



Return-to-Activities FAQs

Be sure to read through all the Return-to-Activities protocols on our website linked [here](#). If your question is still not answered in the FAQ below, please contact rta@sowa.org for more information.

Sports Specific

What is the best way to manage equipment?

All equipment must be cleaned and sanitized pre and post practice session by Coach or Safety Squad volunteer. It is recommended that Coach keeps all equipment / equipment bag in between practices and sanitizes at start and end of every practice, and that each participant bring their own equipment with their name on it if possible.

Can 2 teams of 25 use the same facility if the groups are able to remain socially distant and not intermingle?

Yes, distancing protocol will be provided for each sport to show how teams can organize themselves with the appropriate spacing and still be safe.

What if a coach or assistant coach cannot make practice to complete that 4-1 ratio? How do we facilitate practice?

Practice does not need to be canceled in the event a coach or assistant coach is not able to attend. Safety Squad can fill-in temporarily to maintain 4:1 ratio. Special Olympics Washington will monitor contact tracing submissions and contact the program directly if attendance continues to be an issue.

What is the recommendation for transporting athletes to practice who need a ride?

It is recommended when transporting participants outside the household that masks are worn at all times by all passengers while in transit. It is also recommended to ventilate/windows down if the weather permits you to do so. Ventilation has proven to reduce the risk of transmission.

How should food and beverages at practices be handled?

Participants should bring their own food and water/beverage if needed, when possible. There should be no shared food nor shared water jugs/beverage dispensers – individual bottles and packages only.

COVID-19 Screening Protocols

Are any modifications being made to the Return-to-Activity Protocol considering the CDC announcement on mask wearing outdoors if you've been vaccinated?

No accommodations or changes will be made considering this announcement. Even if you are vaccinated, masks are required to be worn throughout your participation with Special Olympics.

May a participant use a face shield instead of a mask?

No. It is not known if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. At this time, clinical guidance suggests that a face shield should be used *in addition to* a facemask in certain clinical settings, not as a replacement for a mask. A face shield alone does not provide proper protection from the spread of COVID-19 via droplets in the air. At this time, it is not recommended that a face shield be used instead of a facemask at Special Olympics activities.

Here is a [resource](#) from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Boggs Center to help explain the need for and the usage of masks for individuals with ID.

If someone says they have a medical reason for not being able to wear a facemask, how should a Program handle this?

At this time, if an individual is unable to wear a mask for any reason, they will not be able to participate in Special Olympics activities. The use of the mask is not only to protect the individual, but to protect others in attendance and reduce possible transmission. Individuals unable or unwilling to wear a mask should be invited to participate in virtual or at home activities.

How will contact tracing work?

At the start of each practice the Safety Squad will record temperature checks for each participant as well as verify that participants have no symptoms and are not sick. [This form](#) used to record this information will also serve as the contact tracing sheet that is required to be submitted back to the Sports Region Manager within 24 hours of completion of practice. These forms are required to be turned in after each practice.

What happens if the contract tracing forms are not turned in after each practice?

If the Safety Squad volunteer or team does not submit the contract tracing form within 24 hours of practice, the team will be notified to terminate practice until the situation can be resolved.

Who does the program/team notify when a participant tests positive for COVID-19?

Please contact John Borgognoni (206-800-0019) immediately if you have a participant that tests positive for COVID-19. Coaches should suspend practices immediately and individuals should not return to activities until after 14 days from exposure if they do not have symptoms or test positive themselves.

Special Olympics staff will notify other participants that an individual in attendance tested positive (without disclosing identifying information) as soon as possible and instruct individuals to contact their healthcare provider for further guidance.

For the screening form, when asking if you have had any exposure to COVID-19, how immediate should the contact /exposure be/have been?

Only report if the participant has had direct contact with someone who has had COVID-19, not that someone has been in contact with a friend who had another friend that had COVID-19.

Could you clarify “indirect contact” and “direct contact”? Is passing a soccer ball considered “indirect contact”?

In this context, “indirect contact” is considered an activity where a ball or equipment is touched or in contact with an individual’s hands/skin and then directly touching another individual’s hands/skin without disinfection. An example of indirect contact would be a basketball or football, or softball being passed around between participants. Individual drills for those sports with disinfection of equipment/ball in between uses is permitted. For example, an individual practices dribbling and then the ball being disinfected before being used by the next individual to practice their skills. Soccer drills that involve passing the ball by kicking and staying 6 feet/2 meters apart is not indirect contact as the contact is via the covered foot, not skin.

Does the COVID screening violate HIPAA?

Currently, Special Olympics is exempt from HIPAA. Teams and Coaches should still put in place a process to protect health information locally as best as possible in terms of storing and sharing medical information.

If a Special Olympics participant was potentially exposed to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 at a different location (e.g., their school or home or work) and not the Special Olympics event, do we need to shut down practice and have all participants quarantine?

1. The recommended protocol for Special Olympics activities would be that the individual who was potentially exposed must stay home and should not attend practice or SO events until 14 days after exposure. They should be reminded to monitor their symptoms and consult with a doctor to discuss the need for testing and/or treatment.
2. If the exposure is known to have taken place before the last time this individual was at an SO event (e.g., they attended practice on Wednesday and the potential exposure took place the previous Monday), the Program may want to consider having virtual practices for two weeks, to ensure there wasn’t spread.
3. If the SO individual ultimately develops symptoms and test positives, then practice must be suspended for at least 2 weeks and all participants should be notified, while maintaining privacy, that an individual at Special Olympics event they attended has tested positive for COVID-19.

Regarding return to activities of those who have tested positive, is there a time limit as to when the positive test occurred? For example: someone tested positive 6 months ago and now wants to return to activities, do they still need to supply proof of medical clearance? Or is this only for recent positive diagnoses?

It does not matter when the positive test occurred, with respect to clearance to return to activities. They are obligated, per the SOI protocol, to provide proof of medical clearance prior to return to play for the immediate purpose of ensuring no further transmission and because of the potential long-term (especially cardiac-related) health impacts that could cause.

What if it is discovered that a registered Special Olympics Washington team or program is not following outlines COVID protocols?

Programs/Teams will be instructed to stop practice immediately. Any insurance or funding privileges will be revoked, and your team will no longer be allowed to practice in summer season. Programs/Teams will be marked for review for Fall season participation.

How do you handle a situation where first aid must be administered during an activity?

First aid should absolutely be provided by coaches, volunteers, or staff if required during an activity, even if physical distancing is not feasible during the aid. If it is a medical emergency, call the local emergency medical services (E.g., (9-1-1 in the US). If it is a non-medical emergency, but basic first aid is needed, individuals providing care should follow proper hand hygiene and wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer and put on a surgical facemask and disposable gloves prior to administering first aid. If the athlete is breathing and conscious, they should also be wearing a face covering. Administer the first aid and then properly dispose of all supplies and gloves.

After care is provided, ensure individuals follow proper hand hygiene and wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. All activities should have a basic first aid kit on site which should also include a surgical facemask, disposable gloves, and hand sanitizer/disinfectant. A face shield or protective eye wear may also be useful.