

Protocol for Organized Youth Sports: Appendix S

Recent updates: (Any changes are highlighted in yellow)

2/9/2022

- Updated introductory comments
- Incorporated current employer mandate to provide and require employees in close contact with others to wear a well-fitting medical grade mask, surgical mask, or higher-level respirator at all times while indoors at the worksite or facility, including in shared vehicles.
- Clarified distinction between youth participants who must be fully vaccinated in order to be exempt from screening testing and from quarantine after exposure, and adult participants who must be fully up-to-date on vaccination status to be exempt.
- Results, verified or unverified, from over-the-counter test kits, including tests self-administered and self-read at home may now be utilized to fulfill screening testing requirements for youth athletes and adult participants who are not employees.

The Los Angeles County [Health Officer Order](#) requires 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 Omicron 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 Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus spreads more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in Los Angeles County (LAC) in the past.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build-up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious **person is** engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

It is strongly recommended that all sports activities occur outdoors where the risk of exposure is lower due to the ventilation being better than indoors.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for youth sports leagues (including school sports teams) to enhance safety for participants, coaches, referees, and communities and to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within youth teams and between teams during competitions. With the exception of the testing requirement, the requirements below apply to teams and sport activities based in LAC and to teams or players coming to LAC for a competition from other jurisdictions.

Routine screening testing for LA County-based teams or leagues is required as described below, presuming adequate COVID-19 diagnostic testing capacity and supplies. The screening testing requirements below may be modified based on the availability of and access to testing. In addition, these requirements remain in effect as long as the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

(LACDPH) reports high or substantial rates of community transmission and will be re-assessed when community transmission remains at a moderate or low level.

In addition to this information, please remember:

- ❑ Youth sports leagues must follow the [Los Angeles County Health Officer Order](#) and the [Los Angeles County COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance for Youth Recreational Sports Programs](#).
- ❑ Youth sports leagues that employ coaches, referees 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 [LACDPH Best Practice Guidance for Food and Beverage Service](#).

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

Follow mask rules for participants, coaches, staff, and spectators

- ❑ **Mask rules based on the setting.** Wearing face masks reduces the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In outdoor settings with less than 5,000 people, it is recommended, but not required, that all spectators who are in close contact with others, regardless of vaccination status wear a mask. In outdoor settings, all coaches, staff, volunteers, referees, and officials when working with teams in settings where distancing is not feasible, and regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask at all times. In all indoor settings, coaches, staff, volunteers, referees, officials, and spectators, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask at all times.
- ❑ **Participants:** Require all participants, regardless of vaccination status, to bring and wear masks. Masks are required to be always worn indoors when participants are not actively practicing, conditioning, competing, or performing. Masks are also required while on the sidelines, in team meetings, and within locker rooms and weight rooms. When actively practicing, conditioning, or competing in indoor sports, masks are required by participants as practicable. When actively practicing, conditioning, or competing in outdoor moderate and high-risk sports where distancing is not possible, masks are required by participants, as practicable. Encourage participants to bring more than one mask to practice or games in case their mask gets wet or soiled during play. Any face mask that becomes saturated with sweat should be changed immediately.

Per the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Face masks have been shown to be well tolerated by most people who wear them for exercise.” However, the mask may be removed under the following circumstances.

- *Eating and drinking.* Participants may remove their face masks temporarily to eat or drink. When participants are actively eating or drinking, they should be encouraged to maintain a 6-foot distance from others to reduce the risk of exposure if someone turns out to be infected.

- *For water sports.* Participants who are engaged in water sports such as swimming, water polo, or diving, may remove their face masks while they are in and **preparing to dive** into the water. Face masks must be worn when participants are not in the water.
 - *For gymnastics.* Gymnasts who are actively practicing/performing on an apparatus may remove their masks because of the theoretical risk that the mask may get caught on objects and become a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision. Masks are required for floor routines and when gymnasts are not actively practicing/performing on the apparatus.
 - *For competitive cheerleading.* Cheerleaders who are actively performing/practicing routines that involve tumbling, stunting, or flying may remove their masks because of the theoretical risk that the mask may get caught on objects and become a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision.
 - *For wrestling.* During wrestling contact, a face mask could become a choking hazard and is discouraged unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes.
- ❑ **Spectators:** When indoors, require all spectators, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#). Make masks available for those who arrive without them. When outdoors, masks are recommended in crowded spaces and places among spectators at sporting events where distancing is not practical or possible. At outdoor sporting events attended by more than 5,000 individuals, universal masking is required by all spectators and employees except for the limited time when actively eating or drinking.
- ❑ **Coaches:** When indoors, require all coaches, regardless of vaccination status, to [bring and wear masks](#). When outdoors, require all coaches, regardless of vaccination status, working with moderate- and high-risk sports teams where distancing is not feasible, to bring and wear masks. Coaches must wear masks, even when engaged in intense physical activity.
- ❑ **Referees and other game officials:** When indoors, require all referees and officials, regardless of vaccination status, to bring and wear masks at all times. When outdoors, require all referees and officials, regardless of vaccination status, working with moderate- and high-risk sports teams where distancing is not possible, to bring and wear masks at all times.
- ❑ **Employees:** If the youth sports league employs coaches or other support staff, please note that employers **must provide and require employees in close contact with others to wear a well-fitting medical grade mask, surgical mask, or higher-level respirator such as an N95 filtering facepiece respirator or KN95, at all times while indoors at the worksite or facility, including in shared vehicles.** For more information about free and low-cost Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for businesses and organizations see <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.
- ❑ Employees who work in **crowded outdoor settings** 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 **when in crowded outdoor settings.** 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.

Vaccinate

- ❑ It is strongly recommended that all athletes ages 5 and older, coaches and team staff are fully vaccinated **and, if eligible, boosted against COVID-19**. Vaccination against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available for everyone 5 years of age and older. **Booster doses are available for everyone 12 years 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 youth sports league fully vaccinated and receive booster doses as soon as they are eligible 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 **adults** whose vaccination status is up-to-date¹ **and youth who are fully vaccinated** 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.
- ❑ Youth sports leagues, team organizers, or coaches should maintain records of all athletes' and staff/coaches'/volunteers' vaccination status and weekly COVID-19 testing compliance. They do not need to keep a copy of the proof of full vaccination shown nor copies of test results.

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 LACDPH officials](#), staff, and families immediately of any confirmed case of COVID-19.
 - A 7-day suspension of all team activities and DPH approval before resuming activity will be required of any youth sports team in which there has been an outbreak of four or more epidemiologically linked cases over a 14-day period. Individual conditioning and skill building may continue during the suspension period as long as everyone on the team complies fully with any individual isolation or quarantine orders that apply.

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.
- ❑ Limit the number of participants who visit the restroom or locker room at any given time.

¹ Up-to-date vaccination status refers to having received a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine when eligible or having completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series if not yet eligible for booster. See [Vaccine eligibility summary](#).

- ❑ Non-athletic team events, such as team dinners or other social activities, should only happen if they can be held outdoors with distancing.

Routine Screening Testing for COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 may infect any member of the youth sports league, even fully vaccinated² 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.

- ❑ Persons who have recovered from/completed isolation for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days should not be included in periodic COVID-19 screening testing if the person is asymptomatic. Screening for not fully vaccinated persons who were previously infected with COVID-19 should start 90 days after the first day of symptoms or from the day of collection of first positive test (if they were asymptomatic).
- ❑ Whenever a confirmed case is identified on any of your youth sports 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.
- ❑ Youth sports leagues, team organizers, or coaches should maintain records of all athletes' and staff/coaches'/referees'/volunteers' vaccination status and weekly COVID-19 testing compliance and any testing done after having exposure to a COVID-19 case. They do not need to keep a copy of the proof of full vaccination shown nor copies of test results.

At the current time, with high or substantial community transmission occurring in Los Angeles County, the following testing requirements apply to all participating athletes and staff/coaches/referees/volunteers. **Youth participants** who show proof that **they are fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 and are not playing unmasked nor with unmasked teammates indoors, or have recovered from/completed isolation for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days, should not be included in routine COVID-19 screening testing if the person is asymptomatic. **Adult participants (e.g., coaches, support staff, officials, volunteers) who show proof that their vaccination status is fully up-to-date against COVID-19, or have recovered from/completed isolation for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days, should not be included in routine COVID-19 screening testing if the person is asymptomatic.** **Screening for persons whose vaccine status does not meet the above requirements for their respective age category** and who were previously infected with COVID-19 should start or restart screening testing 90 days after the first day of symptoms or from the day of collection of first positive test (if they were asymptomatic). See Table below for examples of sports in

²The following are acceptable as proof of "full vaccination": 1) A photo identification of the attendee and 2) their vaccination card (which includes name of person vaccinated, type of COVID-19 vaccine provided and the date the last dose was administered) OR a photo of the attendee's vaccination card as a separate document OR a photo of the attendee's vaccine card stored on a phone or electronic device OR documentation of full vaccination from a healthcare provider (which includes name of person vaccinated and confirms that the attendee is fully vaccinated against COVID-19). For the purposes of this Protocol, people are considered "fully vaccinated" against COVID-19: 2 weeks or more after their second dose in a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna, or 2 weeks or more after a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen, or 2 weeks or more after completion of COVID-19 vaccine series listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (e.g., AstraZeneca/Oxford). See WHO's [website](#) for more information about WHO-authorized COVID-19 vaccines.

³ The following is acceptable as proof of previous COVID-19 infection (previous positive viral test result) and completion of isolation within the last 90 days: a photo identification and a paper copy or digital copy on their phone or electronic device of their positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test taken within the last 90 days, but not within the last 10 days. Person must have completed their [isolation requirement](#) prior to participating.

different risk categories.

1. **Indoor Moderate or High-Risk Sports for children of all ages and staff/coaches/volunteers.** A weekly negative test result is required for all youth participants who are not fully vaccinated and all adult participants whose vaccine status is not up-to-date, including children who are playing and staff/coaches/volunteers; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation. Results from over-the-counter test kits, including self-administered, self-read tests performed at home, verified or not, are also acceptable to fulfill this obligation for youth athletes and adult non-employees, as long as results are reported to the organizers of the team or sports program. Under current Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards for Prevention of COVID-19 in the Workplace (Cal/OSHA ETS), testing required to be offered to employees may only include self-administered, self-read over-the-counter tests if the procedure is proctored or observed by the employer or a certified telehealth provider. If a team determines that requiring all players to remain masked during heavy exertion is not practicable, and players elect to participate without their masks as a result, all team members, regardless of vaccination status, are required to have screening tests for COVID-19 performed at least weekly. Please note that while community transmission in the County remains substantial or high, it is strongly recommended that participants whose vaccination status do not meet the above requirements for their respective age category or are not always masked during indoor practices, conditioning, competitive play, or performing, test two times per week.
 2. **Outdoor Moderate or High-Risk Sports for youth ages 12 and older and staff/coaches/volunteers.** A weekly negative test result is required for all youth participants who are not fully vaccinated and for all adult participants whose vaccination status is not up-to-date, including youth ages 12 and older who are playing and staff/coaches/volunteers; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation. Results from over-the-counter test kits, including self-administered, self-read tests performed at home, verified or not, are also acceptable to fulfill this obligation for youth athletes and adult non-employees, as long as results are reported to the organizers of the team or sports program. Under current Cal/OSHA ETS, testing required to be offered to employees may only include self-administered, self-read over-the-counter tests if the procedure is proctored or observed by the employer or a certified telehealth provider.
- No screening testing is required for children under age 12 playing Outdoor Sports. For players on moderate- and high-risk sports teams who are under age 12, and are regularly transported together via buses/vans, a weekly negative test result is recommended; weekly school testing fulfills this obligation.

- ❑ If players under age 12 are participating in multi-county, multi-day competitions of Moderate or High- Risk Outdoor sports, a negative test within a 3-day window period⁴ prior to their first game at the competition is recommended.
- ❑ No screening testing is required for athletes of any age, coaches, or support staff on moderate- or high-risk sports teams if the team is only engaged in conditioning or skill-building activities where 6 feet physical distance is maintained between participants at all times. This exemption only applies during the period of time when there are no close contact activities occurring at any practices and no competitive games. If there are any full practices or competitions occurring on certain days, then the testing requirements remain in place even if other practices only include conditioning and skill building.
Youth participating in outdoor sports **who are fully vaccinated** are not required to test weekly unless there is a positive case among players, coaches and/or staff. If there is a positive case, all players, staff/coaches/volunteers (regardless of vaccination status) are required to have a weekly negative test result for two weeks from exposure to the case and must test negative prior to competitions.
- ❑ Team staff/volunteers whose role or functions do not include any direct interaction with athletes, coaches, or other staff (e.g., lending administrative support to the team or league but not working directly with youth or other team members) are exempt from the testing requirements.
- ❑ Occasional volunteers who have very limited direct interaction with athletes, coaches, or other staff (e.g., a volunteer referee or umpire who officiates only once or twice during the season) are not required to perform weekly screening testing but must produce proof of **fully up-to-date** vaccination **status** against COVID-19 or proof of a negative test performed within the 3 days prior to their volunteer activity.

Ventilate

- ❑ If youth sports activities are taking place indoors, make sure your building's Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (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.
- ❑ When indoor activities do occur, improved ventilation in gymnasiums is a critical strategy to lower risk of viral transmission and outbreaks occurring as a result of high-risk competitive play. Strategic use of fans to improve air exchange at floor level may have significant impact at mitigating this risk. See [Best Practices for Gymnasium Ventilation](#) for further guidance.
- ❑ Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- ❑ If your team or youth sports 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.

⁴ The 3-day window period is the 3 days before the inter-team competition. A 3-day timeframe instead of 72 hours provides more flexibility to the athlete or staff member. By using a 3-day window period, test validity does not depend on the time of the competition or the time of day that the test was administered. For example, if the competition is at 1pm on a Friday, the athlete or staff member could participate in the competition with a negative test that was taken any time on the prior Tuesday or after.

- ❑ 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 youth sports 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.

Understanding the Risks Associated with Sports during the Pandemic

Sports and physical activities that allow for 6-8 feet between other competitors, like golf or singles tennis, are going to be less risky than sports that involve frequent close contact, like basketball or wrestling. Those where athletes do not share equipment, like cross country, will likely be less risky than which have shared equipment, such as football. Those with limited exposure to other players may be a safer option. A sprint in a track race, for example, may be less risky than sports that put someone in close contact with another player for an extended period of time, like an entire half of a game.

The specific location where athletes train, practice and compete also impacts risk. Choose outdoor venues for sports and classes whenever possible. COVID-19 is more likely to spread in indoor spaces with poor ventilation. Indoor sports and activities will likely present an increased risk of transmission, especially if the sport or physical activity also involves close contact, shared equipment, and more exposure to other players, such as basketball.

The more people someone interacts with, the greater the chance of COVID-19 exposure. So small teams, practice pods or classes that stay together, rather than mixing with other teams, coaches, or teachers, will be a safer option. This will also make it easier to contact individuals if there is an exposure to COVID-19.

Staying within your community will be safer than participating on travel teams. Traveling to an area with more COVID-19 cases could increase the chance of transmission and spread. Travel sports also include intermixing of players, so athletes are generally exposed to more people.

Table 1. Examples of Sports Stratified by Risk Level

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, Taichi) • 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