



To: Local Coordinators and Local Committee members

Date: January 12, 2021

Topic: Return to Sport update

As you know, the province-wide restrictions on group events and social gatherings have been extended until February 5, 2021. However, provincial sport organizations have received the go-ahead to run very small adult sport training opportunities, and youth programs are allowed to continue, all with some new safety requirements in place.

As such, Special Olympics BC is inviting Locals to apply to their Community Development Coordinators in order to reopen programs under the following new conditions, in addition to the SOBC Return to Sport Plan safety protocols that have been updated correspondingly – [please click here](#) to review the protocols and changes.

**Prior to reopening, all programs must apply to reopen using [this form](#), and must receive approval from the provincial office before restarting.**

Here are the new conditions:

- All participants in sport, fitness, and youth program activities must practice physical distancing of **3 metres/10 feet** (up from 2 metres/6 feet).
- Adult or mixed-age outdoor sport activities can have a maximum of four people, which includes at minimum one coach.
  - If an outdoor program previously had greater numbers than this, in advance of the first new practice, the Head Coach must organize small training groups pairing 1 coach with up to 3 athletes. Each small group must train independently of the others, maintaining all required physical distancing. They can share an outdoor facility such as a ski hill as long as the physical distancing can be maintained, but there can be absolutely no gathering at the facility at any time. The same coach and athletes must train together each week, independent of others.
- Adult and mixed-age indoor sport activities can have a maximum of 1 athlete with 1 coach.
  - If an indoor program previously had greater numbers than this, the Head Coach must organize training pairs of 1 coach with 1 athlete. Each pair must train independently of the rest of the program, maintaining all required physical distancing. They can share a facility (e.g. pool) as long as the facility rules are followed and the 3 metres of physical distancing can be maintained, but there can be absolutely no gathering at the facility at any time. The same coach and athlete must train together each week, independent of others.
- Programs where the participants are all 21 and under can have a maximum of 9 athletes and 3 coaches (12 participants total). There must be at minimum a 3:1 athlete-to-coach ratio. All must practice physical distancing of 3 metres/10 feet. If your program has both youth and adults, you must follow the requirements for adult activities.
- All the previous SOBC Return to Sport Level 1 safety protocols remain in place, including the requirements to stay home if you are sick in any way, to offer individual skill training only (no



game play), and to observe ride-sharing safety standards. There have been some slight updates to specific protocols in order to be consistent with the new standards. These are:

- No crossovers can be permitted between programs. If a coach is not able to attend a practice, they must inform the athletes that particular practice has been cancelled;
- Given the new permitted numbers, duties of the Program Safety Volunteer must be carried out by a coach at every practice;
- When carpooling to a program venue, health screenings must be done before entering the vehicle. No one is permitted to carpool with athletes or coaches outside of their training group.

### **Programs must be approved by the SOBC provincial office before reopening.**

Per the current provincial guidelines for sport, “adult” means age 22 and over.

Powerlifting and indoor Club Fit remain paused at this time. We’re continuing to research whether they fall under the Provincial Health Order to suspend high-intensity group exercise, or if there are ways they can safely continue at this time.

We know there are athletes, coaches, and volunteers who do not want to return to sport at this time, or who feel the above conditions will make it too hard to run or participate in programs. That is completely understandable. No one is required to return to sport.

But we also know there are athletes, coaches, and volunteers who passionately want to continue training, for their physical and mental well-being. We want to make it possible for these opportunities to reopen, **safely**, wherever possible.

If your Local has an interested coach and athletes, and an available facility, please apply to your Community Development Coordinator to run that program. We are so thankful for all of the hard work that Local Committees, coaches, volunteers, and athletes have put into the Return to Sport, and for your efforts to incorporate the new standards.

If you have any questions or feedback, please don’t hesitate to email [covid@specialolympics.bc.ca](mailto:covid@specialolympics.bc.ca).

To find all province-wide restrictions on events, social gatherings, and travel, [please click here](#).

To find virtual resources for staying active, connected, positive, and informed, [please click here](#).

More support:

- [Mental health and anxiety support at BounceBack BC](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control information on mental well-being](#)
- [Community Living BC’s collection of plain-language resources](#)
- Find more in the Stay Positive and Stay Informed sections [on this page](#)