



Overview

This guidance for returning to Special Olympics activities is based on information provided by Special Olympics, Inc., the latest medical information available and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The information should be used to help prepare local SONC programs for a safe return to activities. This document summarizes plans.

Throughout this document “participants” are defined as all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, family members, caregivers, staff or others in attendance of an activity.

These are intended as minimum guidelines for Special Olympics North Carolina (SONC) local programs as they consider returning to activities and is intended to supplement – not replace – any state, local, or tribal government health and safety laws, rules and regulations with which similar organizations must comply. **In all cases, the more stringent set of guidelines is to be followed no matter the source** (i.e. if SONC has more stringent guidelines, these are to be followed. If the local authority has more restrictions in place, those are to be followed.).

Additionally, the information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and, as such, SONC makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information. Further, you should seek advice from medical professionals and/or public health officials if you have specific questions about symptoms and/or diagnoses related to COVID-19.

Similarly, SONC local programs should immediately consult with the SONC staff regarding any liability or insurance coverage related questions.

Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of infection, especially since many within the Special Olympics movement (with and without intellectual disabilities) are at greater risk for complications from COVID-19. If there is a significant change in the rate of infection and the status of the state, **the proposed SONC return to activity protocol laid out in this document may change at any given time.**



Guiding Principles

1. The health and safety of all members of the Special Olympics movement is paramount.
2. Beyond a sports organization, Special Olympics is a movement for and by people with intellectual disabilities (ID), and its guidance must be inclusive and directed at the unique needs and abilities of people with ID.
3. Relevant SOI, CDC, and North Carolina guidelines should serve as minimum standards. In addition, consideration should be given to local and community authorities in that if there are more conservative/restrictive guidelines, these should be followed.
4. Guidance is based on current medical information available at the time of publication. As knowledge of COVID-19 is changing rapidly, guidance will continue to evolve.
5. We all want to provide some level of activity for the athletes and recognize the need to provide whatever services we can to them.

Plans for Return to Activity – September 8 thru December 31, 2020

Fitness Training from Home

A Unified 10-week training plan titled Partner Up Power Up has been developed for all participants to join from home. This will be available in printed copy for all participants and will have online resources available for those who can access them. The training program will take place September 8 through November 20, 2020.

Recommended sports for fall season

SONC will provide modifications for sport training that can either be carried out at home or in the small in-person group settings laid out in the following section. Athletes can opt to simply do the fitness training at home or to also add the sport component. The following sports will be offered in this format with online training each Thursday:

Bocce	Cycling
Equestrian	Golf
Roller Skating	Soccer
Softball	Tennis

If a local program wants to do sports training in a sport not listed above, please consult with the SONC sports staff to work together on modifications. The requirements listed next for in-person training would still be in place (for example, basketball training would still need to happen outdoors).



In-person Training

SONC will create teams of 10 or less (this includes athletes, Unified partners and coaches) through this training plan. The primary purpose of the teams will be to establish regular communication and to participate in the program as a team. Those teams can get together for in-person training assuming all of the following:

- Everyone involved is comfortable with in-person training. Any participant can opt out at any time.
- All in-person gatherings are held outdoors only. In the event of inclement weather, athletes should be encouraged to attend virtual sessions or follow the training plan instead.
- It is a consistent group of the same 10 or less people.
- The local program orders and provides Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- The “Who is At High Risk” document is shared with all participants.
- The Participant Code of Conduct and Risk Acknowledgement Form is completed by each participant.
- The status of Athlete Participation Packets is confirmed to ensure each athlete is properly registered. A separate document is available outlining how to handle expired/expiring forms.
- All guidelines for in-person gatherings provided by both the state of North Carolina, local entities and relevant facilities, and those laid out in the code of conduct are followed.
- The on-site screening process is conducted and followed. This process is provided in detail in supporting materials.

Competition Events

No in-person competitions/events will be held in the name of Special Olympics North Carolina for the remainder of 2020. This includes events at all levels including the local level. In addition to the numerous considerations for in-person activities, the great majority of local events are school-based. With the Governor’s announcement to only allow either online or hybrid education (Plans B or C), school-based events are simply not feasible, and many school districts have already announced that field trips and school events will not be allowed.

Fundraising special events (golf and fishing tournaments, polar plunges, etc.)

Fundraising events have a lot of unique factors and there are ways to still conduct these events with adjustments. Please consult with SONC staff about any special event fundraisers so that each event can be assessed individually in order to determine if it will be possible in 2020.



Healthy Athletes

Because of the nature of Healthy Athlete screening events, no in-person events will be conducted in 2020; however, four disciplines will be available virtually. More information will be distributed in early August.

Unified Champion Schools

All Unified Champion Schools (UCS) programming is conducted within schools. For this reason, UCS activities will occur in accordance with the guidelines of that school district. If schools get to the point of allowing in-person activities for groups of students in the school, UCS activities can be included.

UCS may serve as an important resource and alternative to the typically offered Special Olympics events in the schools since they will be within a school and inevitably involve smaller group gatherings.

Young Athletes

Materials and equipment have been developed to implement the Young Athletes program at home. Visit the web site at www.sonc.net for more information. If a local program wants to conduct an in-person Young Athletes session, it needs to follow all of the guidelines listed in this document.

Leadership Meetings

While virtual/online meetings are strongly encouraged, meetings may occur in-person if the parameters for in-person gatherings, as laid out in this document, are followed.