



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 and local programs with guidance to assist in planning and implementation of safe training and competitions.

Special Olympics Wisconsin has updated its COVID-19 guidance based on the latest information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Special Olympics, Inc. The COVID-19 guidance is intended for consideration by local programs and for SOWI hosted competitions. School-hosted activities, fundraising, and or non-Special Olympics/third-party hosted events are considered separate from this framework and Programs should follow regulations and COVID-19 protocols from their school and local authorities, respectively for those events.

This guidance is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical or public health advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Special Olympics Wisconsin makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials should be sought if you have specific questions 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 U.S. CDC guidelines should serve as the minimum standards. In addition, consideration should be given to local and community authorities with the most conservative/cautious guidelines being prioritized.
4. Guidance is based on current information available at the time of publication and takes a phased approach that is dependent on local transmission rates and vaccination rates in addition to testing/monitoring/contact tracing/health system capacity.

## Return to Play Guidelines

Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) will follow local health regulations with consideration of additional guidance based on the indicator from CDC COVID-19 Community Levels. Visit the Wisconsin [Department of Health Services COVID-19 webpage](#) or your county [Local Public Health website](#) to learn more about current local health regulations.

In addition to city, county, and state health regulations, SOWI is utilizing the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) which provide information about the amount of severe illness in the community you are located and can help determine appropriate steps to protect yourself and others. Community Levels were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help individuals and counties decide what COVID-19 preventative strategies to use.

Each COVID-19 Community Level has corresponding guidance that will help to minimize the impact COVID-19 has on individuals and the health care systems. The guidance is a resource to SOWI Local Programs to provide a safe training or practice environment. Final tournament protocols will be communicated in pre-event information for each competition.

CDC COVID-19 Community Levels are updated on the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID-19 Data Webpage](#) once a week. The host county of the practice/activity/competition will be used to determine Community Level.

### ***Participation Risk Awareness and Acknowledgement***

Prior to returning to any in-person Special Olympics activities, all participants are required to complete and return the [Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants](#), which provides Program indemnification for COVID-19 related claims.

## COVID-19 Community Level and Additional Guidance

All Wisconsin counties are assigned a weekly [COVID-19 Community Level](#) of low, medium, or high depending on:

- How many hospital beds are being used due to COVID-19
- New hospital admissions due to COVID-19
- Total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past seven days

The following guidance is a resource to SOWI Local Programs to provide a safe training or practice environment.

Special Olympics Wisconsin will take the following guidance into consideration when planning events, particularly when the host county is in the orange level. Final event protocols will be posted in pre-event information for each competition.

<b><u>LOW COMMUNITY LEVEL</u></b>	<b><u>MEDIUM COMMUNITY LEVEL</u></b>	<b><u>HIGH COMMUNITY LEVEL</u></b>
<p><i>Definition:</i> Hospitals are seeing limited impacts of COVID-19, few people experiencing severe illness, and few people are testing positive in a county.</p>	<p><i>Definition:</i> Hospitals are seeing some impacts of COVID-19, some people experiencing severe illness, and some people are testing positive in your county.</p>	<p><i>Definition:</i> Local health care systems may become overwhelmed due to increased levels of severe disease. Individuals should take additional precautions to reduce strain on their hospitals.</p>
<p><b>Event Size and Venue Type:</b> Per local regulations.</p> <p><b>Pre-event Testing:</b> Pre-event testing is not required.</p> <p><b>Type of Sport:</b> Per local authority regulations.</p>	<p><b>Event Size and Venue Type:</b> Per local regulations.</p> <p><b>Pre-event Testing:</b> Pre-event testing is not required.</p> <p><b>Type of Sport:</b> Per local authority regulations. Stagger start times to reduce crowding at event.</p>	<p><b>Event Size and Venue Type:</b> Per local regulations.</p> <p><b>Pre-event Testing:</b> Pre-event testing recommended. Test results will not be recorded.</p> <p><b>Type of Sport:</b> Individual sports and indirect contact sports only for competition.</p>

<p><b>Masks:</b> Recommended for all participants.</p> <p><b>Onsite Screening:</b> No onsite screening required. Event organizers have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID-19 symptoms.</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b> Masking not required.</p> <p><b>Spectators:</b> Permitted per local authority regulations.</p> <p><b>Meals:</b> No restrictions.</p>	<p><b>Masks:</b> Recommended for all participants.</p> <p><b>Onsite Screening:</b> No onsite screening required. Event organizers have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID-19 symptoms and rapid testing, if necessary.</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b> Masking recommended on any SO-provided transportation, unless all participants are vaccinated and/or if required by local authorities.</p> <p><b>Spectators:</b> Permitted per local authority regulations. Separation from participants as much as possible.</p> <p><b>Meals:</b> Stagger mealtimes and/or dining groups as much as possible. Individuals recommended to bring their own water bottle.</p>	<p><b>Masks:</b> Strongly encouraged for all participants.</p> <p><b>Onsite Screening:</b> Verbal confirmation of no symptoms for all participants. Event organizers have a plan for identifying and isolating individuals with COVID-19 symptoms and can facilitate rapid testing, if necessary.</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b> Private transportation encouraged as much as possible.</p> <p><b>Spectators:</b> Limited. Must be separated from participants, in spectator only areas.</p> <p><b>Meals:</b> Participants bring their own meals and water bottles and/or provide individually packaged pick-up food and beverage only. Stagger mealtimes and/or dining groups as much as possible.</p>
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<p><b>Non- Sport Gatherings:</b> No restrictions.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b> No restrictions.</p>	<p><b>Non-Sport Gatherings:</b> Minimize large social gatherings, where possible.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b> No restrictions.</p>	<p><b>Non-Sport Gatherings:</b> No large social gatherings (i.e. dance). No in-person opening/closing ceremonies. Local Programs can contact <a href="mailto:COVID@SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org">COVID@SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org</a> with questions about community gatherings.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b> Distance when possible. Find alternatives to placing awards around the athletes' necks.</p>
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## COVID-19 Exposure & Illness

Regardless of Community Level or vaccination status,

- Individuals that have been exposed to COVID-19 should follow [CDC guidance for precautions](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.
- Individuals that are sick with COVID-19 should follow [CDC guidance for isolation](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.

## Recommendations for Safe Play

### Four Steps to Stay Safe

1. **Know your risk:** People of older age, those with disabilities, or anyone with a weakened immune system, or people with other underlying medical conditions (including pregnancy) are at higher risk for severe infection.
2. **Protect yourself:** The best way to protect people from severe COVID-19 infection is to make sure they are fully vaccinated and have received their booster shots. There is a robust network of COVID-19 vaccine providers throughout the state. To find a vaccine location in your community: visit [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), call 211 or 877-947-2211, or visit the [211 COVID-19 vaccination special events web page](#) for more vaccination options.
3. **Take action if exposed:** Individuals that have been exposed to COVID-19 should follow [CDC guidance for precautions](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.
4. **Take action if you're sick or test positive:** Individuals that are sick with COVID-19 should follow [CDC guidance for isolation](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.

### Activity & Infection Control Recommendations

- 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.
- Athletes and volunteers should 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- First aid should absolutely be provided if required during activity, even if physical distancing is not feasible during aid. Proper hand hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be performed prior to and after administering aid.

## Definitions

- **Community Level:** An [indicator used by the CDC](#) to identify the impact of COVID-19 in your community. Counties are classified as low, medium, or high based on the following criteria: number of hospital beds in use due to COVID-19; number of new hospital admissions due to COVID-19; new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past seven days.
- **Exposure:** The amount of contact with an individual that currently has COVID-19. See additional [CDC guidelines](#) to understand factors that lower or increase risk of exposure.
- **High Risk:** Individuals that are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. High risk factors include older adults, people who are immunocompromised or have other medical conditions, people with asthma, and people that are pregnant.
- **Host County:** The county where the event/practice will take place that is used when referencing the [WDHS Community Level Map](#) to identify risk level.
- **Participant:** Athletes, Unified partners, Coaches, Officials, SO Staff, and families/caregivers if they will not exclusively be in spectator only spaces.
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** Special coverings designed to protect individuals from exposure to or contact with infectious agents. PPE includes gloves, facemasks, protective eyewear or face shields.

## Onsite Screening Protocol for COVID-19 High Community Level (orange)

Regular education should 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 of COVID-19. Individuals must not participate in any activities if they are sick. Recommend anyone who is ill to contact his or her own healthcare provider for further evaluation.

In addition, prior to entering an activity, practice, event, or gathering, in Significant Risk (orange) protocols, **all participants must undergo the following verbal screening protocol:**

1. Ask each participant the following questions (reinforced through visuals, such as a paper with icons):
  - a. In the last 10 days, have you had [direct exposure](#) with someone who has been sick with COVID-19? If yes, they should follow [CDC guidance for precautions](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.
  - 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)?
2. If screener receives verbal confirmation that individual answered no to all questions listed above, they may enter activity.
  - a. If yes to any questions, participants should follow [CDC guidance for precautions](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.
  - b. Participants who have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19 should follow [CDC guidance for isolation](#), regardless of vaccination status or previous infection.