

Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19

Last Updated: April 28, 2021



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. 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. (8/6/20)

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 by contacting your regional contact. SOWI Staff will use the list of participating agencies to inform them of any changes in phases due to COVID-19 numbers and competition opportunities.
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.

(1/11/21)

3. What dictates moving into Phase 2?

All programs will start in Phase 1 when they begin practicing, regardless of when that is. After a programs has been in Phase 1 for 2 weeks, they may petition to move into Phase 2. We will be utilized guidance and COVID-19 Burden data from the Wisconsin DHS to make the decision if it is best for a program to move into Phase 2. SOWI will use the Burden number to determine the highest Phase level possible for agencies within each county. The Burden can be found on the Wisconsin DHS website (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/disease.htm>).

Burden Status	Burden Case Window	Outdoor	Indoor	SOWI Phases: Competitions
Critically High	1000+	Phase 0	Phase 0	Stay At Home
Very High	350 - 999	Phase 1	Phase 1	In-practice competitions only
High	101 - 349	Phase 2	Phase 1	Limited in-person competitions outdoor only
Moderately High	51 - 100	Phase 2	Phase 2	Limited in-person competitions indoor or outdoor
Moderate	11 - 50	Phase 3	Phase 2	Limited in-person competitions indoor or outdoor
Low	0 - 10	Phase 3	Phase 3	Limited in-person competitions indoor or outdoor

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. (1/21/21)

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:

(www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/return-to-play-during-covid-19/).

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 be hosting bi-weekly coaches meetings to update coaches on changes in COVID-19 risks, SOWI offerings, and to share best practices. You can sign up for the Coaches Meetings by visiting this link:

<https://forms.gle/MpBfYTjAaMxEsucB8>

(1/11/21)

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.

(8/1/20)

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

Thermometer screenings are mandatory during Phase-1. Agency may use Agency funds to purchase thermometers on site. Agency may also request athletes and coaches to take their own temperature right before leaving for practice.

(1/11/21)

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.

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

5. 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 (14 days) and all participants should be notified, while maintaining privacy, that an individual at Special Olympics event they attended has tested positive for COVID-19. As with all recommendations, consult with your local guidance to ensure you are in compliance with local rules and regulation. (8/6/20)

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

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.

(8/1/20)

Sports Questions

1. 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.

Note: scrimmage or full play of any sports such as basketball, football, volleyball, or soccer, etc. however, would be considered direct contact as bodies are regularly in contact with one another. (8/6/20)

(8/1/20)

2. How is Special Olympics Wisconsin adapting competitions to ensure safety during COVID-19?

Special Olympics Wisconsin will minimize risk for competitions by screening athletes, coaches, volunteers, officials, and staff prior to entering the competition area. The host county and the counties from where teams are traveling from must be in at least Phase 2 in order to compete. In Phase 2, there will be groups no larger than 50 people total for indoor events and no larger than 100 people for outdoor events and agencies will be scheduled together rather than scheduled by division. Team contact sports will not be offered and will be replaced with skills for those sports. In-practice competitions will also be offered.

(4/28/21)

3. What is the difference between In-Practice Competitions and In-Person Competitions?

SOWI will provide in-practice competition options for agencies. This allows agencies to participate in the sport without traveling to another location and interacting with new groups. During these competitions, agencies will submit a qualifying score for their athletes at the registration deadline. Those scores will be used to division their athletes against athletes from around the state. The agencies will then submit a final score by the Score Submission Deadline. The final score will be used to place the athletes within that division. If an athlete has a qualifying score but no final score, they will receive a participation ribbon.

In-Person competitions are SOWI run events that agencies will travel to an event to do their final competition. Athletes from the same agency will be scheduled together to compete to reduce the risk of exposure but will be divisioned against athletes who attend that event.

To minimize exposure, Awards Ceremonies as well as any Opening/Closing Ceremonies will be done Virtually after the event has concluded.

(1/11/21)

4. Where do I find the updated information about sports offerings and rule changes?

Any COVID related rule changes, training plans, training videos, and virtual competition options can be found on the Sports Offered page on the Special Olympics Wisconsin website (www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/sports-offered/). Updates will also be sent to agencies who have notified SOWI staff that they plan to participate in a given sport.

(1/11/21)

Responsibility, Liability and Third Party Events

1a. 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.

(8/1/20)

1b. Does this protocol apply to activities hosted by Special Olympics Agencies such as Park & Rec, YMCA, ARC and Independent LLC organizations?

If a partner Agency is offering non-SOWI activities as part of their adaptive programming, they may follow their own guidelines but must do so strictly under their own purview and assume all responsibility. If the activity is held under the auspices of training and/or competition for Special Olympics WI, all rules and guidelines must be followed. Partner Agencies not following guidelines or judged to be circumventing the rules will be subject to suspension.

(8/1/20)

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 15 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.

(4/28/21)

Medical Operations and First Aid

1. 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. (8/6/20)

(8/1/20)