



SAFER AT HOME Guidance Recommendations for Participation in Sports

August 26, 2020

Participating in sports and recreation throughout the year is crucial to our physical and mental health and provides benefits regardless of age. At this time, organized sports are permitted as long as the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment [personal recreation guidance \(which includes guidance for organized recreational sports\)](#) is followed and adhered to. Note that additional requirements may be in place for specific types of athletic activities (e.g. masks, indoor/outdoor event). Athletic organizations should establish consistent protocols for players, coaches and spectators.

While sports and recreation are important, they are also high risk activities for the possible spread of COVID-19 and additional precautions must be taken. Little is known about the long-term effects of COVID-19, even for athletes who don't show symptoms. The health of participants should be evaluated and the decision to engage in sports should be made in careful consideration with one's healthcare team and family.

Avoid contact sports.

Playing sports in which the athletes will be within 6 feet of each other is not recommended due to the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19. Consider holding individual skills-training camps rather than competition.

Reduce person-to-person contact.

If competition continues, consider taking steps to reduce the degree of direct person-to-person contact while participating.

- This may include things like reducing team size (5 vs. 5 rather than 11 vs. 11) or change game play to reduce contact (e.g. flag football vs. tackle).
- All athletes older than 10 years old must wear masks both indoors and outdoors if 6-foot distancing cannot or will not be maintained.
- Consider taking temperatures and monitoring for symptoms of everyone associated with a sports team.

Avoid traveling to other communities.

Traveling to other communities for athletics is discouraged at this time, even if playing for sports considered non-contact, such as golf and cross country. If traveling is needed, travel only for individual skills-training camps rather than competition within other communities. Travel increases a person's risk of contracting COVID-19; if traveling to another community, please adhere to all local COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions.

Tournaments are discouraged.

Tournaments are allowed under the Safer at Home Public Health Order 20-28, but large-scale tournaments that encourage travel and/or playing a large number of different teams are strongly discouraged. All game/match play must follow the state guidance for [organized recreational sports](#), while the operation of the tournament must follow all state guidance for [outdoor events](#) or [indoor events](#).

- All players, coaches, and spectators are counted in the "capacity" for the event, which is limited based on the amount of space available.
- Referees, umpires, and staff that are responsible for enforcing the public health order are not counted in the "capacity" for the event.
- Spectators are strongly discouraged.
- The total number of games each team plays should be reduced to reduce contact and viral spread.



- Movement and social distancing should be monitored carefully.
- Consider prohibiting participation from athletes traveling from areas with high rates of new COVID-19 cases. A COVID risk map developed by Harvard may be useful in helpful to determine high spread areas: <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>

Masks must be worn.

Masks must be worn by all athletes who are 11 years old or older at all times indoors and are strongly recommended for athletes 3 years old or older. Outdoors, all athletes 11 years of age or older must wear a mask whenever 6 feet distancing cannot be maintained during practice, play, and active competition. Athletes between 3 and 10 years old are strongly encouraged to also wear masks outdoors. Masks must also be worn by all coaches, referees, umpires, spectators, or anyone else at the game/match/tournament. If wearing masks renders safety equipment inoperable, they may be removed while using the safety equipment.

Athletes who cannot medically tolerate a face covering should not participate.

Masks help to keep the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19 to others. To protect their own health and reduce spread of COVID-19 to others, and in keeping in line with Governor Polis's Civil Rights Guidance, athletes who can't medically tolerate a face covering should not participate in any in-person athletics.

Spectators should stay home.

Few or no spectators should be at youth sports, and no spectators should attend adult sports events. Spectators must also follow the state mask order, as well as any applicable mask orders in place in the municipality in which the sport is taking place. It is the organizer's responsibility to ensure all guidance is followed by spectators. For youth sports, consider:

- A policy limiting the number of adults and outlining expectations for attendance
- Rotating spectators that attend and providing a virtual streaming option
- Spacing spectators out around the field or court to ensure at least 6 feet of distance from others not in the same household.
- Closing bleachers and asking spectators to bring their own chairs.

14-day quarantine is required if anyone associated with the team becomes positive for COVID-19.

Based on the very contagious nature of COVID-19, and the risk that occurs with sports and gathering of individuals, even with infection prevention practices in place, if a coach, parent helper, student, or anyone else associated with the team is determined to be positive for COVID-19:

- The ill individual must [isolate](#) for 10 days
- The entire team must [quarantine](#) for 14 days, regardless of negative test results
- The team must cease all practices and conditioning for the 14-day quarantine period
- If two or more individuals are determined to be positive within the same 14-day period, the team must cease all activity immediately until they have consulted with Boulder County Public Health disease investigators.



Hosting a Practice, Game, or Tournament

Consider the following to help with deciding if you should host a sport event. The state [personal recreation guidance](#) must be followed.

- **The age of the players:** Will they understand any new rules? (e.g. no high fives, hugs, handshakes, etc.).
- **Facility:** Is it indoors or outdoors? Indoor activity could pose greater risk of exposure or spread. Does it allow for adequate social distancing?
- **Community spread:** What phase (Stay at Home, Safer at Home, etc.) is Boulder County currently in? Are there other restrictions on mass gatherings to be aware of?
- **Closeness of athletes and time spent together:** Will players be within 6 feet of each other or opposing team to participate in this activity for more than 15 minutes? (Transmission occurs during close contact, defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.) Is the opposing team following the public health guidance? What is the health status of all participating players? Will players be in close contact for more than 15 minutes?
- **Closeness of athletes when they are not actively engaging in the activity:** Will athletes be able to space 6 feet apart in the dugout, on the sidelines, in the parking lot, etc.? Snacks and gathering time outside of physical activity is strongly discouraged because it could increase risk of exposure or spread.
- **Sharing of equipment:** Will athletes need to share equipment? (e.g. Balls, gloves, gear, etc.) If so, how will equipment be cleaned between use?
- **High-risk athletes:** Are any of your participants in a high-risk category? How will accommodations be made to allow them to participate with their team? Athletes who are exempt from the mask order should not participate in sports.
- **Your organization's capacity:**
 - Can you gather contact information for all participants including spectators? If a case of COVID-19 occurs, health officials will require this information quickly and accurately. Consider a sign in sheet with symptom screening all participants
 - Can you control movement and mask wearing of all people that will be attending and continuously monitor?
 - Can you supply hand washing facilities and/or hand sanitizer to all participants?
 - Do you have the ability to thoroughly communicate with all participants?
 - Are you able to screen all players for symptoms prior to participation?

If your organization is concerned about the risk of any of these considerations, consider offering alternatives to competitive play. This can include individual skills camps, in-team only scrimmages, changing the type of play (i.e. flag football vs. tackle), reducing team competition size (i.e. 5 vs. 5 instead of 11 vs. 11), etc.

Links and guidance referenced in this document:

- [Public Health Order 20-28](#)
- [Personal Recreation Guidance for Organized Sports](#)
- [Indoor Event Guidance](#)
- [Outdoor Event Guidance](#)
- [Colorado Mask Order](#)
- [BCPH Mask Order](#)
- [Governor Polis's Civil Rights Guidance](#)
- [When and How to Quarantine and Isolate](#)

Please see additional [Considerations for Youth Sports](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and the [Colorado High School Activities Association](#) for information about high school athletics. Please email healthinfo@bouldercounty.org if you have questions.

