

Considerations for Youth Sports (COVID 19)

Saint Wendel Catholic School

Updated May 29, 2020 (CDC Guidelines)



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers the following considerations for ways in which youth sports organizations can protect players, families, and communities and slow the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Administrators of youth sports organizations can consult with [state and local health officials](#) to determine if and how to put into place these considerations. Each community may need to make adjustments to meet its unique needs and circumstances. Implementation should be guided by what is practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community. These considerations are meant to supplement – **not replace** – any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which youth sports organizations must comply.

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

There are a number of actions youth sports organizations can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and reduce the spread during competition and practice. The more people a child or coach interacts with, the closer the physical interaction, the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple players, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Therefore, risk of COVID-19 spread can be different, depending on the type of activity. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth sports settings as follows:

- **Lowest Risk:** Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- **Increasing Risk:** Team-based practice.
- **More Risk:** Within-team competition.
- **Even More Risk:** Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area.
- **Highest Risk:** Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.

Assessing Risk

The way sports are played, and the way equipment is shared can influence the spread of COVID-19 among players. When you are assessing the risk of spread in your sport, consider:

- **Physical closeness of players, and the length of time that players are close to each other or to staff.** Coaches can also modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups (cohorts) that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups
- **Amount of necessary touching of shared equipment and gear (e.g., protective gear, balls, bats, racquets, mats, or water bottles).** It is also possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. Minimize equipment sharing, and clean and disinfect shared equipment between use by different people to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- **Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play (e.g., during practice, on the sideline, or in the dugout).** During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, attention should be given to maintaining [social distancing](#) by increasing space between players on the sideline, dugout, or bench.

- **Age of the player.** Older youth might be better able to follow directions for social distancing and take other protective actions like not sharing water bottles.
- **Players at higher risk of developing serious disease.** Parents and coaches should assess level of risk based on individual players on the team who may be at [higher risk for severe illness](#), such as children who may have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems.
- **Size of the team.** Sports with a large number of players on a team may increase the likelihood of spread, compared to sports with fewer team members. Consider decreasing team sizes, as feasible.
- **Nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers.** Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- **Travel outside of the local community.** [Traveling](#) outside of the local community may increase the chances of exposing players, coaches, and fans to COVID-19.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and player families about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity
 - [Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
 - Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Teach and reinforce [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - Do not allow spitting and encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease). Face coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports. Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.
 - People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided to all participants on the [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces on the field, court, or play surface (e.g., drinking fountains) at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects and equipment (e.g., balls, bats, gymnastics equipment) should be limited, or cleaned between use by each individual if possible.
 - Identify an adult staff member or volunteer to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment.

- o Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- **Shared Objects**
 - o Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Do not let players share towels, clothing, or other items they use to wipe their faces or hands.
 - o Make sure there are adequate supplies of shared items to minimize sharing of equipment to the extent possible (e.g., protective gear, balls, bats, water bottles); otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of players at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Keep each player's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, bags, or areas.
- **Ventilation**
 - o If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to players or others using the facility.
- **Water Systems**
 - o All players should be encouraged to bring their own water to minimize touching water fountains.
- **Modified Layouts and Social (Physical) Distancing**
 - o Space players at least 6 feet apart on the field while participating in the sport (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills)
 - o Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
 - o Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
 - o Create distance between players when explaining drills or the rules of the game.
 - o If keeping physical distance is difficult with players in competition or group practice, consider relying on individual skill work and drills.
 - o Encourage players to wait in their cars with guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group.
 - o Limit the use of carpools or van pools. When riding in an automobile to a sports event, encourage players to ride to the sports event with persons living in their same household.
 - o If practices or competition facilities must be shared, consider increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to leave before another group enters the facility. If possible, allow time for cleaning and/or disinfecting.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - o Provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on floors or playing fields, to make sure that coaches and players remain at least 6 feet apart.
- **Communal Spaces**
 - o Close shared spaces such as locker rooms, if possible; otherwise, stagger use and [clean and disinfect](#) between use.
 - o Limit the number of players sitting in confined player seating areas (e.g., dugouts) by allowing players to spread out into spectator areas if more space is available (e.g., if spectators are not allowed).

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**
 - o Keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches or staff, and make sure that each group of players and coach avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible. Teams might consider having the same group of players stay with the same coach or having the same group of players rotate among coaches.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - o Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between groups and with guardians as much as possible. One example is increasing the amount of

time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to depart before another group enters the facility. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between uses.

- **Gatherings, Spectators, and Travel**

- Avoid group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings, where spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**

- Sick coaches, staff members, umpires/officials, or players should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).

- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**

- Make sure that coaches, staff, officials, players, and families know that sick individuals should not attend the youth sports activity, and that they should notify youth sports officials (e.g., the COVID-19 point of contact) if they (staff) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms within the last 14 days.
- Immediately separate coaches, staff, officials, and players with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath) at any youth sports activity. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.

- **Clean and Disinfect**

- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
- Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaningexternal icon](#) and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.

Training Video- <https://youtu.be/LMBzjaVRChY>