

Return To Activities Protocol

Last Updated and New York Board Approved
July, 2021

Special Olympics



Special Olympics, Inc. and Special Olympics New York have updated guidance on return to in-person activities to reflect the latest information on COVID-19. This guidance is based on the latest information from the World Health Organization (WHO), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other health authorities and created in consultation with a team of global medical experts and with input from Special Olympics stakeholders.

The primary goal of this guidance has been and remains zero deaths due to transmission of COVID-19 at events. The secondary goal is to prevent outbreaks of COVID-19. While local and national guidance should always be followed, we are providing guidance above the local, state and national levels because of the high risk of COVID to our population to protect all in our movement. This guidance is intended to supplement – not replace – any state/provincial, local, territorial/national or tribal health and safety laws, rules and regulations with which similar organizations must comply.

Guidance on COVID-19 Return to Activities

Programs MUST designate a COVID-19 response point-person to keep current guidance, compliance requirements, coordinate response and monitor for COVID-19. This may be the National Director/CEO/Executive Director or a designee.

Additionally, the information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Special Olympics makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. Further, you should seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials if you have specific questions about symptoms and/or diagnoses related to COVID-19.

Similarly, Programs should immediately consult with legal and/or insurance counsel regarding any liability or coverage related questions.

Throughout this document “participants” are defined as all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, family members, caregivers, staff or others in attendance of an activity. This guidance is intended for all in-person activities (e.g., sports practices, competition, coaches training, Young Athletes, Healthy Athletes, Program-hosted UCS activities, Athlete Leadership, volunteer meetings/trainings, etc.). School-hosted activities and fundraising events are considered separate from this framework and Programs should follow regulations and COVID protocols from their school and local authorities, respectively for those events.

Guiding Principles

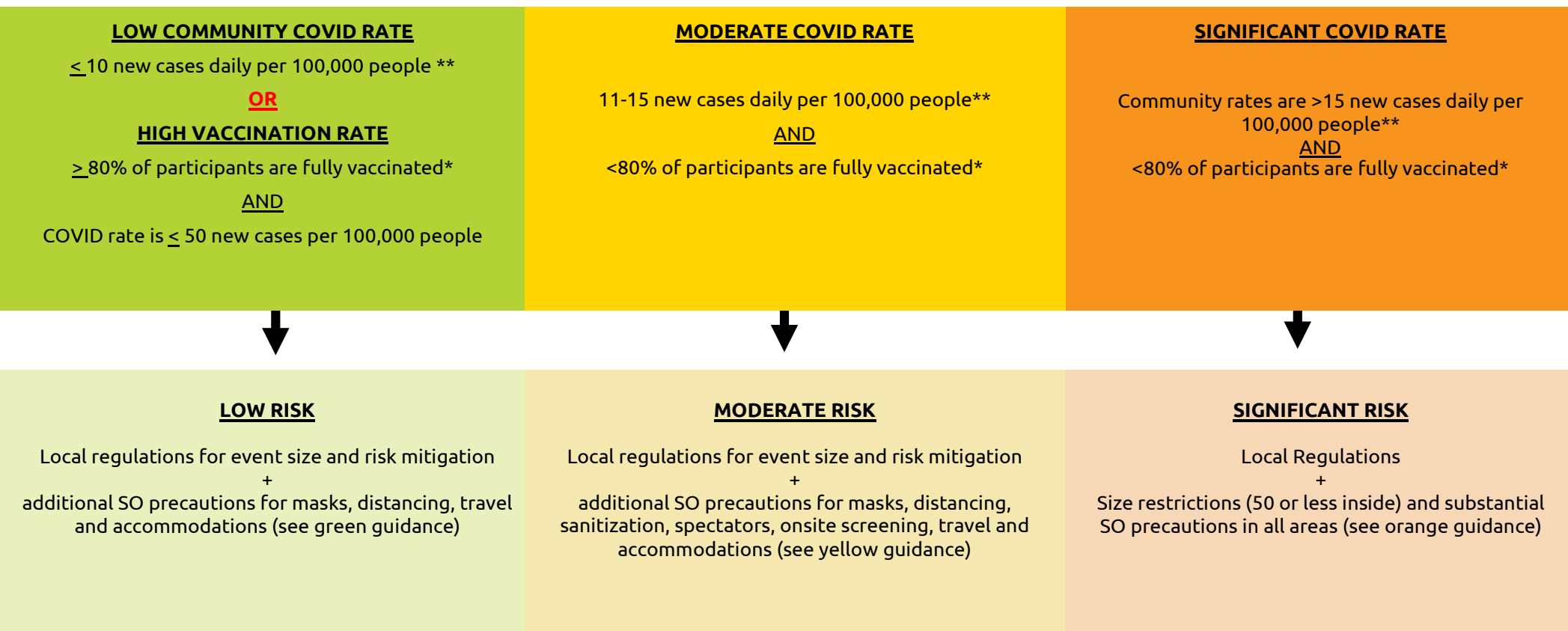
1. The health and safety of all members of the Special Olympics movement is paramount.
2. Beyond a sports organization, Special Olympics is a movement for and by people with intellectual disabilities (ID), and its guidance must be inclusive and directed at the unique needs and abilities of people with ID.
3. Relevant WHO and country-specific (e.g., U.S. CDC) guidelines should serve as minimum standards. In addition, consideration should be given to local and community authorities in that if there are more conservative/restrictive guidelines, these should be followed.
4. Guidance is based on current medical information available at the time of publication.
5. Guidance takes a phased approach that is dependent on local transmission rates, vaccination rates as well as testing/monitoring/contact tracing/health system capacity.

Special Olympics Return to Activities Protocol



SOI Revised June 2021

If in-person activities are permitted in your local area, follow below guidance (color chart) to determine protocols needed, in addition to local regulations.



*KEY DEFINITIONS:

- **Fully Vaccinated:** Two (2) weeks after completing all doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. (Valid sources for proof of vaccine will include a copy of one of the following: NY Vaccination Card, NYS Excelsior Wallet Pass (screen shot) or a Medical Verification being a note or signed record from your practitioner documenting the date of your full vaccination status).
- **Participants:** Athletes, Unified partners, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers, HODs, SO Staff, and families/caregivers if they will not exclusively be in spectator only spaces.
- **Community:** Generally, the community is the county/district. If data is not available for the county/district, then use the smallest community (e.g., state) for which the data is available.
- **PCR/NAAT:** PCR or NAAT, is a type of viral diagnostic test for COVID-19.
- **Rolling 7-day average/100,000:** a 7-day moving average, takes the case rates per 100,000 people for the last 7 days, adds them up, and divides it by 7.

**Resources for Identifying 7-Day Rolling Average Case Rate:

- Country Level Data Globally (this is per Million to divide by 10): <https://tinyurl.com/944jd6xe>
- State Level Data in the US: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/coronavirus-us-cases-deaths/>
- County/District Level Data should also be available from your Local Health Authorities and/or Local Resources.
- The Brown School of Public Health (formally Harvard Metrics): <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>

Protocols	<u>Low Risk</u>	<u>Moderate Risk</u>	<u>Significant Risk</u>
Event Size and Venue Type (indoors/outdoors)	Size and venue per local authority regulations.	Size and venue per local authority regulations.	Entirely Outdoors (except restrooms): Size per local authority regulations Indoors or Mixed Indoors/Outdoors: ≤50 participants NOTE: Mixed venue=Events that still have indoor components (e.g., meals) even if primary activity is outdoors.
Type of sport/activity	Per local authority regulations.	Per local authority regulations. Stagger start times to reduced crowding at the event.	Individual sports and indirect contact sports only for competition play. No competitive play for contact sports – drills only For non-sport (e.g., leadership trainings, meetings, etc.): Distancing and no direct contact.
Forms	Athletes, Coaches, Unified partners, Officials, Volunteers, and Staff complete the COVID Code of Conduct & Risk Form. Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants (US Only).	Athletes, Coaches, Unified partners, Officials, Volunteers, and Staff complete the COVID Code of Conduct & Risk Form. Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants (US Only).	Athletes, Coaches, Unified partners, Officials, Volunteers, and Staff complete the COVID Code of Conduct & Risk Form. Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants (for US Only).
Operations	Event organizers must have a COVID Point of Contact identified. Event organizers must have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID symptoms, rapid testing (if necessary), contact tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.	Event organizers must have a COVID Point of Contact identified. Event organizers must have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID symptoms, rapid testing (if necessary), contact tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.	Event organizers must have a COVID Point of Contact identified. Event organizers must have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID symptoms, rapid testing (if necessary), contact tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.
Onsite Screening	Signage on preventive measures (handwashing, distancing and masking) and education on symptoms and	Verbal confirmation of no symptoms for all participants and spectators + recommended onsite temperature checks on arrival (each day, if multiple days).	Written confirmation (electronically or via paper) of no symptoms for all participants + recommended onsite temperature checks.

	reminder to stay home if sick or any symptoms.	Signage on preventive measures (handwashing, distancing and masking) and education on symptoms and reminder to stay home if sick or any symptoms.	Verbal confirmation for spectators on arrival + recommended temperature check (each day, if event is multiple days). Signage on preventive measures (handwashing, distancing and masking) and education on symptoms and reminder to stay home if sick or any symptoms.
Positive COVID test or previous COVID disease	No participation within 10 days of COVID positive test and 7 days of any symptoms. Athletes and Unified partners should receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.	No participation within 10 days of COVID positive test and 7 days of any symptoms. Athletes and Unified partners must receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.	No participation within 10 days of COVID positive test and 7 days of any symptoms. Athletes and Unified partners must receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.
Masking *Masking requirements may be more stringent if Programs chooses based on local situation.	Masks strongly recommended for ALL participants, especially when indoors, except during rigorous exercise. All individuals who are unvaccinated to wear masks indoors and outdoors, except during rigorous exercise.	Masks required for ALL participants, especially when indoors, except during rigorous exercise.	Masks required at all times for ALL participants, except during rigorous exercise.
Distancing	Take active measures to ensure distancing as much as possible outside of sport activities, especially in indoor spaces.	Distancing required at all times.	Distancing required at all times.

Transportation	Private transportation encouraged as much as possible. Distancing on any shared transport organized by SO. Masking required for all on any SO transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated.	Private transportation encouraged as much as possible. Distancing on any shared transport organized by SO. Masking required for all on any SO transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated.	Private transportation encouraged as much as possible. Distancing on any shared transport organized by SO. Masking required for all on any SO transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated.
Travel <i>All travel requirements for host country/state/territory as well as for return to home should also be considered in planning.</i>	Permitted, with precautions. All participants must be from other low transmission area or must be vaccinated – tracked as part of planning and registration. If air/train travel, strongly recommended that a negative PCR test be required prior to departing home location. Individuals with positive results are instructed to stay home.	Permitted, with precautions. All participants must be from other low transmission area or must be vaccinated – tracked as part of planning and registration. If air/train travel, negative PCR test should be required prior to departing home location. Individuals with positive results are instructed to stay home.	Not permitted outside local area, state, province/territory.
Accommodations	If ALL individuals in the room are vaccinated, up to 4 individuals may share a room. If one individual is unvaccinated, max of 2 per room. Otherwise, individuals sharing a room must live in the same household.	If ALL individuals in the room are vaccinated, up to 4 individuals may share a room. If one individual is unvaccinated, max of 2 per room. Otherwise, individuals sharing a room must live in the same household.	Overnight events with accommodations organized by SO not permitted.
Multi-Day Events Testing Protocol	Required for International events and Recommended for State/Country events: If event is more than 7 days, rapid PCR test is recommended at least once for credentialed participants.	Required for International Events and Strongly Recommended for State/Country events: If event is more than 7 days, rapid PCR test is recommended at least once for credentialed participants.	Multi-day/Overnight events not permitted under Orange protocol.

	NOTE: If anyone tests positive, they should not participate, be isolated, and contract tracing should be conducted per event protocol and local regulations.	NOTE: If anyone tests positive, they should not participate, be isolated, and contract tracing should be conducted per event protocol and local regulations.	
Sanitization	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas (e.g., bathrooms, meal areas) and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas (e.g., bathrooms, meal areas) and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas (e.g., bathrooms, meal areas) and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.
Spectators Sideline observers (e.g., family/support staff)	Permitted per local authority regulations. Separation from participants as much as possible.	Limited. Must be separated from athletes and not attend participant areas.	Not permitted (unless athlete requires additional assistance from caregiver that can't be accommodated by a coach/volunteer. Permissions granted at the Program's discretion). Individuals should maintain social distance from one another on the sideline.
Meals	Stagger mealtimes and cohort groups as much as possible, especially when indoors.	No self-serve buffet meals. Participants bring own water bottles. Stagger mealtimes and cohort groups as much as possible.	Participants bring their own meals and water bottles and/or pick-up only. Stagger mealtimes and cohort groups.
Non-Sport Gatherings (during Competitions)	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. Minimize large social gatherings (e.g., community dances, athlete festivals), where possible.	Limit additional non-sport gatherings occurring during competitions. No large social gatherings (e.g., community dances, athlete festivals) If held, follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.

Ceremonies	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. For award ceremonies, strongly recommend outdoors.	No in-person opening/closing ceremonies. For award ceremonies, maintain size limits, masking, sanitization, and distancing requirements outlined above. Find alternatives to placing medals around the athletes' necks to maintain distancing.
Healthy Athletes	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. See additional HA guidance for discipline-specific precautions.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. See additional HA guidance for discipline-specific precautions.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. See additional HA guidance for discipline-specific precautions.
Young Athletes	Children should wear masks during YA activities. Unvaccinated coaches and volunteers should also wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged. Additional guidance for implementing YA activities in the Return to Activities protocol for young children.	Children should wear masks during YA activities. All coaches and volunteers should also wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged. Additional guidance for implementing YA activities in the Return to Activities protocol for young children.	Children should wear masks during YA activities. All coaches and volunteers should also wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are Required. Additional guidance for implementing YA activities in the Return to Activities protocol for young children.
School-based Activities	School-based activities led by schools are considered separate from this framework and should comply with guidance from schools/districts.	School-based activities led by schools are considered separate from this framework and should comply with guidance from schools/districts.	School-based activities led by schools are considered separate from this framework and should comply with guidance from schools/districts.

Fundraising Events	<p>Fundraising events are considered separate from this framework and should comply with any local regulations and local guidelines and in consultation with local legal counsel.</p> <p>There is a template for a General Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity (US example) available for these events.</p>	<p>Fundraising events are considered separate from this framework and should comply with any local regulations and local guidelines and in consultation with local legal counsel.</p> <p>There is a template for a General Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity (US example) available for these events.</p>	<p>Fundraising events are considered separate from this framework and should comply with any local regulations and local guidelines with additional guidance for athlete leaders serving in an official capacity to complete the Code of Conduct and Risk Form and maintain masking and distancing protocols.</p> <p>There is a template for a General Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity (US example) available for these events.</p>
--------------------	--	--	--

NOTE: In all levels, and under “Stay at Home” Orders, virtual activities should be offered to those individuals who may be unable to attend in-person. For all participants who are unable to comply with this guidance, the individual’s circumstances should be assessed, and alternative accommodations should be offered.

Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation: Functional Area Considerations

SPORT

Each sport will present a varying level of risk as well and 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) at all levels of return. Throughout the pandemic, many local, national and international sport associations have offered 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.

SCHOOLS

With regards to activities in schools, Programs should follow the school's protocols and guidance in terms of when and how activities may resume. If school activities transition into Special Olympics community activities (e.g., the final competition/tournament is hosted by Special Olympics), then proper return to play protocol and necessary precautions for Special Olympics events, as outlined in this document, must be followed.

If the school or community partner's guidelines are less stringent or in conflict with the guidelines of Special Olympics, the following guidance applies:

1. The school/partner leaders/authorities should be informed of the Special Olympics guidelines for determining return to play.
2. The possibility of high-risk conditions in populations within the movement is conveyed to leaders/authorities.
3. Decision-making and options are provided to students with and without ID to provide for equal treatment.
4. Parents, guardians, or other caregivers of youth participants are provided with education on Special Olympics guidelines and relevant acknowledgements (e.g., video)
5. Youth participants involve in Special Olympics branded/sanctioned activities are given the option to opt out without penalty and are provided options for safe at home activities.

HEALTHY ATHLETES

Because of the nature of Healthy Athlete screening events which are often conducted indoors, may require close contact with decreased opportunity for physical distancing, and some interactions may be high risk without proper PPE and precautions in place, additional guidance is available on safety precautions for returning to in-person Healthy Athlete events under each level. Virtual health programming and education should continue to be offered when in person activities are limited and/or as an extension of in-person activities to reach a greater number of athletes.

LEADERSHIP

Each leadership activity (e.g., Athlete Leadership workshops, Regional or Program leader meetings, Board meetings, Leadership Academy, Athlete Input Councils) will present a varying level of risk, and determination of what modifications are feasible should be considered by the Program. However, if precautions and mitigation for infection control (e.g., PPE, physical distancing, no shared equipment/supplies, and/or disinfection, staggered starts, etc.) can be implemented, then leadership activities may resume following the guidance for each level. If travel of participants occurs, the participants must be vaccinated and/or coming from an area in which they have the same or lower community transmission levels as the host site and follow local regulations on travel for both the originating location and the host location. Virtual programming and participation will be encouraged and available through all phases, as is feasible.

Onsite Screening Protocol for COVID-19

Regular education must be provided to all athletes, staff, volunteers, coaches, families and caregivers reminding them stay home if they have a fever or any signs and symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). **Individuals must not participate in any activities if they are sick, for their own health and to reduce transmission of any infections to others. Instruct anyone who is ill to contact their own health provider for further evaluation.**

However, in addition to this education, before or prior to entering an activity, practice, event, or gathering, for **Green** level, you must have signage that reminds individuals who are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to not enter the venue or participate in the event.

For **Yellow** and **Orange** level events (Moderate and Significant Risk), Program:

1. Must set-up a space for screening that maintains physical distance (6ft/2m) during screening.
2. Must ask the following questions verbally for Yellow and in written form for Orange (so you have documentation):
 - a. In the last 14 days, have you had contact with someone who has been sick with COVID-19?
 - i. If yes, they should self-quarantine per local regulations.
 - b. Have you had a fever in the last week (temperature of 100.4°F/37.8°C or higher)?
 - c. Do you have a cough and/or difficulty breathing?
 - d. Do you have any other signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea)?
3. Recommend to conduct onsite measurement of temperature using thermometer, if possible (preferred non-touch thermal scanning thermometer if possible).
 - a. Fever equals temperature of 100.4°F/37.8°C or higher.
 - b. If high, may re-test after 5 minutes to ensure temperature is accurate.
4. Must record all names, results and contact information and keep in case needed for contact tracing or reporting (*Template available in supplemental materials*).
5. If yes to any questions regarding symptoms and/or elevated temperature, participants **MUST** be isolated from the group (at minimum, kept 2m/6ft apart from others and with mask on), be sent home, and instructed to contact their healthcare provider for evaluation.
 - a. Participants who are found to have COVID-19 symptoms must wait 7 days after symptoms resolve to return to activity OR must provide written proof of physician clearance to Special Olympics to return earlier.
 - b. Participants who test positive for/have COVID-19 must provide written medical clearance before returning to sport and fitness activities.

Questions?

For local volunteers and participants, please contact your Accredited Program office for questions.

For Accredited Programs, please contact your Regional Office or Special Olympics, Inc. for questions.

For general questions to SOI, Regions may email COVID@specialolympics.org or for liability questions, email Legal@specialolympics.org.

Glossary of Terms

- **Fully Vaccinated:** Two (2) weeks after completing all doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Participants:** Athletes, Unified partners, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers, HODs, SO Staff, and families/caregivers if they will not exclusively be in spectator only spaces.
- **Community:** Ideally, the community would be at the county/district level. If data is not available at the county/district level, then use the lowest level (e.g., state) for which the data is available.
- **PCR/NAAT:** A Nucleic Acid Amplification Test, or NAAT, is a type of viral diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Polymer Chain Reaction (PCR) is the most common type of an NAAT test.
- **Rolling 7-day average/100,000:** A 7-day moving average, takes the case rates per 100,000 people for the last 7 days, adds them up, and divides it by 7. This provides a more stable case rate than daily which may have very high days and very low days.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Additional materials available in supplemental documentation on the [Special Olympics Resources for COVID-19 website](#):

- a. Frequently Asked Questions and Additional Considerations
- b. Factsheet on Who is at Higher Risk
- c. COVID-19 Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Assessment Form
- d. Screening and Tracking Report Template
- e. Virtual Games Participation Waiver (for non-registered athletes)
- f. General Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity (US example)
- g. Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants (US Only)
- h. Links to Sport Specific Recommendations on how to modify activities
- i. Healthy Athletes Screening Specific Guidance
- j. Training and education materials for participants and coaches
- k. Signage and educational posters on precautions and COVID-19 symptoms
- l. Social Media infographics

As developed, additional resources will be added to the Special Olympics Resources website for COVID-19:

<https://resources.specialolympics.org/return-to-activities-during-covid-19>