



## 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:

- Summer Challenge Fitness Series – June, July, August

### **Recommended sports for summer season**

Summer is usually a time when people take a break from sports training. Those interested in leading summer sports trainings can do so by using the modifications SONC has provided for fall and spring sports. These trainings can either be carried out at home or in in-person group settings. Local coordinators must fill out the following [form](#) should any sports trainings be planned for the summer. Any in-person activity must be reviewed and approved by SONC.

### **In-person Training**

**In-person trainings may continue over the summer** for those counties that are not identified by NC DHHS as having critical community spread. All parameters initially laid out for the 2020 fall season will stay in place. Indoor gatherings will not be allowed until further notice.

In-person gatherings should continue to be limited to no more than ten people until May 28, 2021.

**UPDATE: Starting May 29, SONC will move into the next phase of its return to activities guidance which will allow for 50 people or less to take part in an in-person activity. Along with the increased number of participants, in-person activities may now be held indoors.** All health and safety protocols must continue as previously laid out. With that said, SONC will require that local program coordinators complete the following [form](#) with any plans related to in-person activities for SONC to review and approve. This new phase will run until July 31. Plans for August will be announced during the summer.

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, unless otherwise approved by SONC.**
- **There are no more than 50 people present at one time. This includes volunteers, family members, caregivers, support staff, etc.**
- 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 is different from the one used in the fall.**
- **Athlete Participation Packets (medicals) must be up to date for any athlete participating in an in-person activity 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 invitational level any time before July 31, 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. SONC is currently working on a full calendar of fall invitationals. Local programs should be conversations with potential participants and school systems about the feasibility of local events in the fall.**

## **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.

# Return to Activities Protocol

Last Updated: April 28, 2021

**Special Olympics**  
North Carolina



## **Healthy Athletes**

Because of the nature of Healthy Athlete screening events, no in-person events will be conducted before June 30, 2021.

Those looking to hold a MedFest or provide free sports physicals for athletes may resume doing so starting September 1, 2021 with proper approval from SONC. Those interested in holding a MedFest or free sports physical event must contact SONC's Health Director with their plans via email ([health@sonc.net](mailto:health@sonc.net)).

After some successful virtual screenings in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, SONC will look to host more later this year. If you are interested in learning how to host your own virtual screening, please contact SONC's Health Director at [health@sonc.net](mailto:health@sonc.net).

## **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.



## So what does 2021 look like?

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

May	<p>Wrapping Up Spring Partner Up Power Up</p> <p>In-person activities may continue 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.</p> <p>Through May 28 – 10 people or less may participate in in-person activities outdoors only</p> <p>May 29 – 50 people or less may participate in in-person activities outdoors only</p> <p>No competition events will be held at any level</p>
June -July	<p>No state-level events will be held.</p> <p>50 people or less, in-person summer activities may occur with approval from SONC 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.</p>
August - December	<p>SONC will continue to monitor conditions and announce plans for local and invitational level competitions and any changes to in-person gathering parameters.</p>