

Sport-Specific Protocol: Soccer

Status: Return to Practice
Last Updated: July 14, 2020

Special Olympics



This document is specific to the sport of soccer and is supplemental to the general *Return to Activities Protocol*. It is imperative that soccer programs adhere to any protocol outlined below or in the general *Return to Activities Protocol*. If your facility has rules in place that are stricter than those provided by Special Olympics, those local rules are to be used.

BEFORE PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL

- Ensure venue is disinfected, especially restrooms and high traffic areas, such as a gated field entrance.
- It is highly recommended that all equipment (including soccer ball) is provided by the team and not each player.
- Sanitize soccer balls, cones, bibs, or other equipment to be used.
- Designate a space for each player to set their gear that is at least 9 feet from another player's space.
- If utilizing team bibs, assign 1 bib to each player and place bibs at players' gear drop off location.
- Collect *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* from all attendees (players, screeners, county management, family, etc.).

PARTICIPANT CHECK-IN

- Designate one location to enter the field for check-in and screening.
- Check-in area must be setup so that social distancing can be maintained.
- If possible, check-in area should be setup outside to reduce bottlenecks and close-quarter interactions.
- *Athlete Medical Forms* must be checked as usual.
- Check that each participant has a *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* on-site.
- Must follow the "Onsite Screening Protocol for COVID-19" as outlined in the *Return to Activities Protocol*.
- Collect *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* from all attendees (players, screeners, county management, family, etc.).

BEFORE PRACTICE OR COMPETITION

- Meals are strongly discouraged. If a meal will be served, boxed or bagged meals are required. Food preparation and packaging must be done by the caterer. Food must be distributed by a caterer-provided person. Napkins and utensils must be provided by the caterer and distributed individually to each participant. No buffets or banquet style meals are permitted. Concession stands run by the facility are allowed to serve.
- Make regular announcements to reinforce the importance of PPE, hygiene, and social distancing.
- Grouping up should be discouraged as much as possible.

DURING GAMEPLAY

- Masks are required at all times, except when participating in on-field activities.
- Spitting is strictly prohibited.
- Each coach/referee must provide his/her own whistle. Electronic whistles are strongly recommended in lieu of a traditional blown whistle.
- You may distribute water provided:
 - The person distributing the water is utilizing PPE and proper sanitation procedures.
 - The water is in a sealed container.
 - One person is handling the water and players are not permitted to reach into the water reservoir.
 - Community water coolers should not be utilized.

- It is highly recommended that players sanitize their hands regularly throughout the practice or match.
- If a player uses a mouthguard, his/her hands must be sanitized after every touching of the mouthguard.
- Coaches should be the only people touching equipment with their hands, and hands should be sanitized before and after moving equipment.
- Social distancing must be maintained at all times.
- No high fives, handshakes, or other direct contact.
- Scrimmaging is not allowed. It is recommended to utilize a training plan that encourages individual or small group exercises.
- Heading is not allowed.
- Soccer balls may be shared only if the players touch the ball with their feet. There are no goalkeepers in Special Olympics 5v5 soccer, so there is no need to use hands.
- Team bibs should not be shared between players.

AFTER PRACTICE OR COMPETITION

- Players should be encouraged to leave the practice area at the conclusion of practice. Use of restrooms as needed is acceptable.
- If multiple teams use the same field, ensure that players can enter and exit the field while maintaining social distancing.
- Social distancing must be maintained while waiting for rides.
- Sanitize all equipment at the conclusion of practice, including washing team bibs.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

- Social distancing guidelines will be followed at all times if inclement weather forces activities inside.
- If social distancing cannot be maintained indoors, and there is a chance of inclement weather, soccer activities will be cancelled.

PENALTIES

- Programs that do not adhere to these protocols will be suspended from hosting soccer events for 1 year.
- Soccer players who do not adhere to these protocols may face punishment up to and including suspension from Special Olympics activities.
- Additional punishment may be given to County Management as warranted, on a case by case basis, according to the *Return to Activities Protocol*.