

# Sports

The “Tennessee Pledge” is a plan to help Tennesseans get back to work in a safe environment, restore their livelihoods and reboot our state’s economy.



# Sports

These guidelines are intended for youth and adult sports. Athletics play an important role in the community, and these guidelines provide recommendations for facilities, teams, and spectators to protect student-athletes and amateur sports participants.

The risk of COVID-19 transmission varies by sport/activity, and these guidelines are intended as a supplement to assist with safely engaging in practice and competition. Additional regulations from a sport's governing body (e.g., TSSAA) may be applicable.

The decision to resume or engage in sporting activities and competition is best made at the local and individual levels. **Non-school-sponsored athletics, including practices and games or competition, must be conducted in a manner consistent with this guidance.** For K-12 athletics, the decision to permit sports-related activities is the discretion of a school and its governing body for athletics. Collegiate and professional athletics must be conducted pursuant to the rules of their respective governing bodies and institutions.

## Safeguarding Guidance

Venue operators and coaches should evaluate relevant activities to make appropriate adaptations as necessary, even if not specifically described below. These guidelines are subject to change.

## Athlete, Personnel, and Spectator Protection

- **Screen coaches, athletes, team personnel, volunteers/staff, officials, and spectators for illness** upon arrival to every practice and competition (or reporting to work at the venue) with the following questions:
  - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days? (Note: This does not apply to medical personnel, first responders, or other individuals who encounter COVID-19 as part of their professional or caregiving duties while wearing appropriate PPE.)
  - Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
  - Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
  - Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
  - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
- Teams/venues should assure adequate space, staffing, and timing of entrances so as to not promote crowding for any period of time during ingress/egress and



screening.

- **Direct persons who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms** (i.e., answers “yes” to any of the screening questions or, if temperature checks are conducted, who has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater) **to leave the premises immediately and seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing.** Take appropriate precautions to maintain the confidentiality of health information.
  - Any person who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 must isolate at home for a period of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (or the date they were tested, if asymptomatic) AND must be fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medications) AND have improvement in symptoms for at least 24 hours.
  - Any person who has been a close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) of a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 must quarantine at home for a period of 14 days from their last exposure to that individual. A negative COVID test does not affect the quarantine requirement.
- **All persons should stay home if feeling ill.** Any symptoms of illness should be reported to a coach or supervisor, and teams/supervisors should require notice of any COVID-19 positive case in a person’s household. Persons who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the CDC (e.g., due to age or severe underlying medical conditions) should consider whether to refrain from participating.
- **Practice social distancing** to the greatest extent possible
  - Implement social distancing on the bench/sideline, and otherwise encourage maintaining at least 6 feet from others to the greatest extent possible. Eliminate or relocate non-essential persons from team areas.
  - Limit congregating in common areas and other confined indoor spaces.
  - Use smaller cohorts for practices and, to the extent possible, avoid mixing between cohorts. Limit or spread out team huddles. Use larger areas for practice, warm-ups, or other staging to allow for greater physical separation of athletes.
  - Spectators should maintain at least 6 feet of separation from others not from the same household, including in seating areas or bleachers. In localities where fan attendance is permitted, **venues are encouraged to limit fan attendance to a number that will allow social distancing and should mark/designate bleachers or seats in order to promote social distancing among spectators.** In consultation with local health providers, in areas experiencing high virus transmission consider further limitations on attendance (e.g., family members only, or no spectators). Offer virtual/remote observation where possible.
  - Umpires and officials should increase physical distance when using a projected voice or blowing a whistle in close proximity to other persons.
  - Avoid exchanging documents between teams or officials as much as possible

- Limit use of, or congregation within, confined indoor areas such as locker rooms
- Venues, teams and leagues should be mindful of applicable state and/or local orders that limit gathering sizes and facilitate compliance with such orders.
- **Consider requiring cloth face coverings**
  - Wearing a cloth face covering may not be possible while actively participating in a certain athletic activity (e.g., swimming, distance running, high-intensity aerobic activity), but participants should wear a face covering when not actively engaged in physical activity (e.g., on the bench or in the dug-out or team room)
  - Coaches, team personnel, and officials should wear face coverings if within 6 feet of others and if using a projected voice within 15 feet of others
  - Spectators and staff/volunteers should wear cloth face coverings if maintaining appropriate distance of 6 feet from other spectators is not possible and if using a projected voice within 15 feet of others
  - Venues/teams must comply with any local order requiring face coverings
  - Include appropriate exemptions for young children and those with medical or health reasons for not wearing a face covering
- **Increase hygiene practices**
  - Require all athletes, coaches, team personnel and staff/volunteers to wash or sanitize their hands upon arriving and leaving each day, and encourage spectators to do the same. Athletes, coaches, and staff/volunteers should regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer between activity while on-site.
  - Athletes and coaches should refrain from high fives, handshake lines, and other avoidable contact with teammates, opposing teams, coaches, umpires, and fans.
  - Practice good respiratory etiquette when coughing or sneezing. Limit spitting, and wash/sanitize hands after blowing one's nose.
- **Use personal drinks and snacks**
  - Athletes, coaches, and others are encouraged to bring personal beverages to athletic activities. If a volunteer or coach provides beverages for the team, utilize single-serving containers and label for each athlete.
  - If the organizer provides hydration stations or coolers (e.g., water table for team or group run participants), limit persons in prep areas other than essential staff and minimize congregation by participants
  - Avoid shared beverages and unpackaged, shared food
- **Plan for potential COVID-19 cases.** This will include no participation for a minimum of 10 days for positive cases and no participation for any close contacts of cases during a 14-day quarantine period. Teams/venues should plan to provide the local health department with information on close contacts to assist with case

investigation and contact tracing.

- Coaches should set expectations with athletes regarding potential changes to the season, and consider stress or mental distress experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Sport-Related Modifications

- **Assess the risk of the particular activity or sport.** Noncontact sporting events and activities generally present lower risk in terms of COVID-19, while contact sporting events and activities can present moderate to high risk. Appropriate modifications and precautions can further the safe resumption of such activity.
  - “Noncontact sporting events and activities” mean sports that can be conducted while substantially maintaining appropriate social distancing, and that involve at most only close contact or proximity between participants that is incidental to the activity. Such sports include, but are not limited to, baseball, softball, golf, disc golf, tennis, cycling, track and field and cross country or running events, swimming, skiing, archery, cricket, and equestrian
  - “Contact sporting events and activities” are sports for which there is a requirement or substantial likelihood of routine, sustained close proximity or physical contact between participants. For example, some sports, such as wrestling are scored by impacting an opponent, while others, including football or rugby, require tackling of players. Others like basketball, soccer, lacrosse, competitive cheer, rugby, ice and field hockey, rowing, mixed martial arts, wrestling, boxing, volleyball, water polo, and other combat sports involve participants being in close, sustained proximity and likelihood of physical contact
- **Certain components of training or competition are appropriate to limit or modify** for the time being. For aspects of sports that are higher risk or involve greater physical contact, consider focusing on skill development and play that limits or reduces contact, unless necessary during competition.
- **Recommend limiting competition to teams in your region or league/conference.** Expand beyond regional play as appropriate in light of COVID-19 case prevalence existing at the time. Consider whether a shorter or abbreviated season might be a feasible and appropriate precaution. Avoid scrimmages with other teams outside official competition.
- **Limit long-distance team travel where possible and minimize transporting teams/athletes in large groups where possible.** When group transport is required, everyone in the vehicle should be encouraged to wear a cloth face covering and practice social distancing in the vehicle as much as possible. Give special consideration to appropriate precautions where overnight travel is involved.

- **Virtual team meetings** are preferred where possible
- **Handling of sporting equipment:**
  - Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should not be shared. If equipment must be shared, disinfect between each use or as regularly as possible, according to CDC/EPA guidelines for sanitization (e.g., track and field relay batons and field implements, ball racks, tackling dummies)
  - To the extent possible, avoid sharing equipment or balls between teams. For applicable sports, balls and other equipment should be rotated on a regular basis to limit contact by multiple users, unless sanitized.
- **Identify alternate rules of play** due to COVID-19
  - Refer to Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association's [modified regulations](#), as applicable, or other rules from a league or sport governing body or association
  - Running or similar events with larger groups of participants should consider utilizing smaller heats/waves or interval starts. Use electronic timing if possible to minimize congestion at the start/finish, and have finish line officials wear face coverings. Use venues or courses that allow for greater physical separation of athletes.
  - Tournaments could utilize single elimination to decrease interaction between teams and reduce the number of persons that remain on-site
  - Expand the sidelines area for social distancing, and limit pre-game meeting attendees
  - Suspend switching team benches in volleyball
  - Refer to COVID-19 rules or resources from a sport's governing body (e.g., [USA Gymnastics](#), [USA Track and Field](#), [USA Softball](#), [USA Football](#), [USA Hockey](#), [US Golf Association](#), etc.)
- **Use caution with indoor practices/training and competition.** Use social distancing and face coverings. Evaluate options to improve ventilation, as permitted by building regulations.
- Consider appropriate modifications for a return to training or conditioning work after athletes may have had a period of inactivity.

## Facility- or Administrative-Related Modifications

- **Arrange or mark any seating areas, tables, chairs, etc. (indoor and outdoor)** to facilitate social distancing. If safe distances are not achievable, remove or barricade seating areas as needed. Install barriers and protective shields where needed to safely distance staff (e.g., at ticket booths, concessions, etc.)
- **Post signage encouraging social distancing and other COVID-19 precautions.** Use signs or ground markings to indicate proper social distancing at ticket booths,



concession areas, bathrooms, or anywhere else a line/congregation is anticipated to form. If larger crowds are anticipated, consider establishing a “guest flow” plan, including managing queues and making walkways or stairways one-way or clearly divided for bi-directional travel, with appropriate directional signs/markers.

- **Consider staggered activities/scheduling to improve social distancing.** For example, if multiple practices or games are to be held at the same facility, schedule adequate time between groups to allow for facilities to be disinfected and minimize interaction. Make efforts to maintain physical distancing at sports complexes with multiple fields that operate simultaneous games or practices, or limit the number of fields in use at any one time if necessary.
- **Cap the number of teams or athletes** (and/or spectators) as appropriate to achieve appropriate physical distancing during the competition/event
- **Staff or volunteers should regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces**, equipment and common areas using disinfectant cleaning supplies per CDC guidelines
- **Hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations** with soap and running water should be readily accessible for all persons on-site
- **Eliminate concession operations for the time being**, or, if offered, implement relevant provisions of the Tennessee Pledge restaurant guidelines. Encourage athletes and spectators to bring their own water rather than using on-site water fountains.
- **Where available, use electronic or online solutions** for reservations, check-in, waivers or payment
- **Communicate expectations and protocols to participants** in advance
- **Positive COVID-19 case management:** Organizers and coaches should maintain a complete list of persons, with contact information, present at each practice/competition and cooperate with the local health department in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 by a participant. An effort should be made to maintain a log of spectators with contact information, to the extent possible.
- **Limit the number of people in restroom facilities** at any one time to reduce potential exposure within those confined spaces, and ensure that sanitization is occurring at increased intervals. Properly sanitize porta-potties throughout event, if used. Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations for each porta-potty. Space out porta-potty clusters for greater social distancing within lines; consider decreasing the ratio of the number of persons per porta-potty at large events.
- **Consider offering virtual participation or spectating options** where possible
- **Limit awards ceremonies or post-event celebrations** to reduce potential for larger crowds
- Implement appropriate **precautions for band section and cheerleaders**, if present. This includes COVID-19 screening and social distancing. Due to the potential increased risk of virus transmission during certain activities, the use of bands at contests is discouraged. If the band is present, limit to a halftime

performance or relocate the band from the stands to other available areas away from crowds and increase the amount of physical distance between band members. Increase the amount of physical distance between cheerleaders as well as between cheerleaders and other persons if projected voices are to be used.

- **Covered employers and employees should be aware of the provisions of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act**, which allows for paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons, such as for self-quarantining or seeking a medical diagnosis for COVID-19 symptoms
- **Prepare for absence of critical staff** by developing a roster of qualified individuals who can fill in if staff members are absent due to illness or family circumstances
- Prepare plans for potential cancellation and/or postponement of competitions due to COVID-19

**Notice to participants and/or parents or guardians of youth participating in group sporting activities:** No person should participate, and parents should not permit children to participate, in sporting activities if participant has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or exhibits any symptom(s) of COVID-19. If after recent participation in sporting activities the participant develops symptoms or is confirmed as positive for COVID-19, you should consult their healthcare provider and report such occurrence to the coach or other administrator. Parents are encouraged to make efforts to limit potential COVID-19 exposure by any vulnerable persons who are members of the same household or come into frequent, close contact with individuals who participate in sports.

## Additional Resources

[Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association Regulations](#)

[CDC Considerations for Youth Sports](#)

[CDC Youth Sports Program FAQs](#)

[Little League® Best Practices](#)

[U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee](#)

[NCAA Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: Action Plan Considerations](#)

[Southeastern Conference Medical Task Force Requirements for COVID Management](#)

[ERG Swimming Pool Guidelines](#)

[CDC Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities](#)