

3/19/2021

Return to Activity Update:

Every day, Special Olympics New York reviews the current metrics and positive rates of COVID-19, including NY Forward cluster hotspot designation and the related NYS executive orders. This data currently shows rates of transmission are on the decline, especially as more and more New Yorkers become vaccinated. As the safety of our athletes is always our primary consideration, we will continue to offer in-person as well as virtual program offerings for the summer season.

We have every reason to remain optimistic for a robust summer season. Our winter season in-person and at-home activities proved safe, fun and valuable to many athletes.

We look forward to a return to unrestricted program activity as soon as possible!

Return to Activity Seasonal Guide

This introductory information applies to all Special Olympics New York activity. 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 continue to offer in-person activity where permitted. We have developed a seasonal sport specific overview for training club practice and local competition during these early phases of return.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Each sport will present a varying level of risk as well as determination of what modifications are feasible should be considered by the Program. However, if precautions and mitigating criteria (e.g. PPE, physical distancing, no shared equipment and/or disinfection, staggered starts, etc.) can be implemented, then most sports may be offered in some capacity (e.g. individual skills or drills or small internal scrimmage) during all phases of return. Many local, national and international sport associations have begun to offer guidance on how to safely return to play within their sport with mitigation. It is recommended that, in addition to the minimum precautions detailed within this document, Programs adhere to sport-specific precautions and mitigation in determining how to resume sport activities and guidance from sport authorities and associations.

Phase 1 Considerations:

- Phase 1 = ≤10 people (includes athletes, coaches, and volunteers) No Spectators.
- Activities must comply with distancing guidelines at all times.
- No activities that involve direct or indirect contact (e.g., through a ball in the hand) can occur.
- Consider spacing for drills, etc. using visual guides such as tape, chalk, cones, etc.
- Maintain physical distancing and avoid close contact (e.g. high fives, hugs, huddles) during and after activity
- Wear facemasks throughout the activity, except during exercise, including upon arrival and departure
- No spectators should be allowed to congregate on the sidelines of activities. Individuals providing transportation for participants should remain in vehicles until sessions are over. If participants need assistance, caregivers may remain provided they also maintain distancing, hygiene and use PPE, including masks.

Phase 2 Considerations:

- Phase 2 ≤50 people (includes athletes, coaches, and volunteers).
- Activities must comply with distancing guidelines at all times.
- Indirect contact (e.g., through a ball in the hand) MAY resume. Direct contact may NOT resume yet.
- Maintain physical distancing and avoid close contact (e.g. high fives, hugs, huddles)
- Wear facemasks throughout the activity, except during exercise, including upon arrival and departure
- Participants may share equipment when circumstances require it (i.e. soccer ball on the field). If shared equipment must be used, prepare a cleaning protocol and supplies to disinfect shared equipment between uses.

Program Activity:

Fitness, Health, and Wellness

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- [Fitness Health & Wellness Webpage](#)
- [Fitness Health & Wellness Resources](#)

Young Athletes

- Phase 1 activities, coaches and Programs must have sufficient Young Athletes equipment to provide each child with their own station or set of equipment
- All equipment needs to be sanitized before and after each session. Select equipment that can be easily wiped down. For example, a rubber or flyweight ball will be easier to clean than cloth beanbags or balls
- In Phase 2, if equipment is shared between children, sanitize equipment after each individual use
- Increase the size of the field, court, or space being used for Young Athletes activities to ensure children can always remain 6 feet apart
- For community-based Young Athletes activities, have parents or caregivers serve as Young Athletes volunteers, instead of external individuals
- Only one parent or caregiver per child should attend activities
- Stagger arrival and departure times so families are not entering the facility at the same time
- When possible, use outdoor facilities to increase space and limit opportunity for transmission
- Alternatively, in Phase 1, coaches can focus on Young Athletes activities that can be done with no equipment (click link for activities) https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Young-Athletes-Return-to-Activities-Addendum.pdf?_ga=2.210043221.1944423600.1598891768-470270565.1568643164
- Young Athletes Resources: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YC0_QcdVISN7vyhNoOlawO15Sn7fUAV

Developmental Sports

- Age-appropriate introduction to sports for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 6-12 years old (15 – badminton)
- Phase 1 activities, coaches and Programs must have sufficient equipment to provide each child with their own station or set of equipment
- All equipment needs to be sanitized before and after each session
- In Phase 2, if equipment is shared between children, sanitize equipment after each individual use
- Increase the size of the field, court, or space being used for activities to ensure children can always remain 6 feet apart
- For community-based Young Athletes activities, have parents or caregivers serve as Young Athletes volunteers, instead of external individuals
- Only one parent or caregiver per child should attend activities
- Stagger arrival and departure times so families are not entering the facility at the same time
- When possible, use outdoor facilities to increase space and limit opportunity for transmission
- Developmental Sports Resources: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/developmental-sports>

MATP:

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- MATP Resources: http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/matp/?&_ga=2.78348305.464579031.1598901537-1078356308.1588254922

Summer Sports:

Bowling:

- Due to unique facility compliance considerations, regional leader must be consulted prior to participation
- Athletes need to choose or use their own bowling ball
- With Volunteer assistance, athletes should gather and sanitize their own ball between frames
- Bowling Alley must meet protocol standards to ensure physical distancing (site visit encouraged)
- Maximum 2 people per lane
- Bowling Resource: <https://www.bowl.com/USBCCOVID19Update/>

Swimming:

- Maintain physical distancing at all times – maximum 2 people per lane
- All relays excluded until further notice
- Staggered use of locker rooms to maintain physical distance guidelines
- Swimming Resource: <https://www.usaswimming.org/home/covid-news>

Volleyball

- Skills only (Phase 1)
 - Athletes should gather their own volleyball
- Serving, Bumping and Setting, Team Assessment Skills
- Team Volleyball may resume in Phase 2
 - masks will be worn during play
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- Volleyballs must be sanitized or replaced after each dead ball
- Volleyball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball/features/usa-volleyball-response-on-coronavirus>

Gymnastics

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- Gymnastics Resource: <https://usagym.org/pages/aboutus/pages/coronavirus.html>

Powerlifting

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- Powerlifting Resource: <https://www.usapowerlifting.com/covid-19-updates/>

Basketball

- Skills only (Phase 1 & 2) physical contact during live play is likely, prohibiting team basketball
- Dribbling, Passing, Shooting Team Assessment Skills
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- Athletes should gather their own ball
- Basketballs must be sanitized before each exchange
- Basketball Resource: <http://www.fiba.basketball/news/fiba-publishes-guidelines-for-the-return-to-basketball>

Tennis

- Skills only (Phase 1)
- Serving, Forehand Volley, Backhand Volley, Forehand Ground stroke, backhand ground stroke, serve deuce court, serve advantage court, alternating ground strokes with movement

- If tennis balls are handled by multiple athletes, they must be sanitized before each exchange; eg: **aerosol spray can be used**
- If multiple courts present, set-up courts 10 feet apart
- Tennis Resource: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/usta-covid-19-updates.html>

Athletics

- Individual running events only (Phase 1)
- Field events and relays eligible in Phase 2
- Consider staggering athlete start times during training sessions when possible
- Assign athletes to every other lane
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- Equipment must be sanitized before each exchange
- Athletics Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

Fall Sports:

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

Cross Country:

- Do not run in a pack
- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Cross Country Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

Cycling:

- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Cycling Resource: <https://usacycling.org/event-organizer/covid-19-event-resources>

Equestrian:

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- 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>

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>

Soccer:

- Skills only (Phase 1 & 2 through November 19th, 2020)
- Team Soccer, (Phase 2 eligible in 2021)
- Dribbling, Shooting, Run & Kick, Team Assessment Skills
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- 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
- Bat for Distance, Base Race, Fielding, Hitting, Throwing, Team Assessment Skills
- Athletes should gather their own ball in between sets
- Softballs must be sanitized before each exchange
- Team Softball may resume in Phase 2
 - masks will be worn during play
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- Softball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/covid-resources>

Winter Sports:

Alpine Skiing & Snowboarding

- 1 athlete per chair on the lift (Phase 1 & 2) *(if needed, a volunteer may accompany and safeguard athletes while using the lift)
- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Skiing Resource: <https://usskiandsnowboard.org/>

Cross Country Skiing

- Do not ski in a pack
- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Skiing Resource: <https://usskiandsnowboard.org/>

Floor Hockey

- Skills only (Phase 1 & 2) physical contact during live play is likely, prohibiting team floor hockey
- Defense (maintain 6 feet physical distance), Passing, Stick Handling, Shoot for Accuracy, Shoot Around the Goal
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- Athletes should gather their own puck
- If hockey pucks are handled by multiple athletes, they must be sanitized before each exchange; eg:
aerosol spray can be used
- Floor Hockey Resources: <https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety/> /
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afbhypy9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0>

Figure Skating

- Athletes may practice together but should wear a mask
- Figure Skating Resource: <https://www.usfigureskating.org/coronavirus>

Speed Skating

- Stagger start times to ensure physical distance requirements are met
- Athletes may practice together but should wear a mask
- Speed Skating Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating>

Snowshoeing

- Individual events only (Phase 1)
- Consider staggering athlete start times during training sessions when possible
- Assign athletes to every other lane
- Relays eligible in Phase 2
- Snowshoeing Resource: <http://www.snowshoeracing.com/>

Additional Considerations:

Competition:

- During S.O. phase 1 & 2, small group local competition is still possible. As SONY determines clubs and athletes that register to return, a local competition calendar will be developed
- Local culminating competition: SONY regions will support those clubs and athletes who have registered and are training with a culminating event
 - Either training club specific, or as a local regional event
 - Dependent upon the number of athletes and health considerations

Venue:

- 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 they are taking? How can we inform them of our safety precautions and expectations if they are commingling 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 will practice responsible physical distancing by remaining at least 6 feet apart
- All athletes, staff, volunteers, and spectators will wear PPE such as face masks, gloves; etc.
- 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

Volunteers/Coaches/Officials:

- Consider having volunteers/teams of volunteers whose sole purpose is to concentrate on sanitizing, cleaning, enforcing athlete physical 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 physical 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 physically 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 physical 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 physical distancing
- Break athletes into small groups that stay together and do not co-mingle. Keep players together in small groups with designated 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 on the ground to ensure physical 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, and 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 physical 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 the same "spot" for gear and 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

https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Return-to-Activities-Sport-Risks-Recommendations.pdf?_ga=2.234347358.155407231.1599672847-470270565.1568643164