



April 2022

Return to Activity Seasonal Guide

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 guidance applies to all Special Olympics New York (SONY) program activity. Details and safety precautions are found in the full return to activity protocol. In addition to our ongoing in-person return to activity SONY will continue to offer an 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 four levels of return.

The information in this document and the SOI Protocol document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional legal or public health advice. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, 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 consult with legal and/or insurance counsel regarding any liability or coverage related questions.

SONY Protocol Summary

(Please refer to the full protocol for complete detail)

*If in-person activities are permitted in your local area, follow below guidance (color matrix) to determine protocols needed, in addition to local regulations. Where your community transmission and vaccination rates intersect determines your risk category.***

		Community Transmission (average daily new cases per 100,000 people)			
		0 – 10	11 – 50	51 – 99	≥100
Vaccination Rate (percent of participants at event)	100%				
	80 – 99%				
	51 – 79%				
	≤50%				

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	SIGNIFICANT RISK	VERY HIGH RISK
Local regulations for event size + additional SO precautions (see green guidance)	Local regulations for event size + additional SO precautions (see yellow guidance)	Local Regulations (outdoor) + Size restrictions (100 or less indoor) and additional SO precautions (see orange guidance)	Virtual activities only for groups of >10 participants. Groups ≤10 can gather with additional SO precautions (see orange guidance)

***KEY DEFINITIONS:**

- **Fully Vaccinated:** Two (2) weeks after receiving all recommended doses, that a participant is eligible for, of a COVID-19 vaccine(s) that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Participants:** Athletes, Unified partners, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers, HODs, SO Staff, others in attendance of an activity, 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.
- **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.

NY DOH Guidance Update: Department of Health and New York Forward, numerous COVID 19 guidance were officially archived prior to March 2nd, 2022. The Sports and Recreation Guidance was officially archived at that time and the only NY DOH guidance currently in effect is applicable to large scale indoor events of 5000 individuals or more. The following statement applies to archived guidance: *“Archived New York Forward industry reopening guidance documents are no longer mandatory. These documents are being made available as a public reference and resource only.”*

<https://forward.ny.gov/>

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 low and moderate risk levels of return to play. Our local, national, and international sport associations offer safe return to play guidance. 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.

Additional Guidance:

- Athletes, Coaches and Volunteers are required to submit proof of full vaccination.
- Athletes, Class A Coaches, and event Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to travel outside of their local region and attend overnight events.
- Day of Event – Volunteers who remain unvaccinated may support local, regional, and super-regional gatherings.

Sport Risk Assessment Guidance:

Low Risk	Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.
Moderate Risk	Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.
High Risk	Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Moderate and High-Risk sports can still be active during the “significant risk” level of the protocol in the form of individual skills training / development activities.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS		
Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Athletics - Running Events	Athletics - Field Events / Relays	Judo
Swimming - Individual Events	Swimming - Relays	Competitive Cheer
Bocce - Singles	Bocce - Doubles / Team*	Handball
Tennis - Singles	Tennis - Doubles	Basketball*
Badminton - Singles	Badminton Doubles	Netball
Table Tennis - Singles	Table Tennis - Doubles	Flag Football*
Cycling	Gymnastics (Artistic)*	Dance Sport
Equestrian	Gymnastics (Rhythmic)*	Floor Hockey
Golf	Bowling	Floorball
Open Water Swimming	Powerlifting*	
Triathlon	Roller Skating	
Alpine Skiing	Cricket	
Cross Country Skiing	Baseball*	
Figure Skating	Softball*	
Snowboarding	Volleyball	
Snowshoeing	Sailing	
Speed Skating	Football - Soccer	
	Speed Skating Relays	

*Could be potentially considered lower risk with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants.

Pre-event Testing Summary:

- The transmission and vaccination conditions are defined by the protocol risk in Yellow as **Moderate Risk**
- Unvaccinated participants (Coaches, Athletes & Volunteers) must be tested
- These participants must be tested **no more than 72 hours prior** to the gathering
- Competition, and overnight travel require testing. Training and practice gatherings do not require testing
- The test may be a PCR or at home rapid test, the results must be negative
- Minimally, proof is demonstrated with a photograph of the negative test at event check-in

Program Activity:

Fitness, Health, and Wellness

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE.
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized.
- Consider staggering lesson or training times
- [Fitness Health & Wellness Webpage](#)
- [Fitness Health & Wellness Resources](#)

Young Athletes (Eligible for all levels)

- 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.
- Children and unvaccinated coaches and volunteers should wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged.
- 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
- Young Athletes Resources: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YCO_QcdVISN7vyhNoOlawO15Sn7fUAV

Developmental Sports (Eligible for all levels)

- Developmental Sports are age-appropriate introduction to sports for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 6-12 years old (15 – badminton)
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized.
- 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 levels)

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE.
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized.
- MATP Resources: http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/matp/?&_ga=2.78348305.464579031.1598901537-1078356308.1588254922



Summer Sports:

Bowling: (Eligible for all levels)

- Athletes encouraged to choose or use their own bowling ball
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized.
- 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 levels)

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

Volleyball (Eligible for all levels) – (Modification in Orange)

- (Orange) Skills and Team Skills only, no direct physical contact permitted
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green & Yellow Levels
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized.
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE
- Volleyball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball/features/usa-volleyball-response-on-coronavirus>

Gymnastics (Eligible for all levels)

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Gymnastics Resource: <https://usagym.org/pages/aboutus/pages/coronavirus.html>

Powerlifting (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Powerlifting Resource: <https://www.usapowerlifting.com/covid-19-updates/>

Basketball (Eligible for all levels) – (Modification in Orange)

- (Orange) Skills only, dribbling, passing, shooting team assessment skills, no direct physical contact permitted
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green & Yellow Levels
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Basketball Resource: <http://www.fiba.basketball/news/fiba-publishes-guidelines-for-the-return-to-basketball>

Tennis (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Tennis Resource: <https://www.usta.com/en/home/usta-covid-19-updates.html>

Athletics (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Athletics Resource: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19>

Fall Sports:

Bocce: (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
 - Regularly sanitize bocce balls handled by multiple athletes
 - Regularly sanitize the palina
- Bocce Resource: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afbhby9mubfvx/AAD8UGthVrYs-YUH24XzfXkna?dl=0>

Cross Country: (Eligible for all levels)

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

Cycling: (Eligible for all levels)

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

Equestrian: (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE
- 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 levels)

- Golf Resource: www.usga.org

Soccer: (Eligible for all levels) – (Modification in Orange)

- (Orange) Skills and Team Skills only, no direct physical contact permitted
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green & Yellow Levels
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- 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: (Eligible for all levels)

- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- Softball Resource: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/covid-resources>

Winter Sports:

Alpine Skiing & Snowboarding (Eligible for all levels)

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

Cross Country Skiing (Eligible for all levels)

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

Floor Hockey (Eligible for all levels – (Modifications in Orange))

- (Orange) Skills only; physical contact prohibited
 - Defense skill: (maintain 6 feet physical distance), Passing, Stick Handling, Shoot for Accuracy, Shoot Around the Goal, Athletes should gather their own puck
- Full competitive team play restricted to Green & Yellow Levels
- All shared equipment to be regularly sanitized
- 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 levels)

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

Speed Skating (Eligible for all levels)

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

Snowshoeing (Eligible for all levels)

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

Additional Considerations:

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):

- Coaches, Volunteers, and/or Support Staff will have access to PPE
- PPE includes: (masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and spray, personal water bottles, temporal thermometers, disposable gloves, personal towels, etc.)
- Assure 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:

- Sanitized and safe training location available that meets or exceeds the standards of our protocol
- Head Coach, volunteers, or staff complete venue walk-through prior to practice / activity to assess all necessary protocol, safety and activity modification needs
- Assure 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)
- 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:

- 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 have trouble 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 event Volunteers who remain unvaccinated are not permitted to travel outside of their local region and attend overnight events

Staff / Volunteers / Coaches / Officials:

- 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
- 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
- Leverage health care professionals to assist with participant screenings, on-site observation for symptoms, and/or in the event of on-site quarantine needs?
- Coaches, volunteers, and officials are always encouraged to social distance.

Equipment:

- Establish an 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:

- Modify all sports to meet any applicable social distancing requirements
- Consider having no spectators at practices and/or some events
- Use physical guidance (ropes, cones, tape on floor, and chalked 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
- 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