

Community Sports

COVID19 Prevention Checklist Industry Guidance

Last updated: Apr 28, 2021

The State of Maine has adopted a multi-layered approach to COVID-19 guidance—supported by science, public health expertise, and industry collaboration—to help Maine businesses and community organizations operate safely. As we enter the second year of the pandemic, these updated guidelines highlight the importance of employing multi-layered mitigation strategies to keep Maine businesses, employees, and residents as safe as possible from COVID-19 transmission. Public health guidance will continue to evolve as we learn which mitigation strategies most effectively reduce transmission risk.

No single measure or action will completely prevent transmission of COVID-19. Use of multiple strategies—sometimes called layered mitigation—provides greater protection than implementing a single strategy alone. When multiple mitigation strategies—including masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and ventilation—are consistently and correctly used, risk of transmission is decreased.

Please make sure you pair this community sports guidance with the general guidance available at <https://www.maine.gov/decd/covid-19-prevention-checklists>.

For the latest information on travel policies and Executive Orders related to COVID-19, visit the Office of the Governor's COVID-19 Response website: <https://www.maine.gov/covid19>.

General Guidance and Requirements for Community Sports Activities

Community sports activities for both youth and adults require careful consideration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health experts recognize the role of outdoor recreation and exercise in promoting mental health, physical fitness, and cognitive development. Reducing exposure to respiratory droplets through physical distancing and masks, as well as increased hand hygiene, ventilation, and staying home when sick, remain the primary tools to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Because of the increased possibility of infection through droplets, vigorous exercise in closely confined spaces should be avoided.

At this time, outdoor training with physical distancing may be prudent. These requirements and guidelines focus on maximizing opportunities for physical distancing and keeping small, stable cohorts of participants whenever possible. This guidance includes best practices recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Aspen Institute, and guidance documents from several states.

Students attending school and students participating in any group sporting activity (club, community or school-based) are mixing the cohorts that schools are attempting to use for their public health protection measures. This increased mixing creates a high risk for potential spread both within schools and between schools and therefore this guidance must be diligently followed.

Sports activities present multiple challenges in the effective use of primary prevention strategies. These challenges include:

Risk of exposure to the virus due to close physical proximity during sports activities through participation in the sport activity itself, group seating, and group travel.

Increased risk during intense and sustained physical contact whether purposeful or accidental.

Increased projection of respiratory particles during cardiovascular activities, yelling or shouting as part of play, or common sneezing or coughing. This increase in projection of droplets can be up to 14 feet, well exceeding the typical physical distancing recommendation of 6 feet between individuals.

While masks may not be compatible with some activities, the experiences of other states shows that masks can be safely and effectively worn during competition. As such, masks are required for all individuals at indoor practices and competitions at all times, including players, coaches, staff, and officials while engaging in practice or competition, unless specifically noted (i.e., masks should not be worn while actively swimming). **Masks are not required for outdoor practices and competitions but are recommended when 6 feet of physical distance is hard to maintain (e.g. athletes on the bench). They are required when individuals go inside (e.g., to locker rooms or rest rooms). (Updated 4/28/21)**

Note: This document applies to community-based sports clubs, teams, and events. This includes organized sports with limited private as well as public participants. It also applies to venues that host community sports such as ice rinks and municipal buildings. It does not apply to professional and collegiate sports, which are governed by professional and intercollegiate association guidelines as well as applicable Executive Orders (e.g., large gathering limits).

Framework for Assessing the Risk of Sports and Recreation Activities

The risk of participating in sports and recreation activities is determined by a combination of (1) risk of transmission of COVID-19 inherent to each sport in terms of duration and proximity of contact (e.g. golf versus rugby) and (2) risk associated with the type of play (e.g., skill-building drills, within-team competition, competition between teams from different geographic areas).

Type of Play

The following types of play are defined by level from least to greatest risk. Across all types of play, keep players together in small, stable groups (i.e., cohorts) with dedicated coaches or staff. Larger cohorts increase the number of individuals who may need to quarantine if an exposure occurs. Individual training alone or with household members is permitted at all times.

Level 1: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning with physical distancing, no close contact, and in limited numbers when possible.

Level 2: Team-based practice with physically distanced group activities.

Level 3: Within-team competition (e.g., intra-squad scrimmages) or virtual competition with other teams. This level of play involves interaction within one cohort of participants.

Level 4: In-person competition between teams from the same geographic area (e.g., the same county and in some cases adjacent counties). This level of play involves interaction between two cohorts of participants.

Level 5: In-person competition between teams from different geographic areas within Maine.

Level 6*: In-person competition between teams from different states. *States must be included on the list of states exempt from testing and quarantine requirements in the Moving Maine Forward plan. (Updated 3/12/21)

*Interstate training and competitions must follow Maine’s community sports guidelines in relation to masking and physical distancing, whether the activity occurs within Maine or outside of Maine.

Note: Individuals traveling or returning to Maine must follow the executive order on travel and rules explained in the Moving Maine Forward plan. Check the website of the Maine Centers for Disease Control for updated information on exemptions to these requirements.

Type of play allowed, based on risk level of sport or activity

At this time, sports are restricted to the types of play presented in the table below based on the level of risk associated with the sport or activity. During all activities, the public health measures in this guidance must be followed (e.g., hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting, masks, etc.) These requirements will be updated as conditions change.

Risk level characteristics	Examples	Levels of Play Allowed
Lower Risk		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and activities that can be done with physical distancing and no physical contact Sports and activities that can be done individually 	<p><i>Examples:</i> Batting cages, singles or doubles tennis, singles pickleball, individual swimming, catch, disc golf, golf, individual biking, surfing, horseback riding, crew/sailing, fishing, hunting, motor sports, gymnastics, weightlifting, single sculling, no contact martial arts, curling, individual figure skating, individual speed skating, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus, hammer), jumping events (high jump, pole vault, long jump, triple jump), skiing, cross country events where physical distance can be maintained</p>	<p>Levels 1-6* (indoor or outdoor)</p>
Moderate Risk		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental contact, but with protective equipment or mitigating measures in place that may reduce the likelihood of transmission between participants (e.g., wearing masks indoors, modifying play to maintain 6 feet of physical distance, cleaning and disinfecting) 	<p><i>Examples:</i> Baseball, softball, team swimming, fencing, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, ice hockey, competitive and sideline cheer, contact martial arts, ultimate frisbee, running events where physical distance cannot be maintained, field hockey, pair figure skating, team speed skating, volleyball, 7 vs. 7 flag (touch) football, doubles pickleball</p>	<p>Levels 1-5 (indoor or outdoor) Level 6* (outdoor)</p>
Higher Risk		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and activities that involve sustained close contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that transmission may occur between participants 	<p><i>Examples:</i> Football, wrestling, rugby, boxing</p>	<p>Levels 1-3 (indoor or outdoor)</p>

High-Risk Populations

Vulnerable or high-risk populations require special consideration for sporting activities.

Individuals should discuss the risk of COVID-19 with their primary care provider to determine if sports activities are a safe option for them or their child, with consideration for individuals at higher risk with whom they or a member of their household group may be living or interacting with.

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. For the most up to date information on this topic, see US CDC guidance on conditions that place individuals at increased risk of severe illness (see: People with Certain Medical Conditions).

Consider offering options for individuals at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as virtual coaching and in-home drills that limit their exposure risk.

General Requirements

Organizers of community sports activities are responsible for limiting the number of individuals that can gather in a shared space, in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order on gathering size limits.

Players, coaches, volunteers, officials, and spectators count toward the gathering limit.

If a space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the six-foot distancing requirement, occupancy in that space must be limited to allow for such compliance.

All gathering limits as further established by the Governor's Executive Order are subject to the following limits: (Updated 3/5/21)

All indoor gatherings limits:

Effective March 26, 2021 through May 23, 2021: 50% of permitted occupancy or 50 persons, whichever is greater.

Effective May 24, 2021 and thereafter: 75% of permitted occupancy or 50 persons, whichever is greater.

Any outdoor gathering taking place at a facility or event that is subject to a permitted occupancy limit is subject to the following limits:

Effective March 26, 2021 through May 23, 2021: 75% of permitted occupancy.

Effective May 24, 2021 and thereafter: 100% of permitted occupancy.

Require individuals to wear a mask indoors and recommend wearing a mask outdoors when 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained, per CDC recommendations and pertinent Executive Orders from the Office of the Governor. (Updated 4/28/21)

Masks are required indoors for all individuals during practice and competition, including athletes, coaches, staff, officials, and spectators. (Updated 4/28/21)

Unless the governing body for your sport has a specific recommendation regarding plastic face shields, do not wear them in place of a mask given potential safety risks.

To facilitate the use of a mask, coaches and officials should consider using an artificial noisemaker such as an air horn in place of a whistle.

Require individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from individuals who are not part of their household group whenever possible.

Organizers should identify staff members or volunteers to help maintain physical distancing among players, coaches, umpires/referees, and spectators.

Space players at least 6 feet apart whenever possible (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills, when explaining drills or the rules of the game).

Spectators must maintain 6 feet of physical distance between themselves and other spectators as well as players.

Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.

Communicating COVID-19 Policies

Inform participants and spectators of your COVID-19 policies and procedures in advance, if possible, via website, newsletters, social media channels, etc.

Coaches are encouraged to send a welcome email or call players and/or parents to inform them about actions that the program will take to protect players. During these calls, coaches should remind them to stay home if they are sick or have been around someone who is sick.

Place signage at entrances and throughout the venue alerting individuals to required gathering limits, physical distancing requirements, mask policies, symptoms of COVID-19, and other health and hygiene reminders. The federal CDC has developed free, printable posters on these topics (see: [Print Resources](#); For communications resources specific to sporting activities see: [Considerations for Youth Sports](#)).

It is strongly recommended that program organizers and coaches remind players, spectators, and staff that if they are ill (e.g., have a fever or cough) they should not visit, train, or play. Signage reminding individuals of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 is highly recommended.

Consider using announcements and/or recorded messages to communicate COVID-19 policies to individuals during their time at the venue, if applicable.

Operational Requirements

Risk of virus transmission decreases in outside environments. Indoor sports activities significantly increase exposure to respiratory droplets in the shared air space. Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible. Vigorous exercise amongst team members from different households in closely confined spaces should be avoided, even if masked and physically distanced.

Provide training to coaches, officials, and staff on:

hand hygiene

physical distancing guidelines and expectations

monitoring personal health

proper wear, removal, and disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

laundering of cloth masks and uniforms: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#), [How to Disinfect: Laundry](#) (CDC)

cleaning protocols, including how to safely and effectively use cleaning supplies: [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#) (CDC)

Youth activities require adult supervision to ensure careful attention to mitigation strategies.

Coaches, volunteers, and athletes must stay home if they are feeling ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19.

Organizers/coaches should ask all staff and players (or guardians of players, if appropriate) to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to practice or competition using either of the following approaches:

Use an electronic or app-based self-screening form, such as the Coronavirus Self-Checker available on the federal CDC's homepage.

Self-screen using the following questions:

Do you feel ill or have you been caring for someone who is ill?

In the past two weeks, have you been exposed to anyone who tested positive for COVID-19?

Promote frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing with all participants engaged in sports activities. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizers with a minimum of 60% alcohol content. Handwashing and/or sanitizing should occur before and after the sport activities, and more often if the activity involves the use of shared objects.

Providing a method to rinse hands before applying hand sanitizer is recommended for situations where participants may become dirty or dusty.

Encourage visitors to be prepared to bring their own hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use in facilities where soap and water are not readily available.

Educate players about covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their elbow. Discourage spitting.

For contact tracing purposes, to the extent practicable, organizers should maintain a record including contact information for athletes and coaches who have direct prolonged interaction.

Based on current knowledge, a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated. An individual is also considered a close contact if they provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19, had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them), shared eating or drinking utensils, or if the person sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on them.

If practice or competition facilities must be shared, consider increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow one group to leave before another group enters the facility/venue. This will minimize interaction between individuals at points of ingress and egress and allow time for cleaning and disinfecting.

Limit the number of players sitting in confined player seating areas (e.g., dugouts). Ensure 6 feet of physical distance by allowing players to spread out into spectator areas if more space is available.

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.

Facilities

Indoor sports activities significantly increase exposure to respiratory droplets in the shared air space. If indoor facilities are used, take steps to improve ventilation in the building.

Increase the percentage of outdoor air (e.g., using economizer modes of HVAC operations) potentially as high as 100% (first verify compatibility with HVAC system capabilities for both temperature and humidity control as well as compatibility with outdoor/indoor air quality considerations).

Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, if possible.

Disable demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.

Consider using natural ventilation (i.e., opening windows if possible and safe to do so) to increase outdoor air dilution of indoor air when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.

Consider restricting the use of water fountains to water bottle refill only with instruction for individuals to wash or sanitize hands after use.

Require any organizations that share or use the sports facilities to follow the considerations in this guidance.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on the field, court, or play surface 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 and objects should be cleaned between uses if possible.

Cleaning products must not be used near children, and staff must ensure there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.

Refer to the following documents for guidance on general cleaning and disinfection:

COVID-19 Prevention Checklist General Guidance (State of Maine)

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility (CDC)

Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes (CDC)

Shared Objects

Participants should bring and use their own equipment when possible, or have equipment designated and labeled for individual use by the organization.

Discourage sharing of items, especially those that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Do not let players share towels, clothing (e.g., uniforms, pinnies), or other items they use to wipe their faces or hands.

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.

If food is offered at any event, pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee are advisable. Avoid sharing food and utensils.

Water bottles should be labeled to avoid cross-contamination.

Cohorting Players and Coaches

Keep players together in small, stable 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.

Transportation

Transportation to and from sports activities require attention because of increased risk of close proximity and poor ventilation. See the “shared transportation” of the general guidance for additional guidelines (see: General Guidance).

If buses are used, spread individuals out to the extent possible, increase the airflow with open windows if weather permits, require use of masks, and provide hand sanitizer for use when entering and exiting the bus.