

To: All NCSRA referees

From: Paul James, State Referee Administrator

Re: Dealing with exemption claims to the mask mandate

Date: 12-2-2020

In clarification of the memo sent on 11-30-2020 (and reproduced below), the subject of the limited exceptions to the mask mandate and how to address those exemptions are addressed here.

Pursuant to Governor Cooper's Order #180 and the corresponding guidance of the NCDHHS, there are limited exemptions to the requirement of wearing a mask. For purposes of soccer, referees will not make any attempt to determine the validity of any claimed exemption. The procedures below must be used to establish a player's exemption. **Ultimately, and at all times, it is up to each official to judge their own level of risk exposure in determining whether they will continue to officiate a match or not in light of the number of potentially claimed exemptions. The more claims, the more a team will run the risk that one or more officials will determine it is unsafe for them to proceed and simply not call the game. This is always the right of the official.**

For any participant claiming an exemption, that participant, including officials, must make the claim known to the referee through the coach or adult team captain before the match begins. Once claimed, assuming the officials are willing to proceed, no further action is required.

For any participant who has not previously claimed an exemption, but who for any reason encounters difficulty functioning with a mask during play, that participant should be allowed to isolate from the other participants while still on the field, remove the mask to recover, and replace it when ready to rejoin the game. They may also be permitted to leave the field as if injured and return again with permission of the referee or be substituted. If the participant remains on the field they are still considered as a player for the Laws of the Game, including offside judgments, but they may not resume active participation until they have put the mask back on.