



## 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.

Currently, 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

### Fitness Training from Home

SONC will continue to make training programs available for athletes and Unified partners.

Current plans include:

- Partner Up Power Up Unified fitness program – March 2 through May 14

### **Recommended sports for winter/spring season**

SONC has provided 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.

### In-person Training

**Due to the sustained prevalence of COVID-19 across the state, effective immediately, no in-person training shall be conducted until April 3, 2021.**

**In-person trainings may resume on April 4 for those counties that are not identified by NC DHHS as having critical community spread if the local program coordinator and coaches choose to do so. All parameters initially laid out for the 2020 fall season will stay in place. Indoor gatherings will not be allowed until further notice.**

All in-person training should abide by the following:

- Everyone involved is comfortable with in-person training. Any participant can opt out at any time.
- **In-person gatherings should be held outdoors only.**
- It is a consistent group of the same 10 or less people. This number will stay the same as the fall 2020 guidelines.
- The local program orders and provides Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- The “Who is At High Risk” document is shared with all participants.
- A release form must be completed by every person attending the in-person gathering. **Please note that this form may be different from the one used in the fall.**
- Athlete Participation Packets (medicals) do not need to be collected for basic



participation in the spring Partner Up Power Up program. If athletes do gather in person for training after April 3 and it is outside the school environment, updated forms must be on file before participation.

- 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.
- It is currently required that all people wear masks at all times (even on the field of play) if gathering in person.
- The on-site screening process is conducted and followed. This process is provided in detail in supporting materials.
- **If any SONC trainings/activities happen in school facilities within the usual school operations/schedule, they may fall under all guidelines the school system has in place for their students rather than those provided by SONC. All of these functions would be considered school activities.**

## **Competition Events**

SONC will not hold any competitions at the state or invitational level any time before June 30, 2021.

**Additionally, SONC will not hold any state-level events in the calendar year of 2021.**

**It is the hope that smaller scale competitions such as local events and invitationals may resume later in the year but SONC will continue to assess and make announcements prior to these being scheduled.**

Additionally, SONC recommends that no local program hold any competition events during this period, including spring games. In addition to the numerous considerations for in-person activities, the great majority of local events are school-based. With the many school systems continuing to opt for 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. The extensive planning and preparation that normally goes into a spring games is also a great consideration and cannot be done in a realistic and quality manner to prepare for the spring of 2021.

## **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 2021.



## **Healthy Athletes**

Because of the nature of Healthy Athlete screening events, no in-person events will be conducted before June 30, 2021. After some successful virtual screenings in the fall of 2020, SONC hopes to see more of these opportunities. Information about how to still offer these events in an alternative manner is forthcoming.

## **Unified Champion Schools**

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

UCS can 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](http://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.

# Return to Activities Protocol

Last Updated: March 3, 2021

**Special Olympics**  
North Carolina



## So what does 2021 look like?

Statewide we will focus on virtual and small group grassroots opportunities.

March	Spring Partner Up Power Up No in-person sports trainings or competitions can be held
April-May	Spring Partner Up Power Up In-person activities may resume April 4 for those counties that do not have excessive COVID transmission as determined by state government if the local program coordinator and coaches choose to do so No competition events will be held at any level
June - December	No state-level events will be held. SONC will continue to monitor conditions and announce plans for local and invitational level competitions and any changes to in-person gathering parameters.