

Special Olympics BC Return to Sport Frequently Asked Questions

What is the SOBC Return to Sport Plan?

These are the steps we will take to bring back in-person sport programs in a careful, safe way. The plan also includes the agreements and steps that all participants will have to follow to be involved in Special Olympics BC programs again.

We will start with pilot programs in small batches of sports. This piloting will test the safety measures. Then we will roll out more sports to more Locals as conditions allow.

How did you choose the first sports?

These sports were selected because we believe they present the lowest risk. They can all be done outside, athletes can train in a way that does not require any physical contact, and we can ensure each piece of equipment is used by one athlete only during a practice (minimizes touching of shared surfaces).

How do you choose Locals to host pilot programs?

The testing phase needs a mix of Locals from all over the province, in order to assess a wide range of considerations for athletes of all backgrounds, coaches, facilities, and equipment. And the participating Locals and coaches needed to feel they could fulfill the requirements of the testing phase (e.g. providing frequent feedback to SOBC). We're grateful to everyone taking on this role.

How do you choose the athletes to participate in pilot programs?

Coaches and Locals leading pilot programs talk to the athletes that they think will be comfortable participating, and will be able to follow and give feedback on the safety requirements.

The sport I registered for is now in Level 1. Can I participate?

As Locals start to reopen sports, they will announce what sports will be offered and what their registration process will be. But please know that things will be different from Local to Local. To run a sport, a Local needs to have access to facilities, enough volunteers, and enough interested athletes. Participant numbers may still be small at first, because the space requirements are going to be different in order to ensure physical distancing is possible, and because many facilities will have their own considerations.

Thank you for being patient – everyone is doing the best they can under the circumstances, and wants to have a safe return to sport as soon as possible.

The sport I registered for isn't being offered yet. Can I switch to a sport that's running now?

No, sorry, you can't at this time. All programs need to start small, to make sure they will be safe for everyone. Thank you so much for your patience while we work on the gradual, phased approach to bringing all of your sports back.

Can I participate in more than one sport at once?

No, sorry, not at this time. Because the numbers of spaces available in programs will be much more limited than in past, due to safety and physical distancing requirements, athletes and coaches may only participate in one sport at a time in order to make room for the maximum possible number of people to have opportunities to participate.

When your Local opens registration for the 2020-21 season, we encourage you to register for all the sports you normally would, or all the sports you are interested in – this will give you the best chance of getting into a spot in one of them.

The B.C. government just announced we're moving to a new phase. Is SOBC changing what level of sport we're in?

Not necessarily. SOBC's progression through sport levels will be determined by provincial staff who will be observing how Locals' programs are going, and monitoring provincial sport and health context.

How will sports progress through levels?

Special Olympics BC staff will review progress based on whether all safety requirements are working and can be fulfilled. When it's time to move to the next level, staff will make a recommendation to the Board of Directors Executive Committee for their review. If approved, staff will announce that decision.

Can I travel outside my community for sports?

Not at this time. Please refer to the Program Progressions chart in the SOBC Return to Sport Plan for more information.

The generic version of my sport is open. Why isn't SOBC offering my sport yet?

Special Olympics is very different than most other sport bodies who are only responsible for one sport. We have 18 sports, Club Fit, youth programs, health screenings, and programs like Athlete Leadership that we must develop plans for. We must make sure our plans are good, and that we do everything we can to protect the health of participants. If we open too many sports at one time, we may not be able to determine early enough what is working and where there are challenges.

There aren't any COVID-19 cases in my community. Why isn't my sport open, or why isn't it transitioning to a more open level?

SOBC must remain mindful of the phase that the province is in, but we also have to avoid moving too quickly to introduce higher-risk activities (such as high-contact sports). We need to be sure before we make a move. However, we recognize that each sport is different and may transition through levels at

different times. The SOBC Provincial Office will direct and approve all transitions through various levels.

I'm new to Special Olympics! Can I participate?

When regular registration opens in late summer/fall, we would love to get you signed up! Please connect with your [Local Committee](#) or the [SOBC Community Development staff member for your Region](#).

When I start my sport again, do I need to wear a mask?

That decision will be up to you.

I'm really worried about COVID-19, is it going to be safe for me to do my sports?

We have created clear and thorough health and safety steps to make sure all participants will be able to stay healthy. We have a good plan that was created after consulting a lot of different provincial sport and health expert sources, as well as SOBC coaches, athletes, and families. We are all committed to doing everything possible to keep all participants safe. However, if any athlete, coach, or volunteer is not comfortable or ready to return to sport, we fully understand. No one should feel pressured or like they have to return at this time.

I think COVID-19 is overrated, I want to get back to my sports, why is this taking so long?

We have to take COVID-19 seriously. We absolutely must make sure our in-person programs can operate safely. Any setback would be a huge setback. We have to move very carefully through any progressions.

If I individually choose to participate in activities, what can I do to protect myself?

If you don't feel well, are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, you have travelled outside of Canada, or you live in a household with someone who has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID – you must stay home.

If you are healthy and choose to participate in physical activities outside the home:

- Wash your hands before and after participating.
- Bring your own equipment, water bottle, and hand sanitizer.
- Comply with physical distancing measures at all time.
- Avoid physical contact with others, including shaking hands, high fives, etc.
- Leave the field of play as quickly as possible after you finish.
- Follow the rules and guidelines as set out by the facility and SOBC.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact SOBC staff through covid@specialolympics.bc.ca.