

Aquatics Coalition: Return to Events Recommendations

The Return to Events Recommendations were originally developed by USA Triathlon and have been adapted by the Aquatics Coalition to address aquatic events on a general level. Additionally, these recommendations rely on fact-based recommendations from other expert resources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), World Health Organization (“WHO”), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”) and sport-specific guidelines developed by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (“USOPC”). They are broadly focused to allow for clear, flexible, and scalable application across all sizes and scopes of events.

These recommendations will be updated according to the latest information from the WHO, CDC and other health authorities, as well as the USOPC and other resources released on this topic as timely as possible. Very importantly, these recommendations are designed to be applied to and supplement local directives; event organizers must adhere to any rules and/or regulations that their local authorities issue.

DISCLAIMER: *While the advice given in these recommendations has been developed using the best information available, it is intended simply as guidance to be relied upon at the user’s own risk. The Aquatics Coalition and associated volunteer contributors do not take responsibility for the accuracy of any information or advice given or omitted herein nor does any person, organization or corporation connected with providing this guidance. The foregoing parties are not liable for any consequences whatsoever resulting directly or indirectly from compliance with or adoption of this guidance.*

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Appendix : [Pre-Participation COVID-19 Information and Screening Questionnaire to Athletes](#)

Section I: Phased Approach to Return to Events

These recommendations have been developed to align with the three-phased approach for resuming normal business and lifestyle operations as provided by the Federal Government.

Please note, these recommendations must apply and adhere to the location rules and regulations based on where your event is held.

- 1. Phase I Overview:** No events are permitted by state or local authorities. Virtual events only and training with strict limitations while maintaining adherence to mass gathering thresholds, physical distancing and sanitation protocols. Check with your overseeing body if virtual events are covered through insurance and/or event sanctions. All decisions continue to be consistent with federal guidelines and guidance from state and local authorities and aligned with local circumstances.
- 2. Phase II Overview:** In-person events are permitted with local event size restrictions and strict limitations, and training with moderate limitations, while continuing to adhere to mass gathering thresholds, physical distancing and sanitation protocols. Perform a WHO risk assessment to determine if your event is located in a Very Low or Low Risk Category¹ All decisions continue to be consistent with federal guidelines and guidance from state and local authorities, and aligned with local circumstances.
- 3. Phase III Overview:** In-person events are permitted with no local event size restrictions and moderate limitations, and training with considerations, while continuing to adhere to physical distancing and sanitation protocols. Perform a WHO risk assessment to determine if your event is located in a Very Low or Low Risk Category.² All decisions continue to be consistent with federal guidelines and guidance from state and local authorities and aligned with local circumstances.

There are several resources available for determining what phase your state and local jurisdictions are currently operating under. Refer to your local and state health department websites for this information. You can also reference many sources that have compiled information nationwide like the New York Times' *Coronavirus Reopen Map* and NPR's *State-by-State Guide for Reopening*.

¹

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/points-of-entry-and-mass-gatherings>

²

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/points-of-entry-and-mass-gatherings>

Section II: Recommendations for Event Planning and Operations

The impact of coronavirus will undoubtedly have a long-lasting and significant impact on event planning and operations. The following recommendations are designed to provide a scalable application to all sizes and forms of aquatic events.

Event organizers are ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of their event participants and should exercise discretion for how they implement these recommendations at their own events. Be up to date, follow, and adhere to the guidance of state and local jurisdictions. Before holding an event, organizers should:

- 1) identify and adhere to the mass gathering limitations set by local authorities;
- 2) have enhanced plans in place for preventing, mitigating, responding to disease transmission.

1. Event Medical and Safety Operations at Events

Basic medical procedures must be implemented to protect the safety of workers, volunteers and participants. Event organizers should develop an event medical plan with attention to COVID-19 factors.

- a. **Staffing:** 1-2 staff members should be dedicated to constantly cleaning tables, chairs and other high touch points after each athlete leaves an area. An additional consideration should be disposable covers on each of these items. Consider giving medical and security staff authority to screen a participant, staff member or spectator presenting symptoms.
- b. **Screening:** Screen everyone entering the venue. It is imperative to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by rapidly identifying those with the virus, having them self-isolate and receive medical treatment. COVID-19 symptoms range from mild, cold-like symptoms, to respiratory failure.
 - i. Have staff equipped with thermometers, extra face coverings and gloves. Based on the CDC definition³ of a fever and the symptoms of COVID-19^{3,4}, if the athlete, staff or spectator has a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or greater they should be directed to the event's medical director (if available) for final determination or be sent to seek medical clearance to attend/participate in the event.
 - ii. The three most common symptoms include:
 1. Fever (>100.4-degree F)
 2. Cough
 3. Shortness of Breath

³ *Definitions of Signs, Symptoms, and Conditions of Ill Travelers*, Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/maritime/definitions-signs-symptoms-conditions-ill-travelers.html>, Retrieved on 4 May 2020.

⁴ *Symptoms of Coronavirus*, Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>, Retrieved on 4 May 2020

Less common symptoms include:

- a. Chills
- b. Sore Throat
- c. Headache
- d. Muscle & Joint Pain
- e. Chills
- f. Congestion
- g. Loss of Sense of Smell
- h. Vomiting
- i. Diarrhea

- iii. Medical tent considerations (as location permits and where applicable)
 1. Consider a larger tent for medical, with the ability to open up or remove walls, to allow medical staff and athletes in need of medical help to spread out. It is important to keep in mind that there should still be privacy rooms within the medical treatment area.
 2. Cooling pools should not be used.
 3. Have ample hand sanitizer, fresh towels and wipes, trash cans and bags, and other necessary cleaning supplies. If an athlete arrives at the event exhibiting symptoms, the appropriate medical and security staff should be notified. Provide presenting individual(s) with appropriate PPE and escort to a designated COVID-19 isolation location. After evaluation, if an individual is asked to leave the venue, they should be provided with information regarding local medical resources and instructed to receive further evaluation. If an individual needs assistance to be escorted from the venue, local medical protocols will be used to complete transport.

c. Questionnaire:

- i. Consider sending a check-list to participants prior to the event or use a self attestation App (e.g. HealthyTogether App - Healthy on Event Day!
<https://www.healthytogether.io/>)
 1. Include questions such as:
 - a. Have you tested positive for COVID-19?
 - b. Do you have symptoms (cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath, etc.)?
 - c. Are you feeling sick?
 - d. Have you been exposed to someone who has been sick?

If the answer to any of those questions is “yes,” inform the participant that they should not attend the event unless they get clearance from their medical provider.

See Appendix for example Questionnaire.

2. Event Operations

The following provides guidance for event directors holding events in Phases 2 and 3 and constitute a collection of recommendations from OSHA, WHO, CDC, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, USOPC and leaders in the endurance and aquatics community.

- Sanitization Protocols
- Venue Setup and Flow
- Registration and Packet Pickup
- Event Introduction
- Expo and Partners
- Awards and Awards Ceremonies
- Media

a. Sanitization Protocols^{5, 6}

I. Basic infection prevention measures must be implemented to protect all persons at your event. This includes but is not limited to:

1. Post ample signage on-site encouraging regular hand washing and sanitizing
2. Have hand washing and sanitizing stations readily available and ample trash receptacles placed around event venue
3. Regularly cleaning high touch point areas
4. Require athletes, staff, volunteers, officials, and spectators to stay home if they are feeling ill
5. Discourage use of other people's equipment, phones, tools, etc.

II. How to implement at events:

1. Portable toilets (when applicable)
 - a. Provide ample sanitation options like hand wipes, sinks, or hand sanitizer immediately outside each portable toilet cluster
 - b. Increase the number of portable toilets to lower the ratio of athletes per portable toilet

⁵, Retrieved from *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*, Occupational Safety and Health and Safety Administration, *Prepare to Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures*, page 8
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>, 24 April 2020

⁶ Retrieved from *Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Center for Disease Control (located at: cdc.gov); *Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies to event staff and participants*,
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>, 24 April 2020

- c. Increase the physical footprint by adding some space between portable toilet to encourage socially distancing in lines
 - d. Consider additional signage to support physical distancing
 - i. Marking out six-foot markers to distance within the line
 - e. Schedule additional cleaning or continue to sanitize throughout the event day
2. Hand washing and sanitizing stations
 - a. Have several hand washing and sanitizing stations available throughout the event venue
 - b. Place stations in key areas:
 - i. Restrooms
 - ii. Finish line
 - iii. Post-event food
 - iv. Transition
 - v. Fluid stations
 3. Have ample volunteers available to monitor and restock supplies continuously throughout the event.

b. Venue Setup and Flow⁷

- I. Promote physical distancing and mitigate person-to-person contact
 1. Have ample signage placed in key areas of venue encouraging physical distancing
 - a. Add markings to the ground around potentially crowded areas to encourage people to spread out
 - b. Provide educational signage and ground markings for physical distancing in all areas where spectators may congregate
 2. Design your venue in a way that allows for smooth flow of athletes and spectators and mitigates crowds forming
 3. Consider restricting spectators
 - a. If allowing a small amount, limit to designated area(s) within venue
 4. Consider offering live athlete results tracking and/or live video stream to YouTube or other internet streaming services to encourage spectators to watch and track athletes from home
 5. Have the event announcer make announcements periodically to remind spectators about guidelines and government regulations

c. Registration and Packet Pickup

- I. Registration and packet pickup procedures should be altered to promote physical distancing and mitigate person-to-person contact

⁷ *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, *Prepare to Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures*, page 8 <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>, 24 April 2020

1. Registration
 - a. Online vs. In-person
 - i. Consider type of event, past registration history
 - b. Anticipate how event format and timeline may dictate special registration requests
 - c. Questions that the event organizer needs to ask in an online registration
 - i. Specific arrival times to the venue for certain groups of athletes
 - ii. Specific event start times for certain groups of athletes
 - iii. Specific athlete registration capacities per event(s), wave, or time slot
 - d. Consider additional signage to support physical distancing
 - i. Marking out six-foot markers to distance within the line
2. Packet Pick Up
 - a. Require multiple packet pick-up times with designated pick-up times, perhaps alphabetically by last name
 - b. Consider a drive-through packet pickup if possible
 - c. Consider mailing packets to athletes/teams ahead of time
3. Packet Composition
 - a. Giveaways: Only competition-essential materials included inside the event package (e.g. no promo materials) while reducing packaging as much as possible
 - i. Give athletes an option to forego swag, limited swag, virtual swag or goody bag, or provide another pick up option
 - ii. If offering swag, an option could be branded face coverings or other personal protective equipment

d. Event Introduction

- I. Event introductions or coach meetings should shift to a virtual format in Phase II:
 1. Record the briefing and post to YouTube or a similar platform
 2. All guidelines should be communicated to the athletes including normal event policies and procedures, when to arrive at the venue depending on assigned event start times, changes to event based on physical distancing and increased hygiene measures, courses, rules, etc.
 3. In Phase III, Virtual briefings are still recommended, but in-person briefings can occur if able to maintain local protocols
 - a. Consider multiple, smaller briefings instead of one larger briefing

e. Expo and Partners

- I. Expo should be altered to promote physical distancing and mitigate person-to-person contact

1. Extended hours / footprint to limit the number of people in one area
 - a. If neither is an option, limit the number of expo vendors and space vendors further apart
 - b. Additional option is to assign times for athletes to enter the area
 2. Event merchandise sold exclusively online to eliminate giveaways
 3. Create one-way walking paths through the expo and clearly marking where people should stand in line
 4. Wipe down or use disposable table coverings
- II. Consider over communicating with partners regarding the status of the event, including being upfront about the limitations to the venue, athlete offerings, etc.

f. Awards and Award Ceremonies

- I. Award ceremonies can easily be implemented virtually instead of in-person
 1. Consider virtual ceremony
 2. Consider virtual awards versus hard awards
 3. Consider mailing awards after the event
 4. Consider spreading out awards over several tables and having athletes retrieve their own awards (with a few staff members/volunteers nearby to monitor). If elected to have podiums, space them out and only call one athlete/team up at a time. Additionally, avoid physical contact including but not limited to high fives, hugs, and handshakes.

g. Media

- I. Be up to date, follow, and adhere to the guidance of state and local jurisdictions.
- II. Consider limiting media
- III. Credential all media in advance of the event and define areas that they are permitted to gather to maintain physical distancing guidelines

3. Staff and volunteer considerations at event

a. Communications

Remind staff and volunteers that official communications about the event is only to come from the event organizer or other appointed person in charge of media communications. DO NOT speculate on event changes, athlete or staff illnesses or injuries, or other variables surrounding the pandemic and its effect on the event.

b. Health of staff / volunteers

1. Staff and volunteers not feeling well must not attend the event. They must be sent home if they arrive and are unwell.
2. Have temperature checks available

c. Amount and location of staff / volunteers

Reduce staff and volunteers where possible but increase in key areas, as necessary. Some areas that may require more staff or volunteers to best promote hygiene and physical distancing include:

1. Packet Pickup
2. Aid stations
3. Entrance gate for temperature checking
4. Concessions
5. Cleaning staff

- d. Supplies:** Have ample hand sanitizer, face coverings (if required by the state or local jurisdiction), gloves, water, food, sunscreen, and other essentials on hand to keep staff and volunteers well equipped to do their jobs
- e. Gloves:** Not ALL staff and volunteers need gloves. Remember, gloves only protect the person wearing the gloves. Dirty gloves can transmit disease in the same fashion as dirty hands without gloves. Gloves should only be worn in key areas of food/fluid prep, close proximity to athletes, or other areas as necessary where transmission of disease or dirty substances is high.

4. Public Safety and Security (Spectators and General Public)

- a. Tiers:** Create plans to determine who is permitted at the event or in specific designated areas. An example of this is grouping people into tiers from essential to non-essential.⁸

Tier 1 (Essential): Athletes, coaches, officials, event staff, medical staff, security

Tier 2 (Preferred): Media, volunteers, recovery staff (e.g., massage therapists)

Tier 3 (Non-essential): Spectators, vendors

1. Phase 1

- a. No spectators in accordance to federal, state, local government mass gathering thresholds

2. Phases 2 and 3

- a. Using multi-modal communication strategies, encourage at high risk individuals for illness not to attend the event
- b. Identify individuals with possible infection by:
- i. Screen everyone entering the venue (Tiers 1-3)
 - ii. Have designated security and medical personnel observe spectators and general public (Tier 3)
 - iii. All designated security and medical personnel should be equipped with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and thermometer for screening
 - iv. If individual is identified with signs and symptoms follow appropriate protocols developed in medical plan (Tiers 1-3)

b. Infection mitigation and medical response considerations

1. Create lines of communications between medical team, local EMS personnel, event organizers, event staff, athletes, coaches and spectators

⁸ USOPC Event Planning Considerations document pp 7-12

2. Multi-modal communication should be utilized to distribute COVID-19 information for the general public and spectators (Tiers 1-3)
3. Use different entrance/exit spectators and general public (Tiers 1-3)
4. Identify access/egress routes for medical personnel for ill patient removal and appropriate measures to be taken to ensure safety.
5. Create clear areas of separation between athletes, staff, volunteers, spectators and general public
6. Provide multiple hand sanitizer/trash receptacle stations in venue near high touch areas
7. Provide post-event summary to athletes, coaches, event staff, media, spectators, general public

C. Insurance and Sanctioning

If you sanction your event with a NGB or overseeing organization, you could receive the benefit of general liability insurance coverage. Event Directors should contact their overseeing organization for more information on sanction and insurance coverage.

Sample waivers to reference:

1. U.S. Masters Swimming: [Example Waiver](#)
2. USAT Triathlon: [Example Waiver](#)

Section III: Athlete Communications and Preparation for Return to Events

The following provides guidance for athletes training for, and participating in, events in Phases 2 and 3, and constitutes a collection of recommendations from OSHA, WHO, CDC, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ITU, USOPC and leaders in the endurance community.

1. Evaluate Your Health

Self-monitoring for symptoms is critical when training for, and participating in, an event. All athletes should self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 daily. If athletes develop any symptoms, as outlined below, they should self-isolate and contact a healthcare professional.

If athletes have tested positive for COVID-19, have had any symptoms or are questioning their health at all prior to an event, they should get clearance from their medical provider to train and compete. If athletes have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should have quarantined themselves for 10 days without a test or 7 days with negative test prior to an event. Moreover, athletes should not compete unless three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery. Recovery is defined as resolution of fever without use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms, e.g. cough, shortness of breath, etc.

2. Signs and Symptoms

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Since it is a new virus, people are susceptible to infection. Therefore, it is imperative to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by rapidly identifying those with COVID-19, having them self-isolate and receive medical treatment.

(Refer to Section II for a full list of signs and symptoms.)

3. Preventing the Spread

Face coverings can be an important tool to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Athletes should follow the guidance of their state and local authorities regarding face coverings. In addition, athletes can prevent the spread of COVID-19 by adhering to the following:

- a. Staying more than 6 feet away from others
- b. Avoiding touching their face
- c. Frequently washing their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol if their hands are not soiled
- d. Covering their mouth and nose with a bent elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing, disposing of the tissue in the trash, and washing their hands or using hand sanitizer if their hands are not soiled
- e. Frequently cleaning commonly touched surfaces with antiseptic cleanser
- f. Cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

4. Return to Training

Athletes should consider partnering with their local coaches and organizations to provide in-person and virtual coaching sessions that can be geared more individually to the athlete needs and geographical constraints. Many organizations are posting virtual guidelines and training options for athletes and coaching staff to utilize.

If athletes wish to train in a group, they should continue to follow guidance from federal, state and local authorities. If meeting people who are not part of an athlete's household, it is recommended to avoid all physical contact and maintain physical distancing.

Avoiding groupings and meetings in busy areas is also recommended.

5. Navigating Events

Coronavirus will undoubtedly have a long-lasting and significant impact on sporting events and training. New requirements may vary by jurisdiction and event logistics will likely be more cumbersome and time consuming. Athletes should be patient, prepared and flexible.

Athletes are expected to come to events prepared for changes as compared to past years. Event organizers have been working diligently to develop adjustments that

encourage a safe and fair event while promoting physical distancing in every aspect of the event. Athletes should abide by the directives of the event directors and local authorities.

a. Follow Infection Prevention Measures.

Basic infection prevention measures include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical Distancing: When in line for restrooms, packet pick-up, food, event start or other high-traffic areas, physical distancing is encouraged by standing at least 6 feet apart from other people
2. Toilets: With a higher frequency of cleanings expected, athletes may have to wait longer to use the toilet
3. Hand Hygiene: Utilize hand washing and sanitizing stations around the event venue. Athletes are also encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer.
4. Respiratory Hygiene: The CDC recommends wearing face coverings in public settings where other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Follow the direction of your local authority regarding face coverings.
5. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then dispose of the used tissue immediately and wash your hands

b. **Travel and Lodging**

If you travel to an event, consider the risk associated with the following modes of travel:

1. Airplane: Most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on flights because of how air is circulated and filtered, but sitting within 6 feet of someone who has the virus for a prolonged period of time can put you at risk of getting or spreading COVID-19
2. Bus or Train: Consider standing or sitting at least 6 feet from other passengers
3. Car: Exercise caution when making stops in public places to limit close contact with someone who could be infected. Consider preparing food and packing ample supplies to minimize stops along the trip.
4. RV Parks and Campgrounds: While helping to minimize the number of stops athletes may need to make along the way, exercise caution when staying at RV parks and campgrounds, especially those that are heavily occupied
5. If you stay overnight outside of your home, consider the associated risk:

- a. Treat the hotel, motel or rental property as a public place and avoid close contact with others and wash your hands often
- b. Athletes should reference the hotel's cleaning procedures or clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, remote controls, toilets, and sink faucets
- c. Wash any non-pre-wrapped plastic plates, cups or silverware before using

Section IV: Resources

1. Public Health

- a. [CDC Situation Analysis](#)
- b. [CDC Mass Gathering Guidelines](#)
- c. [OSHA Guidelines for Hazard Prevention](#)
- d. [OSHA COVID-19 Control & Prevention](#)
- e. [List of Tests Approved in United States](#)
- f. [WHO COVID-19 Main Website](#)
- g. [WHO interim guidance- "Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19"](#)
- h. [International Traveling Health Guidelines](#)

2. Risk Management and Mass Gatherings

- a. [WHO Generic Risk Assessment and Mitigation Checklist](#)
- b. [WHO interim guidance on how to use risk assessment and mitigation checklist](#)
- c. [FAQs on Mass Gatherings and COVID-19 including Sporting Events FAQs](#)
- d. [Key planning recommendations for Mass Gatherings during COVID-19](#)
- e. [Decision tree flowchart for mass gatherings in context of COVID-19](#)

3. Sports Organizations

- a. [International Triathlon Union Medical Resources](#)
- b. [USA Swimming Resources](#)
- c. [U.S. Masters Swimming Resources](#)
- d. [USA Triathlon Safe Return to Sport Resources](#)
- e. [Return to Running: Runner Attitude Survey Results](#)

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- a. [What States have Mandatory Mask Laws](#)
- b. [EPA-Approved Products to Use](#)
- c. [Advice on Use of Face coverings](#)
- d. [Leslie Jordan](#)

- e. [Alanic 7-7-7 Program](#)
- f. [BOCO Gear](#)
 - i. BOCO Gear is offering up their new Face Coverings and Performance Gaiters in the legendary BOCO quality you know and trust. Pick from some really cheery in-stock mask designs [here](#) or order Custom Designs for your Event by emailing hillary@bocogear.com
- g. Cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, sanitizer stands, etc.
 - i. [Uline](#)
 - ii. [Bulk Apothecary](#)

5. Virtual Swag

- a. [Fanomena](#)
- b. [Virtual Event Bags](#)
- c. [Digital Event Bag](#)

6. Meetings / Briefings

- a. [Zoom](#)
- b. [Cisco Webex](#)
- c. [BlueJeans](#)
- d. [Google Hangouts](#)

7. Signage and street graphics

- a. [MPA Event Graphics](#)