facilities, etc. are able to make use of including images, infographics, statistics, videos, and more.

The use of these resources, either as they are or as part of other activities / communications, is recommended for all of golf's stakeholders to promote the benefits of playing the sport. The information shared in the resources can be linked back to research activity that has taken place or is currently underway.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR LIMITING THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following (information from WHO):

- **Wash your hands frequently -** Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
  Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

- **Maintain social distancing -** Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
  Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- **Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth - Why?** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

- **Practice respiratory hygiene -** Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

  Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

- **If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early -** Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
  Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

Find out more at who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Health Benefits of Golf visit golfandhealth.org.

World Health Organization, Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control National information resources for the public by EU Country - https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china/sources-updated

For more information in countries not listed above then more information will be available on your government's own Coronavirus COVID-19 guideline websites.

The CPG would like to thank its Member Country PGAs, in particular the PGA of Sweden, Golf & Health Project Executive Director, Dr Roger Hawkes, European Tour Chief Medical Officer, Dr Andrew Murray, the PGA of America, PGA of New Zealand, and Senior Public Health Advisors in the UK for contributions to the content within these guidelines.