

Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19

Last Updated: July 24, 2020

Special Olympics
Wisconsin



Phases and Timelines

1. What is the timeline for roll-out?

Local Programs may begin with Phase 1 of the Special Olympics WI Return to Play plan with gatherings of 10 people or less starting on August 1, 2020. Special Olympics Inc. has indicated that all US Programs are expected to remain in each phase for at least 2 weeks, even if local areas move through phases more quickly. It is our goal to move to Phase 2 on August 15, 2020. The Special Olympics WI Return to Play plan is intended as a minimum standard and not to replace any local regulations or guidance. If your locale has restrictions that are more stringent in place, then those are to be followed. For example, if SOWI were currently in Phase 1, but the local authorities determine that the community must resume "Stay at Home" orders, you must revert to Phase 0.

2. What are required of programs before the start practicing?

1. All local programs must inform SOWI of their intentions to start practicing. This can be done through the electronic Intent to Play survey that was sent out or by contacting your regional contact. We will be creating master lists of programs and intended sports to assist rolling out the new guidelines.
2. Coaches/AM must attend complete an online training session specific for COVID-19
3. All Athletes and coaches must complete the COVID-19 release form prior to, or turn in at practice.
4. Local Programs must have the materials and understanding to perform screenings before every practice.

3. What dictates moving into Phase 3?

Special Olympics Wisconsin will be the sole arbitrator on which phase the state is currently in. We will be utilized guidance from SOI, CDC, Wisconsin DHS and multiple local authorities around the state. It is very possible we will have multiple local programs practicing under different phases depending on local conditions and county guidelines. It is the purpose of SOWI to work with local programs on identifying the best method to allow participants to safely practice.

Coaching and Training

1. What is SOWI doing to ensure coaches are prepared for practice?

Special Olympics WI is preparing a library of new sport specific rules and training plans with an emphasis on COVID-19 guidelines. These will be available on a centralized COVID-19 SOWI Webpage: (waiting on link). This site will also host numerous educational videos for both coaches and athletes, as well as educational handouts and signage that can be used at practices.

We will also be holding online live training sessions where staff can answer questions, coaches can share issues or best practices. These training sessions will also be hosted/attended by Athletes from the Athlete Input Council so their voice is heard as well.

COVID-19 Screening

1. 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.

2. What if our program doesn't have the capacity to do thermometer screenings onsite?

Thermometer screenings are mandatory during Phase-1. We are evaluating if they will need to be performed in Phase-2.

3. What do Local Programs do with completed screening forms?

Local Programs will retain all forms for a minimum of 3 years. These documents will be used to help health authorities with contact tracing for any potential infections.

4. Does the COVID screening violate HIPAA (applicable in the US only)?

At this time, Special Olympics is exempt from HIPAA as HIPAA only applies if organizations/providers transmit personal health information (PHI) electronically for transactions that HHS has adopted standards including submitting for financial claims, or is considered a clearinghouse or a health plan. However, the Program and coaches should still put in place a process to protect health information as best as possible in terms of storing and sharing medical information.

Individuals at High Risk

1. Why are participants living in long-term care facilities considered high risk?

The list of individuals at high-risk is based on guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO). Research has shown that individuals with disabilities living in long-term care facilities are at increased risks of transmission as well as complications. The intention behind this is in regards to individuals living in licensed long-term care facilities.

2. Are we restricting participation, preventing athletes and volunteers from participating if they identify as "high risk"? Are we treating athletes and volunteers the same? i.e. do we restrict athletes and allow volunteers?

At this time, the recommendation from SOI is that all individuals who identify as high risk should be strongly encouraged to stay home, but the guidance does not mandate that Programs must restrict participation on this basis. This guidance applies to all participants (athletes, coaches, volunteers, etc.). However, it is the responsibility of both SOWI and the Local Program to ensure that participants are provided education and information about hygiene and prevention measures, as well as who is considered at high risk (i.e. through release forms and educational materials) so they can make an informed decision regarding their participation. Additionally, the Local Program is responsible for implementing safety control measures to mitigate risk of all participants in attendance. SOWI is developing alternative ways for engagement via virtual or at home activities for those programs and participants. This guidance will continue to be evaluated by SOI based on evolving clinical and legal considerations.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Are facemasks mandatory at all Special Olympics activities?

Masks, also known as cloth face coverings, help prevent the spread of the virus. Wearing a cloth face covering will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The spread of COVID-19 can be reduced when masks are used along with other preventive measures, including physical distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization recommend that individuals wear cloth face coverings when they are in public settings where they cannot reliably maintain six feet of distance from others at all times. Given the substantial increase in the numbers of cases of COVID-19 infection in some counties this precaution has become mandatory.

It is the expectation that facemasks will be worn by participants at Special Olympics WI activities when not actively engaged in aerobic activity. During aerobic activities when face masks are not worn, 6 feet distancing is required at all times. If local ordinances are stricter, then those rules must be followed.

[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.

2. If someone says they have a medical reason for not being able to wear a facemask, how should a Local 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 also to protect others in attendance and reduce possible transmission. Individuals unable or unwilling to wear a mask in Phases 1 and 2 should be invited to participate in virtual or at home activities.

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

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.

Fall Sport Season Questions

1. What is the current thinking on the Fall Sport Season? Will there be any in person competitions?

Information from the [Intent to Play Survey](#) will be used to develop the Fall Sports Season. Our plan is to offer two short seasons to end the year:

- Fall-Outdoor (Aug – Oct): Golf, Flag Football Skills, Bocce, Cornhole, SOfit.
- Fall-Indoor (Oct – Dec): Bowling Leagues, VB skills, Rings, SOfit

Both will offer a end of season virtual celebration. Tentative dates are:

- Fall-Outdoor (Aug – Oct): October 5-9
- Fall-Indoor (Oct – Dec): December 14- 18

We are currently building out detailed plans on several competition options for each sport – everything from virtual to in person events – that will depend on agency interest and current coronavirus conditions. We will also be creating one page Training Plan documents for each sport to assist coaches on Back to Play options that are Phase specific (including competition option).

Notes:

- Athletes would be able to compete in multiple sports. It is up to programs to manage any potential conflicts in practice or competition.
- Athletes must have a valid medical to participate in any activity.

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Sport Specific Questions

1. What would a potential Bowling season look like?

There will not be any in-person bowling competitions in fall 2020. We are working on league style options where athlete scores will be sent in to regional offices weekly for divisioning and awarding. We will have more specifics once all programs have completed the Intent to Play form.

Notes:

- Because of the difficulty for some programs getting 3-games per athlete in one session, we are looking to base scores off a 2-game per session. The goal is to be as flexible as possible.

2. What would a potential Golf season look like?

We are looking at several options including both a golf league where athletes would submit scores over a period of time, as well as in person events depending on county restrictions. We will have more information (including

competition dates) soon. This is all subject to program interest and we will evaluate more once all programs have completed the Intent to Play form.

Responsibility, Liability and Third Party Events

1. Does this protocol apply to events hosted by a third party but at which Special Olympics participants are invited to attend?

If the event is hosted by a third party and Special Olympics athletes or participants are being invited to attend, the third party host organization should assume all responsibility. While a Program would defer to the rules and regulations of the third-party host, it is recommended Programs understand the safety and health measures the host will be implementing in order to help participants determine if they would feel safe attending. If Local Programs are responsible for organizing aspects of participation (e.g., travel, accommodation, etc.), it is recommended that you follow the protocols for those aspects at a minimum.

2. In Phase 1 and Phase 2 , does the number restriction include any non-Special Olympics staff may be running/employees of the venue/facility, or other members of the public at the same venue who are not part of our Special Olympics group, or just the Special Olympics participants?

If venue staff will not be interacting with the athletes and are not consistently within 6 feet/2 meters of the Special Olympics group, these facility staff would not count against the 10 or 50 or less limit. If the facility staff are mixing with the group and within 6 feet/2 meters during the activity and/or will be leading activities, then they should be counted in the number of participants.

In addition to Special Olympics guidance, of course, Local Programs will have to follow the guidance of the venue/facility (as well as the local authorities) if more stringent in terms of number of participants allowed within the venue/facility overall for Phase 1 and 2. If there are other groups in the space, it is the responsibility of the venue to follow local guidance to control and applicable venue capacity limits and/or physical distancing requirements amongst groups in the venue. However, if the venue is not operating in a safe manner, or in conjunction with the general infection control precautions, the Program should consider switching venue or ceasing activities, until they can be done safely.