



COVID-19 Protocol

-UPDATED 07.22.2022-

Special Olympics Maryland (SOMD) continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the state of Maryland. SOMD, including our local programs, will follow the protocol of the State of Maryland and local jurisdictions, including host venues, to provide our athletes and volunteers sport experiences that are both meaningful and safe in an environment consistent with what they are experiencing in their local communities.

Guidance is based on the latest information from the World Health Organization (WHO), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other health authorities and created in consultation with a team of global medical experts and with input from Special Olympics stakeholders. As an ever-changing situation, SOMD reserves the right to modify protocol based on the latest information from the WHO, the CDC, and state and local health departments.

Guidance on COVID-19 Return to Activities

Programs MUST designate a COVID-19 response point-person to keep current guidance, compliance requirements, coordinate response and monitor for COVID-19. This may be the National Director/CEO/Executive Director or a designee. **Jeff Abel (jabel@somd.org) will serve in this role for SOMD.**

Additionally, the information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. 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.

Similarly, Programs should immediately consult with legal and/or insurance counsel regarding any liability or coverage related questions.

Throughout this document “participants” are defined as all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, family members, caregivers, staff or others in attendance of an activity. This guidance is intended for all in-person activities (e.g., sports practices, competition, coaches training, Young Athletes, Healthy Athletes, Program-hosted UCS activities, Athlete Leadership, volunteer meetings/trainings, etc.). School-hosted activities and fundraising events are considered separate from this framework and Programs should follow regulations and COVID protocols from their school and local authorities, respectively for those events.

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.
5. Guidance takes a phased approach that is dependent on local transmission rates, vaccination rates as well as testing/monitoring/contact tracing/health system capacity.

Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation: Functional Area Considerations

SPORT

Each sport will present a varying level of risk as well and determination of what modifications are feasible should be considered by the Program. However, if precautions and mitigating criteria (e.g., PPE, physical distancing, no shared equipment and/or disinfection, staggered starts, etc.) can be implemented, then most sports may be offered in some capacity (e.g., individual skills or drills or small internal scrimmage) at all levels of return. Throughout the pandemics, many local, national and international sport associations have offered guidance on how to safely return to play within their sport with mitigation. It is recommended that, in addition to the minimum precautions detailed within this document, Programs adhere to sport-specific precautions and mitigation in determining how to resume sport activities and guidance from sport authorities and associations when necessary.

SCHOOLS

With regards to activities in schools, Programs should follow the school's protocols and guidance in terms of when and how activities may resume. If school activities transition into Special Olympics community activities, then proper return to play protocol and necessary precautions for Special Olympics events, as outlined in this document, must be followed.

If the school or community partner's guidelines are less stringent or in conflict with the guidelines of Special Olympics, the following guidance applies:

1. The school/partner leaders/authorities should be informed of the Special Olympics guidelines for determining return to play.
2. The possibility of high-risk conditions in populations within the movement is conveyed to leaders/authorities.
3. Decision-making and options are provided to students with and without ID to provide for equal treatment.
4. Parents, guardians, or other caregivers of youth participants are provided with education on Special Olympics guidelines and relevant acknowledgements (e.g., video)
5. Youth participants involve in Special Olympics branded/sanctioned activities are given the option to opt out without penalty and are provided options for safe at home activities.

HEALTHY ATHLETES

Because of the nature of Healthy Athlete screening events which are often conducted indoors, these events may require close contact with decreased opportunity for physical distancing, and some interactions may be high risk without proper PPE and precautions in place, additional guidance is available on safety precautions for returning to in-person Healthy Athlete events under each level. Virtual health programming and education should continue to be offered when in-person activities are limited and/or as an extension of in-person activities to reach a greater number of athletes.

LEADERSHIP

Each leadership activity (e.g., Athlete Leadership workshops, Regional or Program leader meetings, Board meetings, Leadership Academy, Athlete Input Councils) will present a varying level of risk, and determination of what modifications are feasible should be considered by the Program. However, if precautions and mitigation for infection control (e.g., PPE, physical distancing, no shared equipment/supplies, and/or disinfection, staggered starts, etc.) can be implemented, then leadership activities may resume following the guidance for each level. Virtual programming and participation will be encouraged and available through all phases, as is feasible.

Questions?

Contact Jeff Abel, Vice President, Local Program Development: jabel@somd.org

Glossary of Terms

- **Fully Vaccinated:** Two (2) weeks after completing all doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Participants:** Athletes, Unified partners, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers, HODs, SO Staff, and families/caregivers if they will not exclusively be in spectator only spaces.
- **Community:** Ideally, the community would be at the county/district level. If data is not available at the county/district level, then use the lowest level (e.g., state) for which the data is available.
- **PCR/NAAT:** A Nucleic Acid Amplification Test, or NAAT, is a type of viral diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Polymer Chain Reaction (PCR) is the most common type of an NAAT test.
- **Rolling 7-day average/100,000:** A 7-day moving average, takes the case rates per 100,000 people for the last 7 days, adds them up, and divides it by 7. This provides a more stable case rate than daily which may have very high days and very low days.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Additional materials available in supplemental documentation on the Special Olympics Resources for COVID-19 website:

- a. Frequently Asked Questions and Additional Considerations
- b. Factsheet on Who is at Higher Risk
- c. Communicable Disease Waiver (Required for All Participants)
- d. Screening and Tracking Report Template
- e. Virtual Games Participation Waiver (for non-registered athletes)
- f. General Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity (US example)
- g. Communicable Disease Waiver for Participants (US Only)
- h. Links to Sport Specific Recommendations on how to modify activities
- i. Healthy Athletes Screening Specific Guidance
- j. Training and education materials for participants and coaches
- k. Signage and educational posters on precautions and COVID-19 symptoms
- l. Social Media infographics

As developed, additional resources will be added to the Special Olympics Resources website for COVID-19:

<https://resources.specialolympics.org/return-to-activities-during-covid-19>

APPENDIX

1. Factsheet on High Risk Participants
2. Communicable Disease Waiver
3. SOMD Additional Protocol

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<https://resources.specialolympics.org/return-to-activities-during-covid-19>

FACT SHEET ON WHO IS AT HIGH RISK FROM COVID-19

Subject to Change, Version: 8-16-2021

Who is at higher risk of COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a relatively new disease and information is changing on who is more likely to get COVID-19 and who is will have more complications.

Current clinical guidance and information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) lists those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as:

- Unvaccinated people 60 years and older. Risk increases with age.
- Unvaccinated people with disabilities (resulting from long-standing systemic health and social inequities)

Regardless of age, individuals who are **unvaccinated** and have underlying conditions, such as the following, are or maybe at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19:

- People with chronic lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or moderate to severe asthma, interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, and pulmonary hypertension
- People who have serious heart conditions (including heart failure, coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathy, hypertension)
- People who have HIV and/or are immunocompromised
- People with obesity or who are overweight (body mass index [BMI] of 25 or higher). To calculate BMI, refer to:
 - https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html
- People with cancer
- People with diabetes (Type 1 and 2)
- People with chronic kidney disease
- People with liver disease
- People with dementia
- People with down syndrome
- People who are pregnant
- People who are smokers, current or former
- People with a substance abuse disorder
- People with sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- People who have had a stroke or cerebrovascular disease

The list may change as evidence is learned. Please review the latest list of conditions that put individuals at increased risk available at the [CDC website \(https://bit.ly/2VEJcSK\)](https://bit.ly/2VEJcSK)

If you are at a high risk and unvaccinated, you may be putting yourself at risk when you return to activities with Special Olympics. But, you may also put your family and your teammates at risk. If you have these conditions, it is strongly recommended that you should not return to Special Olympics in-person activities until you are vaccinated or the community transmission in your community is low.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you should consult with a healthcare professional for written medical clearance before returning to Special Olympics in-person activities as serious cardiac, respiratory, and neurological issues may develop as a result of COVID-19.

Expected Behaviors

I understand I could get Coronavirus through sports, training, competition and/or any group activity at Special Olympics. I am choosing to participate in sports, competition and/or other Special Olympics activities at my own risk.

During the time these precautions are needed, I agree to the following to help keep me and my fellow participants safe:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● If I have COVID-19 symptoms, I will stay at home and NOT go to any activities until 7 days after all of my symptoms are over. If I am exposed to COVID-19 and have no symptoms, I can return 14 days after exposure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Special Olympics gave me education on Special Olympics rules for COVID-19 and who is at high-risk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I know that if I have a high-risk condition, I have more risk that I could get sick or die from COVID-19. If I have a high-risk condition, I should consider not participating in Special Olympics events in-person, until there is little or no Coronavirus in my community,
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I know that before or when I get to a Special Olympics activity, they may ask me some questions about symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. They may also take my temperature. I will answer truthfully and participate fully.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I may have to keep at least 6 ft/2m from all participants at all times.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I may have to wear a mask while at Special Olympics activities based on local COVID-19 prevalence and/or my vaccination status.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I will wash my hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before any activities. I will wash my hands any time I sneeze, cough, go to the bathroom or get my hands dirty.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I will avoid touching my face. I will cover my mouth when I cough or sneeze and immediately wash my hands after.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I will not share drinking bottles or towels with other people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I will only share equipment when instructed to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● If I get or have had COVID, I will not go to any in-person Special Olympics events until 7 days after my symptoms end. I will go to my doctor and get written clearance before returning to any sport or fitness activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I understand that if I do not follow all of these rules, I may not be allowed to participate in Special Olympics activities during this time.

**WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY, ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT
FOR COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
("Agreement") for
SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in Special Olympics sports training, competition or fundraising activities, the undersigned acknowledges, appreciates, and agrees that:

1. Participation includes possible exposure to and illness from infectious and/or communicable diseases including but not limited to MRSA, influenza, and COVID-19. While particular rules and personal discipline may reduce this risk, the risk of serious illness and death does exist; and,
2. I KNOWINGLY AND FREELY ASSUME ALL SUCH RISKS, both known and unknown, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation; and,
3. I willingly agree to comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for participation as regards protection against infectious diseases. If, however, I observe any unusual or significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such to the attention of the nearest official immediately; and,
4. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, HEREBY RELEASE AND HOLD HARMLESS Special Olympics, Inc, Special Olympics Maryland, their officers, officials, agents, and/or employees, other participants, sponsoring agencies, sponsors, advertisers, and if applicable, owners and lessors of premises used to conduct the event ("RELEASEES"), WITH RESPECT TO ANY AND ALL ILLNESS, DISABILITY, DEATH, or loss or damage to person or property, WHETHER ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF RELEASEES OR OTHERWISE, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT, FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS TERMS, UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP SUBSTANTIAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT, AND SIGN IF FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT.

Name of Participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (Required if under 18 years old or has legal guardian)

This is to certify that I, as parent/guardian, with legal responsibility for this participant, have read and explained the provisions in this waiver/release to my child/ward including the risks of presence and participation and his/her personal responsibilities for adhering to the rules and regulations for protection against communicable diseases. Furthermore, my child/ward understands and accepts these risks and responsibilities. I for myself, my spouse, and child/ward do consent and agree to his/her release provided above for all the Releasees and myself, my spouse, and child/ward do release and agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Releasees for any and all liabilities incident to my minor child's/ward's presence or participation in these activities as provided above, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THEIR NEGLIGENCE, to the fullest extent provided by law.

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Parent guardian/signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Special Olympics Maryland Additional Protocol

Subject to Change- UPDATED 07-22-2022

Protocol

At this time, Special Olympics Maryland will follow the protocol and restrictions of state and local jurisdictions, including host venues. For events, programs, and competitions that involve multiple area programs, Special Olympics Maryland will follow the protocol of the host county and venue of that event. In the event that the protocol of the state, county, and/or host venue are different, Special Olympics Maryland will follow the most restrictive protocol.

Vaccinations

At this time, there will be no sport-specific requirements for sports and activities through **December 4, 2022**. The vaccination protocol of state and local jurisdictions, including host venues, will be followed if it is more restrictive than SOMD's vaccination protocol. Vaccination requirements for future sports seasons, sports, and activities will be communicated on a season-by-season basis.

Overnight Housing Provided by SOMD

At this time, full vaccination is not required to stay in overnight housing provided by SOMD, including the local program.

Local Program Implementation of Vaccination Requirements

When SOMD does not require full vaccination for participation, local programs cannot require full vaccination for participation.

Vaccination Status Tracking

SOMD will be tracking the vaccine status of participants so that we can have an accurate understanding of vaccination rate for our programs and competitions throughout the year. When full vaccination is required for participation, valid proof of vaccination will be required----only a valid COVID vaccination card, vaccination certificate or documentation from a medical professional that indicates the vaccination date and type will be accepted.

While we hope all our vaccinated participants feel comfortable providing proof of vaccination, we understand some may not. Those who choose not to provide proof of vaccination will be considered unvaccinated. As with all athlete and volunteer paperwork that is submitted, this information will not be shared with anyone not needing to know for the purposes of program and competition planning.

What if a participant has a lost or damaged card?

If a participant has lost his/her card or has one that is damaged to the point where it isn't readable, replacement cards can be obtained through the Maryland Health Department. Those with lost cards will be considered unvaccinated until valid proof of vaccination can be provided. Additionally, a COVID Vaccination Certificate can be obtained through Maryland Health Department using MyIR (Immunization Record) using the steps below. Those needing a replacement card can obtain a certificate in a matter of minutes. This will also serve as valid proof of vaccine.

Instructions for downloading an Official Vaccine Record:

1. Using Chrome, go to the Maryland Immunet website: <https://md.myrir.net/rorl>
2. Select "Register Today" and complete the form to create an account
3. Complete the "find your records" form.
 - o Note: There may be a delay while the site links to your health department records. If it does not link immediately, wait a few minutes and select "try again"

4. How to download or print your COVID-19 immunization record:
 - At top of screen select “Go to Documents” to view state certificates
 - Select “Certification of COVID-19 Vaccination”. You may print or download your COVID vaccine certificate.

What if a participant doesn't want to provide proof of vaccine?

While we hope all our vaccinated participants feel comfortable providing proof of vaccination, we understand some may not. Those who choose not to provide proof of vaccination will be considered unvaccinated, until they are willing/able to provide proof of full vaccination, if a vaccination requirement is put in place.

Access to information

Like personal information collected on athlete and volunteer registration paperwork, participant vaccination information must be held confidentially. Only members of the management team and coaching staff should have access to vaccination information of individual participants. Vaccination information of individual participants cannot be distributed to other volunteers, athletes, or family members.

Unvaccinated Participants

At this time, SOMD does not have vaccination requirements for sports and activities, and overnight housing through December 4, 2022. However, if state or local jurisdictions, including host venues, require full vaccination for participants, individuals who are not fully vaccinated may not be able to participate based on the protocol and restrictions of those entities.

Participation after Positive Test, Symptoms, Exposure

If an individual who is currently participating in Special Olympics Maryland programs tests positive for COVID-19 or experiences symptoms, those individuals MUST follow the most recent CDC guidance related to testing, isolation, and masking. Guidance can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

At this time, a negative test or doctors clearance is not required to return to SOMD programs after COVID-19 symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test. Individuals must follow CDC guidance as it relates to return to public activities found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

Participants who have attended a Special Olympics Maryland program within **5 days** of positive test must notify their coach or event lead of the positive test.

Program Response to a Positive Test:

When a program is notified of a positive test from a participant, it is the program's responsibility to notify all attending participants. In order to maintain privacy, the notification cannot include any identifying information. Please direct program participants to follow CDC recommendations for testing, isolation, and quarantine and include the link to this website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

NOTIFICATION TEMPLATE

TO: **[EVENT/PROGRAM NAME]** PARTICIPANTS

We were recently notified that a participant who attended **[INSERT EVENT NAME]** on **[INSERT EVENT DATE]** tested positive for COVID-19. We encourage you to follow CDC guidance, [found here](#), as it relates to testing, isolation, and quarantine.

Should have an questions, please contact **[PROGRAM CONTACT NAME and EMAIL]**

If individuals reach out with questions or asking for additional information, it is crucial that identifying information not be shared. The best response is:

Thank you for your question. In order to maintain privacy, we cannot provide additional information at this time. We would encourage you to follow CDC guidance [found here](#), as it relates to testing, isolation, and quarantine.

Activities and Group Size

Group Size

All programs are required to follow state, local, and host venue protocol as it relates to group size restrictions.

Multiple Groups at One Location

In the event that a host venue or local jurisdiction limits group size, it may be appropriate for multiple groups to use the same outdoor facility for an activity. In those cases, the following must be met to maintain distinct groups:

- No group can have more than the allowable number of participants at any time, including coaches and volunteers.
- Groups must be separated at all times by at least 50 feet (15 meters). If possible, a physical barrier (cones, partitions, etc) should be used.
- Each group must be led by a distinct group of coaches and volunteers.
- Individuals from one group cannot move to another group during activity. This includes coaches and volunteers.
- Individuals from different groups must remain separate for the full duration of the program. This includes coaches and volunteers.
- It is recommended that equipment not be shared between groups, but if equipment will be shared, it must be properly disinfected before being passed from one group to another.
- Groups may use the same pre-screening station, provided all individuals maintain appropriate physical distancing during the screening, however there should be 1 participant log per group.
- It is recommended that programs using a common pre-screening station consider staggering arrival times for groups to ensure that pre-screenings can be done safely and efficiently.
- Groups must remain consistent if the program meets regularly (daily, weekly, bi-weekly).

If all of these requirements cannot be met, the Local Program cannot have multiple groups at the same location and time.

Activities

Sport and activity choice will be left up to local programs. It is important to remember that any in-person activity must follow state, local, and/or host venue protocol. Coaches and activity leads must demonstrate compliance with safety protocol throughout the activity.

Masks and Face Coverings:

Participants are required to bring their own mask or face covering, but extra disposable masks should be on site should a participant forget their own. When worn, the mask or face covering must fully cover a participant's nose and mouth. An individual's mask or face covering must be separate from their clothing. A participant cannot pull their shirt above their nose and mouth or wear a high-collared shirt and cover their face. For additional guidance on face coverings and masks, participants are [encouraged to review guidance from the CDC](#).

PPE and Other Equipment

It is recommended that in-person programs have the following PPE and other equipment on site:

- Extra Masks
- Non-latex Gloves
- Hand Sanitizer
- Disinfectant (for equipment)
- Signage regarding social distancing (encouraged but not required)

An activity is not able to start until these items are available for use in their local program.

Signage:

Special Olympics Maryland has designed a signage pack available for purchase by local programs. Programs interested in purchasing SOMD-designed Return to Activity Signage including those listed below should contact Jeff Abel (jabel@somd.org) for an online order form. Orders will be billed and shipped directly to the local program. So as to not create confusion, orders should come from the Area Director only.