

Vermont Work Safe Guidance: Section 9.1 - Sports and Organized Sports

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This mandatory pandemic guidance has been issued in accordance with Executive Order 01-20 issued and amended by Governor Phil Scott. It has been developed by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Department of Public Safety and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Should data emerge that indicates evidence of COVID-19 transmission as a result of sports-related activities, additional broad-based or sport-specific restrictions may become necessary, including but not limited to:

- Suspending games, meets and competitions;
- Closing or otherwise limiting access to facilities.

Such decisions will be made by the Department of Health in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Agency of Natural Resources.

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1. Overview

Sports/Organized Sports Including Youth Leagues, Adult Leagues, Practices, Games, and Tournaments

PHASE ONE: Effective **Saturday, December 26, 2020**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume **team-based activities** strictly limited to no more than 25 participants and:

- Individual skill-building exercises;
- Strength and conditioning sessions; and,
- No-contact drills.

PHASE TWO: Effective **Monday, January 18, 2021**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume full **team-based practices** including the following activities:

- Drills involving incidental contact; and
- Team-based scrimmages.

PHASE THREE: Effective **Friday, February 12, 2021**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume the following activities:

- Games, meets and competitions, subject to the restrictions noted below.

Additional direction on school-sponsored winter sports programs, applicable to both public and independent schools, has been published by the Agency of Education at: <https://education.vermont.gov/documents/aoe-anr-winter-sports-programs-for-the-2020-21-school-year>

In accordance with Addendum 8, all other indoor and outdoor organized **adult** sports* remain suspended until further notice, including Vermont-based teams participating in interstate play.

**Professionally facilitated lessons and classes that provide individualized instruction to adults are not considered “organized sports” and may occur in accordance with Section 8.1 of the Work Safe Memo.*

2. General Requirements

Organized youth leagues shall:

- Require all participants to complete a health check, including temperature screening, before arriving at team-based activity. At a minimum, the following questions should be considered:
 - Have you been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19?
 - Do you feel unwell with any symptoms consistent with COVID-19? For example, have they had fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea?
 - If a participant indicates that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or if you believe your establishment has been exposed to COVID-19, please call the Health Department at 802-863-7240 in order to determine next steps.
- Require masks / cloth face coverings to be worn at all times when indoors, including during practices, scrimmages, games, meets, and competitions, and when outdoors for all activities whenever physical distance of six feet cannot be consistently maintained. Individuals failing to properly mask should be asked to comply or directed to immediately leave the activity or facility. If an individual fails to properly mask, the facility or the State of Vermont may suspend the team's practices or games indefinitely.
 - Anyone with a documented medical or behavioral reason for not wearing a facial covering should not be required to wear one.
 - Officials must properly mask at all times and use an electronic, handheld whistle or whistle mask/gaiter. This includes during arrival, departure, warm-ups, half-time, etc.
 - Athletes participating in gymnastic, figure skating, cheer and dance skills and events that require inversion (i.e., tumbling, vaulting, bars, etc.) are exempt from wearing a mask while performing. Modifications should be considered to limit inversions, twisting, and tosses in order to promote masking. Because of the increased risk of transmission associated with vocalization, cheer squads currently may not perform vocal routines in practice sessions or competitions.
- Limit teams to no more than two games in any 7-day period. "Jamboree" or tournament-style play is not currently permitted in Vermont. This will be reevaluated on April 1, 2021.
- Prioritize non-contact activity, such as conditioning and drills where physical distance can be maintained, and give strong consideration to implementing modifications to reduce intensity of face-to-face contact and promote physical distancing.

- Prohibit congregating before, during, and after practice; promote an “arrive, play, and leave” mentality. Players and coaches should arrive for practices dressed to play to the maximum extent practicable and limit time spent in locker rooms. Any locker room use must adhere to physical distancing and masking requirements and must be limited to 50% of approved fire safety occupancy or one person per 100 square feet.
- Put in place measure to promote physical distancing between individuals during times when athletes are not actively participating in practice or competition, including team meetings and when players are on the sidelines or benches.
- Prohibit spectators from attending sports events; only “key personnel” – players, coaches and staff and credential media – are allowed to attend team-based activities.
 - Guardians must wait in their vehicles and to avoid socializing with other guardians at practices.
 - For 10U level athletes, prior to the start of team-based activity and immediately following the team-based activity, a maximum of one guardian per participating family (masks required) is permitted to enter the practice facility briefly (15 minutes or less) in order to ensure their athlete is dressed and equipment is properly secured/removed. Guardians are encouraged to be efficient and are not permitted to remain in the facility during the practice. Six foot spacing must be maintained between members of different households. In an effort to allow coaches/instructors to maintain active management of health and safety protocols during the team-based activity, they may designate a single volunteer safety manager to stay inside the facility during practice to help with young athletes who may need extra assistance with equipment, to use the bathroom facilities or get the attention of a parent waiting outside in an emergency.
- Plan facility schedules in a manner that avoids contact between different user groups, including staggered starts and sufficient time between games to minimize contact between arriving and departing cohorts.
- Prohibit team-based social gatherings until all other COVID-19-specific restrictions regulating sports leagues are fully lifted.
- Discourage multi-household carpools to team-based activities.
- Prohibit spitting or expulsion of bodily fluids of any sort on the playing service (field, court, ice, etc.), or anywhere in or around the playing service or in the facility.
- Prohibit sharing of water bottles.
- Regularly and thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment.

- Ensure teams maintain list of participants in each practice for a minimum of 14 days to assist in contact tracing. Home teams must keep a list of all people present (players and personnel) for any game, meet or competition for a period of 14 days following any game or competition, and make immediately available to the Health Department upon request.

3. Sports-Related Travel

Vermont-based sports teams may only participate in sporting events in Vermont, and these events may only occur between or involve Vermont-based teams. Any Vermont based athlete or team that chooses to leave the state to participate in a recreational sports practice, scrimmage, pick-up game or competition, must complete a quarantine before returning to work, school or attending public events.

4. Sports Specific Guidance

The risk associated with different types of sports programs is a function of the degree of contact between participants and the type of setting or venue in which the contest is held.

Outdoor Sports: The following guidance is for organized sports leagues and teams; informal outdoor recreations activities (i.e., pond hockey) should follow [Section 4.1 of the ACCD guidance](#).

- **No or low-contact** – cross country running, golf, tennis, equestrian, bass fishing tournaments, sideline cheer, single sculling, alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, track and field – may hold team practice sessions, as well as limited games, competitions and meets. The total number of people present at any meet or competition must either all be members of a single team or the total number of participants may not exceed 25 individuals. A meet may involve multiple groupings through the day if the groups do not interact with one another.

Further, individual-focused snow sports that encourage social distancing, including downhill skiing, snowboarding, and Nordic skiing, may hold in-state competitions for **athletes of any age** in Vermont and those complying with the state’s quarantine rules if in accordance with [snow sport competition rules](#) promulgated by the Vermont Alpine Racing Association and Vermont’s snow sports academies.

- **Close proximity or moderate contact** – soccer, softball, baseball, lacrosse, field hockey, ultimate frisbee, 7-on-7 football, crew with two or more rowers – may hold team practice sessions, scrimmages and games. The total number of participants in any game or competition may not exceed 25 individuals or the rostered members of the two teams competing, whichever is greater.
- **High contact** – football, rugby – may hold practice sessions limited to no and low contact physical conditioning and skill building drills. Full contact scrimmages and games are not currently permitted. Lower contact formats, such as 7-on-7 football, may be considered as alternatives.

Indoor Sports - COVID-19 is more likely to spread in closed indoor spaces, meaning indoor sports are inherently higher risk. Whenever possible, virtual event formats must be utilized. Officials and judges for virtual competitions are encouraged to utilize remote participation to the maximum extent practicable. When it is necessary for officials or judges to be on-site: a health check must be completed before arriving; facial coverings are required to be worn at all times; and physical distancing must strictly observed, both between individual officials and between officials and athletes.

- **No or low-contact** – track and field, individual event swimming, bowling, gymnastics, figure skating – may hold team practice sessions, competitions and meets. Physical distancing requirements must be strictly observed.
- **Close proximity or moderate contact** – 5-on-5 basketball, indoor soccer/futsal, ice hockey, broomball, volleyball, team dance, competitive cheerleading – may hold team practice sessions, scrimmages and

games/competitions. The total number of people present at any practice, game or competition may not exceed current limits on indoor event size.

- **High contact** – wrestling – may hold practice sessions limited to no and low contact physical conditioning and skill building drills. Full contact matches are not permitted.

5. Facilities

Use of indoor facilities is limited to 50% of approved fire safety occupancy or one person per 100 square feet and limits on event size – currently no more than 75 people present. Limits on numbers in locker rooms and other similar spaces must be evaluated independently and must be strictly enforced. Venues with multiple facilities (such as multi-rink locations, multi-court gyms) may have more than one unit of the maximum event size as long as those units are in distinct portions of the facility (a different gym, unique and distinct rinks) and the distinct gatherings have no interaction with one another (for example, a basketball team and a cheer squad should not have access to the same locker room at the same time).

Indoor, pick-up games are not currently allowed; fitness and exercise facilities (such as gyms and ice rinks) may offer opportunities consistent with [Section 8.1 of the ACCD guidance](#).

Weight rooms and other indoor training facilities – use of indoor training facilities, such as weight rooms, must adhere to the most current guidance published by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for fitness centers, which currently limits use to 25% of approved fire safety occupancy or one person per 200 square feet. Usage must be structured in a manner that ensures six feet of physical distance between individuals for any activity that will occur for more than a few moments (e.g., spotting a lift).

Indoor sports facilities should take steps to ensure adequate ventilation, including:

- Increase the volume of outdoor air to the maximum possible and reduce the volume of recirculated air being returned while the gym is occupied.
- Select maximum filtration levels for the HVAC unit.
- Ensure that the HVAC unit runs continuously while the facility is occupied, and that HVAC unit runs for at least two hours before and two hours after occupancy.

The *Strong and Healthy Start* guidance published by the Agency of Education requires school to restrict the number of people in the school building that are not students or staff to the “minimal number necessary.” Recognizing that many elementary-age recreational sports programs are administered by the local municipality (as opposed to school-sponsored), the following steps are necessary to ensure consistency with AOE’s guidance:

- Any recreational sports program utilizing a school facility must limit participants to those within the “sending area” served by the school for academic instruction.
- Visitors are limited to “key personnel” and therefore must reflect the minimum number necessary to safely run the program.

Schools may choose to impose additional restrictions, including limiting or prohibiting the use of facilities for games with other recreational programs from outside the school’s sending area.

6. Return to Play After COVID-19 Diagnosis

Consistent with the most current guidance available from the American Academy of Pediatrics, all children and adolescents (through age 22) diagnosed with COVID-19 infection, regardless of symptom severity, may not return to play until asymptomatic for at least 14 days and cleared by their primary care physician. Adults (e.g., coaches and referees) who exercise vigorously during an athletic event diagnosed with COVID-19 should not return to play or vigorous exercise until asymptomatic for two weeks and cleared by their physician.

7. Reporting Non-Compliance

Concerns related to compliance with these guidelines are best addressed to program administrators, school administrators or the local facility manager.

On-going concerns may also be submitted via the Executive Order Reporting Tool on the Department of Public Safety website at <https://dps.vermont.gov/home>