

# SOWI Return To Play Protocol

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*Special Olympics*  
*Wisconsin*



## Guidance on COVID-19 Return to Play Activities

Special Olympics Wisconsin is dedicated to protecting the health and safety of our athletes, volunteers, coaches, officials, staff, and all that contribute to the success of our athletes in training and events. The purpose of this document is to provide Special Olympics Wisconsin agencies with information to assist them returning to training/play in the context of COVID-19. We are aware not all local programs will be ready to return to training/play at the same time, but it is our goal to provide the necessary resources for when they are. At the outset and throughout the process, please remember it is important that each athlete and their families/caregivers stay informed and make educated choices about when they are ready to return to play. No one should feel pressured – or pressure others – into a decision.

**Throughout this document “participants” are defined as all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, family members, caregivers, staff or others in attendance of an activity.**

In creating this document, Special Olympics Wisconsin has conducted extensive research and utilized expertise inside and outside the organization to assemble guidelines and policies. As an accredited state program of Special Olympics Inc., we rely heavily on their guidance as we created a comprehensive model that will allow agencies to resume activities through a multi-phase gradual approach. We modeled our system after many other state and local programs, as well as other sports organizations, and provide guidelines that include a detailed approach to physical distancing, screening, training, and interactions to ensure consistent and best practices are followed to promote the health and safety of all participants and fans.

These are intended as minimum guidelines for Local Programs as they consider returning to activities. **It 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.**

Additionally, the information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, 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.

## 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. As knowledge of COVID-19 is changing rapidly, guidance will continue to evolve.
5. Guidance takes a phased approach that is dependent on local transmission rates as well as testing/monitoring/contact tracing/health system capacity.

# Phased Approach to Return to Play

Special Olympics WI has adopted a four (4) phased approach to return to activities. SOWI is referencing the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) data for COVID-19 Disease Activity to determine phasing changes for SOWI practices and in-person competition. Using this data will provide clear benchmarks. Trajectory information is also provided for agencies to use to make their own determination prior to reaching a benchmark. These metrics are updated weekly on Wednesday afternoons and can be found here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/disease.htm>.

SOWI has decided to utilize Burden as a metric to determine the maximum phase allowed as well as the highest level of competition that can be safely offered. Burden is the total number of COVID-19 cases per 100K Wisconsin residents in the last 2 weeks. WDHS has created Burden Status levels and SOWI is utilizing the Burden Status and WDHS recommendations to determine the maximum phase Agencies can be it.

Each program will start in Phase 1 for in person activities. After 2 weeks of practice, agencies can petition to move to the next phase if the WDHS numbers allow by contacting their Athletic Director and providing information about participation and how COVID protocols have been followed.

## Participation Risk Awareness and Acknowledgement

Prior to returning to any in-person Special Olympics activities in Phases 1 through 2, all participants are required to complete and return (1) *COVID-19 Participant Release Form* which provides information and guidance on assessing risk and acknowledges that participation could increase risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 AND (2) the *Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants* which provides Program indemnification for Covid-19 related claims.

Participants who have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19 must wait 10 days after symptom onset (or 10 days from test if asymptomatic) before returning to activity. If participants have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19, they should consult with a healthcare professional for medical clearance before returning to Special Olympics to sport or fitness activities. **Local Programs should ensure that all participants (e.g. athletes, unified partners, coaches, volunteers, staff, and families) are educated about all procedures and expectations for return to activities.**

Phase 0 (Burden 1,000+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay at Home advised.</li> <li>All fitness, training and coaching is done virtually.</li> </ul>
Phase 1 (Burden 350-999)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 1: Small Group Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelter in place is lifted. Restriction on size of mass gatherings (15 people indoors and 25 people outdoors).</li> <li>Activities may resume if they adhere to strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols.</li> <li>No direct or Indirect contact (e.g. throw a ball in the hand) should take place.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Training activities may include only be pre-approved SOWI COVID-19 Sports.</p>
Phase 2 (Burden 51-349)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 2: Large Group Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size restrictions on gatherings increased to ≤50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.</li> <li>Activities may continue if they adhere to physical distancing and sanitation protocols.</li> <li>Indirect contact (e.g. throw a ball in the hand) MAY resume. No direct contact should occur in sports.</li> <li>Training groups will continue with SOWI COVID-19 approved sports. Programs may request pre-approval for other sport options.</li> <li>Competition and games may occur regionally (with people traveling from similar geographic areas who are in the same phase) as long as it is pre-approved by Regional offices and adhere to the 50 person maximum including athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and fans.</li> <li>SOWI to offer competitions and league play with restricted sizes following WDHS and local guidelines.</li> </ul>
Phase 3 (Burden 0- 50)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 3: Limited Size Competition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size restrictions on gatherings will be increased to 150 people indoors and 300 people outdoors.</li> <li>SOWI will continue to monitor appropriateness of contact sport and announce if more sports options will be allowed.</li> <li>SOWI will begin facilitating limited size competitions following local guidelines.</li> </ul>
Phase 4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phase 4: Large Scale Competitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No restrictions on size of mass gatherings.</li> <li>Large Competition and Games (with people traveling from multiple geographic areas who are in same phase) MAY potentially occur, if permitted by WDHS, country and local standards.</li> </ul>

## SOWI COVID-19 approved sports for Phase 1 and 2

SOWI COVID-19 approved sports will be updated on the SOWI website:

<https://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/sports-offered/>. SOWI will be developing sport specific guidelines, training plans and competition (in practice and in person) for each of the approved sports. Local Programs can petition for other sports, but SOWI does not guarantee to provide resources or competition for those options.

## Guidelines for Return to Play

### Prepare for Activity

- Based on currently available information from the CDC and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Athletes/Unified Partners/Coaches/Volunteers with underlying health conditions may want to seek guidance by their medical professional as to their participation.
  - Vulnerable individuals include people over sixty-five (65) years of age, people that are pregnant, people in long-term care facilities, people with compromised or weakened immune systems, and people with serious underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, serious heart conditions, liver disease, kidney disease requiring dialysis, diabetes, obesity, or asthma.
  - All participants are required to complete and return a COVID-19 *Participant Release Form*, which provides information and guidance on assessing risk and acknowledges that participation could increase risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.
- Prior to attendance, educate all participants on:
  - High-risk conditions and the risks of participation.
  - Requirement that anyone who has symptoms must stay home and to contact their own health provider if they are sick for further evaluation.
  - Current requirements for in-person gathering, including PPE, hygiene, and physical distancing.
- Remind participants to bring PPE and, if used, their own water bottle, towel, and equipment. Have facemasks/PPE available for those who are unable to bring.
- Have reminders/signage posted that reinforces appropriate use of PPE relevant to the activity, hygiene and physical distancing.
- Have hand sanitizer or handwashing facilities available at venue.
- Participants should travel independently to training sessions or travel with individuals from their at-home environment if possible. Remind participants that during transport to activities, it is recommended that participants should wear a mask if on public transport, such as a bus, or if carpooling which includes someone not living with them.
- Have COVID screening protocol in place and coaches/staff/volunteers prepared to implement prior to or upon arrival at event (see additional guidance on screening protocol below).

### Activity Guidelines

- The single most effective way to limit the spread of COVID-19 is to require any participant that is sick or having symptoms of an illness to STAY HOME regardless of what is causing the illness.
- On arrival, conduct screening for ALL PARTICIPANTS (*see screening protocol below*). All participants with symptoms, a history of recent (last 14 days) COVID exposure, or temperature > 100.4° F must not proceed to the activity.
- Group activities must adhere to the maximum number of individuals based on the current Return to Play phase (i.e. 10 or less).
  - Groups must maintain the minimum 4-athletes to 1-chaperone ratio.
  - Groups in open areas are to be a minimum of 50 meters apart to be considered a different group. There may be NO co-mingling of groups.
- Participants must be able to comply with appropriate physical distancing guidelines recommended by the CDC at all activity sessions. To the greatest extent possible, maintain at least 6 feet from any other person. Coaches must consider spacing in the training area and modify drills and activities to comply with physical distancing

guidelines. Wear facemasks throughout the activity, except during exercise, including upon arrival and departure.

- Participants may share equipment when circumstances require it (i.e. soccer ball on the field). If shared equipment must be used, prepare a cleaning protocol and supplies to disinfect shared equipment between uses.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar cleaning or washing materials readily available at practice/activity sites. Hand sanitizer should be used after blowing/ wiping nose, sneezing, and after contact with shared equipment.
- To minimize gathering sizes (particular Phase 1), no spectators should be allowed to congregate on the sidelines of practices. Volunteers providing transportation for athlete should remain in vehicles until training sessions are completed. If participants need assistance, caregivers may remain provided they also maintain distancing, hygiene and use PPE, including masks.

### **Infection Control Guidelines**

- Read and help distribute the documents on COVID-19 and Health Fact Sheets supplied by SOWI.
- Athletes and volunteers need to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 daily. If any signs or symptoms of infection are present, the participant should not attend any Special Olympics trainings or activities.
- Cover coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands).
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds as frequently as possible or use hand sanitizer: after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- No Fist-Bumps, Elbow-Bumps, or Air High Fives. No hugs
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects frequently.
- Coaches/volunteers who have frequent, close contact with athletes should wear some combination of a face mask, a face shield and/or goggles if physical distancing cannot be assured.
- If someone tests positive for COVID-19 that attended a practice/team activity, the Agency should cancel in-person activities for 14 days. An agency representative should contact anyone at that practice/team activity to notify them of the positive test.

### **Training Sites & Equipment**

- All training sessions during Phase I should be created and executed in compliance with physical distancing guidelines: No more than 15 people for indoor activities and no more than 25 people of outdoor activities.
- Athletes should be set up in individual spaces, large enough for players to be respectful of physical distancing. The space provided should therefore be at >6 square feet per player.
- Small group training sessions should preferably take place outdoors in an area where physical distancing can more easily be maintained.
- In the event training must be held indoors, utilize facilities that have increased standards of facility cleaning and disinfection to limit worker and patron exposure to COVID-19, as well as protocols to clean and disinfect in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in the facility.
- If the environment requires it, rigorous and frequent cleaning of equipment with disinfectant before, during and after training should occur.
- Participants must use their own equipment during training. This includes the participant's own water bottle, towel, etc. where applicable.
- Personal equipment should be cleaned with disinfectant before and after each use.
- Avoid community equipment use when possible. If not possible, equipment should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each individual use.

## 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 infections to others. Instruct anyone who is ill to contact his or her own health provider for further evaluation.

However, in addition to this education, before or prior to entering an activity, practice, event, or gathering (in phases 1-3), for **all participants must undergo the following screening protocol:**

1. Create a Check-In Station adhering to physical distancing guidelines.
  - a. The screener will be responsible for self-monitoring before practice/activity.
  - b. The screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. The screener must also wear a facemask.
  - c. Only one participant should check-in at the station at a time. Should a line form at the check-in station, those waiting should ensure they practice safe physical distancing of 6ft.
2. Ask each participant the following questions (reinforced through visuals and verbally, such as a paper with icons):
  - a. In the last 14 days, have you had contact with someone who has been sick with COVID-19?
  - b. Have you had a fever in the last week (temperature of 100.4°F 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. Should conduct onsite measurement of temperature using thermometer (preferred non-touch thermal scanning thermometer if possible).
  - Fever equals temperature of 100.4°F or higher.
  - If high, may re-test after 5 minutes to ensure temperature is accurate.
4. Record all names, results and contact information and keep in case needed for contact tracing or reporting (*Template available in supplemental materials*).
  - a. If yes to any questions, 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.
  - b. Participants who are found to have COVID-19 symptoms must wait 10 days after symptoms resolve to return to activity OR must provide written proof of physician clearance to Special Olympics to return earlier.
  - c. Participants who have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19 must wait 10 days after symptom onset (or 10 days from test if asymptomatic) before returning to activity. If participants have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19, they should consult with a healthcare professional for medical clearance before returning to Special Olympics to sport or fitness activities.