

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Guidance for Youth Sports Leagues

Requirements and Best Practices

Introduction

On July 17 and 22, the Los Angeles County Health Officer issued a revised [Health Officer Order](#) requiring the use of face masks in all indoor public settings. Given the increase in community transmission of COVID-19 and the predominance of the more easily spread Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus, masking indoors, regardless of vaccination status, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus spreads more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in LA in the past.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for youth sports leagues (**including school sports teams**) to enhance safety for participants, coaches, and communities, and lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their teams.

In addition to this information, please remember:

- Youth sports leagues must follow the LA County [Health Officer Order](#) and the [LA County COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance for Youth Recreational Sports Programs](#).
- Youth sports leagues that employ coaches or other support staff must also adhere to the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS).
- Youth sports leagues operating concession stands should review and follow [DPH Best Practice Guidance for Food and Beverage Service](#).

Please be sure to read and follow the [general guidance for employers](#). The best practices below are intended to supplement the general guidance.

Follow mask rules for participants, coaches, and spectators

- **Participants:** When indoors, require all participants, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#). Youth sports participants must wear a face mask even while engaging in physical activity in any indoor setting.

- Participants may remove their face masks temporarily to eat or drink. When participants are eating or drinking, they should be encouraged to maintain a 6-foot distance from others.
- Participants who are engaged in indoor water sports such as swimming, water polo, or diving, may remove their face masks while they are in the water. Face masks must be worn when participants are not in the water.
- Encourage participants to bring more than one mask to practice or games in case their mask gets wet or soiled during play.
- **Spectators:** When indoors, require all spectators, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#). Make masks available for those who arrive without them.
- **Coaches:** When indoors, require all coaches, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#) when they are indoors. Coaches must wear masks even when engaged in intense physical activity when indoors.
- **Employees:** If the sports league employs coaches or other support staff, please note that employers are required to provide unvaccinated employees working in indoor settings, upon request, with the correct-size respirator along with basic instructions on how to achieve a good seal. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through. For more information about free and low-cost PPE for businesses and organizations see: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.
- Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with other people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as "double-masking" (wearing a cloth mask OVER a surgical mask), or a respirator. This is particularly important if the employee is not fully vaccinated or is fully vaccinated but has underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk, and is working in an indoor setting, a crowded outdoor setting, or in a shared vehicle.
- When outdoors, masks are recommended in crowded spaces and places, including among spectators at sporting events where distancing is not practical or possible. At sporting events attended by more than 10,000 individuals, universal masking is required by all spectators and employees except for the limited time when eating or drinking.

Vaccinate

- It is strongly recommended that all student athletes 12 and older, coaches and team staff are fully vaccinated. Vaccination against the virus that cause COVID-19 is available for everyone 12 years of age and older. Vaccination is the primary strategy to reduce the burden of COVID-19 disease and protect all members of the community. Having all athletes and staff in your league fully vaccinated will greatly decrease the risk of transmission of the virus among teammates and between teams, and will provide excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. It will also decrease disruption in team activities, because fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are close contacts to a case of COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic and continue to test negative.

Screen for symptoms and isolate

- Ask participants and families to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to attending youth sports activities.
- Post [signage](#) to remind everyone who enters your establishment that they should NOT enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.
- Youth sports programs must exclude or isolate any participant, coach, or spectator that is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Take action to isolate participants who begin to have COVID-19 symptoms during youth sports activities, from other participants, coaches and spectators.
 - [Notify LA County DPH officials](#), staff, and families immediately of any confirmed case of COVID-19.

Reduce crowding, especially indoors

- If possible, hold youth sports activities outdoors where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is much lower.
- If youth sports activities must be held indoors, take steps to reduce the number of participants, coaches and spectators in any indoor area.

- Physical distancing is an infection control best practice that may be implemented as an additional safety layer to reduce the spread of COVID-19. During practices, encourage activities that do not involve sustained person-to-person contact between participants and/or coaching staff and limit such activities in indoor settings. Instead, consider focusing on skill-building activities.
- Consider limiting the number of participants who visit the restroom or locker room at any given time.
- Non-athletic team events, such as team dinners or other social activities, should only happen if they can be held outdoors with distancing.

Require Screening Testing for COVID-19

- The virus that causes COVID-19 may infect any members of the youth sports league, even fully vaccinated members, although it is more likely to infect unvaccinated persons. Any infected person can potentially transmit the virus to others. One strategy to accurately identify infected individuals and then quickly isolate them is routine periodic screening testing for COVID-19 with a Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) such as PCR, or an Antigen (Ag) test. General guidance and recommendations about testing including the types of tests available can be accessed at our [Testing Information for Patients](#) page.
- At the current time with high community transmission occurring in Los Angeles County, routine testing is required for all athletes and staff participating in **moderate or high-risk sports**, regardless of vaccination status. See Table below for examples of sports in different risk categories.
- Required testing cadence is minimum once per week.
- Testing two times per week is strongly recommended for unvaccinated participants and staff.
- In addition, testing must be performed within 48 hours of any inter-team competition and results must be available before the competition begins or the athlete or staff member may not be present at the competition.
- Whenever a confirmed case is identified on any of your teams, follow instructions listed in the [Exposure Management Plan for Youth Sports](#) and ensure that all unvaccinated close contacts quarantine along with any symptomatic vaccinated close contacts.

Ventilate

- If youth sports activities are taking place indoors, make sure your building's HVAC system is in good, working order.
- Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- When weather and playing conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows - position window fans to blow air outward, not inward.
- Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- If your team or league utilizes transport vehicles, such as buses or vans, it is recommended to open windows to increase airflow from outside when it is safe to do so.
- See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#) and CDC [Ventilation in Schools and Child Care Programs](#) page.

Support handwashing

- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms with signage promoting use.
- Encourage frequent handwashing.

Communicate

- Post [signage](#) so that visitors who are entering your facility are aware of your policies, including the requirement that everyone must wear a face mask while indoors.
- Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to the public.

Take additional precautions around team travel and multi-team tournaments

- When traveling in vehicles with other members of the team not from the same household, wear masks during the entire trip and keep windows open. This includes when carpooling in family vehicles.
- If traveling outside Los Angeles County for an event, adhere to the [Travel Advisory and Guidance](#)
- When traveling overnight, it is recommended that team members not from the same household sleep in separate rooms and keep masks on whenever visiting other members' hotel rooms.
- Socializing with other teams is strongly discouraged.

Table 1. Examples of Sports Stratified by Risk Level Depending on Degree of Participant Contact

Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archery • Badminton (singles) • Band • Biking • Bocce • Bowling • Corn hole • Cross country • Curling • Dance (no contact) • Disc golf • Drumline • Equestrian events (including rodeos) that involve only a single rider at a time) • Golf • Gymnastics • Ice and roller skating (no contact) • Lawn bowling • Martial arts (no contact) • Physical training (e.g., yoga, Zumba, Tai chi) • Pickleball (singles) • Rowing/crew (with 1 person) • Running • Shuffleboard • Skeet shooting • Skiing and snowboarding • Snowshoeing • Swimming and diving • Tennis (singles) • Track and Field • Walking and Hiking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Badminton (doubles) • Baseball • Cheerleading • Dance (intermittent contact) • Dodgeball • Field hockey • Flag Football • Kickball • Lacrosse (girls/women) • Pickleball (doubles) • Squash • Softball • Tennis (doubles) • Volleyball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball • Boxing • Football • Ice hockey • Ice Skating (pairs) • Lacrosse (boys/men) • Martial Arts • Roller Derby • Rugby • Rowing/crew (with 2 or more people) • Soccer • Water polo • Wrestling