

Protocol for Organized Youth Sports: Appendix S

Effective Date: Wednesday, September 01, 2021

Recent updates: Any changes are highlighted in yellow

9/27/21:

- Clarifies that teams traveling to LA County from outside of the County are encouraged but not required to submit negative COVID-19 screening test results but must continue to comply with all other aspects of the Health Officer Order and this Protocol.
- No screening testing is required for athletes of any age, coaches, or support staff on moderate- or high-risk sports teams IF the team is only engaged in conditioning or skill-building activities where 6 feet of physical distance is maintained between participants at all times.
- Staff/volunteers whose role/functions do not include direct interaction with players are exempt from testing requirements. Volunteers that interact with teams only periodically (e.g., volunteer referees) do not need to engage in weekly testing but must provide either proof of full vaccination or a negative test result within 3 days of their volunteer time.
- Addition of accommodations for sports where masking may be a choking hazard.

On July 17 and 22, the Los Angeles County Health Officer issued a revised [Health Officer Order](#) requiring the use of face masks in all indoor public settings. Given the increase in community transmission of COVID-19 and the predominance of the more easily spread Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus, masking indoors, regardless of vaccination status, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus spreads more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in [Los Angeles County \(LAC\)](#) in the past.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build-up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious person is engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

It is strongly recommended that all sports activities occur outdoors where the risk of exposure is lower due to the ventilation being better than indoors. Masking is encouraged, but not required, when outdoors if less than 10,000 people are present.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for youth sports leagues (including school sports teams) to enhance safety for participants, coaches, and communities and to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their teams and between teams during competitions. With the exception of the testing requirement, the requirements below apply to teams and sport activities based in LAC and to teams or players coming to LAC for a competition from other jurisdictions.

Routine screening testing **for LA County-based teams or leagues** is required as described below, presuming adequate COVID-19 diagnostic testing capacity and supplies. The screening testing requirements **below** may be modified based on the availability of and access to testing. In addition, these requirements remain in effect as long as the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) reports high rates of community transmission and will be re-assessed when community transmission is no longer high.

In addition to this information, please remember:

- Youth sports leagues must follow the Los Angeles County [Health Officer Order](#) and the [Los Angeles County COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance for Youth Recreational Sports Programs](#).
- Youth sports leagues that employ coaches or other support staff must also adhere to the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS).
- Youth sports leagues operating concession stands should review and follow [LACDPH Best Practice Guidance for Food and Beverage Service](#).

Please be sure to read and follow the [general guidance for employers](#).
The best practices are intended to supplement the general guidance.

Follow mask rules for participants, coaches, and spectators

- Mask rules based on the setting.** Wearing face masks reduces the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In outdoor settings with less than 10,000 people, it is recommended, but not required, that all participants, coaches, staff, volunteers, and spectators who are in close contact with others, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask. In all indoor settings and at Outdoor Mega Events (events with over 10,000 attendees, like sports games, parades, among others), wearing a mask is required, regardless of vaccination status.
- Participants:** When **INDOORS**, require all participants, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#). Youth sports participants must wear a face mask, even while engaging in physical activity, in any indoor setting. Encourage participants to bring more than one mask to practice or games in case their mask gets wet or soiled during play. Any face mask that becomes saturated with sweat should be changed immediately.

Per the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Face masks have been shown to be well tolerated by most people who wear them for exercise." However, the mask may be removed under the following circumstances.

- **Eating and drinking.** Participants may remove their face masks temporarily to eat or drink. When participants are actively eating or drinking, they should be encouraged to maintain a 6-foot distance from others **to reduce the risk of exposure if someone turns out to be infected**.
- **For water sports.** Participants who are engaged in water sports such as swimming, water polo, or diving, may remove their face masks while they are in **and prior to diving into the water**. Face masks must be worn when participants are not in the water.
- **For gymnastics.** Gymnasts who are actively practicing/performing on an apparatus may remove their masks because of the theoretical risk that the mask may get caught on objects and become

- a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision. Masks are required for floor routines and when gymnasts are not actively practicing/performing on the apparatus.
- *For competitive cheerleading.* Cheerleaders who are actively performing/practicing routines that involve tumbling, stunting, or flying may remove their masks because of the theoretical risk that the mask may get caught on objects and become a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision.
 - *For wrestling.* During wrestling contact, a face mask could become a choking hazard and is discouraged unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes.
- ❑ **Spectators:** When indoors, require all spectators, regardless of vaccination status, to bring and wear masks. Make masks available for those who arrive without them.
 - ❑ **Coaches:** When indoors, require all coaches, regardless of vaccination status, to bring and wear masks. Coaches must wear masks, even when engaged in intense physical activity, when indoors.
 - ❑ **Employees:** If the youth sports league employs coaches or other support staff, please note that employers are required, upon request, to provide employees, those not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who are working in indoor settings and in shared vehicles, with the correct-size respirator for voluntary use along with basic instructions on how to achieve a good seal. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through. For more information about free and low-cost Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for businesses and organizations see: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.
 - ❑ Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with other people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as “double-masking” (wearing a cloth mask OVER a surgical mask), or a respirator. This is particularly important if the employee is not fully vaccinated or is fully vaccinated but has underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk, and is working in an indoor setting, a crowded outdoor setting, or in a shared vehicle.
 - ❑ When outdoors, masks are recommended in crowded spaces and places, including among spectators at sporting events where distancing is not practical or possible. At sporting events attended by more than 10,000 individuals, universal masking is required by all spectators and employees except for the limited time when actively eating or drinking.

Vaccinate

- ❑ It is strongly recommended that all student athletes ages 12 and older, coaches and team staff are fully vaccinated. Vaccination against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available for everyone 12 years of age and older. Vaccination is the primary strategy to reduce the burden of COVID-19 disease and protect all members of the community. Having all athletes and staff in your youth sports league fully vaccinated will greatly decrease the risk of transmission of the virus among teammates and between teams, and will provide excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. It will also decrease disruption in team activities, because fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are close contacts to a case of COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic and continue to test negative.
- ❑ Youth sports leagues, team organizers, or coaches should maintain records of all athletes’ and staff/coaches’/volunteers’ vaccination status and weekly COVID-19 testing compliance. They do not need to keep a copy of the proof of full vaccination shown nor copies of test results.

Screen for symptoms and isolate

- Ask participants and families to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to attending youth sports activities.
- Post [signage](#) to remind everyone who enters your establishment that they should NOT enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.
- Youth sports programs must exclude or isolate any participant, coach, or spectator that is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Take action to isolate participants who begin to have COVID-19 symptoms during youth sports activities, from other participants, coaches, and spectators.
 - [Notify LACDPH officials](#), staff, and families immediately of any confirmed case of COVID-19.

Reduce crowding, especially indoors

- If possible, hold youth sports activities outdoors where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is much lower.
- If youth sports activities must be held indoors, take steps to reduce the number of participants, coaches, and spectators in any indoor area.
- Physical distancing is an infection control best practice that may be implemented as an additional safety layer to reduce the spread of COVID-19. During practices, encourage activities that do not involve sustained person-to-person contact between participants and/or coaching staff and limit such activities in indoor settings. Instead, consider focusing on skill-building activities.
- Consider limiting the number of participants who visit the restroom or locker room at any given time.
- Non-athletic team events, such as team dinners or other social activities, should only happen if they can be held outdoors with distancing.

Routine Screening Testing for COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 may infect any member of the youth sports league, even fully vaccinated members, although it is more likely to infect unvaccinated persons. Any infected person can potentially transmit the virus to others. One strategy to accurately identify infected individuals and then quickly isolate them is routine periodic screening testing for COVID-19 with a Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) such as PCR, or an Antigen (Ag) test. The CDC recommends that all unvaccinated participants in any youth sports test at least weekly in communities experiencing high rates of transmission. General guidance and recommendations about testing including the types of tests available can be accessed at our [Testing Information for Patients](#) page.

- ❑ Persons who show proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19¹ or that they have recovered from/completed isolation for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days should not be included in periodic COVID-19 screening testing if the person is asymptomatic. Screening for not fully vaccinated persons who were previously infected with COVID-19² should start 90 days after the first day of symptoms or from the day of collection of first positive test (if they were asymptomatic).
- ❑ Whenever a confirmed case is identified on any of your youth sports teams, follow instructions listed in the [Exposure Management Plan for Youth Sports](#) and ensure that all unvaccinated close contacts [quarantine](#) along with any symptomatic vaccinated close contacts.
- ❑ Youth sports leagues, team organizers, or coaches should maintain records of all athletes' and staff/coaches'/volunteers' vaccination status and weekly COVID-19 testing compliance and any testing done after having exposure to a COVID-19 case. They do not need to keep a copy of the proof of full vaccination shown nor copies of test results.
- ❑ At the current time, with high community transmission occurring in Los Angeles County, the following testing requirements apply to all participating athletes and staff/coaches/volunteers. Persons who show proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or that they have recovered from/completed isolation for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days should not be included in routine COVID-19 screening testing if the person is asymptomatic. Screening for not fully vaccinated persons who were previously infected with COVID-19 should start 90 days after the first day of symptoms or from the day of collection of first positive test (if they were asymptomatic). See Table below for examples of sports in different risk categories.
 1. **Indoor Moderate or High-Risk Sports for children of all ages and staff/coaches/volunteers.** A weekly negative test result is required for all participants who are not fully vaccinated, including children who are playing and staff/coaches/volunteers; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation. Testing two times per week is strongly recommended for unvaccinated participants.
 2. **Outdoor Moderate or High-Risk Sports for youth ages 12 and older and staff/coaches/volunteers.** A weekly negative test result is required for all participants who are not fully vaccinated, including youth ages 12 and older who are playing and staff/coaches/volunteers; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation.
- ❑ No screening testing is required for children under age 12 playing Outdoor Sports. For players **on moderate- and high-risk sports teams who are under** age 12, and are regularly transported together via buses/vans, a weekly negative test result is recommended; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation.

¹ The following are acceptable as proof of "full vaccination": 1) A photo identification of the attendee and 2) their vaccination card (which includes name of person vaccinated, type of COVID-19 vaccine provided and the date the last dose was administered) OR a photo of the attendee's vaccination card as a separate document OR a photo of the attendee's vaccine card stored on a phone or electronic device OR documentation of full vaccination from a healthcare provider (which includes name of person vaccinated and confirms that the attendee is fully vaccinated against COVID-19). For the purposes of this Protocol, people are considered "fully vaccinated" against COVID-19: 2 weeks or more after their second dose in a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna, or 2 weeks or more after a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen, or 2 weeks or more after completion of COVID-19 vaccine series listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (e.g., AstraZeneca/Oxford). See WHO's [website](#) for more information about WHO-authorized COVID-19 vaccines.

² The following is acceptable as proof of previous COVID-19 infection (previous positive viral test result) and completion of isolation within the last 90 days: a photo identification and a paper copy or digital copy on their phone or electronic device of their positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test taken within the last 90 days, but not within the last 10 days. Person must have completed their [isolation requirement](#) prior to participating.

- If **players** under age 12 are participating in multi-county, multi-day competitions of Moderate or High-Risk Outdoor sports, a negative test within a 3-day window period³ prior to their first game at the competition is recommended.
- No screening testing is required for athletes of any age, coaches, or support staff on moderate- or high-risk sports teams if the team is only engaged in conditioning or skill-building activities where 6 feet physical distance is maintained between participants at all times. This exemption only applies during the period of time when there are no close contact activities occurring at any practices and no competitive games. If there are any full practices or competitions occurring on certain days, then the testing requirements remain in place even if other practices only include conditioning and skill building.**
- Fully vaccinated youth participating in outdoor sports are not required to test weekly unless there is a positive case among players, coaches and/or staff. If there is a positive case, all players, staff/coaches/volunteers (regardless of vaccination status) are required to have a weekly negative test result for two weeks from exposure to the case and must test negative prior to competitions.
- Team staff/volunteers whose role or functions do not include any direct interaction with athletes, coaches, or other staff (e.g., lending administrative support to the team or league but not working directly with youth or other team members) are exempt from the testing requirements.**
- Occasional volunteers who have very limited direct interaction with athletes, coaches, or other staff (e.g., a volunteer referee or umpire who officiates only once or twice during the season) are not required to perform weekly screening testing but must produce proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 or proof of a negative test performed within the 3 days prior to their volunteer activity.**

Ventilate

- If youth sports activities are taking place indoors, make sure your building's Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system is in good, working order.
- Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- When weather and playing conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows-position window fans to blow air outward, not inward.
- Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- If your team or youth sports league utilizes transport vehicles, such as buses or vans, it is recommended to open windows to increase airflow from outside when it is safe to do so.
- See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#) and CDC [Ventilation in Schools and Child Care Programs](#) page.

³ The 3-day window period is the 3 days before the inter-team competition. A 3-day timeframe instead of 72 hours provides more flexibility to the athlete or staff member. By using a 3-day window period, test validity does not depend on the time of the competition or the time of day that the test was administered. For example, if the competition is at 1pm on a Friday, the athlete or staff member could participate in the competition with a negative test that was taken any time on the prior Tuesday or after.

Support handwashing

- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms with signage promoting use.
- Encourage frequent handwashing.

Communicate

- Post [signage](#) so that visitors who are entering your facility are aware of your policies, including the requirement that everyone must wear a face mask while indoors.
- Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to the public.

Take additional precautions around team travel and multi-team tournaments

- When traveling in vehicles with other members of the youth sports team not from the same household, wear masks during the entire trip and keep windows open. This includes when carpooling in family vehicles.
- If traveling outside Los Angeles County for an event, adhere to the [Travel Advisory and Guidance](#).
- When traveling overnight, it is recommended that team members not from the same household sleep in separate rooms and keep masks on whenever visiting other members' hotel rooms.
- Socializing with other teams is strongly discouraged.

Understanding the Risks Associated with Sports during the Pandemic

Sports and physical activities that allow for 6-8 feet between other competitors, like golf or singles tennis, are going to be less risky than sports that involve frequent close contact, like basketball or wrestling. Those where athletes do not share equipment, like cross country, will likely be less risky than which have shared equipment, such as football. Those with limited exposure to other players may be a safer option. A sprint in a track race, for example, may be less risky than sports that put someone in close contact with another player for an extended period of time, like an entire half of a game.

Where athletes train, practice and compete also impacts risk. Choose outdoor venues for sports and classes whenever possible. COVID-19 is more likely to spread in closed indoor spaces with poor ventilation. Indoor sports and activities will likely be more risky, especially if the sport or physical activity also involves close contact, shared equipment, and more exposure to other players.

The more people someone interacts with, the greater the chance of COVID-19 exposure. So small teams, practice pods or classes that stay together, rather than mixing with other teams, coaches, or teachers, will be a safer option. This will also make it easier to contact individuals if there is an exposure to COVID-19.

Staying within your community will be safer than participating on travel teams. Traveling to an area with more COVID-19 cases could increase the chance of transmission and spread. Travel sports also include intermixing of players, so athletes are generally exposed to more people.

Table 1. Examples of Sports Stratified by Risk Level

Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archery • Badminton (singles) • Band • Biking • Bocce • Bowling • Corn hole • Cross country • Curling • Dance (no contact) • Disc golf • Drumline • Equestrian events (including rodeos) that involve only a single rider at a time • Golf • Gymnastics • Ice and roller skating (no contact) • Lawn bowling • Martial arts (no contact) • Physical training (e.g., yoga, Zumba, Tai chi) • Pickleball (singles) • Rowing/crew (with 1 person) • Running • Shuffleboard • Skeet shooting • Skiing and snowboarding • Snowshoeing • Swimming and diving • Tennis (singles) • Track and Field • Walking and Hiking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Badminton (doubles) • Baseball • Cheerleading • Dance (intermittent contact) • Dodgeball • Field hockey • Flag Football • Kickball • Lacrosse (girls/women) • Pickleball (doubles) • Squash • Softball • Tennis (doubles) • Volleyball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball • Boxing • Football • Ice hockey • Ice Skating (pairs) • Lacrosse (boys/men) • Martial Arts • Roller Derby • Rugby • Rowing/crew (with 2 or more people) • Soccer • Water polo • Wrestling