



COLORADO

**Department of Public
Health & Environment**

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED SPORTS

Effective September 16, 2020

Scope

Organized youth recreational and adult amateur leagues, club sports, interscholastic, and other organization-sponsored athletics must adhere to state and local orders and restrictions, and operate with restrictions and strong precautionary measures, as specified in the guidance below.

The transmission control strategies for COVID-19 that follow can be applied to other settings where physical activity and forced exhalation occur, and parks and recreation staff (or their equivalent) and state sporting governing bodies are encouraged to enforce these guidelines.

Sports settings such as professional or collegiate entities should adhere to the specific guidelines for their governing body and specifications in public health orders.

Guidance Rationale

Important Please Read: Participating in sports with and against other individuals, in any capacity during this pandemic, holds an inherent risk of possible infection for participants and risk of transmission to other individuals, such as their household members. Stakeholders in organized sports must consider the risks and benefits of participation in their plans for resuming organized sports. Adherence to public health guidelines is essential to minimize risk and disruptions to athletic activities. Organizers must also be familiar with recommendations from their national, state, and local governing bodies regarding illness (including, but not limited to, COVID-19).

The risk of COVID-19 spread can be different depending on the type of activity which is based on:

- Number of people with whom a player or coach interacts
- Type of physical interaction
- Length of time of the close interaction
- Sharing of equipment across multiple players
- Environment of play (e.g. indoors, outdoors)

- Layers of protection that are in place, including:
 - face coverings
 - physical distancing
 - hand hygiene
 - cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, etc.

Physical exertion, including sports, involves forced exhalation, which may increase the risk of transmission, similar to that seen in singing or playing certain musical instruments. Therefore, **increased physical distancing of participants and spectators beyond a minimum of 6 feet is reasonable**, although the appropriate level of distancing to mitigate COVID-19 transmission is not yet known. Infection control measures applied collectively, such as screening, physical distancing of coaches and spectators, hand hygiene, and facial coverings where appropriate are especially important given that many sports involve close contact of individuals at various times during training or competition.

Appropriately managed cases of COVID-19 among athletes will likely result in required isolation of ill individuals and quarantine periods for close contacts lasting a minimum of 14 days. Athletes, teams, and organizations should hold each other accountable to follow guidelines and ensure compliance with infection control measures during and beyond play. Behaviors and decisions of participants outside the sports setting may impact the ability of the entire team to participate in training or competition if a single athlete or coach becomes exposed or ill.

Teams that desire to practice and compete without disruption are strongly advised to take these recommendations seriously.

Athletic scouts and recruiters are encouraged to rethink how they evaluate athletes so as not to encourage unsafe practices and competition and unintentionally put athletes and programs at risk.

Competition creates a motivation for athletes. Coaches and athletic organizations are encouraged to instill discipline in athletes and find new ways to motivate athletes during times when competition is too risky. Athletes can be encouraged to practice discipline, set goals, and continue to engage in their sport in different ways to foster motivation while aligning with safe practices.

Guidance for all phases

Gathering Size and Cohorts

- Per [personal recreation](#) guidance:

- In Level 1: Groups of up to 50 players, excluding coaches or referees/umpires (or other staff required for player safety) at a time per court or per field.
- In Level 2: Groups of up to 25 players, excluding coaches or referees/umpires (or other staff required for player safety) at a time per court or per field.
- In Level 3: Groups of up to 10 players, excluding coaches or referees/umpires (or other staff required for player safety) at a time per court or per field.
- Limit indoor facilities to up to 25% capacity, or 50 people, whichever is fewer, per room, so long as people can stay 6 feet apart from each other.
- Limit the use of a pool to 25% capacity, or up to 50 people.
- Cohorting is the practice of maintaining a stable group with fixed membership. Cohorting facilitates disease control by minimizing the number of new contacts each individual interacts with and limits the scope of dismissal and closure activities in the event of a detected case of COVID-19 or other disease.
- Cohort kids on teams, and to the greatest extent possible, maintain the integrity of the cohorts the kids may already be participating in at school. Ensure appropriate communication between teams and other institutions where a kid may be in another cohort, such as their school.

Facility Considerations

- Host practices and play outdoors as much as possible. Outdoor environments are considered less risky than indoor environments.
- Maximize ventilation and increase circulation of outdoor air, referencing [ASHRAE guidance](#), when it is not feasible to be outside.
- The use of locker rooms is strongly discouraged, and they should only be used when absolutely necessary for player safety. In those limited circumstances, limit or stagger access to accommodate physical distancing, reduce the number of people in the locker room at one time, and maximize ventilation and air turnover. Per the statewide [mask order](#), masks are required indoors except in limited circumstances.
- Regularly clean and disinfect locker rooms or changing areas if they must be used.
- Assess athletic facilities and determine the need to reorganize equipment, venue entry/exit, venue layout, directional arrows and signage to prevent people from congregating.
- Determine capacity for square footage of usable space. Capacity may be calculated using the [Social Distancing Space Calculator](#).
- Minimize shared equipment and create a plan for cleaning and disinfection for athletic facilities, equipment between uses and cohorts. [See Cleaning Guidance](#).
- Do not allow athletes to share towels, clothing, or other items they use to wipe their faces or hands.
- Stagger training and competition times to allow time for cleaning/disinfection of equipment and facilities and avoid overlapping arrival/departure of teams and cohorts.

Spectators

- Spectators must be hosted according to the [indoor](#) or [outdoor](#) guidance, depending on the setting of the game. All teams engaged in play are responsible for ensuring these guidelines are followed by spectators.
- If there are multiple games happening at different sections of the field, spectators must not mingle or mix with each other.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.

Screening and Best Prevention Practices

- **Screening Practices**
 - Coaches, athletic directors, medical and administrative staff are to be familiar with public health requirements, [athlete welfare considerations](#) and direct play accordingly.
 - Maintain a list of participants for each practice/game.
 - Athletes and spectators must participate in the screening process for symptoms and COVID-19 exposures to ensure they are symptom-free before they are deemed able to attend or play. A person must be delegated to be responsible that screening is performed consistently and according to [public health recommendation](#).
 - Athletes or spectators with suspected or known COVID-19 exposures, such as ill household contacts, must stay at home and adhere to requirements for [quarantine](#).
 - Require documented medical clearance for athletes with a history of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection to ensure each athlete is no longer likely to be contagious, has fully recovered and is medically capable of resuming sports participation.
 - Provide frequent communication with all staff and families of athletes related to the organization's actions, restrictions due to public health orders as well as occurrences of COVID-19 within the team, and potentially affected individuals within the sports organization.
 - Individuals at risk of severe illness from COVID-19: Encourage parents/guardians of athletes with underlying medical conditions to discuss the risks and benefits of sports participation with their health care provider, and consider alternative timing or method of return to sports participation if indicated.
- **Programmatic Practices**
 - Establish a system of tracking attendance athlete, staff, and spectator participation in practices and games to facilitate contact tracing in the event of illness or exposure to COVID-19.
 - Regularly clean and disinfect all commonly touched surfaces and shared objects ([Additional Guidance](#))
 - Eliminate shared water stations, towels, uniforms, etc. for athletes, staff, and coaches.

- Prepare to scale back the level of activity following a case or outbreak of COVID-19.
- Educate athletes about COVID-19 and the related protocols and address their fears and questions in an age- and developmentally-appropriate manner.
- **Management Practices at Training and Athletic Events**
 - Athletes, staff, and coaches must maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet when not engaged in active training or competition.
 - All participants, staff, and coaches on the sidelines must be sitting or practicing at least 6 feet apart from each other.
 - Require hand hygiene upon arrival, before hydration breaks, and at regular intervals throughout training and competition.
 - Adhere to the statewide mask order, which requires that masks are worn in indoor settings, except under limited circumstances. Masks are strongly encouraged, although not required, in outdoor settings unless required by local authorities.
 - No spitting (saliva, sunflower seeds, chewing tobacco) or sharing water bottles/team jugs.
- **Isolation and Quarantine**
 - Establish protocols for isolation of symptomatic individuals and for communication of positive cases and/or potential exposure to COVID-19, including assigning a specific staff member to coordinate with local public health officials.
 - Isolate athletes on-site who develop symptoms during training or competition and make arrangements for them to safely leave the venue as soon as possible. Symptomatic athletes must cover their faces and isolate in a designated space at least 6 feet from other individuals while awaiting transportation.
 - Symptomatic athletes and spectators should access the [CDPHE Symptom Support tool](#), adhere to requirements for [isolation](#), and contact a healthcare professional to discuss the need for evaluation and [testing](#). Athletes and spectators who test positive for COVID-19 must notify the sports organization and follow instructions from local public health agencies.

Suspected and Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

- All organized sports must follow the [case and outbreak guidance for schools](#) if their participants are within grades P-12.
- For adult organized sports, refer symptomatic employees, spectators and athletes to a healthcare professional for evaluation and testing, as well as to the [CDPHE Symptom Support tool \(Additional Guidance\)](#), and report to local public health agencies.
- Follow protocols for isolation of individuals who become symptomatic during training or competition, and alert youth sports organization or school of symptomatic individuals.
- Outbreak guidance can be found [here](#).
- The sports organization **must** notify and cooperate with their local public health agency on next steps. Local public health agency contacts are found [here](#). Failure to report may result in suspension of games or even seasons.
- Due to the need for [quarantine](#) of all potentially exposed parties, all training and competition for those exposed individuals must be cancelled for a minimum of 14 days from the last date of exposure. **Negative COVID-19 testing in potentially exposed individuals does not eliminate the need to complete a full 14 days of quarantine, as symptom onset and detection after**

exposure is variable. Athletes who develop symptoms after COVID-19 exposure should access the [CDPHE Symptom Support tool](#), adhere to requirements for [isolation](#), and contact a healthcare professional to discuss the need for evaluation and [testing](#).

- Given the potential for prolonged symptom recovery and cardiac complications from COVID-19, athletes with confirmed or presumed COVID-19 infection must coordinate with their health care provider to obtain clearance for return to sports participation - due to the demands of athletic activity, clearance may be different from timing for return to school or return to work.

Tournaments, Transportation and Travel

- For adult competitive sports, follow guidelines developed for [public transportation](#) for transportation between matches, with the exception that household groups may sit closely together with appropriate distancing between household groups.
- For competitive sports with participants in the P-12 system, follow school transportation guidelines which includes a requirement for riders to wear face coverings, unless they can be 6 feet apart at all times.
- For events that require travel outside the local region, be aware that guidance for travelers may vary depending on what part of Colorado you are visiting. Some Colorado counties may have additional local restrictions which are more stringent than statewide guidance. Follow this [link](#) for more information regarding travel within Colorado.
- Sporting events or tournaments must comply with all protocols in this guidance. Indoor sporting events or tournaments are discouraged.
- Play amongst intra-Colorado teams is a best practice; travel of teams to and from other states, especially areas of higher COVID-19 incidence and transmission, is highly discouraged. Teams that do travel to other states must adhere to restrictions that are in place for those areas.
- Times for games or competitions should be staggered to prevent mingling of separate teams, cohorts, and spectators.
- Concessions should follow [Restaurant Guidance](#), and other facilities should be regularly cleaned, sanitized, and maintained. ([Additional Guidance](#))
- If spectators are present, adjacent fields of play should be distanced to allow for at least 50-feet of social distancing between two fields of play and their respective spectator sections. All spectators should be following the [Outdoor Events Guidance](#), which means no mingling across groups of spectators.
- Common spaces or other places for gathering (e.g. picnic tables) should be closed.
- Post clear signs notifying participants, spectators, and employees of hygiene and sanitation expectations, including not entering if they or anyone in their household is experiencing any symptoms of illness.

Sport risk categories based on various factors

- **Low-frequency of contact sports** - Includes sports with little inter-athlete contact; athletes perform these sports at a distance or individually.
 - *Examples - running, swimming, diving, skateboarding, skiing*
- **Medium-frequency of contact sports** - Includes sports with some inter-athlete contacts, but allows for social distancing at most times. These sports may require the sharing of equipment or provide the opportunity for equipment to be cleaned between participants.
 - *Examples - volleyball, soccer, weightlifting, tennis, golf, softball, baseball, gymnastics, field hockey, bowling*
- **High-frequency of contact sports** - Includes sports with more frequent or sustained inter-athlete contact and/or shared equipment among participants.
 - *Examples - ice hockey, lacrosse, football, basketball, rugby, wrestling*
- **Additional resources for sport categorization:**
 - [National Federation of State High School Associations \(NFHS\) Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)

- [US Olympic and Paralympic Committee \(USOPC\) Sports Event Planning Considerations Post-COVID-19](#)
- [Aspen Institute Return to Play COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool](#)

Phase Specific Guidelines		
Phase	Sport Category	Sports Guidance
Stay at Home		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No in-person contact with other athletes or coaches. Independent individual training and conditioning, remote coaching/personal training are allowed. ● Above activities with household contacts are encouraged.
Safer at Home	Applies to all risk levels of sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Groups of up to 25 players, excluding coaches or referees/umpires at a time per court or per field. ● Spectators are strongly discouraged for adult sports. Spectators, like parents, are permitted for youth sports, so long as members from different households maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from each other. Spectators must adhere to the indoor or outdoor event guidance. ● Outdoor sports facilities for use (e.g., tennis courts, basketball courts, pickleball courts, bike tracks, motocross tracks, fields) may be open to up to 25 people at a time per court or per field. ● Limit indoor facilities to up to 25% capacity, or 50 people, whichever is fewer, per room, so long as people can stay 6 feet apart from each other. ● Limit the use of a pool to 25% capacity, or up to 50 people. ● Must adhere to additional Personal Recreation guidance.
	Low frequency of contact sports	<p>Level 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider scheduling competitions outside of the local community at least two weeks apart to allow for quarantine and isolation requirements while minimizing schedule disruptions. <p>Level 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider limiting competition to opponents within the same local community. <p>Level 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider limiting to in-person individual or small group training with appropriate physical distancing.
	Medium and High frequency of contact sports	<p>Level 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider limiting full contact/collision activities with other teams outside of the community. ● Consider scheduling competitions outside of the local community at least two weeks apart to allow for quarantine and isolation requirements while minimizing schedule disruptions. <p>Level 2</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider beginning within-team contact/collision activity in small groups. Assure athletes have acclimated to demands of training - acknowledge risks of progression to activity which decreases physical distancing and increases athlete contact. ● Consider beginning individual athlete contact drills (for example, tackling pads/sleds in football). Clean/disinfect equipment after each athlete or cohort. <p>Level 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider limiting to in-person individual or small group training with appropriate physical distancing.
Protect Our Neighbors	Applies to all risk levels of sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider beginning training and competitions with travel outside the local region. ● Consider limiting scrimmages and competitions to opponents in other communities with similarly low levels of disease transmission.