

Dec 2021 v3

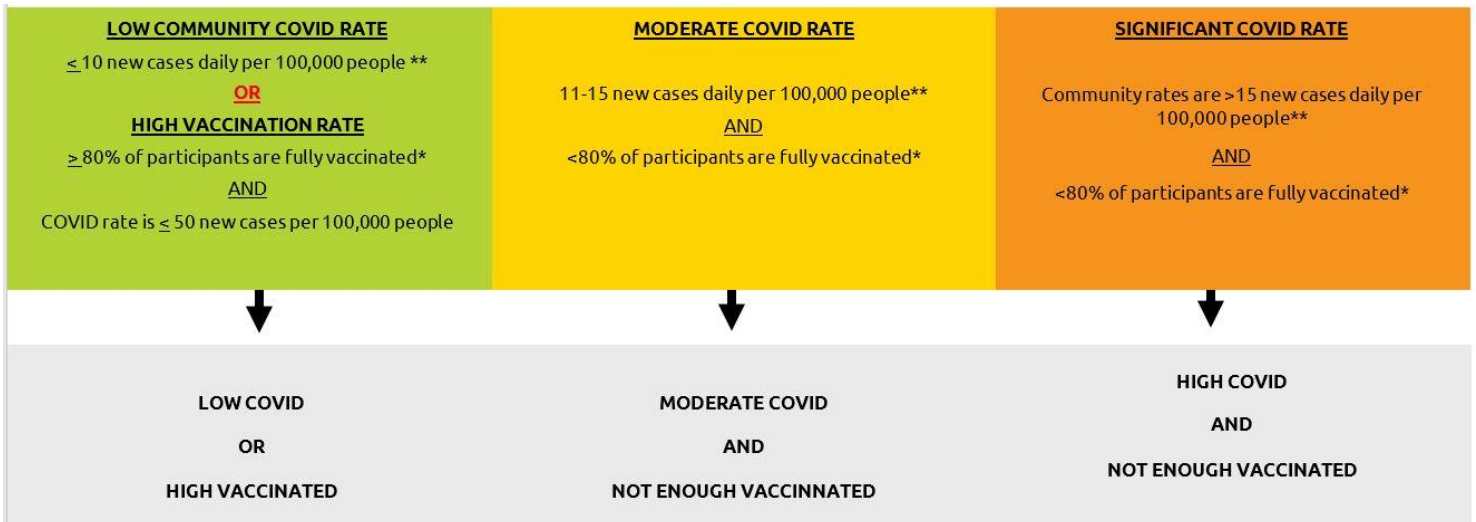
## Return to Activity Seasonal Guide

Every day, Special Olympics New York reviews the current metrics and positive rates of COVID-19, including local guidance where available. As more and more New Yorkers become vaccinated and the safety of our athletes is always our primary consideration, we will continue to offer in-person as well as virtual program offerings. We have every reason to remain optimistic for robust in-person activity and we continue to offer (off the field) at-home activities that are safe, fun and valuable. We look forward to a return to unrestricted program activity as soon as possible.

This introductory information applies to all Special Olympics New York (SONY) program activity. Details, safety precautions and protocol for return can be found in the **SONY/SOI Return Protocol and Guidance Documents**. In addition to our ongoing in-person return to activity SONY will continue to offer off the field program that can be done individually or absent of large gatherings. We have developed a seasonal sport specific overview for training club practice and local competition during the three levels of return.

### SONY Protocol Summary

*(Please refer to the full protocol for complete detail)*



### Important Distinctions

*(Please refer to the full protocol for complete detail)*

<p><b>[Low Transmission]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Sports possible with limited modification</li> <li>• <b>Open travel</b> to yellow and green gatherings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Onsite Check-in</li> <li>• Masks and Distancing Required</li> <li>• Full Sports possible with limited modification</li> <li>• <b>Limited travel:</b> All participants must be vaccinated &amp; can travel to yellow &amp; green gatherings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor activity is restricted to 50 or less</li> <li>• Physical Onsite Check-in</li> <li>• Masks and Distancing Required</li> <li>• Individual sports and indirect contact sports only for competition play. No competitive play for contact sports – drills/skills only</li> <li>• No Travel or Overnights</li> <li>• No Spectators</li> </ul>
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## General Information:

Each sport will present a varying level of risk and modifications should be considered by the Program as necessary. However, if precautions and mitigating criteria (e.g. PPE, physical distancing, limit shared equipment and/or disinfection, staggered starts, etc.) can be implemented, then most sports may be offered in full capacity during the **Green (Low Risk)** and **Yellow (Moderate risk)** Levels of return. Many local, national and international sport associations have begun to offer guidance on how to safely return to play within their sport. 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. Effective Jan. 1, 2022, Special Olympics New York will require proof of COVID-19 vaccination in the following settings (updated 12'21):

- **Athletes, Class A Coaches and event Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to travel outside of their local region or attend overnight events. Day of Event – Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to attend any gathering.**
- **All athlete participating in high-risk sports training and competition must be vaccinated. High-risk sports are determined by the SONA/SONY sports guidance and the New York State Department of Health. As of December 2021, they are Floor Hockey (winter), Volleyball and Basketball (summer), and Soccer (fall).**
- **All athletes or coaches participating in a sports training and competition where vaccinations are required by local mandate.**
- **Unified and school-based athletes participating in a school setting will continue to follow school guidance, unless traveling to a Special Olympics event outside of their school coverage.**

## 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 (Eligible for all 3 levels)

- SONY has adopted the 3 levels of return illustrated above. 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
- 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 encourage physical distancing
- For community-based Young Athletes activities, have parents or caregivers serve as Young Athletes volunteers, if possible.
- All non-vaccinated adults present at Young Athletes activities (coaches, parents, caregivers, etc.) must wear a face mask from arrival through departure.
- Children over 2 years old should wear a cloth face mask when participating in-person.
- COVID Related Guidance: [https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Young-Athletes-Return-to-Activities-Addendum-June-2021.pdf?\\_ga=2.163152639.2145461908.1627415427-384825041.1622048017](https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Young-Athletes-Return-to-Activities-Addendum-June-2021.pdf?_ga=2.163152639.2145461908.1627415427-384825041.1622048017)
- Young Athletes Resources: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YCO\\_QcdVISN7vyhNoOlawO15Sn7fUAV](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YCO_QcdVISN7vyhNoOlawO15Sn7fUAV)

### **Developmental Sports (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Developmental Sports are age-appropriate introduction to sports for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 6-12 years old (15 – badminton)
- 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
- 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
- Developmental Sports Resources: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/developmental-sports>

### **MATP: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves
- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- MATP Resources: [http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/matp/?&\\_ga=2.78348305.464579031.1598901537-1078356308.1588254922](http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/matp/?&_ga=2.78348305.464579031.1598901537-1078356308.1588254922)

## **Summer Sports:**

### **Bowling: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Athletes encouraged 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)
- Bowling Resource: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afbhby9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0>

### **Swimming: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Swimming Resource: <https://www.usaswimming.org/home/covid-news>

### **Volleyball (Eligible for all 3 levels) – (significant modification in orange)**

- (Orange – Significant/**High Risk**) Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves and Volleyballs must be sanitized or replaced after each dead ball; Skills and Team Skills only, no direct physical contact permitted
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green and Yellow Levels
- Volleyball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball/features/usa-volleyball-response-on-coronavirus>

### **Gymnastics (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- (Orange – Significant Risk) Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves and all shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Gymnastics Resource: <https://usagym.org/pages/aboutus/pages/coronavirus.html>

### **Powerlifting (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- All shared equipment needs to be sanitized in between each athlete
- Powerlifting Resource: <https://www.usapowerlifting.com/covid-19-updates/>

### **Basketball (Eligible for all 3 levels) – (significant modification in orange)**

- (Orange Significant/**High Risk**) Skills only; physical contact during live play is likely, prohibiting team basketball when in Orange

- Dribbling, Passing, Shooting Team Assessment Skills
- Athletes should gather their own ball when using skills format
- Basketballs must be sanitized before each exchange
- Basketball Resource: <http://www.fiba.basketball/news/fiba-publishes-guidelines-for-the-return-to-basketball>

**Tennis (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Shared equipment must be sanitized before each exchange; **aerosol spray can be used**
- Tennis Resource: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/usta-covid-19-updates.html>

**Athletics (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Equipment must be sanitized before each exchange
- Athletics Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

**Fall Sports:**

**Bocce: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- 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
- Bocce Resource: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afhbypy9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0>

**Cross Country: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Avoid running in a pack
- Cross Country Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

**Cycling: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Cycling Resource: <https://usacycling.org/event-organizer/covid-19-event-resources>

**Equestrian: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- 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: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Golf Resource: [www.usga.org](http://www.usga.org)

**Soccer: (Eligible for all 3 levels) – (significant modification in orange)**

- Shared equipment and Soccer balls must be sanitized before each exchange
- (Orange – Significant/High Risk) Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will wear medical gloves and balls must be sanitized or replaced after each dead ball; Skills and Team Skills only, no direct physical contact permitted
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green and Yellow Levels
- Social Distancing Drills:  
[https://www.soccerindiana.org/assets/58/6/what\\_social\\_distancing\\_grids\\_can\\_look\\_like.pdf](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: (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Shared equipment and Softballs must be sanitized before each exchange
- Softball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/covid-resources>

## **Winter Sports:**

### **Alpine Skiing & Snowboarding (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Skiing Resource: <https://usskiandsnowboard.org/>

### **Cross Country Skiing (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Avoid skiing in a pack
- Skiing Resource: <https://usskiandsnowboard.org/>

### **Floor Hockey (Eligible for all 3 levels – (significant modifications in orange)**

- (Orange – Significant/High Risk) when in the orange level, Skills only; physical contact during live play is likely, prohibiting team floor hockey
- When in orange, Defense (maintain 6 feet physical distance), Passing, Stick Handling, Shoot for Accuracy, Shoot Around the Goal, Athletes should gather their own puck
- Shared equipment and pucks handled by multiple athletes, must be sanitized before each exchange; **aerosol spray can be used**
- Floor Hockey Resources: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/floor-hockey?locale=en>
- <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afbhypy9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0>

### **Figure Skating (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Figure Skating Resource: <https://www.usfigureskating.org/coronavirus>

### **Speed Skating (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Speed Skating Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating>

### **Snowshoeing (Eligible for all 3 levels)**

- Snowshoeing Resource: <http://www.snowshoeracing.com/>

## **Additional Considerations:**

### **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):**

- Do we have the ability (financial, procurement, distribution) to provide everyone with appropriate PPE as needed?
- Have we agreed upon the forms of PPE we will be requiring or recommending be used at activities (masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and spray, personal water bottles, temporal thermometers, disposable gloves, personal towels, etc.)?
- Do we have a communications plan for all participants of any SONY activity (athletes, Unified partners, volunteers, coaches, officials, venue staff, family members/caregivers, spectators, donors/sponsors, etc.) to let them know the PPE expectations are (what they must/should bring, what SONY will provide, etc.)?

**Venue:**

- Is there a safe training location available that meets or exceeds the standards of our protocol?
- What assurances do we have from venue of implementation of their sanitization measures/procedures?
- Have we closely reviewed the contract (and consulted with American Specialty Insurance on contract language and/or certificates of insurance) to be clear if we are or are not expected to take on the responsibility and labor of sanitizing their venue?
- Have coach / local volunteer / staff do venue walk-through prior to practice / activity to assess all necessary protocol, safety and activity modification needs.
- 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 co-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:**

- What signage and notices language/scripts will we provide our local training programs / coaches for them to post?
- 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.

*Example Signage:*

- Do not enter if you are exhibiting any signs of illness such as sneezing, coughing, sniffles, have a fever, or don't feel well
- If you are repeatedly sneezing or coughing, you may be asked to immediately leave the premises
- All athletes, staff, volunteers, and spectators should practice responsible social distancing by remaining at least 6ft 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
- Avoid touching your face including your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Broadcast regular announcements on public announcement (PA) system

**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.
- Try to 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.
- **Athletes, Class A Coaches and Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to travel outside of their local region or attend overnight events. Day of Event – Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not**

permitted to attend any gathering (Updated 12'21).

**Staff / Volunteers / Coaches / Officials:**

- Do we have enough personnel available, trained and comfortable with the protocols to meet athlete ratio needs and conduct safe activities? Have go/no-go plan if not enough qualified personnel available.
- Have back-up staffing plan for coaches, volunteers and officials: cross-train staff and create a roster of trained back-up personnel.
- How will we educate and train volunteers, coaches, officials (including helping them understand if they themselves may be considered at higher risk)?
- Consider making the SOI eLearning COVID-19 course as optional or required prior to volunteering, coaching, officiating, or participating in certain SO activities?
- How will we communicate/message the “why?” behind our increased safety and health measures in volunteer education and communications, especially as many volunteers don’t understand that our athletes (and other participants may be at higher risk)?
- 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.
- What kind of extra volunteers might we want? Health care professionals to assist with participant screenings, on-site observation for symptoms, and/or in the event of on-site quarantine needs?
- How will we educate volunteers and coaches as to the authority they have to send someone home from a practice or event if they do not meet the screening requirements or do not to the participant agreement terms.
- How will we communicate to and educate coaches that it’s OK to not come back if they don’t feel safe to help alleviate fear of “letting the athletes down.”
- Coaches, volunteers and officials must social distance at all times! Stay at least 6 feet apart.
- **Day of Event - Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to attend any gathering. (July'21)**

**Equipment:**

- What is equipment pre and post cleaning procedure?
- 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:**

- Consult the return to Activities Protocol for guidance for each risk level, but in general, make best efforts to reduce the number of non-essential personnel at practices/events.
- 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.
- Based on the risk level your Program/event falls in to, spectators either should or should be encouraged to 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: do we have enough venue availability? Can our coaches give that much time?
- Modify all sports to meet any applicable social distancing requirements.
- Consider having no spectators at practices and/or some events.
- Use physical guidance (ropes, tape on floor, chalked areas, coneing 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. Teams might consider having the same group of players stay with the same coach or having the same group of players rotate among coaches.
- 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.
- Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play (e.g., during practice, on the sideline, or in the dugout). 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

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