**Hampton Roads Chess Association (HRCA)**

**COVID-19 Protocol for Over-the-Board Chess Activities**

**Effective 28 May 2021 until further notice**

This document outlines the protocol required to hold any Hampton Roads Chess Association (HRCA)-sponsored over-the-board chess activity. All participants are required to abide by these protocols.

1. **Advance registration and payment for events are preferred but no longer required**. Effective 28 May 2021, the Governor of Virginia has lifted all capacity and distancing restrictions for both indoor and outdoor venues. HRCA will now accept cash, check, or card payments for on-site registration as we have in the past. HRCA will resume processing US Chess and HRCA memberships on site, as well.
2. **Tournament site set-up.** 
   1. **Playing Rooms.** Lifting of capacity and distancing restrictions means that HRCA will set up for tournaments in the pre-COVID manner, mindful of fire codes for the venue, meaning 2 to 3 boards per table. Higher risk players may request an assigned board in a less populated playing room prior to the start of the event. HRCA will make every effort to accommodate such requests.
   2. **Skittles.** HRCA will resume use of a Skittles area with capacity restrictions dictated only by facility fire codes. Players are welcome to wait outside or in their cars, but it is wise to let the Tournament Director know where you are waiting. HRCA will make every effort to ensure every player is notified of the start of a round.
   3. **Posted Pairings and Standings.** HRCA will resume posting pairings and standings on paper on the walls; however, players are encouraged not to congregate in a crowd around the pairings. HRCA will routinely post pairings and standings on the SwissSys website and will announce when pairings are available online. Players should retrieve online pairings from their personal devices as a first resort.
3. **Casual play is now allowed.** There is no need to register in advance to show up for casual play at any HRCA chess club event. Casual players must simply follow the same rules as players present for tournament play. This does not apply for a weekend tournament, only for weeknight clubs that offer both casual and tournament play.
4. **Check-in Procedures.** 
   1. All players will first stop at the check-in desk, answer questions about symptoms and potential exposure (available on the HRCA website), and have their temperature taken. Anybody registering a temperature above 99.5 degrees will be turned away. It is critical for players to take personal responsibility and avoid attending HRCA events when they are sick.
   2. ***HRCA does NOT intend to query players about their vaccine status or to check vaccine cards.***
   3. Players will proceed from the check-in desk to let the Tournament Director know they are present for play if pre-registered, and to handle any entry and membership requirements with the Tournament Director.
5. **Mask Requirements. Because the CDC lists sustained one-on-one contact with a single person as the highest risk of COVID transmission (the nature of chess), HRCA will continue to require masks for all players, regardless of age or vaccination status, at the board until further notice.** Per Governor’s orders, players who are not actively playing a chess game, and who are vaccinated, may remove their mask inside the building. HRCA asks players to use common sense in their interactions with others inside the building while not wearing a mask. In scholastic tournaments, this requirement may be stricter, as the Governor has not lifted the mask mandate for “K-12 settings.” *All players will abide by mask requirements announced in advance event publicity.*
6. **Spectators.** Spectators, casual players, and parents are now allowed at HRCA events. As per the US Chess norm, spectators are not allowed in the playing hall for scholastic tournaments. However, parents are welcome inside the building in designated waiting areas. Players who have games in progress are now allowed to spectate other games, following all normal US Chess rules for spectator conduct.
7. **Equipment and Sanitization Procedures.** 
   1. **Equipment.** Players may resume bringing their personal boards, sets, clocks, scorebooks, and writing utensils to any HRCA event. For scholastic events, boards and sets will be provided in the playing venue, and personal sets not allowed, as per normal operating procedures. HRCA always has boards, sets, clocks, and scoresheets available for players.
   2. **Sanitization Procedures.** Per the CDC, touch contact transmission for COVID carries a very low risk. This CDC guidance has been in place for many months, but HRCA continued to sanitize equipment between rounds out of an abundance of caution. Effective immediately, HRCA will no longer sanitize equipment between rounds. If a player or player’s parent desires their equipment to be sanitized, spray and wipes will be available in every playing room. The player or parent is welcome to wipe or spray down pieces and clocks at their assigned board prior to each round. HRCA volunteers will no longer perform this task. If a player or parent notifies HRCA in advance that they would like a sanitized set at the start of every round, they may be given an “assigned board” for the duration of the tournament, where we know in advance the player wants sanitization procedures taken between rounds. Volunteers may be able to perform this task on a limited number of assigned boards.
8. **Food and Drink.** Food and drink are allowed at HRCA events. Concessions will likely resume for weekend tournaments and scholastic club nights. However, food and drink are not allowed at the board, as removing masks at the board is still prohibited. Per church policy, food and drink are not allowed outside of the skittles area/Fellowship Hall.
9. **Procedures during games.**
   1. **Per #5 above, masks are still required while face-to-face at the board for a chess game. Players will absolutely not remove masks at the board.** This is a serious violation of protocol and may result in forfeiture of game. If a player needs a drink of water or simply a “mask break,” the player must step away from the board to an area far away from other players to do so. If a player chooses to do this, their clock will run during this time period if they are on move.
   2. **All players are encouraged to** **wash and/or sanitize their hands prior to the start of each round and avoid touching their face throughout the round.**
   3. **No handshakes before or after the round.** Players will not make physical contact with their opponents. A “non-contact greeting” such as a head nod, wave, brief comment, or other safe and appropriate gesture should be used to maintain good sportsmanship before and after games.
   4. High risk players requiring additional precautions must notify the tournament director/ organizer prior to the event to arrange accommodations. **HRCA will treat high risk players similar to players with disabilities in regard to US Chess rules for accommodations.**