



March 6, 2020

To our athletes, volunteers, families, supporters, and friends of Special Olympics North Carolina,

I want to update you in regards to the news about the Coronavirus and the impact on Special Olympics in our state. Special Olympics North Carolina's staff is closely monitoring the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in 60 countries, including the USA.

After reviewing information from and consulting with local medical health personnel, including officials with Special Olympics International, SONC has not postponed or cancelled any Special Olympics events at the local or state levels in North Carolina at this time because of Coronavirus concerns. However, we are respectful of any decisions our partner organizations such as school systems, parks & recreation departments, YMCAs, and others, and we will abide by their decisions about hosting Special Olympics events. We are also mindful of and will respect any recommendations made by local and state public health officials.

SONC recommends that plans continue to move forward for local Spring Games, and our planning for the SONC Summer Games scheduled for May 29-31 in Raleigh will continue.

We ask our Special Olympics volunteer leadership across North Carolina to remember that you are an extension of SONC and you are not to decide on your own to postpone or cancel an event. Your actions should be consistent with all of SONC's actions. If a partner organization (like the school system or host facility) do propose making a change, please inform SONC staff immediately so we can all work together on next steps. Also, if you become aware of an athlete, coach, volunteer, Unified partner, staff member or any other direct constituent with a confirmed case of Coronavirus, please report it to me at Kfishburne@sonc.net so we have documentation. We have also been asked to provide this information to Special Olympics, Inc. and will relay it once I have been informed.

You may hear that Special Olympics events in other US states or other countries are being affected. Those decisions are being made based on the local conditions of the Coronavirus in those communities and will not necessarily shape decisions we make for North Carolina. Decisions we make in the coming weeks will be based on the impact of the Coronavirus in our counties and state and will be based on health officials' recommendations/advice which will be based on science. In other words, we will use available and known facts rather than basing decisions on misinformation or conjecture.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there currently is no vaccine to prevent Coronavirus. The best way to respond to this public health threat is to avoid exposure and take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of the virus. The CDC issued the following guidelines to help minimize any potential health risk:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a face mask.

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of face masks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

Please see the [fact sheet](#) from the CDC as well.

We will keep you updated in the coming weeks as we all continue to monitor the situation. In the meantime, the best solution is to ensure we are all communicating with each other and working together.

Thank you for your service to Special Olympics in North Carolina and let me know if you have any questions.

Keith L. Fishburne
President & CEO

Special Olympics North Carolina