

YOUTH SPORTS GUIDELINES

These guidelines, effective September 11, 2020, supersede and replace the August 7, 2020, Youth Sports Guidelines. In accordance with the St. Louis County Department of Public Health's ("DPH") Third Amended Order for Business and Individual Guidelines for Social Distancing and Re-Opening, dated July 29, 2020, effective July 31, 2020, (the "Order") and as may be further amended, these guidelines may be replaced or modified by DPH based on new scientific information and local information including the trajectory of influenza-like illnesses, cases of COVID-19, and any other information deemed relevant to protect public health in St. Louis County.

1. Guiding principles

Children playing sports with or against other individuals during this time holds an inherent risk that someone they are playing with is infected, that they may then become infected and, in turn, spread the virus to others in their household or community. Please consider this risk when allowing your child to participate in organized sports.

The information regarding SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing the COVID-19 illness, is changing rapidly. As a result, guidance given nationally and in St. Louis County is subject to change. The guidelines provided in this document will be reviewed and updated based on new scientific information and local circumstances, and, therefore, may change periodically.

Recognizing that the spread of the virus in the community continues to be high, while at the same time risk of transmission during youth sports practices that follow restrictions can be lessened, these guidelines allow team practices, as well as, in some instances, competitions depending upon the frequency of conduct inherent to the particular sport. With high-frequency of contact sports only practices, with restrictions, are allowed. Because the evidence continues to show that congregation of groups of people where there is lot of person-to person interaction spreads the virus, spectators are not allowed.

St. Louis County continues to balance the importance of activity for children with the reality of increased community spread of COVID-19 in St. Louis County.

The risks associated with playing sports with or against other individuals depends on the type of play, the number of individuals participating, and the number of spectators present. For further information, consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance on youth sports](#).

2. Types of Activities

The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth sports settings as follows:

- **Lowest risk:** Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members
- **Increasing risk:** Team-based practice
- **More risk:** Within-team competition
- **Even more risk:** Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area
- **Highest risk:** Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.

3. Types of Sports

Sports are classified based on the level of contact between players, as either low-frequency of contact or high-frequency of contact.

- **High-frequency of contact sports** include basketball, boxing, ice hockey tackle/flag/touch football, lacrosse, martial arts, rugby, water polo, and wrestling.
- **Moderate-frequency of contact** sports include baseball, cheerleading, crew/rowing, dance team, fencing, floor hockey, field hockey, racquetball, soccer, softball, team handball, ultimate frisbee, and volleyball.
- **Low-frequency of contact sports** include diving, extreme sports, gymnastics, rodeo, water skiing, adventure racing, bicycling, canoeing/kayaking, field events (high jump, pole vault, javelin, shot-put), golf, handball, horseback riding, skating (ice, in-line, roller), skateboarding, weight lifting, windsurfing, badminton, bodybuilding, bowling, orienteering, fishing, riflery, rope jumping, running, sailing, scuba diving, swimming, table tennis, tennis, and track.

For sports or activities not included in the above categories that are similar in nature to such other sports or activities, please apply the category most closely associated with the sport or activity. If there is any question regarding the categorization of an activity, please contact the Department of Public Health to determine which category applies.

4. Application

The restrictions and requirements of these Youth Sports Guidelines apply to all individuals age 18 or younger.

The restrictions and requirements of these Youth Sports Guidelines apply to school sponsored and affiliated sports teams and leagues as well as non-school sponsored and affiliated sports teams.

5. Restrictions and Requirements

When allowed, competitions are limited to the St. Louis area region. Region is defined as the Metro East, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson County and Franklin County.

- A. Effective September 11, 2020, the following restrictions and requirements apply to all **High-frequency of contact** sports:
- Team workouts and practices are allowed with restrictions.
 - Practices and team contact drills are allowed but only in groups of 30 athletes or fewer.
 - Intra-squad scrimmages (within the team (not to exceed 30 athletes) that practice together) are allowed.
 - Two coaches are permitted in addition to the group of 30 or fewer athletes.
 - Each group of athletes, not to exceed 30 per group, must remain in a separate single space from another group of athletes at any one time. Any single space must have a minimum of a 20-foot barrier from any other single space. No person is allowed within that 20-foot barrier. The 20-foot barrier should be clearly marked, and such demarcation shall be indicated by a wall, tape or cones.
 - **NO** games are permitted.
 - **NO** tournaments, performances, competitions, or showcases are permitted.

- Social distancing should be maintained as much as possible during practice.
- The practice groups must remain the same every day to reduce the amount of exposure for each child.
- Masks/face coverings **MUST** be worn anytime an individual is not doing vigorous physical activity.
- Coaches **MUST** remain in mask/face coverings at all times.
- Players and coaches should sanitize hands and equipment regularly.
- Wearing masks before during and immediately following activities is **required**, including prior to screening, except as specifically excluded during the individual athlete's vigorous physical activity.
- Every individual, including coaches, must be screened every day that an individual participates.
- No spectators are allowed.
- No two teams should be in the same location at one time. If the same field, gym, or enclosed room will be used in the same day by more than one team, teams must allow sufficient time between sessions to clean the area. No team shall use a field, gym, or similar enclosed room on the same day another team has used any of those locations unless proper cleaning has occurred after the previous team's use. This cleaning requirement shall also apply to groups of up to 30 athletes using the same single space as another group of up to 30 athletes even if those groups comprise one team.
- All equipment (such as bats, sticks, helmets, sleds, etc.) must be disinfected between individual uses.

B. Effective September 11, 2020, the following restrictions and requirements apply to all **Moderate-frequency of contact** sports:

For players younger than 14:

- Full team practices are allowed, with no limit on the number of participants and coaches.
- Games and competitions with other teams from the Region are allowed.
- No tournament style competitions are allowed, such as bracket style play where multiple teams play back to back.
- **NO** spectators.

For players 14 and older:

- Team workouts and practices are allowed with restrictions.
- Full team practices are allowed, with no limit on the number of participants and coaches.
- **NO** games or scrimmages are permitted.
- **NO** tournaments, performances, competitions, or showcases are permitted.
- **NO** spectators.
- **NO** chanting or stunting is allowed for cheerleaders.

For all players:

- Social distancing should be maintained as much as possible during practice and games.
- Masks/face coverings **MUST** be worn anytime an individual is not doing vigorous physical activity.
- Coaches **MUST** remain in mask/face coverings at all times.
- Players and coaches should sanitize hands and equipment regularly.

- Wearing masks before during and immediately following activities is **required**, including prior to screening, except as specifically excluded during the individual athlete's vigorous physical activity.
- Every individual, including coaches, **MUST** be screened every day that an individual participates.
- All equipment (such as bats, sticks, helmets, sleds, etc.) must be disinfected between individual uses.

C. Effective September 11, 2020, the following restrictions and requirements apply to all **Low-frequency of contact** sports:

- Full team practices are permitted with restrictions.
- Competitions are allowed with other teams or individuals within the Region.
- Tournament style competitions are not allowed, such as bracket style play where multiple teams play back to back, including showcases are allowed
- NO spectators
- Social distancing **MUST** be maintained as much as possible during practice and games.
- Masks/face coverings **MUST** be worn anytime an individual is not doing vigorous physical activity.
- Coaches **MUST** remain in mask/face coverings at all times.
- Players and coaches **MUST** sanitize hands and equipment regularly.
- Wearing masks before during and immediately following activities is **required**, including prior to screening, except as specifically excluded during the individual athlete's vigorous physical activity.
- Every individual, including coaches, **MUST** be screened every day that an individual participates.
- All equipment (such as bats, sticks, helmets, sleds, etc.) **MUST** be disinfected between individual uses.

6. The permitted activities must be conducted with the following safety measures:

- Athletes and coaches shall **MUST** undergo a standardized health screening and temperature check prior to starting any sports activity allowed by these guidelines.
- Spectators will be not be allowed.
- Players **MUST** wear a face covering, including during practices and while training when not actively involved in vigorous physical activity, including vigorous practice activity or vigorous training activity.
- Coaches **MUST** wear a face covering at all times.
- Screening times and practice start times **MUST** be spaced out to limit the number of athletes and others in the area.
- The number of players sitting in confined areas (e.g., dugouts) **MUST** be limited to allow for social distancing.
- Hand hygiene is essential. Organizations and facilities **MUST** promote frequent and effective hand hygiene by supplying ample hand sanitizer dispensers and hand-washing stations.
- The use of locker rooms is not recommended. If they must be used, social distancing and mask requirements apply within the locker room. Cleaning is required and equipment must be stored in a designated area.

- To the extent people are present their identity and contact information should be known for contact tracing purposes.
- Congregating **MUST NOT** be allowed by parents, guardians, and any other individuals who would otherwise be spectators or are responsible for the transportation of the athletes, other than the athletes and coaches, at the fields or outside of their individual modes of transportation.
- A drop-off and pick-up line for practices is recommended to avoid unnecessary exposure.
- Water bottles **MUST** not be shared. An individual athlete may use their own water bottle, which should be clearly marked with their name. Cups used for water should be single-use and disposable.
- Coolers must be properly sanitized after each use, and each team or group shall have its own cooler.
- CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting coolers **MUST** be followed.
- Whirlpools or cold/hot tubs should be avoided. If they are required in an emergency, follow best practices. Have a cold-water immersion tub on-site or within 5 minutes of the field.
- If ice towels are available, CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting should be followed. Ice towels shall be used only once, then discarded or washed properly.
- Team huddles, handshakes, fist bumps, and other unnecessary physical contact are not allowed.
- Any shared equipment **MUST** be disinfected with EPA certified products. Equipment should be disinfected, if possible, after each use, or after each inning or play period.
- Any jerseys used during these workouts **MUST** be washed daily and not shared among players.

7. Screening

Every coach and athlete **MUST** be screened when they enter the field, campus or facility where the sporting activity will occur. They must wear a face mask for the duration of the health screening unless masking is not possible due to a medical condition.

A consistent person should be designated to provide healthcare screenings. This person must wear a face mask and gloves when screening others.

The **screening process** is as follows:

- Ask each individual if they have experienced any of the following new or worsening symptoms within the past 24 hours:
 - Fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
 - Sore throat, different than your seasonal allergies
 - Loss of smell and/or taste
 - Diarrhea or vomiting
 - Abdominal pain
- Ask if they have a close contact who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks.

Positive Screening – If an athlete, coach, or official answers “yes” to any of the screening questions, they **MUST** be sent home immediately and told to advise their medical provider. If the athlete’s parents, guardians, or other transportation provider are not present, escort the athlete to a designated isolation room or an area away from others. They **MUST** wear a mask or face covering.

Individuals who have had a significant exposure (defined as direct contact or prolonged exposure within 6 feet) to a positive COVID-19 individual **MUST** quarantine for a minimum of 14 days from the last date of exposure to the positive COVID-19 individual. **If the exposed individual has a negative SARS-Cov 2 test, they still must quarantine for 14 days.** If the exposed individual develops symptoms during these 14 days, testing for SARS Cov-2 should occur.

The school, coach, or other official, as applicable, is required to contact the St. Louis County Department of Public Health to notify the Department employees of the positive screening. The notifying individual must provide information regarding all known contacts of the positive-screened individual. To aid in this contact tracing, all schools, coaches, and other officials conducting the practice or competition must keep a detailed account of all the participants at each practice or competition.

If the individual has health-related questions, the individual must consult with the individual's own health care provider.

Individuals returning to sports after a COVID-19 diagnosis **MUST** consult with both their own health care provider and the Department of Public Health. Only the St. Louis County Department of Public Health can release a St. Louis County resident from quarantine or isolation.

8. Special considerations for those with health conditions

Certain individual athletes on a team may be at higher risk for severe illness than other athletes, such as athletes who have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems. Those individuals with underlying conditions may be more likely to have severe COVID-19 illness. Parents, guardians, and coaches should give special consideration to protecting these athletes.

Athletes, coaches, parents, and guardians should consider delaying the athlete's participation in sports and athletic activities if the athlete has any of the following conditions:

- Chronic lung disease, including moderate or severe asthma,
- Type 2 diabetes,
- Chronic kidney disease,
- Sickle Cell disease,
- Heart conditions; or
- Immunocompromised (*e.g.*, any transplant recipient needing immunosuppressant medications – steroids, biologics, etc., and patients receiving chemotherapy) – if you think your child is immunocompromised, please check with your child's healthcare provider.

Parents or guardians who have children with these risk factors should **MUST** consider consulting with their healthcare provider about participation in sports since limited data exist and, in many cases (well-controlled diabetic or asthmatic) an increased risk is likely not present. Coaches should **MUST** exercise caution in attending youth sport activities if they have any of the above-identified conditions.

9. Enforcement

Organizations, teams, and coaches must understand the importance of enforcing these restrictions and requirements to enable children to continue to participate in sporting activities. Under DPH Orders, St. Louis County can require an organization or team to cease otherwise permitted activities if the restrictions and requirements are not being followed. In addition to the expectation that organizations, teams, and coaches will enforce the requirements set forth in these guidelines, all other enforcement actions, including Department of Public Health ordered closure, civil action, and criminal action, remain available to enforce these guidelines.

For general questions or concerns call **877-435-8411**. Get text message alerts by texting **STLOUISCOALERT** to **67283**. To keep up with the local response and testing sites visit **stlcorona.com** or call **314-615-2660**.

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It is imperative that parents and guardians, as well as those who are organizing and coaching the children/athletes, emphasize the need to follow these guidelines in order to reduce community transmission of the virus and allow additional permitted activities in the future, including competitive play. This means that ancillary gatherings and meetings of parents and athletes should not be sanctioned or sponsored.

Organizations, teams, coaches, and parents must, in accordance with DPH Orders, cooperate and assist in contact tracing, including maintaining a list of players attending practices.

References

- St. Louis County Department of Public Health COVID-19 related Orders.
- [CDC Considerations for Youth Sports](#). Last reviewed June 17, 2020.
- [CDC Cleaning and Disinfection Tool](#). Last reviewed May 7, 2020.
- [CDC Handwashing Guidelines](#). Last reviewed April 2, 2020.
- [Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 \(Interim Guidance\)](#). Last reviewed April 30, 2020.
- [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#). Published April 16, 2020.
- [State of Missouri Novel Coronavirus Analytics](#). Published May 5, 2020.
- [The resurgence of sport in the wake of COVID-19: cardiac considerations in competitive athletes](#).
- Resocialization of Sports in the St. Louis Region. Updated 8/28/20.
- The Path to Zero and Schools: Achieving Pandemic Resilient Teaching and Learning Spaces. Last Reviewed September 3, 2020