

Return to Activity - Fall Sport Season

Details, safety precautions and protocol for return can be found in the **SOI Return Protocol** and **SONY Addendum** documents. In addition to our ongoing phase 0 (zero) program at home, Special Olympics New York (SONY) will begin phases 1 & 2 where permitted, for our Fall Season, beginning in August through November permitted. We have developed a Fall Season sport specific overview for training club practice and local competition during these early phases of return.

All Sports:

- Individual at a Higher risk defined by the SOI Protocol should continue to remain at home until S.O. Phase 3
- Outlined in the protocol: PPE masks, gloves, sanitizer and disinfectant would be in use.
- Support volunteers helping athletes and sanitizing equipment will wear and change gloves between athletes.
- Bring your own equipment whenever possible (balls, golf clubs, bats etc.)
- Always ensure that all facility guidelines are followed
- Sanitize all equipment before and after practice
- Maintain social distancing at all times, arrival, during warm-ups and any training activity
- Utilize Sport Specific Virtual Training Resources - <https://www.youtube.com/user/polarsony>
- The Fall Sports Season will provide for training and local competition at Phases 0, 1 & 2 only.
- Phase 3 activity will be considered in November for the Winter Sports Season

Bocce:

- Athletes should gather their own ball between sets
- If bocce balls are handled by multiple athletes, they must be sanitized before each exchange
- Sanitize the palina in between each set or exchanges
- If multiple courts present, set-up courts 10 feet apart
- Bocce Resource: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afbhby9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0&preview=Sample+Template+Bocce.docx>
- **Modified Singles Considerations:**
 - Do not switch ends (stay on same side for entire practice)
 - Each player should use same color bocce balls throughout entire practice
- **Modified Doubles and Team Considerations:**
 - Do not switch ends (stay on same side for entire practice)
 - Utilize a mark (cone, etc.) to identify where players should return to after their turn
 - Each player should only touch their own bocce balls

Cycling:

- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Tandem/Unified cyclists may practice together but should wear a mask
- Cycling Resource: <https://usacycling.org/event-organizer/covid-19-event-resources>

Golf:

- Walking is recommended, but if utilizing a cart, one person per cart
- Do not utilize rake in sand traps or remove pin and flag on putting green
- Alternate shot – only use your own ball – be prepared to sanitize for incidental exchange
- Golf Resource: <https://www.usga.org/course-care/covid-19-resource-center.html>

Cross Country:

- Avoid running in a pack
- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Cross Country Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

Soccer:

- Skills only (Phase 1 & 2)
- Dribbling, Shooting, Run & Kick, Team Assessment Skills
- Coaches, Volunteers, Support Staff will wear gloves and encourage new gloves when possible
- Athletes should gather their own ball in between sets
- Soccer balls must be sanitized before each exchange
- Social Distancing Drills:
https://www.soccerindiana.org/assets/58/6/what_social_distancing_grids_can_look_like.pdf
- Soccer Resource: <https://www.fifa.com/what-we-do/covid-19/>

Softball:

- Skills only (Phase 1 & 2)
- Bat for Distance, Base Race, Fielding, Hitting, Throwing, Team Assessment Skills
- Coaches, Volunteers, Support Staff will wear gloves and encourage new gloves when possible
- Athletes should gather their own ball in between sets
- Softballs must be sanitized before each exchange
- Softball Resource: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/static.wbcs.org/assets/cms/documents/bf420054-a523-f0cd-c738-8be0d949a731.pdf>

Equestrian:

- Coaches, Volunteers, Support Staff will wear gloves and encourage new gloves when possible
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each rider
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- Equestrian Resource: <https://www.usef.org/forms-pubs/XhKGVYiivTA/usef-covid-19-action-plan-for-operating>

Common Year-Round Sports: SONY recognizes that clubs and athletes train year round and out of season in several select sports. Please consult your specific Regional office prior to engaging in training for any year-round activity. Phase I & II adaptations are currently being developed.

Examples may include: Bowling, Swimming, Volleyball, Gymnastics, Powerlifting, Basketball, Tennis

Competition:

- During S.O. phase I & II, small group local competition is still possible. As SONY determines clubs and athletes that register to return for a fall season a local competition calendar will be developed.
- Local culminating competition: nearing the end of the fall season, SONY regions will support those clubs and athletes who have registered and are training in fall sports with you to offer a culminating event.
- Either training club specific, or as a local regional event
- Dependent upon the number of athletes and health considerations

Venue Considerations:

- Enough space at venue for extra spacing for all sport and non-sport elements of activity (coach meetings, hydration and resting areas, skills and drills stations)
- Will other entities / groups be using the venue at the same time Special Olympics is? Can we find out what safety measures are they taking? How can we inform them of our safety precautions and expectations if they are com-mingling with our participants?
- Consider staggered locker room use (if allowing use at all – may opt to make off limits) so as to not unintentionally create congestion area.
- Provide handwashing and/or hand sanitizer stations.

Event Signage and Notices:

- Use both picture/icon-based (as well as language-based notices) for those who experience difficulty reading.
- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that promote protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.

Signage Examples:

- Do not enter if you are exhibiting any signs of illness such as sneezing, coughing, sniffles, have a fever, or don't feel well
- All athletes, staff, volunteers, and spectators should practice responsible social distancing by remaining at least 6 ft apart whenever possible
- All athletes, staff, volunteers, and spectators should wear PPE such as face masks whenever applicable.
- Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer upon entrance, during the event, before and after you eat, and as you leave.

Transportation / Arrivals / Departures:

- Consider scheduled staggered participant pick up / drop off times.
- Consider increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to depart before another group enters the facility. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between uses.
- Allow for time to conduct screening and collect names of participants in attendance.
- Avoid entering venue (more applicable for indoor venues) at same time as athletes – attempt to reduce human bottlenecks / proximity in and out of venue.
- Athletes and Unified partners: arrive already dressed and sport-ready.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to



alert them that the person may have COVID-19 and notify their family / caregiver.

Staff/Volunteers/Coaches/Officials:

- Consider having volunteers/teams of volunteers whose sole purpose is to concentrate on sanitizing, cleaning, enforcing athlete social distancing and safety behavior expectations compliance (at practices and events) so coaches can coach.
- Consider having volunteers/teams of volunteers whose sole purpose is to concentrate protocol / behavior education and compliance for spectators, family members/caregivers, and venue staff.
- Coaches, volunteers and officials must maintain social distance at all times! Stay at least 6 feet apart.

Equipment:

- Coach keeps all equipment / equipment bag in between practices and sanitizes at start and end of every practice.
- Equipment/gear for each person (their own or provided): put athlete or partner's name on it with tape or other means.
- Be aware of any damaging effects frequent use of some sanitizing products may have on certain forms of gear or equipment.

Spectators / Family Members / Caregivers:

- Have a plan to communicate expectations and information in advance.
- No non-essential personnel at practice.
- Family members / caregivers may need to drop off and pick-up only or stay in car during practice / activity.
- Have separate or staggered screening area or time for spectators / family members / caregivers.
- All spectators must social distance if they sit in stands. Program / volunteers may need to mark off minimum distances in stands or on the ground to create clear seating areas.

Sport: (Practices and Competitions)

- Split squads/practices: when we have enough venue availability
- Modify all activities (warm-ups, drills, etc...) to meet social distancing requirements.
- Consider having no spectators at practices and/or some events.
- Use physical guidance (ropes, tape on floor, chalked areas, cone off areas) to help ensure social distancing.
- Break athletes into small groups that stay together and do not co-mingle. Keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches or staff, and make sure that each group of players and coaches avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible.
- Put out cones or chalk ground to ensure social distancing for each player to have personal area for static stretching. Similarly, designated lanes could be set up for any dynamic stretches or running warm up.
- Modify practices, skills, drills, scrimmages, to limit the time athletes and partners spend physically close to others.
- During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, attention should be given to maintaining social distancing by increasing space between players on the sideline, dugout, or bench. Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.

- Mark off areas along bench, ground, fence or other stationary point of reference with tape/chalk/cones/surveyor's tape to give each athlete same "spot" for gear, rest, when not active at practice every week for consistency.

Support Coping and Resilience:

- Encourage participants to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
- Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Use the Strong Minds resources.
- Encourage participants to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Many participants are going through challenging times. Some may have lost loved ones, lost jobs, been disconnected from friends and school and haven't had the structure they are accustomed to. This creates a lot of stress that can show up in different ways. You can help reduce this stress through your communication approach. Special Olympics has shared the Bridges Model, (more on Bridges) which have some helpful insights on leadership in times of crisis. The CDC also has some helpful useful resources regarding talking with youth, which include: Helping Children Cope and Talking with Children. COVID was published by NCYS.