

# Return To Activities Protocol

Last Updated: February 2022

**Special Olympics**



Special Olympics has 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, third-party 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.

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Revised February 2022

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)**

<b>Vaccination Rate</b> (percent of participants at event)		<b>0 – 10</b>	<b>11 – 50</b>	<b>51 – 99</b>	<b>≥100</b>
	<b>100%</b>				
	<b>80 – 99%</b>				
	<b>51 – 79%</b>				
<b>≤50%</b>					

<u>LOW RISK</u>	<u>MODERATE RISK</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT RISK</u>	<u>VERY HIGH RISK</u>
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.

Protocols	<u>Low Risk</u>	<u>Moderate Risk</u>	<u>Significant Risk</u>
<p><b>Pre-event testing</b>  <i>Negative COVID-19 test required within 72 hours prior to arrival at event.</i></p> <p><i>Pre-event testing is not required for regularly occurring sports practices.</i></p>	<p>Pre-event testing is <b>not required</b> but may be implemented by individual Programs.</p>	<p>Pre-event testing is required in the following conditions:            At minimum, <b>unvaccinated participants</b> should be tested prior to competition, overnight, and events requiring travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In areas of community transmission rates 11 – 50 51 – 79% of participants are vaccinated*.</li> <li>- In areas of community transmission rates 51 – 99 80 - 99% of participants are vaccinated*.</li> </ul> <p>PCR testing recommended; however rapid-antigen (including at-home) testing can be used when access to PCR testing is limited.</p>	<p>Pre-event testing is <b>not required</b> but may be implemented by individual Programs.</p>
<p><b>Event Size and Venue</b></p>	<p>Size and venue per local authority regulations.</p>	<p>Size and venue per local authority regulations.</p>	<p>Outdoors: Size per local authority regulations            Indoors or Mixed Indoors/Outdoors: ≤ 100 participants</p>
<p><b>Type of sport/activity</b></p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.</p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.            Stagger start times to reduced crowding at the event.</p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.            For non-sport (e.g., leadership trainings, meetings, etc.):            Maintain physical distancing and minimize direct contact.</p>
<p><b>Forms</b></p>	<p>All participants complete the COVID Code of Conduct &amp; Risk Form.</p> <p>US Programs only: All athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and volunteers must submit Communicable Disease Waiver.</p>	<p>All participants complete the COVID Code of Conduct &amp; Risk Form.</p> <p>US Programs only: All athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and volunteers must submit Communicable Disease Waiver.</p>	<p>All participants complete the COVID Code of Conduct &amp; Risk Form.</p> <p>US Programs only: All athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and volunteers must submit Communicable Disease Waiver.</p>
<p><b>Operations</b></p>	<p>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), contract tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.</p>	<p>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), contract tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.</p>	<p>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), contract tracing for the event, and notifying health authorities, per local requirements.</p>

<p><b>Onsite Screening</b>  <i>Required of all events:  Signage on preventive measures (handwashing distancing and masking) and education on symptoms and reminder to stayhome if sick or any symptoms.</i></p>	<p>No onsite screening required.</p>	<p><b>Verbal confirmation</b> of no symptoms for all participants and spectators + recommended onsite temperature checks on arrival (each day, if multiple days).</p>	<p><b>Written confirmation</b> (electronically or paper) of no symptoms for all participants + recommended onsite temperature checks.</p> <p>Verbal confirmation for spectators on arrival + recommended temperature check (each day, if event is multiple days).</p>
<p><b>Positive COVID test or previous COVID disease</b></p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.</p> <p>Athletes and Unified partners should receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.</p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.</p> <p>Athletes and Unified partners must receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.</p>	<p>Per local authority regulations.</p> <p>Athletes and Unified partners must receive medical clearance prior to participating in sport. Programs must educate on this requirement.</p>
<p><b>Masking</b>  <i>Not required during rigorous exercise.</i></p>	<p>Masks <b>recommended</b> for ALL participants.</p>	<p>Masks <b>required</b> for ALL participants indoors. Masks recommended outdoors when unable to physically distance.</p>	<p>Masks <b>required</b> for ALL participants.</p>
<p><b>Transportation</b></p>	<p>Masking required for all on any SO transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated.</p>	<p>Masking required for all on any SO transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated.</p>	<p>Private transportation encouraged as much as possible. Masking required for all on any SO transportation.</p>
<p><b>Travel</b>  <i>All travel requirements for host country/state/territory as well as for return to home should also be considered in planning.</i></p>	<p>If traveling from a moderate risk (yellow) location, you should be vaccinated. <b>If unvaccinated, you are permitted to travel with a negative test</b> in accordance with the requirements of the moderate risk (yellow) location.</p> <p>If air/train travel, <b>recommended</b> that a COVID-19 test be taken prior to departing home location. Individuals with positive results are instructed to stay home.</p>	<p>If traveling from another moderate risk (yellow) location, a negative COVID-19 test should be required prior to departing home location. Individuals with positive results are instructed to stay home. (See pre-event testing requirements in line one (1) of protocol grid.)</p> <p>If traveling from an area of low risk (green), taking a COVID-19 test upon return home is <b>recommended</b>.</p>	<p><b>Not permitted outside local area, state, province/territory.</b></p>

<b>Accommodations</b>	No limitation on number of <b>vaccinated individuals</b> sharing a room, per local regulations.  If one individual is unvaccinated, max of 2 per room, unless living in the same household.	Up to 4 <b>vaccinated individuals</b> may share a room.  If one individual is unvaccinated, max of 2 per room, unless living in the same household.	Overnight events with accommodations organized by SO <b>not permitted</b> .
<b>Multi-Day Events Testing Protocol</b>	<b>Required for International events and recommended for State/Country events:</b> If event is more than 7 days, COVID-19 test is recommended at least once (at the mid-point) for credentialed participants.	<b>Required for International Events and recommended for State/Country events:</b> If event is more than 7 days, rapid PCR test is recommended at least once (at the mid-point) for credentialed participants.	Multi-day/Overnight events not permitted under significant risk (orange) protocol, so no testing is required.
<b>Sanitization</b>	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.	Sanitization protocol for all communal shared areas and frequently touched surfaces + shared equipment between uses.
<b>Spectators</b> <i>Sideline observers (e.g., family, support staff)</i>	<b>Permitted</b> per local authority regulations. Separation from participants as much as possible.	<b>Limited.</b> Must be separated from athletes and not attend participant areas if unvaccinated.	<b>Limited.</b> Must be separated from athletes and not attend participant areas.
<b>Meals</b>	No restrictions on meals.	<b>Recommend no self-serve buffet meals. Participants should bring own waterbottles.</b> Stagger mealtimes and dining groups as much as possible.	<b>Participants bring their own meals and water bottles and/or pick-up only.</b> Stagger mealtimes and dining groups.
<b>Ceremonies</b>	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above. Find alternatives to placing medals around the athletes’ necks to maintain distancing.
<b>Healthy Athletes</b> <i>See additional HA guidance for discipline-specific precautions.</i>	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.	Follow size restrictions, venue options and risk mitigation guidance per above.
<b>Young Athletes</b> <i>See additional YA guidance for discipline-specific precautions.</i>	Children and unvaccinated coaches and volunteers should wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged.	Children and ALL coaches and volunteers should wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged.	Children and ALL coaches and volunteers should wear masks. Distancing and outdoor activities are highly encouraged.

**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.**

## 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 infection 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 conducting 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](mailto:COVID@specialolympics.org) or for liability questions, email [Legal@specialolympics.org](mailto:Legal@specialolympics.org).

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

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>