



**MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

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**WORKPLACE SAFETY and REOPENING STANDARDS FOR  
BUSINESSES and OTHER ENTITIES PROVIDING  
YOUTH and ADULT AMATEUR SPORTS ACTIVITIES – Phase III, Step 1**

Amended on February 8, 2021

Effective on February 8, 2021

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In accordance with the authority granted to the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) pursuant to [COVID-19 Order No. 43](#) and [COVID-19 Order No. 58](#) to issue Sector-Specific Rules to implement COVID-19 safety measures for organized youth and adult amateur sports activities, the following is effective on February 8, 2021.

This document provides standards for how to implement general workplace safety standards and other public health guidance (“COVID-19 measures”) in the context of recreational operations in Phase III, Step 1 of the Commonwealth’s reopening. Facility Operators and Activity Organizers who fail to implement applicable COVID-19 measures may be sanctioned in accordance with COVID-19 Order No. 43 and COVID-19 Order No. 58. Facility Operators and Activity Organizers are further reminded that in addition to implementing COVID-19 measures in Phase III, Step 1, they must still comply with all federal, state, and local laws.

The public health data and guidance on which this document is based can and does change frequently. To provide more clarity for school sport organizers, the following guidelines will apply for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year, unless public health conditions warrant any necessary updates. The most recent version of this document can be found on the Commonwealth’s reopening website, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>.

**II. HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT**

The guidelines in this document are designed to provide instructions to Facility Operators and Activity Organizers of all youth and adult amateur sports activities to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

Recognizing that in many instances, activities are organized by one entity and take place at a facility operated by a second entity, this document categorizes guidance based on an entity’s role. The guidance provided on safety protocols includes specific guidance for both Facility Operators and Activity Organizers. Entities that organize activities in facilities for which they are



responsible should comply with both sets of guidance (Facility Operator Guidance and Activity Organizer Guidance).

The Department of Public Health, Department of Labor Standards and/or a Local Board of Health may issue a civil fine for failure to comply with the limitations and requirements set forth below in the amount of \$300 per violation for each incident and for each day the violation(s) occur.

### **III. LIMITATIONS ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES DURING PHASE III, STEP 1**

Facility Operators and Activity Organizers (as defined below) are subject to these guidelines and must comply with activity limitations listed herein. For non-organized sports and recreation, individuals should follow these guidelines, where it applies to their activities. Organizers of athletic and recreational activity competitions or tournaments should follow the competition and tournament guidance herein.

An **Activity Organizer** includes any person, organization, business, school or government entity that organizes or oversees youth and adult amateur sports activities, including without limitation, teams and sports program at, organized or sponsored by private, independent and public K-12 schools, private or independent leagues and clubs, recreational leagues and centers, and municipal sports programs. These guidelines do not apply to professional or collegiate sports.

A **Facility Operator** includes any person, organization, business, school, or government entity that operates the following athletic facilities, including, but not limited to:

- Gymnastics Facilities
- Indoor & Outdoor Pools\*
- Indoor and Outdoor Athletic Fields, Courts, and Courses
- Indoor & Outdoor Ice Rinks
- Indoor and Outdoor Tracks
- Indoor Gymnasiums
- Martial Arts & Dance Facilities
- Indoor and Outdoor Racquet Courts

\*Pool Facilities (both indoor and outdoor) must also ensure compliance with the [\*Safety Standards for Public and Semi-Public Pools\*](#).

Fitness Centers and Health Clubs must follow the [\*Sector Specific Workplace Safety Standards for Fitness Centers and Health Clubs to Address COVID-19\*](#).



Recreational camps or other programs that are subject to [105 CMR 430.000](#) must follow the requirements outlined in the [Massachusetts Child and Youth Service Programs Reopen Approach: Minimum Requirements for Health and Safety](#).

Alpine and Nordic Ski centers and resorts must also ensure compliance with the [Workplace Safety and Reopening Standards for Businesses Providing Outdoor Recreational Experiences and Educational Activities](#).

### **A. RISK LEVEL OF SPORTS**

Sports and recreational activities are categorized as “**Lower Risk**,” “**Moderate Risk**,” and “**Higher Risk**” based on the risk of transmission of COVID-19 inherent in the sport or recreational activity itself as traditionally played.

**Lower Risk** sports and recreational activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities that can be done with social distancing and no physical contact
- Sports or activities that can be done individually

Examples: Tennis, pickleball, swimming, catch, disc golf, golf, individual biking, surfing, horseback riding, individual sailing, fishing, hunting, motor sports, no contact exercise classes, gymnastics, cross country, individual crew, alpine and nordic skiing

**Moderate Risk** sports and recreational activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental physical contact between participants

Examples: Baseball, softball, crew, sailing, outdoor track and field, indoor track and field, running clubs, team swimming, volleyball, dance class, fencing, field hockey, girls’ lacrosse, soccer

**Higher Risk** sports and recreational activities are characterized by:

- Sports or activities for which there is a requirement or a substantial likelihood of routine close and/or sustained proximity or deliberate physical contact between participants and a high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants

Examples: Football, wrestling, rugby, basketball, lacrosse, ice-hockey, competitive cheer, martial arts, ultimate frisbee, boxing, pair figure skating



## **B. SPORTS & RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ALLOWED BY RISK LEVEL DURING PHASE III, STEP 1**

The risk associated with an activity is also dependent on the type of play. The following types of play are defined by level from least to greatest risk.

- **Level 1:** Individual or socially distanced group activities (non-contact workouts, aerobic conditioning, individual skill work, and drills)
- **Level 2:** Competitive Practices (Intra-team/group games, contact drills, and scrimmages)
- **Level 3:** Competitions (Inter-team games, meets, matches, races, etc.)
- **Level 4:** Tournaments

In Phase III, Step 1, sports and recreational activities are subject to the limitations and guidelines set forth below:

- Sports and activities included in the **Lower Risk** category can participate in **Level 1, 2, 3, and 4** type of play.
- Sports and activities included in the **Moderate Risk** can participate in **Level 1, 2, and 3** type of play.
- Sports and activities included in the **Higher Risk** category that require intermittent close proximity or moderate contact (basketball, lacrosse, ice-hockey, ultimate frisbee, competitive cheer, pair figure skating) or sports that require high contact but are only performed outdoors (football and rugby) can participate in **Level 1, 2 and 3** type of play. For the avoidance of doubt, football and rugby may conduct Level 1 play indoors but must only engage in Level 2 and 3 activities outdoors. Sports and activities included in the **Higher Risk** category that are performed indoors and require sustained high contact (wrestling) can participate in **Level 1 and modified Level 2 cohort** play (as described below).

### **Modified Level 2 Cohort Play**

The aforementioned high-risk indoor sports that require high contact (close physical or face-to-face contact), may only engage in Level 1 and modified Level 2 Cohort play using a cohort concept for competitive contact practices or training, provided that Facility Operators and Activity Organizers meet the following minimum requirements:

- Training activities must be performed in “cohorts” of the same small group of individuals that performs all training activities together and without interacting with other individuals or cohorts.
- Cohorts can be no larger than ten (10) participants and the same cohort assignments must be used for every training session or class.



- Participants cannot be a member of multiple cohorts, nor can cohort assignments rotate.
- Training areas or boundaries must be marked so that training cohorts are separated in all directions by at least 14 feet. Class sizes should be capped by the number of available training areas based on the size of the facility.

### **C. SAFETY STANDARDS FOR PLAY**

All Facility Operators and Activity Organizers of activities **must** develop and implement safety standards to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among participants, especially for High Risk sports and those sports conducted in indoor settings and are expected to ensure compliance by all participants. Safety standards should be disseminated regularly. Some of the mitigation strategies that should be incorporated into safety standards include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying measures that can be implemented to increase physical distancing, where feasible.
- In races or similar activities where players typically start or finish together, staggering starts to avoid close contact. When indoors, starting lines should also be adjusted to allow for 6 feet of distancing between participants at the start (e.g. have runners in every other lane, spacing competitors on start line 6 feet apart). If space is limited, staggered start times should be used to allow appropriate spacing for participants for each starting group.
- Conducting the activity or sport outdoors where possible, as outdoor participation is generally safer than indoors and allows for greater distancing.
- Shortening activities, practices, and game play or performing the activity with fewer participants to the extent possible.
- Modifying the activity or sport to reduce the sharing of equipment or to allow for cleaning of shared equipment between participants.
- Utilizing cohorts, even if not required to do so as specified above, of the same participants over the course of an entire program or season.

#### ***Mandatory Facial Coverings for All Sports:***

Facility Operators and Activity Organizers **must require facial coverings to be worn by all participants during active play** except:

- During swimming, water polo, water aerobics or other sports where individuals are in the water; or



- For low risk sports when a distance of at least 14 feet or more is consistently maintained between each participant during active play or performance (e.g., singles tennis, an individual gymnastics performance, a runner that is at least 14 feet or more away from the next runner); or
- For individuals with a documented medical condition or disability that makes them unable to wear a face covering.

For purposes of this guidance, a facial covering means a face mask or cloth facial covering that completely covers the nose and mouth.

Participants for all sports must wear facial coverings on the bench or sidelines at all times and in any huddles or time-outs from active play. Participants should take frequent facial covering breaks when they are out of proximity to other players, using caution to avoid touching the front or inside of the face covering by using the ties or ear loops to remove and replace.

This requirement applies to all spectators and chaperones, coaches, staff, referees, umpires, and other officials.

#### **D. LEVEL 3 AND LEVEL 4 PLAY – COMPETITION AND TOURNAMENT REQUIREMENTS**

For the purposes of these guidelines, a “**Competition**” is defined as multiple participants or two teams competing against one another in a single contest. A competition includes inter-team games, matches, shows, meets, and races. Teams are limited to competing against a single opposing team per day and can play multiple competitions against the same team in a single day. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a team can play up to two games against two different opposing teams in a single day provided that the 1) games are played back-to-back, 2) the facility has multiple fields, courts, or surfaces that allow teams to distance between game transitions, 3) the facility has adequate transition space for all participants, including spectators and 4) no teams or individual players are required wait for their second game other than for a limited break between games to transition between one game to the second game.

A “**Tournament**” is a formal contest that consists of multiple competitions or a series of games between multiple persons or teams, that might include multiple stages, played in a condensed period of time, such as over the course of a single day or multiple days in a row. For the avoidance of doubt, a series of games, “jamboree” “weekend series” “showcase” or tournament-style play (one team playing multiple games vs. multiple opponents in a single day or over the course of a weekend), is still a tournament even if there is a lack of an overall prize, scores, eliminations, brackets, or otherwise.



Pursuant to [COVID-19 Order No. 51](#), road races and other large, outdoor organized amateur or professional group athletic events are not permitted until Phase IV.

#### **E. INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITY CAPACITY AND SPECTATOR LIMITS**

- Indoor facilities must limit capacity to no more than 40% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy.
- If an indoor and outdoor facility has a chaperone or spectator viewing area which allows for at least six feet social distancing between spectators, then spectators are allowed for players under 21 years old. Spectators are limited to 2 adults (parents/guardians or chaperones) and siblings of a participating player.
- In no event can the presence of spectators, plus players, coaches, referees, and facility/activity workers cause an indoor facility to exceed more than 40% of the maximum occupancy for the facility.
- No spectators are allowed for sports and activities played by individuals 21 years and older.
- For facilities with multiple fields, surfaces, courts, courses etc. the above capacity limitations shall apply per playing field, surface, court, etc., provided that there is adequate spacing for at least six feet social distancing for all individuals, including those at adjacent fields, surfaces, courts, etc.
- Facility Operators and Activity Organizers should set schedules with time buffers to prevent the overlap of competitions or overlap of players/spectators from adjacent fields/surfaces/courts at any one time and to allow for disinfecting of equipment and cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, if necessary. Games should end in a draw if time expires.
- Facility Operators and Activity Organizers should mark off designated areas for spectators for each field, surface, court, etc. to minimize the overlap of spectators from adjacent fields, surfaces, courts, etc.

#### **IV. TRANSPORTATION AND OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL**

- **Transportation**
  - Facility Owners, Activity Organizers, participants, staff, coaches, volunteers and guardians/parents must also comply with all relevant transportation safety requirements, including but not limited to, ensuring that staff, volunteers, and parents/guardians are not transporting athletes that are not immediate family



members. In the event that transportation of non-family members becomes necessary, all parties in the vehicle must wear cloth face coverings or face masks and to the extent possible have external air circulating in the vehicle such as opening a window.

- **Out-of-State Travel**

Out-of-state travel for recreational play, competitive training sessions, practices, competitions or any other type of sporting event (“Sport Event”) is strongly discouraged as traveling may increase the chances of exposing players, coaches, and others to COVID-19 or unknowingly spreading it to others, particularly if a team from an area with high levels of COVID-19 competes with a team from an area with low levels of the virus.

- **Low Risk Sports:** All participants, coaches, staff, volunteers, coaches, parents, and guardians traveling out-of-state to participate in a low risk Sport Event must strictly comply with all applicable travel restrictions and requirements of the home state and destination state, including but not limited to, any and all quarantine or testing requirements. All out-of-state teams or athletes of low risk sports coming into Massachusetts for Sport Events must be informed of and follow the [Massachusetts Travel Order](#).
- **Moderate Risk and High-Risk Sports:** Facility operators and Activity Organizers may only allow Massachusetts-based teams of moderate risk and high-risk sports to participate in Massachusetts-based Sport Events held at Massachusetts sports facilities. Any Facility Owner or Activity Organizer that hosts an out-of-state team at a Massachusetts facility may be ordered to close its facility or program.

The [Commonwealth’s Travel Order \(COVID-19 Order No. 45\)](#) governs travel to or from Massachusetts for all teams, athletes, and coaches. Any Massachusetts-based athlete or coach who chooses to leave Massachusetts to participate in a Sport Event must comply with the Commonwealth’s Travel Order (COVID-19 Order No. 45) upon returning to Massachusetts and before returning to sports activity, work, school or attending public events, and Massachusetts based teams must ensure that all team members and coaches comply with the Travel Order. Players and coaches coming to Massachusetts for athletics or any other reason are subject to the requirements of the Travel Order. Students who reside outside of Massachusetts but attend school within Massachusetts are exempt from the Commonwealth’s Travel Order when commuting to Massachusetts for school and are therefore permitted to participate in school affiliated athletics, but the





exemption is limited to students participating in school affiliated athletics. Any Massachusetts-based athlete that travels to another state and does not comply with the Travel Order and any Massachusetts based team that does not ensure compliance with the Travel Order by all of its members may risk suspension of team or league practices and/or games.

## V. COOPERATION WITH HEALTH OFFICIALS

Facility Operators and Activity Organizers, as well as coaches, participants, and others engaging in sports activities are required to cooperate with state health officials and local boards of health and their authorized agents. **Facility Operators and Activity Organizers must keep rosters of all participants with appropriate contact information and make that information available upon request by state officials, local boards of health or their authorized agents.** Should a Facility Operator or Activity Organizers fail to completely and promptly cooperate with health officials, operators and organizers risk closure or suspension of a league's practices and/or games.

## VI. REQUIRED SAFETY PROTOCOLS

All Facility Operators and Activity Organizers must adhere to the following safety standards.

### A. SOCIAL DISTANCING

#### Facility Operator Guidance

- Indoor facilities must limit capacity as specified in Section III (E) above. Facility Owners must ensure that visitors are not congregating in small areas, hallways or lobbies or blocking traffic flow.
- Facility Operator must follow the indoor and outdoor spectator capacity limits as indicated in Section III (E) above.
- Locker rooms are closed and can only be accessed for toileting. Participants must wear-in/wear-out clothes or dress in the parking lot or other designated area.
- Locker rooms are permitted to open in a limited fashion for students at educational institutions with in-person learning that are required to change before or after a school day. Depending on the size of the space, Facility Owners must limit the number of students in a locker room at a single time and in no event no more than 10 students. Locker rooms or meeting rooms cannot be utilized for team huddles or meetings before, during or after practices or games. Students that utilize a locker room for changing must take all belongings with them and cannot use a locker room for storage. Operators must ensure that users of a locker room can abide by capacity restrictions



and social distancing standards and establish signage and visual guidelines if accessing a locker room. Locker room users must use facial coverings or masks. Adult coaches or other staff must ensure youth participants are complying with distancing, capacity and face coverings.

- Indoor showers must remain closed. Indoor and outdoor pool facilities must provide access showers to swimmers prior to swimming in compliance with 105 CMR 435. If outdoor showers are not available, facilities may meet this requirement by providing access to indoor showers. If outdoor showers are available, facilities should keep indoor showers closed.
- Operators should ensure that individuals are not congregating in common areas or parking lots before, during or following practices or events. Tailgating and other social gatherings are strictly prohibited in common areas.
- While indoors, visitors, spectators, volunteers, and staff must wear facial coverings.
- Where feasible, indoor facilities should institute one-way entrance and exits while adhering to established fire and building codes. Operators should ensure that adequate social distancing and face coverings are being used during sign-in for participants entering a facility.

#### Activity Organizer Guidance

- Activity Organizers **must** ensure that participants, staff, volunteers and guardians/parents are aware of and complying with all relevant transportation safety requirements, including but not limited to, ensuring that staff, volunteers, and parents/guardians are not transporting athletes that are not immediate family members. In the event that transportation becomes necessary due to an emergency situation, all parties in the vehicle must wear cloth face coverings and to the extent possible have external air circulating in the vehicle such as opening a window.
- Activity Organizer must ensure compliance with the indoor and outdoor spectator capacity limits as indicated in Section III (E) above.
- Activity Organizers must promote an “arrive, play, and leave” mentality and ensure that individuals are not congregating in common areas or parking lots before, during or following practices or events (such as tailgating).
- Players, coaches and officials should arrive for practices, games, meets and competitions dressed to play.
- While in-person, team-based social events are often considered an integral component of recreational sports leagues, more frequent, extended physical or close contact increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission between team members should an outbreak occur. In the interest of reducing preventable transmission events, Activity



Organizers must ensure that team-based social gatherings do not occur until all other COVID-19-specific restrictions regulating sports leagues are fully lifted.

- Dugouts, benches & bleachers are allowed to open only if six feet of distance can be maintained between each participant at all times.
- Sportsmanship should continue in a touchless manner – no handshakes/slaps/fist bumps.
- If social distancing is not possible in an athletic facility, chaperones/spectators may be asked to wait outside the facility until an activity is completed.
- Once athletes have completed their competition or activity, they must leave the area if another team is taking the field or using the playing surface to ensure adequate space for distancing.

## **B. STAFFING AND OPERATIONS**

### Facility Operator Guidance

- Any concessions or food service must follow the [Safety Standards for Restaurants](#).
- Facility Operators should work with Activity Organizers to stagger activity start and end times or to put in place other protocols to limit contact between all visitors as much as possible. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between users. Operators must have daily schedules prepared in advance.
- Facility Operators of indoor facilities shall establish traffic patterns (one-way flow, designated exits and entrances where possible), and limit capacity to maintain social distancing for the facility, including any restrooms.
- Facility Operators must post notice to employees, workers, and participants of important health information and relevant safety measures.
- Require workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the workplace employer for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of a positive case at the workplace, the employer must notify the Local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located and assist the LBOH to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and /or at the request of the LBOH.
- Employers should take measures to ensure employees comply with all State-issued rules concerning out of state travel for any employer-paid or employer-reimbursed travel.
- Facility Operators shall not knowingly allow an Activity Organizer to use a facility if the Activity Organizer is continuing to organize sports activities despite a notice of non-compliance or directive from the Department of Public Health, Department of



Labor Standards or a Local Board of Health. The Department of Public Health, Department of Labor Standards and/or a Local Board of Health may issue a civil fine for failure to comply with this requirement of \$300 per violation for each incident and for each day the violation(s) occur.

#### Activity Organizer Guidance

- Activity Organizers must ensure that teams and leagues, as well as individual team members, comply with all applicable travel restrictions and any quarantine or testing requirements.
- To participate or attend, organizers should ensure that participants, volunteers, coaches, and spectators must show no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days. Current list of symptoms is available from the [CDC](#).
- If any individual develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the activity, they should promptly inform organizers and must be removed from the activity and instructed to return home.
- Activity Organizers of activities are responsible for following all guidelines and creating a safe environment for participants.

### **C. HYGIENE, CLEANING AND DISINFECTING**

#### Facility Operator Guidance

- If any equipment is provided by the Operator, the Operator must clean and disinfect shared equipment at the end of a practice or competition session using a product from the [list of disinfectants meeting EPA criteria for use against the novel coronavirus](#).
- Indoor sports facilities should take steps to ensure adequate ventilation, including, increasing the volume of outdoor air to the maximum possible and reducing the volume of recirculated air being returned while the facility is occupied.
- Indoor facilities must provide access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, and allow sufficient break time for staff and participants to wash hands frequently; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative.
- All facilities must supply employees with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes).
- Operators must post visible signage throughout the site to remind employees and visitors of hygiene and safety protocols.



- Allow water fountains to be used as refill stations only, provided that social distancing can be maintained. Customers and workers should bring their own water bottles or purchase from the business
- Restrooms facilities shall be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with Centers for Disease Control guidance and best practices linked here: [EEA COVID-19 Outdoor Recreation Facility Restroom Cleaning Best Practices](#)
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning.
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, handrails, bathrooms).
- In event of a positive case, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current guidance.

#### Activity Organizer Guidance

- Organizers must ensure that any shared personal equipment is disinfected before use by each individual using a product from the [list of disinfectants meeting EPA criteria for use against the novel coronavirus](#). Personal equipment includes all gear that is worn by players (e.g., gloves, helmets, masks, skates, footwear, pads, etc.).
- No shared food or drink may be provided during any activities for participants or spectators except by concessions and food service providers following the [Safety Standards for Restaurants](#).
- Participants and spectators should only drink from their own containers. Organizers must provide individual, dedicated water bottles for children if they do not have their own.
- Participants and coaches must achieve proper hand hygiene at the beginning and end of all activities, either through handwashing with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Organizers should understand the cleaning and disinfection protocols employed at the facility they are using and should raise any issues to the operator or Local Board of Health.