



As we start to resume operations and activities in the time of COVID-19, Special Olympics New Mexico (SONM) has developed protocols for its Area and Local Programs which will govern all return to play initiatives. This guidance is founded on the latest medical information available and guidance from organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) and standing State and/or local safety restriction orders.

These protocols are intended as minimum guidelines for SONM Local Programs as they consider returning to Sports training activities. This is intended to supplement, not replace, any state, county, local or tribal health and safety regulations. 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 SONM will adapt these Protocols accordingly as new information becomes available.

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

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. The United States Center for Diseases Control (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.

Who is at Higher Risk of COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new disease and information is changing on who is more likely to get COVID-19 and who will have more complications. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities may be at higher risk of severe illness resulting in death from COVID-19. **There has been estimates that forecast as many as two thirds (2/3) of Special Olympics athletes can be considered High Risk.**

Current clinical guidance and information from the CDC lists those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility (like a congregate or group home)

People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, are also at high risk:

- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions (including heart failure, coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathy)
- People who are immunocompromised



- Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher). To calculate BMI, refer to:
 - https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease
- People with brain and spinal cord disorders (like cerebral palsy, epilepsy, stroke)

If you are at a high risk, you may be putting yourself at risk when you return to activities with Special Olympics New Mexico. But, you may also put at risk your family and your teammates. If you have these conditions, you should not return to Special Olympics in person activities until Phase 3.

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.

Phased Approach to Return to Play

Special Olympics New Mexico is adopting a three (3) phased approach to return to activities. It is important to note there may be times a community will revert to an earlier phase if and when the spread of infection rises in the future.

Participation Risk Awareness and Acknowledgement

Prior to returning to any in-person SONM activities in Phases 1 through 2, all participants must complete and return a ***COVID-19 Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Assessment Form*** which provides information and guidance on assessing risk and acknowledges that participation could increase risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

If participants have tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19, the participant must provide written proof of clearance from their healthcare professional prior to returning to sport training or fitness activities. SONM Area and Local Programs should ensure that all participants are educated about those that are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19 as well as all procedures and expectations for return to play activities.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PHASES

Phase 0 Prevalence: community transmission occurring Stay at home order in place for all individuals.	Phase 1 Prevalence: clusters of cases occurring Stay at home order is lifted, restriction on size of gatherings (≤10 people).	Phase 2 (Prevalence: sporadic cases reported) Size restrictions on gatherings increased to ≤50 people.	Phase 3 (Prevalence: No reported cases*) No restrictions on size of gatherings and public facilities are open. <i>* In Epidemic or Pandemic stage</i>
<p>No events or activities of any sort to be held in person.</p> <p>Individual sport training sessions in own home using own equipment.</p> <p>Coaching occurs virtually.</p> <p>Fitness and Health programming offered virtually or at home.</p> <p>Meetings, conferences or trainings to be held virtually.</p>	<p>HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS Should continue to remain at home.</p> <p>PRACTICES, HEALTH/FITNESS, LEADERSHIP, FUNDRAISING and LOCAL EVENTS (10 or fewer participants) MAY resume if they adhere to strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols. No direct or indirect contact (e.g. through a ball in the hand) should take place.</p> <p>OUTDOOR Venues Only</p> <p>Virtual programming should be made available for those not able to attend in person.</p> <p>Select disciplines of HEALTHY ATHLETES occur for disciplines where risk mitigation and infection control precautions can be put in place.</p> <p>SCHOOL-based activities led by schools should comply with guidance from schools/districts.</p>	<p>HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS Should continue to remain at home.</p> <p>PRACTICES, HEALTH/FITNESS, LEADERSHIP, FUNDRAISING and LOCAL EVENTS (50 or fewer participants), MAY resume if they adhere to physical distancing and sanitation protocols. Indirect contact (e.g. through a ball in the hand) MAY resume. No direct contact should occur in sports.</p> <p>Virtual programming should be made available for those not able to attend in person.</p> <p>HEALTHY ATHLETES may occur for disciplines where risk mitigation and infection control precautions can be put in place.</p> <p>SCHOOL-based activities led by schools should comply with guidance from schools/districts.</p>	<p>HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS can resume public interactions, but should practice physical distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed.</p> <p>LARGE COMPETITION and GAMES (with people traveling from multiple geographic areas who are in same phase) MAY potentially occur, if permitted by CDC, state or local standards.</p> <p>Virtual programming should still be made available for those not able to attend in person.</p> <p>HEALTHY ATHLETES may resume activities, with appropriate infection control precautions in place.</p> <p>SCHOOL-based activities led by schools should comply with guidance from schools/districts.</p>

Mitigation and Precautions by Phase

In the following pages, precautions to mitigate risks are outlined for each phase. If these considerations cannot be met, Local Programs should **not** proceed to the next phase. It is recommended that Local Programs take time (at least 2-4 weeks in each phase) to evaluate the success of the mitigation and infection control precautions prior to moving on to the next phase. Each Phase is broken into four (4) sections: Compliance, Education, Preparation and Activity.

Provided the Local Program has met the necessary criteria for each phase and has taken the recommended precautions to mitigate risks, the Local Program may petition the Chapter Office to proceed to the next phase in accordance to state and local guidelines. However, each SONM Local Program should lagging behind general re-openings within their community by at least 2-4 weeks to benefit from lessons learned. Local Programs should be prepared to revert from a later phase to an earlier phase if state or local authorities require and/or if Local Programs are unable to meet the mitigation and precautions.

PHASE 0 – All Individuals Stay at Home Prevalence: Community transmission occurring. Size: Stay at home orders. No gatherings of any size, public facilities are closed.	
Phase 0 Comply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Follow state and local restrictions regarding Stay at Home.
Phase 0 Educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Educate all participants on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benefits and risk of physical activity after COVID-19 infection. ○ PPE, hygiene, and physical distancing for safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue 'at home' activities to maintain fitness and activity levels.
Phase 0 Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare appropriate resources for safe 'at home' activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare participants for participation in virtual activities or virtual competitions.
Phase 0 Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share resources digitally and activate participants virtually (or via mailings). <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual participants with COVID-19 symptoms should refrain from participating in activities and consult with a healthcare professional for further evaluation.

PHASE 1 Prevalence: Clusters of cases occurring Size: Local gatherings restricted to ≤10 people, individuals at high risk should remain safe at home	
Phase 1 Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure compliance with all state and local regulations, including for participation of individuals at high risk.
Phase 1 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prior to attendance, educate all participants on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ Requirements for in-person gathering, including PPE, hygiene, and physical distancing. <input type="checkbox"/> Following this education (e.g. video or handouts), all participants should acknowledge receiving education and confirm understanding of risks and participation procedures by signing COVID-19 Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Assessment Form.
Phase 1 Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have COVID screening protocol in place and coaches prepared to implement prior to or upon arrival at practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Only use outdoor, well-ventilated facilities. Where possible instruct participants to use single entry point (to allow for screening process) and separate exit. <input type="checkbox"/> No shared supplies such as towels and water/beverage bottles). <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate shared equipment. Equipment should never be used by one participant and then another <input type="checkbox"/> 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 hand sanitizer or handwashing facilities available at venue.
Phase 1 Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On arrival, conduct screening for ALL PARTICIPANTS (<i>see screening protocol below</i>). All participants with symptoms, a history of recent (last 14 days) COVID exposure, or temperature >100.4F/37.8C must not proceed to the activity <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide a safe participation option for those who are at high risk and thus unable to participate in person (e.g. virtual/training at home). <input type="checkbox"/> Activities must comply with distancing guidelines at all times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No activities that involve direct or indirect contact (e.g., through a ball in the hand) can occur. Consider spacing for drills, etc. using visual guides such as tape, chalk, cones, etc. ○ Maintain physical distancing and avoid close contact (e.g. high fives, hugs, huddles) during and after activity ○ Wear facemasks throughout the activity, except during exercise, including upon arrival and departure <input type="checkbox"/> Coaches should minimize changes in personnel---groups should stay together and not change. <input type="checkbox"/> No spectators should be allowed to congregate on the sidelines of activities. Individuals providing transportation for participants should remain in vehicles until sessions are over. If participants need assistance, caregivers may remain provided they also maintain distancing, hygiene and use PPE, including masks. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a list of all participants with contact details. This will allow for contact tracing should a participant be later diagnosed as having COVID-19 during the activity.

PHASE 2 Prevalence: Sporadic cases occurring Size: Local gatherings restricted to ≤50 people, individuals at high risk should remain safe at home	
Phase 2 Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure compliance with all state and local regulations, including for participation of Individuals at high risk.
Phase 2 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prior to attendance, educate all participants on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ Requirements for in-person gathering, including PPE, hygiene, and physical distancing. <p>Following this education (e.g. video or handouts), all participants should acknowledge receiving education and confirm understanding of risks and participation procedures by signing COVID-19 Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Assessment Form.</p>
Phase 2 Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have COVID screening protocol in place and coaches prepared to implement prior to or upon arrival at practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor practice venue can be used. Develop protocols to sanitize the venue including restroom and locker rooms. <input type="checkbox"/> No shared supplies such as towels and water/beverage bottles. <input type="checkbox"/> Minimize shared equipment. If shared equipment must be used, prepare a cleaning protocol and supplies to disinfect shared equipment between uses. <input type="checkbox"/> 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 hand sanitizer or handwashing facilities available at venue.
Phase 2 Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> On arrival, conduct screening for ALL PARTICIPANTS (<i>see screening protocol below</i>). All participants with symptoms, a history of recent (last 14 days) COVID exposure, or temperature >100.4F/37.8C must not proceed to the activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide a safe participation option for those who are at high risk and thus unable to participate in person (e.g. virtual/training at home). <input type="checkbox"/> Activities must comply with distancing guidelines at all times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indirect contact (e.g., through a ball in the hand) MAY resume. Direct contact may NOT resume yet. ○ Maintain physical distancing and avoid close contact (e.g. high fives, hugs, huddles). ○ Wear facemasks throughout the activity, except during exercise, including upon arrival and departure <input type="checkbox"/> Coaches minimize changes in personnel---groups should stay together and not switch up if possible. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a list of all participants with contact details. This will allow for contact tracing should a participant be later diagnosed as having COVID-19 during the activity.

PHASE 3

Prevalence: No reported cases.

Size: No restrictions on size of mass gatherings and public facilities are open.

Phase 3 Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that state and local restrictions allow holding of mass activities. <input type="checkbox"/> If participants are traveling from different geographic areas, ensure all communities meet criteria of “no reported cases.” If not, provide virtual opportunities for those communities/individuals to join.
Phase 3 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Educate participants on standard hygiene practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Inform participants showing signs or symptoms of illness to stay home and contact their own health provider for evaluation.
Phase 3 Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider use of COVID-19 Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Assessment Form.
Phase 3 Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No pre or onsite screening required.
Development of a vaccine or new successful treatments may result in further or revised guidance.	

Onsite Screening Protocol for COVID-19

Regular education must be provided to all athletes, staff, volunteers, coaches, families and caregivers reminding them to 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 their 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 1-2), for **all participants, the Local Program:**

1. Must set-up a space for screening that maintains physical distance (6ft/2m) during screening.
2. Must ask the following questions (reinforced through visuals and verbally, such as a paper with icons):
 - In the last 14 days, have you had contact with someone who has been sick with COVID-19?
 - Have you had a fever in the last week (temperature of 100.4°F/37.8°C or higher)?
 - Do you have a cough and/or difficulty breathing?
 - 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/37.8°C or higher.
 - If high, may re-test after 5 minutes to ensure temperature is accurate.
4. Must record all names, results and contact information and keep in case needed for contact tracing or reporting (*Template available in supplemental materials*).
 - 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.
 - Participants who are found to have COVID-19 symptoms must wait 7 days after symptoms resolve to return to activity OR must provide written proof of physician clearance to Special Olympics to return earlier.
 - Participants who test positive for/have COVID-19 must provide written medical clearance before returning to sport and fitness activities.

APPENDIX

Additional materials available in supplemental documentation:

- a. *Participant Risk Assessment and COVID-19 Code of Conduct Form*
- b. *Screening and Tracking Report Form Template*
- c. *Virtual Games Participation Waiver* (for non-registered athletes)
- d. *Signage and educational posters on precautions and COVID-19 symptoms*
- e. *Frequently Asked Questions and Additional Considerations* (*Under Development*)
- f. *Links to Sport Specific Recommendations on how to modify components* (*Under Development*)
- g. *Healthy Athletes Screening Specific Guidance* (*Under Development*)
- h. *Training and education materials for participants and coaches* (*Under Development*)