

Vermont Work Safe Guidance: Section 9.1 - Sports and Organized Sports

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Published:

February 8, 2021

Updates:

February 11, 2021

February 24, 2021

March 18, 2021

April 2, 2021

This mandatory pandemic guidance has been issued in accordance with Executive Order 01-20 issued and amended by Governor Phil Scott. It has been developed by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Department of Public Safety and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Should data emerge that indicates evidence of COVID-19 transmission as a result of sports-related activities, additional broad-based or sport-specific restrictions may become necessary, including but not limited to:

- Suspending games, meets and competitions;
- Closing or otherwise limiting access to facilities.

Such decisions will be made by the Department of Health in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Agency of Natural Resources.

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1. Overview

Sports/Organized Sports Including Youth Leagues, Adult Leagues, Practices, Games, and Tournaments

PHASE ONE: Effective **Saturday, December 26, 2020**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume **team-based activities** strictly limited to no more than 25 participants and:

- Individual skill-building exercises;
- Strength and conditioning sessions; and,
- No-contact drills.

PHASE TWO: Effective **Monday, January 18, 2021**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume full **team-based practices** including the following activities:

- Drills involving incidental contact; and
- Team-based scrimmages.

PHASE THREE: Effective **Friday, February 12, 2021**, organized youth leagues and school-based sports programs (serving individuals age 19 years and younger) may resume the following activities:

- Games, meets and competitions, subject to the restrictions noted below.

PHASE FOUR: Effective **Friday, April 2, 2021**, all adult leagues may resume the following activities:

- Individual skill-building exercises;
- Strength and conditioning sessions; and
- Drills involving incidental contact.

In addition, adult outdoor sports teams and leagues may resume games, meets and competitions, subject to the restrictions noted below. Adult indoor sports teams and leagues, as well as high contact youth and adult sports (football, rugby, wrestling and martial arts), may resume games, meets and competitions, subject to the restrictions noted below on Friday, April 23, 2021.

Additional direction on school-sponsored spring sports programs, applicable to both public and independent schools, has been published by the Agency of Education at: <https://education.vermont.gov/documents/aoe-anr-winter-sports-programs-for-the-2020-21-school-year>

2. General Requirements

Organized leagues shall:

- Require all participants to complete a health check before arriving at team-based activity. At a minimum, the following questions should be considered:
 - Have you been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19?
 - Do you feel unwell with any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 **that are not associated with any underlying medical condition or medication use**? For example, have they had fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea?
 - Have you complied with Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) and Department of Health guidance around multi-household gatherings and travel-related quarantine for at least the last 14 days?

If a participant indicates that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or if you believe your establishment has been exposed to COVID-19, please call the Health Department at 802-863-7240 in order to determine next steps.

- Require masks / cloth face coverings to be worn at all times, including during practices, scrimmages, games, meets, and competitions. Individuals failing to properly mask should be asked to comply or directed to immediately leave the activity or facility. If an individual fails to properly mask, the facility or the State of Vermont may suspend the team's practices or games indefinitely.
 - Anyone with a documented medical or behavioral reason for not wearing a facial covering shall not be required to wear one.
 - Officials must properly mask at all times and use an electronic, handheld whistle or whistle mask/gaiter. This includes during arrival, departure, warm-ups, half-time, etc.
 - **Athletes participating in running events are exempt from wearing a mask – both practice sessions and meets/competitions – so long as physical distancing is maintained between individuals using staggered starts or other means.**
 - Athletes participating in gymnastic, figure skating, cheer and dance skills and events that require inversion (i.e., tumbling, vaulting, bars, etc.) are exempt from wearing a mask while performing. Modifications should be considered to limit inversions, twisting, and tosses in order to promote masking. Because of the increased risk of transmission associated with vocalization, cheer squads currently may not perform vocal routines in practice sessions or competitions.

- Limit teams to no more than **three games** in any seven-day period.
- Tournament-style play is not currently permitted in Vermont **but may resume beginning June 18, 2021.**
 - **Out-of-state sports teams participating in Vermont-based tournaments must comply with current ACCD and Department of Health guidance around travel-related quarantine before participating.**
- Prioritize non-contact activity, such as conditioning and drills where physical distance can be maintained, and give strong consideration to implementing modifications to reduce intensity of face-to-face contact and promote physical distancing.
- Prohibit congregating before, during, and after practice; promote an “arrive, play, and leave” mentality. Players and coaches should arrive for practices dressed to play to the maximum extent practicable and limit time spent in locker rooms. Any locker room use must adhere to physical distancing and masking requirements and must be limited to 50% of approved fire safety occupancy or one person per 100 square feet.
- Put in place measure to promote physical distancing between individuals during times when athletes are not actively participating in practice or competition, including team meetings and when players are on the sidelines or benches.
- Prohibit spectators from attending indoor sports events; only “key personnel” – players, coaches and staff and credential media – are allowed to attend team-based activities.
 - Guardians must wait in their vehicles and to avoid socializing with other guardians at practices.
 - For 10U level athletes, prior to the start of team-based activity and immediately following the team-based activity, a maximum of one guardian per participating family (masks required) is permitted to enter the practice facility briefly (15 minutes or less) in order to ensure their athlete is dressed and equipment is properly secured/removed. Guardians are encouraged to be efficient and are not permitted to remain in the facility during the practice. Six foot spacing must be maintained between members of different households. In an effort to allow coaches/instructors to maintain active management of health and safety protocols during the team-based activity, they may designate a single volunteer safety manager to stay inside the facility during practice to help with young athletes who may need extra assistance with equipment, to use the bathroom facilities or get the attention of a parent waiting outside in an emergency.
- **The number of spectators for outdoor events should be limited as much as possible and measures should be put in place to ensure social distancing between households. Interactions between spectators and participants should be minimized before, during and after events. At no time shall the total number of spectators exceed current limits on event size – currently 150 for outdoor events.**

- Plan facility schedules in a manner that avoids contact between different user groups, including staggered starts and sufficient time between games to minimize contact between arriving and departing cohorts.
- Prohibit team-based social gatherings until all other COVID-19-specific restrictions regulating sports leagues are fully lifted.
- Discourage multi-household carpools to team-based activities.
- Prohibit spitting or expulsion of bodily fluids of any sort on the playing surface (field, court, ice, etc.), or anywhere in or around the playing surface or in the facility.
- Prohibit sharing of water bottles.
- Regularly and thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment.
- Ensure teams maintain list of participants in each practice for a minimum of 14 days to assist in contact tracing. Home teams must keep a list of all people present (players and personnel) for any game, meet or competition for a period of 14 days following any game or competition, and make immediately available to the Health Department upon request.

3. Sports-Related Travel

Vermont-based sports teams may only participate in sporting events in Vermont, and these events may only occur between or involve Vermont-based teams. Individuals from bordering states who belong to a Vermont-based team, club or organization or routinely utilize a training facility in Vermont, **as well as teams from bordering states that compete exclusively in a Vermont-based league**, may participate in practice sessions, as well as games, competitions and meets, consistent with Vermont's sports-specific guidance.

Similarly, a Vermont resident who belongs to a team, club, organization or league or routinely utilizes a training facility in a bordering state may participate in practice sessions with their team.

Any Vermont-based recreational sports athlete or team that chooses to leave the state to participate in a scrimmage, game, meet or competition must comply with current ACCD and Department of Health guidance around travel-related quarantine before returning to work, school or attending public events.

4. Sports Specific Guidance

The risk associated with different types of sports programs is a function of the degree of contact between participants and the type of setting or venue in which the contest is held.

Outdoor Sports: The following guidance is for organized sports leagues and teams; informal outdoor recreational activities should follow Section 4.1 of the ACCD guidance.

- **No or low-contact** – cross country running, golf, tennis, equestrian, bass fishing tournaments, sideline cheer, single sculling, alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, track and field, **disc golf, swimming** – may hold team practice sessions, games, competitions and meets. **The total number of participants may not exceed current limits on event size – currently 150 for outdoor events. A meet may involve multiple groupings through the day if the groups do not interact with one another.**
- **Close proximity, moderate or high contact** – basketball, soccer, softball, baseball, lacrosse, field hockey, ultimate frisbee, 7-on-7 football, crew with two or more rowers – may hold team practice sessions, scrimmages and games.
- **High contact** – football, rugby – may hold practice sessions and team-based scrimmages. Games are not currently permitted, **but may resume on Friday, April 23, 2021. In the interim**, lower contact formats, such as 7-on-7 football, may be considered as alternatives.

Indoor Sports: The following guidance is for organized sports leagues and teams. **As indicated above, adult indoor sports teams and leagues, may not resume games, meets and competitions until Friday, April 23, 2021.** Fitness and exercise facilities (such as gyms and ice rinks) may offer opportunities consistent with Section 8.1 of the ACCD guidance.

- **No or low-contact** – track and field, individual event swimming, bowling, gymnastics, figure skating, **swimming** – may hold team practice sessions, competitions and meets. Physical distancing requirements must be strictly observed. **The total number of participants may not exceed current limits on event size – currently 75 for indoor events. A meet may involve multiple groupings through the day if the groups do not interact with one another.**
- **Close proximity or moderate contact** – basketball, indoor soccer/futsal, ice hockey, broomball, volleyball, team dance, competitive cheerleading – may hold team practice sessions, scrimmages and games/competitions. The total number of people present at any practice, game or competition may not exceed current limits on indoor event size.
- **High contact** – wrestling and martial arts – may hold practice sessions limited to no and low contact physical conditioning and skill building drills, as well as full contact exercises with a dedicated (single) practice partner. **Standard practice sessions, meets and matches may resume on Friday, April 23, 2021.**

5. Facilities

Use of indoor facilities is limited to 50% of approved fire safety occupancy or one person per 100 square feet and limits on event size – currently no more the 75 people present. **Venues over 17,100 square feet in size may**

accommodate up to 150 people indoors if they comply with the special guidance for large indoor businesses in section 10.1 of the Work Safe Memo. Limits on numbers in locker rooms and other similar spaces must be evaluated independently and must be strictly enforced.

Indoor sports facilities should take steps to ensure adequate ventilation, including:

- Increase the volume of outdoor air to the maximum possible and reduce the volume of recirculated air being returned while the gym is occupied.
- Select maximum filtration levels for the HVAC unit.
- Ensure that the HVAC unit runs continuously while the facility is occupied, and that HVAC unit runs for at least two hours before and two hours after occupancy.

Venues with multiple facilities (such as multi-rink locations, multi-court gyms) may have more than one unit of the maximum event size as long as those units are in distinct portions of the facility (a different gym, unique and distinct rinks) and the distinct gatherings have no interaction with one another (for example, a basketball team and a cheer squad should not have access to the same locker room at the same time).

Indoor training facilities, such as weight rooms, must adhere to the most current guidance published by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for fitness centers. Usage must be structured in a manner that ensures six feet of physical distance between individuals for any activity that will occur for more than a few moments (e.g., spotting a lift).

The *Strong and Healthy Start* guidance published by the Agency of Education requires schools to restrict the number of people in the school building that are not students or staff to the “minimal number necessary.” Recognizing that many elementary-age recreational sports programs are administered by the local municipality (as opposed to school-sponsored), **sports programs must limit those in attendance to participants and the minimum number of “key personnel” necessary to safely run the program.**

Schools may also choose to impose other restrictions, including limiting participants in recreational sports programs utilizing their facility to those within the “sending area” served by the school for academic instruction and/or limiting or prohibiting the use of facilities for games with other recreational programs from outside the school’s sending area.

6. Return to Play After COVID-19 Diagnosis

All children and adolescents (ages 12- 22) diagnosed with COVID-19 infection, regardless of symptom severity, may not return to play until asymptomatic for at least 14 days. Before returning to play, children and adolescents with COVID-19 infection must be seen and cleared by their primary care physician after illness resolves. Children/youth who meet clinical criteria will need to undergo the graduated Return-to-Play protocol overseen and monitored by the patient, their family and their health care provider. Children less than 12 years old can return to activity as tolerated after medical clearance by their primary care physician.

Adult athletes or others (e.g., referees) who exercise vigorously during an athletic event diagnosed with COVID-19 infection should not return to play or vigorous exercise until asymptomatic for two weeks and cleared by their physician.

7. Reporting Non-Compliance

Concerns related to compliance with these guidelines are best addressed to program administrators, school administrators or the local facility manager.

On-going concerns may also be submitted via the Health and Safety Compliance Reporting Tool on the Department of Public Safety website at <https://dps.vermont.gov/home>