

Updated: Youth, adult & school sports guidance

These guidelines are effective starting June 3, 2021.

The State of Rhode Island is encouraging all sports organizations, teams, groups, coaches, and athletes to follow the guidance and best practices below to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while engaged in sporting activities. Mandates and information on youth, adult, amateur and school sports are determined through [executive order](#) or by [regulation](#). Additional information and guidance are available at [ReopeningRI.com](#).

Youth sports organizations should also refer to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance on youth sports](#), [youth sports programs FAQs](#) and [guidance on visiting parks and recreational facilities](#). School sports organizations are also subject to the [Back to School RI guidance](#) and the rules and regulations of the sports organizations that govern school sports, such as local school committees and the [Rhode Island Interscholastic League](#).

Playing sports has both physical and psychological health benefits for children and adults. However, playing sports may increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19 amongst the unvaccinated. Participants, athletes and the parents of minor athletes should carefully weigh the risks of playing sports during the COVID-19 pandemic and take into consideration the sport, setting, local COVID-19 transmission rates, and individual circumstances such as underlying health conditions which may increase the severity of the effects of COVID-19 if contracted.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact Cindy Elder, RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Parks & Recreation, at cynthia.elder@dem.ri.gov.

General Requirements and Guidelines

- **COVID-19 Vaccination:** All individuals who are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination are strongly encouraged to obtain a vaccination. Information regarding vaccines or scheduling a vaccine appointment can be found on the [RIDOH Vaccination Information](#) page. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after all recommended doses of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or World Health Organization (WHO).

If you are interested in hosting a vaccination event for your league, team or organization, please email catherine.schult.ctr@health.ri.gov or call (281) 409-1611.

- **COVID-19 Testing:** Athletes, coaches, and staff taking part in sports activities who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to obtain a COVID-19 test weekly (or more frequently), except in cases where they have tested positive within the past 90 days. Rhode Islanders can schedule a free COVID-19 test for themselves or dependent children on portal.ri.gov regardless of whether they have symptoms or insurance. Some state sites require an appointment. Same-day testing is also available in some local communities. More information about testing can be found on the [RIDOH Testing Webpage](#).

REOPENING RI

Sports leagues and organizations that participate in or host higher risk sports indoors are strongly encouraged to require a negative COVID-19 test or proof of vaccination from all participants prior to the start of each competition. Sports leagues and organizations are also encouraged to establish policies that require weekly COVID-19 testing for all participants and members.

- **Pending Tests:** Coaches, staff, athletes, officials and spectators who are symptomatic or have been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive should not attend games, practices, or any related sports activities while waiting for COVID-19 test results. This provision does not apply to coaches, staff, athletes, officials and spectators who are ordered to be tested routinely by RIDOH (e.g., employees of congregate care facilities) or who participate in routine business testing programs.
- **COVID-19 Positive Case and Quarantine:** If a player, coach, official or member of a team, sports organization, or a stable group tests positive for COVID-19, all members of the team or group who have been in close contact with the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 will need to quarantine in accordance with [executive orders](#) and directions from the RIDOH. Visit RIDOH website for the [latest quarantine and isolation information](#).

If RIDOH identifies a positive COVID-19 case or outbreak connected to an athlete, coach, official, sports team or organization, all activities associated with that case or outbreak should immediately cease, and all participants and organizations should fully and promptly cooperate with RIDOH case investigation and contact tracing, and follow the instructions provided from RIDOH regarding the need to quarantine and when activities may resume.

- **Face Coverings:** Face coverings must be worn in accordance with current executive orders and RIDOH regulations. Individuals do not need to wear a face covering if they are fully vaccinated or if they are participating in activities that take place outdoors. Individuals should not wear masks while swimming or performing gymnastic activities that involve acrobatic, aerial, and tumbling moves. Face coverings are strongly encouraged for individuals who are not fully vaccinated and who participate in outdoor activities that involve a crowded outdoor setting or sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated should continue to wear a face covering indoors.

School coaches, staff, volunteers, players and spectators must wear a face covering in accordance with [Back to School RI Guidance](#) and [K-12 Health and Safety Guidance](#). Additionally, establishments and organizations may require participants to wear a face covering. Athletes are encouraged to bring extra face coverings and change into a clean, dry face covering in case their face covering becomes wet or soiled while engaged in sports activities.

- **Screening:** All players, staff, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators should be screened for symptoms related to COVID-19 prior to the beginning of each activity or before entry into an indoor sports facility. A screening tool is available, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), to aid with proper screening at <https://reopeningri.com/vital-workplace-resources>. Any person exhibiting signs of illness and any person who has been exposed to a person with COVID-19 must be excluded from the activity in accordance with CDC and RIDOH guidelines at <https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/>.
- **Stable Group:** Organizations and individuals that operate sports leagues, camps, and clinics (including all interscholastic, “pick-up” games, and other informal athletic activities) which



REOPENING RI

have participants who are unvaccinated are strongly encouraged to organize players and participants into “stable groups.” The term “stable groups” means the same individuals, including players, coaches, staff and volunteers, remain in the same group over the course of the entire program. Participants should not change from one group to another. When stable groups are not engaged in active play with one another, the stable groups should maintain a minimum physical distance of six feet between stable groups.

- **Interstate Sporting Events:** All sports organizations, teams and groups should follow current executive orders regarding travel.
- **Contact Information:** The collection of contact information (i.e., full name, telephone number, and date and times on site) for participants and athletes by indoor sports facilities and sports organizations is encouraged for the purpose of contact tracing.

All organizations, participants, parents, guardians and spectators are strongly encouraged to cooperate with RIDOH in providing any information for contact tracing purposes.

- **Spectators:** All spectators must follow current executive orders. Sporting venues may impose additional conditions or restrictions based upon the sporting venue’s ability to comply with applicable executive orders, regulations and guidance.
- **Shared Objects:** Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect between use (e.g., bats, racquets). Participants should bring and use their own equipment where possible, or have equipment designated and labeled for individual use by the organization. Cups, bottles, or other food/beverage items should not be shared, and water bottles should be clearly marked with the individual’s name.
- **Transportation/Ride Sharing:** Coaches, volunteers, staff, and other team or stable group members are encouraged to not transport any athlete(s) who are not in their immediate household or not fully vaccinated. Transportation for school sports teams should follow [Back to School RI Guidance](#).
- **Hand Cleaning:** Frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing should be promoted with all participants engaged in sports activities and spectators. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used. Handwashing and/or sanitizing should occur upon entering and leaving an athletic facility and before, during, and after the sport activities. Athletes and coaches are encouraged to limit backslapping, hugging, handshakes and fist bumps with unvaccinated individuals.

Sports Leagues, Teams and Organizations

- **Risk Level of Sports:** For the purposes of this guidance, the State is using the sports categories below. The definitions and examples were influenced by a number of expert and respected organizations including the CDC, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NHSA), the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the Aspen Institute.
- **Higher Risk:** Sports that involve close, sustained contact between unvaccinated participants, a lack of significant protective barriers, and a high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: wrestling, football, boys/men’s lacrosse, competitive cheer, rugby,



REOPENING RI

boxing, competitive martial arts, and pairs figure skating.

- **Moderate Risk:** Sports that involve intermittent close contact or close sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between unvaccinated participants or sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.
Examples: basketball, volleyball*, baseball*, softball*, soccer, water polo, gymnastics* (if equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), ice hockey, field hockey, tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, girls/woman's lacrosse, fencing, competitive group cycling, crew with two or more rowers in shell, 7-on-7 football, team sailing, non-competitive dance, and solo competitive dance.
*Could potentially be considered "Lower Risk" with appropriate modifications.
- **Lower Risk:** Sports that can be done with physical distancing or individually and with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.
Examples: individual running events, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus), individual swimming, golf, weightlifting, alpine skiing, sideline cheer, single sculling, cross country running (with staggered starts), archery, shooting, individual cycling, equestrian, snowboarding, singles figure skating and solo sailing

School Sports

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL) in partnership with RIDE and RIDOH has developed [modifications for high school sports](#). All sports organizations are encouraged to follow RIIL modifications or any modifications that the sport's national governing body puts forth to limit or decrease close physical or face-to-face contact.

- **Specific School Sports Provisions:** The following applies to high school, middle school and elementary school sports:
 - Nothing in this guidance shall interfere with the [Back to School RI](#) guidance; in the event of a conflict, the [Back to School RI](#) guidance shall prevail.
 - RIDE and RIDOH may work with Rhode Island school districts, and RIIL or school districts may develop more restrictive guidance and policies than those established here to meet the specific needs of the community.
 - All school districts, regardless of distance or in-person learning policies, may offer sports in accordance with this guidance.
 - Athletes, coaches and staff should check with their school athletic director for specific information on the school's specific testing protocols.
 - It is strongly encouraged that RIIL require athletes who participate in higher risk sports played indoors obtain a negative COVID-19 test prior to the start of each competition.
 - Teams must follow the Busing and Student Transportation provisions in the [Back to School RI](#) guidance when traveling to off-site practices or games in other jurisdictions.

