

Sport-Specific Protocol: Track & Field

Status: Return to Competition

Last Updated: March 1, 2021

Special Olympics



This document is specific to track & field and is supplemental to the general *Return to Activities Protocol*. It is imperative that track & field hosts 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, entry ways, gathering areas, and other high traffic areas.
- Disinfect any tables & chairs used for check-in and/or any other function.
- Distribute hand sanitizer to the various stations or to all coaches or both.
- Sanitize all track & field equipment, including shots, mini-javelins, rakes, relay batons, stopwatches, measuring tapes, cones, and all other equipment to be used.
- Collect *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* from all attendees (coaches, volunteers, county management, etc.).

PARTICIPANT CHECK-IN

- Check-in area must be setup so that social distancing can be maintained.
- 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.
- Hosts 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, coaches, county management, family, etc.).
- At meets, only head coaches should approach the check-in table of volunteers. Head coaches and County Coordinators are responsible for COVID protocol check-in prior to traveling to the meet.

BEFORE PRACTICE

- Make regular announcements to reinforce the importance of PPE, hygiene, and social distancing.
- Grouping up should be discouraged. Direct participants to an area for any team/rules meeting.
- Designate a space for each athlete to set their gear that is at least 9 feet from another athlete’s space.

LOCKER ROOMS

- Locker room use is strongly discouraged.
- If locker rooms must be used, limit capacity and stagger times that groups are allowed inside.
- Prior to use, coaches should make players aware that all protocols are still in place inside the locker room.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- All participants must have their own shoes and/or towels (no sharing).
- All participants must have a water bottle or be provided with a sealed bottle of water.
- All participants should have their own bag/backpack for their water, clothing, shoes, towels, other personal items and a labeled container for their mask (ex: ziploc bag) while participating in the activity.

DURING PRACTICE AND MEETS

- Before practice or the meet begins, all participants should sanitize their hands.
- Masks not required during the workout or competition.
- All participants must wear a facemask when they are not actively participating. Warm-ups are considered active participation.
- Coaches are required to wear a mask at all times.
- Participants should be reminded to refrain from touching their face. If noticed doing so, they should be directed to re-sanitize their hands.
- For practice, it is recommended to utilize a training plan that focuses on fitness and individual skill development to allow as much social distancing as possible.
- All participants should refrain from spitting or projecting any type of nasal waste during activity.
- You should have additional water to distribute as needed, provided:
 - The person distributing the water is utilizing PPE and following proper sanitation procedures.
 - The water is in a sealed container.
 - One person is handling the water and participants are not permitted to reach into the water reservoir.
 - Community water coolers should be removed from the area.
- No high fives, handshakes, or other direct contact.
- Make regular announcements to reinforce the importance of PPE, hand hygiene, and social distancing.

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assign participants to a particular group. Participants include athletes and coaches.
- Group assignments should be consistent from practice to practice.
- Rotate groups from event to event. If an athlete in a group does not participate in an event, when at that event station, the athlete should use the time to stretch, use the restroom, hydrate, or relax.
- Groups should not interact with other groups.
- Keep groups as small as possible, maintaining the 4:1 athlete to coach ratio.

MEET CONSIDERATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

USA Track & Field created the following event designations.

- **LEVEL 1 – LOW RISK**
 - Standing Long Jump and Running Long Jump
 - Softball Throw, Shot Put and Mini-Javelin Throw, if each athlete has their own implement (softball, shot or mini-javelin). If this is not possible, all 3 events move to Level 2.
 - Sprints and walks in lanes (400 meters and below) if every other lane is used.
 - On an 8-lane track, odd lanes or even lanes are used, but not both (no more than 4 per race).
 - On a 9-lane track, odd lanes are used (no more than 5 per race).
- **LEVEL 2 – MODERATE RISK**
 - Softball Throw, Shot Put and Mini-Javelin Throw, if each athlete does not have their own implement.
 - Sprints and walks in lanes if every lane must be used to accommodate a restricted schedule.
 - All distance events, both running and walking (races 800 meters and above).
 - All relay events.
- **LEVEL 3 – HIGH RISK**
 - No events designated as “high risk” at this time.

MEET OFFICIALS & VOLUNTEERS:

- All meet officials and volunteers must always wear a facemask and should wear disposable gloves.

STAGING:

- Meet management must consider numerous factors when planning and scheduling for a track & field meet.
- Considerations include:
 - Allow more time to the schedule, including gaps between events and gaps between divisions within the same event.
 - Add additional event stations. For instance, if a meet usually has 3 softball throw stations, consider 5 stations this year.
 - Erect additional tents for staging.
 - Provide more detail to the meet schedule. For instance, instead of 3 divisions reporting every 10 minutes, schedule exact time for each division.
 - Reduce the number of athletes assigned to each division. Instead of groups of 8, consider groups of 4.
 - Go straight to finals in all divisions. By not hosting prelims then finals, it reduces the amount of time in staging tents.
 - Host meets with multiple sessions, such as a morning session and afternoon session. Athletes compete in one session only: thereby reducing the crowd in half.
- Within the staging tents, social distancing must be maintained. Set chairs with 6-feet between, marking the ground in a way that if chairs are moved, the chair can be returned to its original position.
- Within the staging tents, all participants must wear a facemask. Participants include staging volunteers.
- Staging volunteers must wear disposable gloves due to hip numbers, assisting athletes, etc.
- Staging volunteers or meet officials will inform athletes when facemasks can be removed.
- Athletes should be prepared to dispose of the facemask, place it in their pocket, or hold it by hand during competition.
- Coaches must be prepared to replace disposable facemasks at the soonest opportune time when their athletes complete competition.

THROWING EVENTS:

- Athletes must sanitize their hands before their division competes. Be sure hands are completely dry before competing. Implements must be wiped down between each division.
- If athletes provide their own throwing implement, coaches assume responsibility for compliance. If implements are provided by meet management, then meet officials and station captains assume responsibility for compliance.
- To reduce exchanging of implements among division athletes, consider having athletes throw all 3 attempts consecutively.

RELAY EVENTS:

- Relay teams should provide their own baton.
- Relay team members must sanitize their hands before the race.
- Batons must be wiped down before the race.
- Coaches assume responsibility for compliance unless batons are provided by meet management. At that point, meet officials and station captains assume responsibility for compliance.

AWARDS:

- Participants must wear facemasks throughout the awards ceremony. Participants include awards volunteers.
- Discontinuance of normal awards ceremony protocols is allowed for 2021 meets.
- Meet management should consider awards immediately following competition, even at the field event station or at the finish line.

AFTER PRACTICE AND MEETS

- No congregating after warm-down or at the conclusion of practice.
- Participants should finish practice, put on their facemask, load up their belongings, and head home.
- Players should be encouraged to leave the facility at the conclusion of practices and competition. Use of restrooms as needed is acceptable.
- Social distancing must be maintained while waiting for rides.
- Sanitize all equipment at the conclusion of practices or meets.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

- Social distancing guidelines will be followed at all times if inclement weather forces participants to move inside.
- If adequate indoor space is not available for social distancing, participants should return to their vehicles with facemasks on.

MEALS & WATER

- Meals
 - Meals are strongly discouraged.
 - If a meal will be served, boxed or bagged meals are preferred.
 - Food preparation, packaging, and serving must be done by the caterer or food service staff.
 - Napkins and utensils must be provided and individually distributed to each participant by the caterer or food service staff. Pre-packaged utensils are highly preferred.
 - No buffets or banquet style meals are permitted. Concession stands run by the facility are allowed to serve.
- 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.

PENALTIES

- Hosts that do not adhere to these protocols will be suspended from track & field meets for 1 year.
- Participants who do not adhere to these protocols may face punishment up to and including or 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*.