

# Guidelines for Re-opening County, Municipal and School Athletic Fields & Resuming Youth Sports Events



*\*Guidelines are updated frequently to align with modifications from the CDC and executive orders.\**

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## OVERVIEW

The State of South Carolina recognizes the value of team sports as a form of recreation that provides positive impacts on both individual physical health and the social health of our communities. Concurrently, the State also recognizes the continued need for additional safety and health precautions necessary to impede or prevent the spread of COVID-19. The guidelines set forth in this document were established with the intent to balance the physical and social benefits of team sports with the overall needs for public health and safety. To that end, and as with all other matters concerning COVID-19, the responsibility of slowing or stopping the advance of this disease is a responsibility shared by all, including event organizers, coaches, officials, youth sports participants and their parents or guardians.

The following dates provide benchmarks for when recreation departments may begin to allow certain types of activities. These activities may not begin sooner than the dates prescribed below. The discretion to re-open athletic fields and allow youth sports activities on or after these dates lies solely with the recreation department or local government having jurisdiction and control of the field and its facilities. This document does not mandate that athletic fields must be re-opened or that youth sports events must be allowed on or after these dates.

Effective May 31, 2020, athletic fields **may** be opened for public use and event organizers and recreation departments **may** begin holding practices for youth sports without spectators other than one parent or guardian per participant, as needed.

Effective June 15, 2020, youth sports organizers and recreation departments **may** begin holding games or similar competitions, with or without spectators.

These guidelines were developed based upon social conditions and other information concerning COVID-19 as of May 20, 2020. The health and safety measures outlined in this plan were formed utilizing CDC and SCDHEC recommendations at this time. It is recognized, however, that the information and circumstances concerning COVID-19 remains fluid and variable. Therefore, these guidelines are subject to change in correspondence with new knowledge of COVID-19 or changing social conditions.

## GENERAL

All events, including practices, warm-ups and games, must adhere to guidelines established by health officials on public gatherings and social distancing. Organizers must maintain a complete list of coaches, players, and employees present at each event to include the date, beginning and ending time of the event, plus name, address, and phone contact to be made available

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upon request from local health department. It is highly encouraged that each league, organization, association adhere to the guidelines set forth by their national, state/provincial, and local government. Leagues should contact their local health department for guidance prior to resuming any league activities.

Each section below contains specific requirements or recommendations for re-opening athletic fields and youth sports events.

## **SIGNAGE/COMMUNICATION**

Posters, signs or other visual communication tools should be displayed throughout the park to remind visitors of social distancing requirements and other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## **SANITATION**

Commonly used surfaces, such as doors, handrails, etc., should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Restrooms, locker rooms and changing areas should be cleaned and disinfected on a regular and frequent basis.

## **CONCESSIONS**

Concessions areas must comply with all SCDHEC standards and additional protocols as required by the State. It is highly recommended that concession areas follow the State's applicable recommendations for re-opening and operating restaurants.

## **HYDRATION**

Water fountains are not recommended for public use. It is recommended to discontinue or discourage use of team water coolers or shared drinking stations.

Players, coaches and umpires/officials should bring their own water bottles to all team activities. As temperatures rise during the summer months, additional measures should be taken by event organizers, coaches and parents to ensure that youth athletes remain properly hydrated during activity.

## **HYGIENE PRACTICES**

Everyone is encouraged to practice good hygiene and follow the CDC guidelines.

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Activities that increase the risk of exposure to saliva must not be allowed. These activities include but are not limited to spitting, licking fingers, eating/spitting seeds, and use of chewing gum.

Children, staff and visitors (when allowed) should wash hands frequently and as directed by SC DHEC and the CDC. Hands should be washed with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be provided. Proper hand washing technique signage should be posted in restrooms and at all hand washing stations.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT & SCREENING**

Event organizers, staff, coaches, players, umpires/officials must conduct daily symptom assessments (self-evaluation).

If possible, agencies and organizations may utilize any of the attached screening methods provided by the CDC.

## **INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE SICK**

Individuals – including but not limited to players, coaches, umpires/officials, parents/guardians accompanying minors, and spectators – should not attend if they have been sick or if they are feeling sick. Anyone who experiences symptoms associated with COVID-19 or otherwise becomes ill during activity, must be required to leave.

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

When feasible, staff and volunteers should wear face coverings within the facility, especially during close contact interactions, cleaning and any other time when social distancing is not possible.

Coaches should wear face coverings at all times. Players should be encouraged to wear face coverings when not actively participating on the field of play, provided the use of a face covering will not otherwise jeopardize the player's health.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

When possible, the following should be implemented to encourage social distancing:

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- Athletes are strongly recommended to travel to the venue alone or only with members of their immediate household, if possible. Face coverings are strongly recommended for individuals traveling to and from the venue.
- No handshakes, high fives or fist bumps before, during, or after the game. Players should refrain from any unnecessary physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires, and fans.
- Six-foot spacing markers should be used for all queuing areas or waiting lines in common areas (e.g., concessions, entrance gate, bathrooms, etc.).
- Establish designated warm-up areas for teams.
- Coaches should keep players in small groups at practice to allow for physical distancing.
- Coaches should ensure that players are adhering to social distancing in dugouts and other seating areas.
- Spectators should not enter player areas (on the field of play or bench areas).
- Utilize digital interactions in lieu of personal interactions (e.g., digital rosters, pre-order gate, pre-order merchandise, digital coaches' meetings, etc.).
- Limit cash transactions.
- Team meals should only occur in compliance with the guidelines issued for restaurants in the state.

## **SHARED EQUIPMENT**

Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should have proper separation and should not be shared. If equipment is shared, it should be properly disinfected between users.

## **UMPIRES/OFFICIALS**

Umpires/officials should avoid exchanging documents or equipment with players, coaches, or spectators.

When feasible and in consideration of other impacts to personal health, umpires/officials should wear appropriate PPE during the game. When possible umpires/officials should maintain physical distance from players, coaches, spectators and staff.

## **SEATING**

Spectators must adhere to social distancing requirements for anyone not in the same family. Bleachers and seating areas should be marked or arranged to allow for proper social distancing.

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Where possible, player and coach seating areas should be expanded to facilitate social distancing. Additional space should be kept clear around the coaches and players' areas to provide adequate physical distance between players and spectators.

## **GAME SCHEDULES**

Game schedules must include adequate buffer times between games to allow spectators, players and coaches to enter and exit the facility with limited interaction.

It is recommended to develop game or tournament schedules that allow sufficient time between games for facilities to be cleaned and disinfected as needed.

## **ENTRANCE/EXIT PROCEDURES**

Where possible, provide separate and clearly marked points of entry and exit for spectators.

Staff should assist with crowd control by reminding spectators to maintain social distancing when queuing at the gate or other common areas. Spectator compliance with social distancing should be encouraged through periodic announcements or audio recordings.

Individuals should not congregate in common areas or parking lots following an event or practice. Strategies should be developed that will avoid large crowds at exits, such as dismissing crowds by section.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes and to help you make informed decisions. Notwithstanding any and all Federal and State requirements, re-opening and resuming activities are at your own discretion.

Although all information in this document is provided in good faith, we make no representation or warranty of any kind, express or implied, regarding the adequacy or completeness of these guidelines.

Under no circumstance shall we have any liability to you for any loss or damage of any kind incurred as a result of the use of these guidelines or reliance on any information provided in this document. Your reliance and use, or your non-reliance, on any information provided in this document is solely at your own risk.

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**Resource Links:**

Considerations for Youth Sports <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>