



Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs (May 22, 2020)

On April 23, 2020, Governor Cooper announced a [three-phased approach](#) to slowly lift restrictions while combatting COVID-19, protecting North Carolinians and working together to recover the economy.

This guidance provides the steps administrators and participants of youth, college, and amateur sports programs can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Guidelines for Conducting Business: Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All organizations and programs that gather groups of people should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission. The guidance below will help administrators and participants of youth, college, and amateur sports programs reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

DHHS Recommends Limiting Sports Activities to Those in Which Participants Can Maintain Social Distancing, or Close Contact is Limited and Brief: Examples include golf, baseball, softball, cycling, swimming, diving, dance, tennis, disc golf, horseback riding, track and field, figure skating, curling, running, and pickleball.

DHHS Does Not Recommend Sports Activities for Which Participants Cannot Maintain Social Distancing and Close Contact is Frequent and/or Prolonged. Organized sports in which participants cannot maintain social distancing are not recommended. These sports typically require coaches and athletes who are not from the same household or living unit to be in close proximity, which increases their potential for exposure to COVID-19. For these sports, it is recommended that activities are limited to athletic conditioning, drills, and practices in which dummy players, sleds, punching bags and similar equipment are used but athletes are not playing the actual sport, itself. These activities can allow athletes to condition and prepare for sports if and when they are played in the future. Examples include football, competitive cheer, lacrosse, basketball, soccer, wrestling, rugby, and hockey.

Spectators are allowed when in compliance with the limit on mass gatherings and social distancing is adhered to.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings

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- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Combatting Misinformation
- Water and Ventilation Systems
- Additional Resources

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

[Social distancing](#) is a key tool we have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings. Phase 2 includes several requirements and recommendations to support social distancing in spaces where the public may gather.

Administrators of Sports programs are **required** to:

- Adhere to the Mass Gathering Limits, if applicable.
- Follow [requirements and restrictions for pools](#), if applicable.
- Follow [requirements and restrictions for large venues](#), if applicable.

It is recommended that administrators of sports programs:

- Close or mark off all common seating areas like dugouts and bleachers or other areas that promote individuals gathering in groups.
- Clearly provide 6 feet floor markings on sidelines, waiting lines, and other areas where there may be a group of people.
- Designate and arrange specific equipment for use that is properly spaced at 6 feet apart.
- Consider workouts in groups/pods of individuals with the same group always working out together, including weight training, to limit exposure should someone become sick.
- Remind individuals not to shake hands, give high fives, or fist pumps before, during, or after the game or practice.
- Individuals should refrain from any unnecessary physical contact with others.
- Coaches, officials, and others should modify communication and avoid up close face to face communication.
- Schedule games to include adequate buffer times between games to allow athletes, coaches and staff to enter and exit the facility with limited interaction.
- Where possible, provide separate and clearly marked points of entry and exit for spectators.
- When sinks or showers are not 6 feet apart, consider limiting use to every other sink or shower so individuals can maintain social distancing while using.
- Provide readily available alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Personal training services and fitness coaching should practice social distancing to the extent possible. When these services require physical contact between coach and athlete, wash hands immediately prior to and following the contact and face to face contact should be minimal.

Cloth Face Coverings

- It is strongly recommended that athletes, coaches, staff, and participants wear a cloth face covering when not actively engaged in physical activity or when they may be near (less than 6 feet from) other people. An FAQ about face coverings is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- It is encouraged that Administrators of Sports programs provide cloth face coverings for athletes, coaches, staff and participants. If provided, they must be single use or properly laundered using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Please share guidance with athletes, coaches, staff and participants on use, wearing, and removal of cloth face coverings, such as [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#), [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#), and [CDC's cloth face coverings FAQ's](#).

Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

It is recommended that administrators of sports programs:

- Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for athletes, coaches, staff and participants. Require handwashing of athletes, coaches, staff and participants upon arrival, after contact with other individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the sports program or activity.
- Frequently check and refill hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.
- Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails, lockers, dressing areas) with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak times or high customer density times.
- Limit sharing of equipment and assign individual equipment (e.g., batting gloves, catcher's equipment, discs, racquets, balls) to avoid sharing between participants.
- Individuals should wear their own appropriate workout clothing and not share towels.
- Disinfect all shared fitness and sports equipment (if provided) between users, with [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) with adequate contact time allowed for disinfectant as stated by manufacturer. If equipment is to be cleaned by the individual, instructions on how to properly disinfect and appropriate contact time for disinfectant must be provided.
- Remind individuals to bring their own water bottles, and that those water bottles not be shared.
- Limit use of hydration stations (water cows, water troughs, water fountains) and provide disposable cups or labeled water bottles for individuals when using any water fountains.
- If water or food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee and provide labeled water bottles or disposable cups, instead of a buffet or family-style meal and shared water coolers/fountains.
- If towel service is provided, soiled towels must be kept in closed containers, handled minimally by employees, and employees must wash hands immediately after handling soiled linens. Towels should be washed and dried on high heat.
- Provide tissues for proper cough and sneeze hygiene.

- ❑ If possible, avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure. Athletes, coaches, staff and participants should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

It is recommended that administrators of sports programs:

- ❑ Have a plan in place for immediately removing athletes, coaches, staff and participants from activity or the sports setting if symptoms develop. Athletes, coaches, staff and participants who have symptoms when they arrive or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other athletes, coaches, staff and participants and sent home.
- ❑ Conduct [symptom](#) screening (use this standard interview questionnaire [English](#) | [Spanish](#)) of athletes, coaches, staff and participants at beginning of the sports activity with immediately sending symptomatic athletes, coaches, staff and participants home to [isolate](#).
- ❑ If applicable, post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English - [Color](#), [Black & White](#); Spanish - [Color](#), [Black & White](#)).
- ❑ If applicable, establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
 - Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
 - Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
 - Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.
- ❑ [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an athlete, coach, staff or participant has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, they should be excluded from sports program or activities until:
 - No fever for at least 72 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
 - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
 - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms
- ❑ [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an athlete, coach, staff or participant has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of sports activity until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.
- ❑ Require symptomatic athletes, coaches, staff and participants to wear masks until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following [CDC guidelines](#) once sick employee leaves.
- ❑ Provide athletes, coaches, staff and participants with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463).

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#).

It is recommended that administrators of sports programs:

- ❑ If applicable, designate a specific time for persons at higher risk to access sports facilities or program without the general population (such as early morning, or late afternoon).

- ❑ Enable staff to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize their contact with other people.

Combating Misinformation

Help ensure that the information your athletes, coaches, staff and participants is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that administrators of sports programs:

- ❑ Make information available to athletes, coaches, staff and participants about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or printed materials like FAQs. Some reliable sources include [NC DHHS COVID-19](#), [Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#)
- ❑ Put up signs and posters, such as those found [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#) and those found [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#).

Water and Ventilation Systems

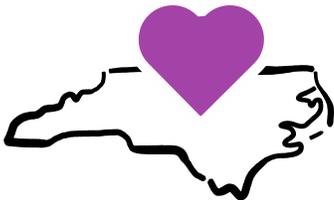
Reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased risk of Legionella and other waterborne pathogens from stagnant or standing water.

Before reopening a facility, it is recommended to:

- ❑ Follow the CDC's [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- ❑ Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.

Additional Resources

- NC DHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- CDC: [Reopening Guidance](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)



#StayStrongNC

**Staying apart brings us together.
Protect your family and neighbors.**

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.



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