



## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS OREGON COVID 19 UPDATE**

December 14, 2021

### **PHASED APPROACH TO RETURN TO ACTIVITIES**

Special Olympics Oregon (SOOR) is excited to announce that it will be expanding its return to limited in-person activities for Winter 2022! To ensure the safety of all participants, we are continuing to implement a phased approach to our return to activities.

All phases of the return plan are developed by the SOOR Return to Activities Task Force and approved by the SOOR Board of Directors. Plans are based on the guidance from Special Olympics, Inc., as well as guidelines shared by the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Infection (CDC), the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and County Health Departments. The Special Olympics Oregon Return to Activities Task Force is comprised of athletes and local program leaders from across the state, board members, other content experts and staff.

#### **Phase 1: Return to Local Sports + Activities (Effective August 1, 2021)**

[SOOR COVID-19 Return to Activities Phase 1](#) is scheduled to continue through December 31, 2021.

In Phase 1, local programs will have the option to select from a menu of sports to host limited size sports training in outdoor settings with specific safety protocols in place. There will also be paperwork requirements for participants prior to return to any in-person activities on the field of play or in other non-sport settings.

#### **Phase 2: Expansion of Local Sports + Activities – Indoor & Outdoor (Effective January 1, 2022)**

Phase 2 will take effect on January 1, 2022 and is currently scheduled to continue until at least March 31, 2022.

In Phase 2, local programs can host sports training and activities from an expanded menu which will include both indoor and outdoor sports. Limited size gatherings with specific safety protocols will still be in place. There will also continue to be COVID-19 Code of Conduct and COVID-19 Participant Waiver paperwork requirements for participants prior to return to any in-person activities on the field of play or in other non-sport settings.

Please see Phase 2 policy details below. [Click here](#) for a Phase 2 Easy Read version that is helpful to share with athletes and families.

#### **Phase 3: Return to Statewide Sports Training & Competition**

Our hope is that public health trends allow for gathering and other safety restrictions to be relaxed or eliminated and for competitions to be offered locally as well as regionally with a traditional SOOR Summer Sports Season. There will continue to be COVID-19 Code of Conduct and COVID-19 Participant Waiver paperwork requirements for participants prior to return to any in-person activities on the field of play or in other non-sport settings whenever Phase 3 is implemented. More information about the projected timing for transition into Phase 3 will be shared by the end of February of 2022.

Any modifications to the timeline or specific policy changes will be made in consultation with the SOOR Return to Activities Task Force and Board of Directors.



**PHASE 2 – SOOR RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PLAN – Effective beginning January 1, 2022**

**Phase 2 - Sports Offered**

The following sports/events may be offered during Phase 2 (at the discretion of each local program):

- Official SOOR Sports
  - Indoor
    - Aquatics: Masking required except when in the water or actively engaged in the sport
    - Basketball: Team play allowed. Masks required at all times.
    - Bowling: Masks required at all times
    - Powerlifting: Masks required at all times
  - Outdoor (or Indoor)
    - Athletics: All running, walking, rolling events, softball throw + running & standing long jump: Masking required except for during aerobic/rigorous activity
    - Bocce: Masks required at all times
    - Snow Sports – with approved travel plan. Please consult with SOOR Staff. Masking required except during aerobic/rigorous activity. Masking required when inside private vehicle. Masking required and distancing encouraged when taking public transportation/shuttle.
- Additional SOOR Club Sports
  - Hiking/Walking Clubs
  - Fitness Clubs
  - One-day sport experiences – please consult with SOOR staff

**Phase 2 - Gathering Size**

No more than a total of 50 eligible participants will be allowed to gather for Special Olympics Oregon sports training. Teams must adhere to the 4:1 athlete to coach/chaperone ratio. Eligible participants are defined as:

- Athletes with current Medical Form, COVID Code of Conduct and Communicable Disease Waiver
- Unified partners with current Class A approval (completed application, background check, completed trainings), COVID Code of Conduct and Communicable Disease Waiver
- Coaches with current Class A approval (completed application, background check, completed trainings), COVID Code of Conduct and Communicable Disease Waiver
- Training COVID Safety Manager(s): Approved Class A volunteers who will be on-site to help set venue and implement all safety protocols
- Any other approved Class A volunteers or staff directly supporting the sports training
- No spectators: In order to assure safety, consistency in attendance, and maximize the greatest opportunity for participation with the limited capacity, spectators will NOT be permitted to attend sports training



## **Phase 2 - Masks, Physical Distancing & Other Safety Protocols**

- All participants will be required to wear a mask (except during aerobic/rigorous physical activity in selected sports) - regardless of vaccine status
- Sport by sport examples and best practices will be shared to assist coaches and organizers in implementing safe play protocols
- Low impact, non-aerobic sports/activities such as bowling, sports skills events will require participants to wear a mask at all times indoors or outside
- Participant screening, distancing, and sanitation protocols will be in place for each training session
- COVID Safety Manager(s) will be responsible for setting up venue and creating proper flow and processes to ensure that everyone is safe from the time they arrive to the time they depart the training venue

## **Phase 2 - Local Program Scheduling Flexibility**

- During Phase 2, there will be no specific start or finish deadlines (local programs can set their own dates)
- Local programs have flexibility when making the following choices:
  - When to start and finish the season
  - Which indoor/outdoor sport(s) to offer (from the provided menu)
  - How many participants (up to 50) will participate per training site
  - Number of training sessions to be offered
- This flexibility also means that some local program may choose to NOT offer any sports training during Phase 2 due to a variety of reasons including facility availability, coaching resources (meeting the required minimum 4 athlete to 1 coach ratio), or other factors

## **PHASE 2 - UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS (UCS)**

Our Unified Champion Schools programs will continue to work directly with school districts across Oregon and will utilize school district policies for any programming solely contained within the school district responsibilities. UCS will follow the same protocols as local programs for any programming when hosting events outside of school/district jurisdiction.

## **PHASE 2 – SOOR RETURN TO FUNDRAISING & OTHER NON-SPORT EVENTS**

### **Phase 2 - SOOR Leadership Meetings or Other Non-Sport/Non-Fundraising Gatherings**

- 50 or fewer participants/attendees
- Outdoors recommended
- Indoor allowed
- Masks required (except when consuming food or beverages)
- Meetings involving meals are strongly recommended to be conducted outdoors or in smaller, private group settings if held indoors.
- Distancing strongly recommended
- Consider shortening duration of gathering



## Phase 2 - Fundraisers

- Local Program Hosted: Same guidance as meetings
- Partner Co-Hosted: Same guidance as meetings.
  - Tip A Cop events fall under the “Partner Co-Hosted” category and will be considered on a case-by-case basis per staff review and approval prior to an event being scheduled
- Third Party (hosted exclusively by a group other than SOOR, but where SOOR reps may have a presence): Local county health guidelines apply

## Phase 2 - Statewide/Signature Events (such as Polar Plunge, Plane Pull)

- Local (county) guidelines
- Any athletes who are asked to participate in official capacity will be required to follow COVID Code of Conduct

Please reference [this document](#) for more details and guidance on Phase 2 Fundraisers, Meetings and Non-Sporting Events.

## SUMMARY

While SOOR continues to relax some restrictions, there is still risk associated with Special Olympics Oregon returning to in-person activities at this time. Community spread of COVID-19 continues to occur in several parts of the state. The delta variant and the new omicron variant are on-going concerns – especially since there are still several counties in our state with vaccine rates lower than 60% for those 16 years and older. Many of our participants remain at higher risk.

It is estimated that as many as one-half to two-thirds of our athletes fall into the high-risk category. For a complete list of the underlying health and other conditions that Special Olympics, Inc. has determined to be high risk, please click here: [SOI Fact Sheet: Who Is High Risk](#). In addition, many of our volunteers may also fall into higher risk categories for infection or negative outcomes due to infection.

## COVID-19 VACCINES

Currently, SOOR does NOT require the vaccine to return to in-person participation. Further, we do not currently collect data on who has and has not been vaccinated or have a reliable means to track this prior to registration for the upcoming season. Special Olympics, Inc (SOI) has developed a tracking app that we will consider in the future. In Phase 1 & 2, all participants (athletes, Unified partners, coaches, other volunteers) will be held to the same safety and masking protocols regardless of vaccine status.

Everyone age 5 and older are now eligible to get the vaccine in Oregon and [COVID-19 booster shots](#) are also available for those who are eligible.

**Special Olympics encourages everyone who has access to the COVID-19 vaccine, to get vaccinated. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19.** If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine works to prevent serious illness. By getting vaccinated, you also help protect people around you. People with intellectual disabilities are almost 6 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the general population. The vaccine helps to reduce the risk of serious disease and death. This information is not meant to be complete, exhaustive, or a substitute for medical professional advice or OHA and CDC guidance and is being made available in the context of the public health emergency related to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

For more vaccine-related resources, please see resources on the right-hand side of this webpage.



## VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

We are proud of the incredible response we have received from athletes, volunteers, and supporters to our virtual programming during the ongoing disruption caused by COVID-19. The health and well-being of our athletes has been our top priority. As we transition back into more and more in-person experiences, virtual programming options will remain moving forward. Programs currently being offered include:

### **SOOR Active**

Special Olympics Oregon launched this at-home wellness community in April 2020, and it has grown to more than 1,250 members. [SOOR Active](#) provides on-going virtual health education, wellness, sport, fitness, and social experiences. SOOR Active will continue in the future but will modify programming as we return to in-person experiences moving forward.

### **SOOR Esports presented by PlayStation**

Special Olympics Oregon introduced [SOOR Esports presented by PlayStation](#) as another way for athletes and Unified partners to engage in meaningful social interaction through on-line skills training and competition. To date, more than 200 players have participated in Unified Rocket League training and competitions. Esports will continue year-round.