



**Date:** January 6, 2022  
**To:** All SOWI Local Programs  
**From:** Jason Blank, Vice President of Sports and Programs  
**Re:** SOWI Return to Play Update

Dear SOWI Local Programs,

Special Olympics Wisconsin has been dedicated to offering safe programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have done that by using protocols from the Special Olympics Inc and guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS). Recently, Special Olympics Inc (SOI) has provided updates on Return to Play guidance, and SOWI has updated our Return to Play plan based on this new information.

With this new update, Special Olympics Wisconsin is transitioning from COVID-19 protocols and will now follow local (city, county, state) health regulations first and foremost, with consideration of additional guidance based on the indicator from CDC COVID-19 Community Levels. Additional key changes in this update include:

- **Guidance:** The Return to Play guidance is a resource to SOWI Local Programs to provide a safe training environment. Special Olympics Wisconsin will follow local health regulations and take the Return to Play Guidance into consideration when planning events, particularly when the host county is in the orange level.
- **CDC Community Level:** SOWI will utilize the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), as posted by the CDC and WDHS. Community Levels 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 are determined by three things: total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past seven days; number of hospital beds used due to COVID-19; new hospital admissions due to COVID-19. Each Community Level has corresponding guidance from SOI that will help minimize the impact COVID-19 has on individuals and the health care systems.
- **Required Waivers:** Communicable Disease Waivers are required for all participants (Athletes, Coaches, Volunteers, and Staff). The Communicable Disease Waiver does not have an expiration date so there is currently no need to renew this form if the participant has already completed it. The COVID-19 Participant Release Form will no longer be required or collected.
- **Proof of Vaccination:** SOWI will no longer require or track proof of vaccination for regional, sectional, or state competitions. The percentage of vaccinated individuals at an event is no longer used as a statistic to determine guidance level, so there is no need for SOWI to continue to track this information. SOWI recommends anyone who is able to be vaccinated to do so and will continue to provide vaccination education and resources.
- **Pre-Event Testing:** Pre-event testing will not be required at any level. SOWI still has inventory of at-home tests that will expire in June 2023. If your program wants at-home tests to distribute, contact your Athletic Director.
- **Masks:** Masks are no longer required. Masks are recommended or strongly encouraged throughout the guidance.
- **Event Size Restrictions:** Size restrictions for both indoor and outdoor events default to local regulations.

If you have questions about Return to Play protocols, email [COVID@SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org](mailto:COVID@SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org). SOWI is hosting a coaches call on Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 7pm for the Winter + Spring sports seasons. Return to Play will be the first topic discussed, so all coaches are invited to attend for the first section, regardless of your sport. [Click Here](#) to register for the pre-season coaches meeting series if you have not done so already. The meeting will be recorded.

Thanks,  
Jason Blank