

Special Olympics COVID-19 Guidance

Version July 2024

LOCAL REGULATIONS SHOULD SERVE AS YOUR PRIMARY COVID-19 GUIDANCE SOURCE

Special Olympics prioritizes the health and safety of athletes, coaches, volunteers and community members. As a movement for and by people with intellectual disabilities (ID), its guidance is inclusive and oriented to their unique needs, following CDC and WHO regulations as of July 2024 ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [CDC Updates Vaccine Recommendations](#) | [NCIRD](#) | [CDC](#)).

As some people with ID are at greater risk of complications from infectious diseases including COVID, Special Olympics recommends that all participants¹ be fully vaccinated² and up to date with COVID-19 vaccine boosters and annual flu vaccines when available.

Participants should stay home until symptoms improve and they are fever-free for 24 hours without medication. After resuming activities, they should take added precautions for five (5) days, including wearing masks, maintaining distance, and enhancing hand hygiene ([CDC](#)).

This applies to all in-person programmatic activities such as sports training and competitions, Young Athletes (YA), Healthy Athletes (HA), Program-hosted Unified Champion Schools events, Athlete Leadership, volunteer meetings/training.

Local, state/provincial/territorial, or national or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations should serve as a primary guide for ensuring a safe environment for all participants. Circumstances may occasionally necessitate Special Olympics and Special Olympics Programs to implement more rigorous mitigative measures in order to better ensure the health and safety of participants.

Special Olympics Programs: this document supersedes prior published Special Olympics guidance on the topic. However, in the event of a re-emergence of COVID-19 prevalence, we encourage Programs to review the suggested mitigative measures found in Special Olympics' December 2022 guidance document. Contact your SOI Regional office or SOI for a copy.

Programs are encouraged to designate a COVID-19 response person to stay updated on guidance and compliance, coordinate responses, monitor cases, and consult legal counsel on liability. This guidance is not a substitute for professional medical or public health advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Special Olympics makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this advice. Medical professionals and public health officials should be consulted for specific questions related to COVID-19 or any other public health matters.

For local participants with questions, please contact your Accredited Program office. For Accredited Programs, reach out to your Regional Office or Special Olympics, Inc. at medicalops@specialolympics.org. For general inquiries to SOI, Regions may email medicalops@specialolympics.org. Additional resources are located on [Special Olympics Resources website for COVID-19](#)

¹ Participants” are defined as all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, officials, volunteers, family members, caregivers, staff, or others in attendance of an activity (e.g., spectators).

² Fully vaccinated: This status applies to an individual when they have received all recommended doses in their primary COVID-19 vaccine series (the second dose in a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine primary series or one dose of a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine primary series). COVID-19 boosters of the vaccines are recommended as immunity reduces over time and by accessing your booster when offer you will keep your protection against COVID-19 at its optimum level.