

HEALTHIER WORKPLACES | A HEALTHIER WORLD

# Reopening: Guidance for Amateur Sports

Guidance Document

Giha.org

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#### Overview

In America, there are various recreational and organized levels of play for teams, schools, leagues, clubs and associations conducting organized youth or adult amateur sports activities. Sports include, but are not limited to: lacrosse; soccer; baseball and softball; volleyball (beach/court); basketball; cheerleading; gymnastics; ice hockey; boxing; football; wrestling; swimming; and cycling. The reopening of amateur sports during the continuing threat of the novel coronavirus should not be interpreted as lessening of the threat of the virus. While the threat for outdoor sports is less, failure to adhere to appropriate safeguards including local, state and federal guidance during play or practice in various venues could result in the continued spread of the virus. There is evidence to suggest that SARS CoV-2 virus may be spread by large droplet nuclei  $(0.25 - 1 \mu m)$ on nearby surfaces and air where individuals may cough, sneeze or speak loudly and smaller microdroplet nuclei (less than 0.25 µm), which may circulate longer in air within the indoor built environment depending the performance and type of ventilation in the building.

This document addresses a broad range of amateur sports and operations providing instruction, practice, training, officiating, trials and competition in all age groups. On the other hand, this document can be applied to other ancillary sport activities such as: meetings, registrations, concession stand operations, parade, picnics, award banquets and ceremonies and incidental fund-raising activities involving the sale of products, coupons, raffle tickets and services, such as: car washes, bake sales and coin drops.

Even though most states have exemptions regarding social gathering guidelines issued on the COVID-19 pandemic, most sport activities in the U.S. have been shuttered since mid-March, 2020 to combat the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. There are opportunities for amateur

sports to follow established CDC and OSHA guidelines to protect coaches, officials, volunteers, guests and visitors. Administrative controls also should be applied with periodicity for each scheduled sporting contest, game, match and special events like competitions and tournaments. This guide helps address some of the most pressing questions amateur sports may have while at practice or play, including:

- How can we protect the employees, volunteers, public, and players from exposure to the virus?
- Can attendance be limited at practices and competition?
- How can we minimize the risk of disease transmission to athletes, coaches and officials?
- What do we do if someone is visibly sick or not following CDC guidelines?
- How do we clean and sanitize contact surfaces such as balls and player equipment?
- Can shower facilities, rest rooms, and locker rooms be cleaned and sanitized before use?
- How do we manage comingling and shared facilities with different teams during sporting events?

At this time, it is unknown if sport events will be sparsely attended after stay-at-home restrictions are lifted, or if they will be flooded with athletes, coaches, and officials returning to practice or play in order to salvage their season. There is still uncertainty with regard to the public by allowing a limited number of spectators to attend team practices, trials, and competitions. In some sports, the season may be extended based on the outcome of the governing body, association, or organization. This document offers practical guidance for sport organizations and associations to implement interim control measures to reduce the risk of transmitting the SARS CoV-2 virus or acquiring the COVID-19 disease. It addresses key questions, and provides tips for the coaches, officials, athletes and parents or guardian to support their organization.



# What should an Employer do to protect coaches, officials, athletes and the public?

Measures can be taken to reduce the risk of transmitting the SARS CoV-2 virus from touching surfaces, or transmitting it from person-to-person by respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing or aerosols (microfine viral particles in air) from close contact during normal conversation or rooting for your team. Clear communication and utilization of social, print and digital media can be used help educate parents, coaches and athletes on the appropriate control measures to protect their health. Signs can be posted at parks, schools, and other venues to help students and the public understand these precautions.

In schools, the Athletic Directors (ADs) in coordination with local school districts and state athletic associations can provide additional information, communication, and resources to student athletes, parents and guardians regarding precautions being taken to protect everyone from the SARS CoV-2 virus. State athletic associations also can provide similar information to officials through their respective state associations. Leaders in private clubs, associations and organizations also can distribute information to their membership to help protect coaches, athletes, officials, parents and guardians, and the general public.

Schools, clubs, sport associations and organizations should continually monitor international (World Health Organization - WHO), federal (CDC), state, and local guidelines for updates and changes in recommendations, cleaning and disinfecting strategies, and other best management practices. They should seek guidance from regional, national, and international leaders relative to health policy and best practices as well as consider forming a team of professionals to monitor, assess, and implement new

strategies as they become available.

In addition, ADs and the leadership of sport organizations should consider the following strategies for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in regards to physical distancing, ventilation, enhanced cleaning practices, restrooms, gymnasiums, food preparation, personal hygiene, employee wellness, respirators, personal protective equipment, training, waste and uniform laundering, and risk communication. Due to the wide variety of amateur sports and venues, it may not be possible for organizations to implement all of the following; however, trying to tackle the problem from multiple angles and with multiple layers can help reduce health risks. Employers, associations and organizations should support COVID-19 prevention activities, procedures, and education.

#### **Physical Distancing**

- Encourage the use of live streaming of events for the public, scouts, parents and quardians.
- Use social media, text, emails, verbal announcements during practices and competitions to discuss steps being taken to protect coaches, players, and officials.
- Stand at least 6-feet apart when warming up, exercising, or socializing with fellow players and coaches.
- Train coaches, athletes, and officials on the CDC public health guidelines to prevent spreading the virus.
  - Make this a key point in pre-game announcements, posting signage at the field or athletic facility, websites, and verbally stating, "Hello, thank you for coming in, we will be keeping a physical distance of 6-feet for your health".
  - Shaking hands, celebrations or exchanging public displays of affection with each other should be discouraged.



- Gatherings in groups or team meeting outside on the field or inside an athletic facility should be discouraged except for teams with information to indicate that they are not infected.
  - If you need to cough, sneeze, or clear your throat, use a handkerchief, scarf, elbow or inside a shirt beforehand.
- Encourage anyone who doesn't feel well or who lives with someone who is not feeling well to leave the premises.
- Limit the number of spectators, including parents and students, for any amateur sporting event.
- Limit the number of persons attending an association or organization meeting while maintaining physical distance. Consider virtual meetings for officials to receive updates and schedule information provided by a state association.
- Take steps to dismiss coaches, athletes and officials at the end of the contest to prevent the interaction between parties (e.g., teams and spectators) for physical distances less than 6-feet.

#### **Indoor Ventilation**

- Use of perfumes and colognes indoors should be discouraged to prevent sneezing and coughing.
- Provide natural ventilation by opening windows and doors whenever possible to increase air flow.
   If windows and doors cannot remain open due to adverse weather conditions, provide good indoor air quality by:
  - Keep HVAC system operational to maintain thermal comfort and increase outdoor air based on system design.
  - Maintaining the relative humidity at 40-60%.
  - Limit the use of portable pedestal or overhead ceiling fans for mixing and air distribution.
  - Ensure restrooms are under constant negative air pressure.

- Filtration used for facilities should consider MER-14 or HEPA filters, especially for small practice, gymnasiums, training, treatment or fitness rooms without affecting the original HVAC design specifications.
- Discard air filters carefully to prevent the discharge of viral particles during the disposal process.
- If you need assistance on HVAC issues, ask an HVAC professional and see <u>ASHRAE</u> updates for more information. AIHA Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Science Professionals and industrial hygienists are also well versed in general dilution ventilation.
- Consider using portable HEPA filtration units in smaller gymnasiums and indoor practice/training/ fitness rooms.
- If fans such as pedestal fans or ceiling mounted fans are used inside the building, take steps to minimize airflow and direction of air from fans blowing from one person directly toward another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, heat-related hazards.
- Heat stress should be considered whenever scheduling games, matches, and tournaments during the summer months. Heat-related illness can occur depending on the ambient air temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed. The NIOSH app is a very useful tool and it can be used to monitor the relative risk of heat stress. Most often it can occur while playing multiple games or matches over several consecutive days. Heat stress may affect officials more than athletes or coaches since team rotate play whereas officials continue working the next consecutive contest and use personal protective equipment during play. Some officials can work as much as eleven (11) consecutive contests over a 3-day weekend.



#### **Enhanced Cleaning Practices**

- Select appropriate disinfectants consider cleaning effectiveness and chemical safety.
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed a <u>list of registered products</u> for use the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
  - Don't mix different EPA registered chemicals together. The combination could be toxic by inhalation.
  - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) and follow manufacturer specifications for cleaning.
  - Consider consulting an Industrial Hygiene expert, if additional advice is needed. AIHA has a consulting list of qualified industrial hygienists.
- Establish a disinfection routine, ensuring there is sufficient contact time to complete a thorough disinfection between events:
  - Seating, doors, restrooms (including portable restrooms), dugouts, tables, benches (team and spectator), showers, locker rooms should be cleaned and disinfected between contests.
  - Do not use wet rag approach (use disposable products instead).
  - Use disposable paper towels or other materials to wipe non-porous surfaces clean. Hard surfaces es also can air dried due to evaporation rate of the cleaner rather than wiping.
  - Ensure cleaning and disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time.
  - Contact surfaces such as player equipment and balls should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
  - Consider cleaning the HVAC intakes on a routine maintenance schedule.

- Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.
- Non-porous surfaces such as gymnasium floors, benches, chairs, official's tables and other contact surfaces should be visibly clean.
- Tell coaches, players and officials about lessons learned and best work practices to reduce the risk of exposure.
- Utilize team resources such as athletic trainer or school nurse to convey importance of following COVID-19 rules.
- Remind the coaches, players and officials not to leave behind any used tissues, food containers or other refuse.
- Clean all common areas in and around concession stands, chairs, benches, and tables.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch/shared interior surfaces such as: doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, and railings.

#### Restrooms

- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if at all possible.
  - Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.
  - Place hand sanitizer near entrance or exit to the restroom.
  - Hand soap should be readily available for use by occupants.
  - Keep restroom facilities under constant negative air pressure while in use.
- For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles, and consider providing a key so disinfection measures can be better controlled.



- Place signs above toilet lids (if present) to indicate that they should closed before and after flushing.
- Place signs asking those using the restroom to wash their hands before and after using the restroom.
- Place signs outside the doorway to discourage players from congregating around or in restrooms.
- Provide paper towels and air dryers in restrooms.<sup>1</sup>
  - The WHO and CDC currently state that hands can be dried using a paper towel or hand dryer.
  - Due to current uncertainties surrounding the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, care should be taken when using a hand dryer or paper towel.
  - The use of touch or push hand dryers is discouraged due to possible surface contamination. If hand dryers are used, consider touchless devices.
  - Businesses and employers should work with HVAC professionals to ensure that bathrooms are well ventilated.
- Double efforts to keep bathrooms clean and properly disinfected. Maintain a record of sanitary work practices. If portable restrooms are provided at the field, ensure the provider sanitizes the facility according to the schedule.

#### Personal Hygiene

- Establish a "before- and after- service" hand washing or sanitizing practice for all athletes, coaches and officials.
- Provide a hand sanitizer or hand washing stations near any team bench, dugout, or other team location.
- Use universal precautions when administering first-aid treatment or concussion protocols for injured athletes.

 Wash your hands before leaving any restroom or use hand sanitizer after leaving any portable restroom facility.

#### **Employee Wellness**

- Conduct body temperature screening and wellness checks before each practice or contest.
  - Temperature screening can include manual (use non-contact infrared thermometers) or a thermal camera.
  - Employees can self-check temperature, while wearing a glove, or disinfect between each use.
  - There are a number of examples available for wellness questionnaires (see Resources below).
- If coach or official is sick or receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), adverse results should be reported to the governing body, association/organization and timing/decision to go back to work based on a doctor's approval.
- Coaches, athletes or officials should indicate if they have taken an analgesic prior to taking their body temperature. Such Over-the-Counter (OTC) medications can result in a false negative and mask clinical symptoms of potential exposure.
- Any mental health concerns regarding the SARS CoV-2 virus or COVID-19 disease by coaches, players or officials should be addressed by the appropriate governing body, association or organization.
- Coaches, trainers and officials may be at a higher risk due to comorbidity factors such as age, gender, race, or other underlying medical illness or disease as outlined in the <u>CDC Groups for Higher Risk</u> of <u>Severe Illness</u>. Additional administrative controls should be implemented to help protect this vulnerable population of employees.

<sup>1</sup>NOTE VERSION CHANGE: In version 1 of this guidance document, in the section titled "Restrooms" it stated to disconnect or tape off the hand dryer.



#### **Other Control Measures**

- Although not necessary, if hand-washing protocols are rigorously followed, consider providing disposable gloves to staff, especially when cleaning and sanitizing the building contact surfaces, tables, chairs, player equipment, and cleaning the restrooms.
  - If gloves are worn, they must be changed regularly as they are not a substitution for hand-washing.
  - Remove or replace gloves that are torn or damaged. Users should check their gloves frequently to avoid exposure.
- Athletes should not be allowed to spit on the field or spit into their hands and touch player equipment.
- Player equipment, balls, or uniforms soiled with blood must be cleaned or replaced before resuming play.
- Coaches should not share player equipment with another team without cleaning and disinfecting between use.
- Athletes, spectators, coaches or officials who exhibit clinical symptoms of COVID-19 illness should be removed from the game and asked to leave the premises.
- Based on state association or organizational rules of engagement, officials or coaches should report the incidence to the leadership of the appropriate governing body. Information should be provided to the organization when the person can resume engagement in the sport.
- Depending on circumstances, for those individuals who cannot maintain physical distancing, provide or encourage all personnel to wear face coverings and use gloves, and regularly use hand sanitizer. (NOTE: Homemade face coverings primarily protect others not yourself). Situations may include,

- but not limited to, time spent onboard a school bus, charter or commercial aircraft, or group public/private transport.
- Plan for absences of coaches or officials by developing flexible attendance and sick-leave policies; plan for alternative coverage and monitor and track COVID-19 related illness with the governing body, association or organization.
- Stay informed about local COVID-19 information and updates in your geographic area.
- Tournaments, games or matches should be suspended/rescheduled if coaches, players or spectators cannot adhere to gathering restrictions and physical distancing.
- Turn off all water fountains in schools and avoid using water fountains in parks and other outdoor locations.

#### **Training**

- Staff and volunteers should be given info and training about physical distancing, processes, and hygiene practices.
- Provide instruction and training to all employees and volunteers:
  - Recognize and understand the symptoms of SARS CoV-2 exposure.
  - Learn to properly put on and remove respirator, surgical mask and/or gloves.
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces according to product specifications.
  - Report any unsafe or unhealthful working conditions to coaches, administrators, and officials.
  - Get formal training on OSHA's global hazard communication standard relative to chemicals used for cleaning.
  - Control and stagger entry and exit from a gymnasium, track, field, court or other scheduled venue.



- Provide Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for cleaning chemicals and ensure employees are aware of the hazards of use.
- If advice is needed, OHS science professionals and industrial hygienists have expertise in selecting or using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training. Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OHS professionals near you in AIHA's <u>Consultants</u> <u>Listing</u>.
- Store any commercial or industrial chemicals in an appropriate location by hazard chemical classification.
- Post signs near outdoor fields or inside schools and other athletic facilities to remind everyone to practice physical distancing, wash their face and hands, and report signs of symptoms of illness.
- Coaches and players should remove any personal refuse from the dugout or bench area and discard items into a recyclable or sanitary receptacle.

#### Waste and Laundering

- Single-use items and used disinfection materials can be treated as regular sanitary waste, following regular safety guidelines.
- Any reusable cloth materials such as player uniforms can be washed with commercially available laundry detergent and dried on the highest temperature setting for the fabric as prescribed by manufacturer instructions.
- Spray sanitizers should be used on player gloves and all other non-washable player equipment.
- Ensure all commercial laundry services are aware of the potential for SARS CoV-2 viral exposure before laundering.

#### Communication

 Communicate with all stakeholders including coaches, players, officials and parents on what's being done to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., disinfection routine, health policies for staff,

- physical distancing, and health and safety measures in-place).
- Consider communicating the visible symptoms of COVID-19 exposure and learning about people who may be at high risk of transmitting the virus (e.g. taking care of someone who is COVID-19 positive, exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, being an essential worker in a high-risk category, etc.).
- Understand schools, organizations and associations have the right to prohibit any contest and ask the person to leave if anyone exhibiting clinical symptoms of illness or does not following established guidelines (e.g., physical distancing, hand sanitizing).
- Use platforms for verbal/written communication, which can include an oral reminder before the contest begins and the use of social media, websites and posting information on indoor/outdoor signs.
- Communicate with all coaches, athletes, officials and sport assignors if a scheduled event is changed, postponed, or cancelled.
- Coaches and players should be reminded to clean their hands upon entry and exit from the dugout or bench.

## What should an Employee or Player do to protect themselves and the public?

- Refrain athletes from spitting or expectorating sunflower seeds, gum or other substance on the field, track, or other practice location. Spitting into a player's hands/glove at bat or a pitcher going to the mouth to moisten the finger tips during a baseball or softball game should be prohibited.
- Report your symptoms by telephone, text or email to those persons in-charge at school, coach, association or organization. Don't go to any sporting event or practice facility to verbally discuss this matter in-person.



- Wear a face covering when out in public and maintain physical distancing inside buildings when not playing or practicing, and outdoors while sitting on the bench or inside a dugout. If physical distancing is not possible on the bench or dugout, consider wearing your face protection.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer when you first arrive, after returning to the bench or dugout, before eating or drinking, after touching your face or face covering and before leaving the premises at the end of the competition.
- Understand how to properly use the PPE issued to you. There are procedures for donning and removing a respirator or face mask. Disposable gloves, if used, should not be torn or abraded during any single use. Gloves used for play should be properly cleaned and sanitized as recommended above.
- Let your employer or coach know if you have any concerns about wearing any PPE provided to you.
- Report any adverse effects while wearing a respirator or face mask or allergic reaction wearing gloves. Don't remove the respirator or face mask inside the building, practice facility, or outside with team nearby even if you are in physical distress. Notify the coach, assigning official or representative from the school, organization or association if you have a medical condition (e.g., cardiovascular, pulmonary, asthma or allergy, etc.) that would preclude from wearing a respirator or a face mask.

## NOTE: If an employer chooses to provide an N95 respirator, please fully consider all the potential OSHA requirements.

 Attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough if possible; carry a disposable towel or handkerchief towel, so if you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose, mouth and mask with it and then, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the premises to wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning to the premises.

- If the symptoms persist, leave immediately. Wash your hands and face thoroughly before going back to the team or reentering the gymnasium, dugout or bench area.
- Staff should wear appropriate PPE if they are unable to maintain 6-feet of separation from congregants.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and exercise equipment (including balls).

# What can a Coaches, Athletes, Trainers or Officials do to minimize transmission of COVID-19?

- Encourage those who are sick or at risk to stay home. This includes:
  - People with underlying medical conditions.
  - People who live with elderly people or those who are at risk.
  - People with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms or who live with someone with these clinical symptoms.
  - People with COVID-19 or live with someone with COVID-19 or who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- School administrators should notify coaches, nurse, and trainer of any athlete who self-reports positive for SARS CoV-2 virus.
- Use PPE and other precautions when administering assistance to any player.
- Live stream or provide remote access to school games, matches or other competition to reduce the risk of exposure to fellow students, parents and/or quardians.
- Limit the number items touched while inside the gymnasium, court, field, arena, or other venue.
- Wear a face covering indoors while sitting on the bench, waiting for the contest to begin, and leaving



- the facility at the same time with the teams and spectators.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after you leave the facility or restroom, if possible.
- Provide disposable cups for portable water coolers, label individual sport beverage containers kept on the bench or dugout, and discard all refuse in a recyclable or sanitary receptacle at the end of the competition.
- Use physical distancing during timeouts and limit the number of timeouts by established game rules without face protection, with exception for medical attention due to injury or illness.
- Congratulate other team with tip of the hat or wave but avoid handshakes and celebrations after the competition.

#### Resources

- CDC Guidance on <u>Parks and Recreational Facilities</u>.
- National Recreation and Parks Association on Slowing the Spread.
- USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) <u>COVID-19</u> Guidance on Safe Return to Play.

- United States Specialty Sports Association <u>Post</u> <u>COVID-19 Return-to-Play Guidelines</u>.
- National Athletic Trainers' Association.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association.
- National Federation of State High School Associations <u>COVID-19 Guidance</u>.
- Little League <u>Coronavirus Update</u>.
- Association of Applied Sports Psychology.
- International Coaching Federation <u>COVID-19 Resources</u> for Coaches.
- United States Specialty Sports Association <u>Coronavirus Updates</u>.
- The EPA has developed a <u>list of disinfectants</u> for use against SARS-CoV-2.
- ASHRAE has a list of <u>COVID resources</u> for commercial buildings.
- AlHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed these guidance documents about reopening and cleaning buildings after closures due to COVID-19: <u>Recovering from COVID-19 Building</u> <u>Closures</u> and <u>Workplace Cleaning for COVID-19</u>.



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Occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice

the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, and controlling workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

## Get additional resources at AIHA's Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center.

Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in our <u>Consultants Listing</u>.

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These guidance documents were primarily developed for those smaller business that don't have readily available occupational health and safety resources, and designed to help business owners, employers, employees and consumers implement science-backed procedures for limiting the spread of the coronavirus. They are subject to any local, state, or federal directives, laws, or orders about operating a business and should only be used if they do not conflict with any such orders.

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