

STAY SAFE MN

# Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth Sports

This guidance document outlines the practical application of prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among sports activities. This is a sports-specific supplement to the [Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth and Student Programming \(PDF\)](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf>).

Please ensure that your program is following the parameters outlined in the above referenced document, including the development of a program-specific plan. Get a program-specific plan template at [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Template and Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

([http://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID\\_19\\_business\\_plan\\_template\\_services.pdf](http://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_business_plan_template_services.pdf)).

In general, the youth and student programming guidance document includes recommendations for:

- Following social distancing.
- Encouraging and enforcing norms of health etiquette, including face coverings.
- Promoting health checks and screening of participants and staff/volunteers.
- Enforcing stay-at-home when sick expectations.
- Ensuring policies are considerate of staff, volunteers, and participants at highest risk of complications.
  - [People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html)
- Routine disinfection of high-touch items (balls, racquets, bats, other equipment).

In support of the National Youth Sports Strategy aims, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recognizes that sports provide opportunities for youth to develop or maintain fitness, specific skills, mental well-being, and social-emotional health. MDH supports youth in engaging in sports, but it should be done in a way that will keep them safe. Below are specific parameters to support youth sports in a way that will minimize transmission of COVID-19.

## Programs involving youth sports

If your program involves sports as either an activity within a program or as the focus of the program itself, please use the following guidance. The guidance is based on the risk level of the sport. The risk categories were determined after reviewing recommendations from the following groups: [United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee \(https://www.teamusa.org/-/media/8BEB91F1CD574230BCD39CE0C779B592.ashx\)](https://www.teamusa.org/-/media/8BEB91F1CD574230BCD39CE0C779B592.ashx) and the [National Collegiate Athletic Association \(http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19\)](http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19), and the MN Higher Education Athletics Workgroup.

### General guidance:

- Strongly encourage that games and practices occur outdoors as much as possible.
- Use face coverings; especially among program staff and coaches, and among participants when feasible.
- Within the program, create consistent pods of the same staff, volunteers, and participants with a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities, and up to 25 people per pod for outdoor activities.
  - Organizations should not feel pressured to go up to 25 people in the outdoor settings, taking time to feel comfortable about bringing kids together is the first priority.
- Make sure you're in compliance with Safe Sport mandates (federal law).
- Remind parents or caregivers that they should not attend practices or games. If necessary for them to be at practices or games, ensure that proper social distancing is maintained between parents or caregivers and encourage the use of face coverings.
- Discourage sharing of equipment as much as possible.
- Adhere to facility or field specific guidelines for COVID-19, including capacity limits.
- Avoid using locker rooms and facility showers.
  - If facility showers need to be used, only allow shower and locker room use if there are partitions or else place signage to maintain proper physical distancing of 6 feet.
- On any given field, floor or space, there must be sufficient space between pods to prevent any interaction between the pods. For example consider the following ratios for participants per field/space. If the field/space is smaller than standard size, consider reducing the number of pods. Examples include (but not limited to):
  - Football/soccer field (approx. 57,600 sq. ft.) – no more than 4 pods of 10, or 2 pods of 25.
  - Ice rink (approx. 17,000 sq. ft.) – no more than 2 pods of 10.

## Risk Factors

| Risk Level  | Examples   |
|---|--|
| HIGH RISK: sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.  | Rugby, boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, wrestling, pair figure skating, ice dancing, football, lacrosse, hockey, group dance, group cheer.   |
| MEDIUM RISK: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants. | Bobsled, doubles luge, multi-person rowing, multi-person kayaking, multi-person canoeing, water polo, gymnastics, sport climbing, trampoline, table tennis, doubles tennis, swimming relays, synchronized diving, artistic swimming, fencing, cycling in a group, running in a close group, modern pentathlon, group sailing, volleyball, soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, short track, speed skating, speed skating in a group, bowling, curling. |

### Recommendations for HIGH and MEDIUM Risk:

- For sports activities that are part of a child care, school, day camp, or other program:
  - Keep any “play” or interaction between players contactless.  
For example: Kick a soccer ball back and forth, but do not allow for training around stealing the ball where contact between players may occur.
  - Do not have intermixing between groups.
- For organized recreation or club sports:
  - Focus on skill development.
  - Keep any “play” or interaction between players contactless.
  - Do not have intermixing between groups.
  - Do not participate in games or tournaments, even if these events are out of state where youth sports games/tournaments are supported.
- Games and competitions are not allowed at this time for these sports.

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| Risk Level   | Examples   |
|--|--|
| LOW RISK: sports that can be done individually, or with social distancing, or no to minimal sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors. | Archery, shooting/clay target, individual running events, individual cycling events, individual swimming, diving, individual canoeing, individual kayaking, individual rowing, individual diving, equestrian jumping, dressage or eventing, golf, individual sailing, skateboarding, weightlifting, alpine skiing, nordic skiing, biathlon, single luge, freestyle skiing, individual speed skating, snowboarding, ski jumping, singles figure skating, , singles tennis, individual dance, pole vault, high jump, long jump, marathon, triathlon, cross country, track and field, disc golf, badminton. |

### Recommendations for Low Risk:

- Continue to focus on individual development.
- Games are permitted; however, as in line with the general guidance, remind parents or caregivers that they should not attend games or practices for this phase. If necessary for them to be at practices or games, ensure that proper social distancing is maintained between parents or caregivers.

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## Future Steps

Future steps may include allowing for larger gatherings and/or flexibility around intermixing between teams and will likely have different guidance based on the type of contact that normally occurs in the sport. In general, MDH will be increasing parameters based on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in Minnesota.

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### Resources

[Frequently Asked Questions About Youth Sports \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/youthsportsfaq.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/youthsportsfaq.pdf>)

[The National Youth Sports Strategy \(PDF\)](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/National_Youth_Sports_Strategy.pdf) ([https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/National\\_Youth\\_Sports\\_Strategy.pdf](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/National_Youth_Sports_Strategy.pdf))

[Project Play Resources](https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/coronavirus-and-youth-sports) (<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/coronavirus-and-youth-sports>)

[Youth Programs and Camps During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(PDF\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Camps-Decision-Tree.pdf)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Camps-Decision-Tree.pdf>)

[Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities \(PDF\):](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/poolreopen.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/poolreopen.pdf>)

[Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth and Student Programs \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf)

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[Stay Safe Guidance](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp) (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp>)



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