



Date: December 17, 2020

To: SOAZ athletes, volunteers, families, and friends

From: Jamie Heckerman, CEO

Subject: *NEW* Weekly COVID / Return to Activities Dashboard Update

Thank you all for your patience and diligence in following the prevention measures & mitigation protocols implemented during the first two phases of SOAZ's Return to Activities (RTA) plan. Your commitment to the responsibility we all share to protect the health and safety of our athletes, volunteers, coaches, officials, staff, and everyone else in our SOAZ family allowed us to safely return to in-person programming for a brief time during the fall season. However, with COVID-19 cases rising here in Arizona in recent weeks, we recognize it is our responsibility to protect the health and safety of our athletes, volunteers, coaches, officials, staff and all that contribute to the success of our athletes in training and competition.

SOAZ has recently established a new protocol for analyzing data compiled by the Arizona Department of Health on a weekly basis to determine if in-person activities (practices, competitions, etc.) can be conducted safely. To ensure the continued safety of our athletes, partners, coaches, volunteers, etc. throughout the return to in-person activities, SOAZ will complete the following process on weekly basis:

1. Every Thursday after ADHS posts updated Covid data to the benchmarks dashboard, SOAZ's Return to Activities Committee will review the COVID-19 data by county.
2. Based on the data at the time of review, SOAZ will identify which delivery model is most appropriate for each individual county for the following week (Thursday – Thursday).
3. SOAZ will share weekly updates on each county's RTA status changes based on the above criteria through the following communication methods:
 - a. **Return to Activities County Status Dashboard**
 - i. Updated every Thursday afternoon on SOAZ's Covid-19 Updates webpage – <https://specialolympicsarizona.org/covid-19-updates/>
 - b. **Mass Text Notification System**
 - i. SOAZ will notify Heads of Delegation and Head Coaches of a change in delivery model via a mass text notification system.
 - ii. To prevent excessive notifications, communication will only be sent out when a county's status & delivery model changes or if a previously scheduled competition is being cancelled.
 - No communication will be sent if conditions allow for practice and competitions to continue as scheduled in the same delivery model the county was operating in the previous week.
 - iii. **HODs and Head Coaches are *REQUIRED to opt-in to receive status updates via text message during the sports season in which their delegation is participating in in-person programming.***
 - iv. Assistant coaches, volunteers, athletes, Unified partners, parents/guardians, etc. may choose to opt-in to receive status updates via text message by completing the following process:
 1. Text SOAZ to **(844) 480-1167**
 2. You will receive a welcome message confirming your entry

Below is the list of resources SOAZ utilizes for making determinations regarding Return to Activities:

- [Special Olympics Arizona – COVID-19 Updates & Resources](#)
- [AZ Department of Health – School Reopening Benchmarks / Dashboard by County](#)
- [Special Olympics International – COVID Resources: Frequently Asked Questions](#)



With the start of SOAZ's winter sports season, please note the following important information regarding the structure of sports practices:

- Delegations are required to plan practices **according to the guidelines of the RTA Phase their county is currently operating under** (as posted on SOAZ's RTA County Status Dashboard).
 - For example –
 - If a delegation is participating in basketball and its county is currently operating under Phase 1 of SOAZ's RTA action plan, sports practices may not exceed more than 10 individuals at one time. We recommend delegations split practices up into multiple sessions and focus on conditioning and drills or practicing under a 3-on-3 model until its county moves back into Phase 2 and the delegation can resume practices with all participants together.
 - If a delegation is participating in basketball and its county is currently operating under Phase 0, sports practices must be conducted virtually. For virtual practices, SOAZ recommends focusing on conditioning & practice drills.
 - If athletes & Unified partners do not have their own equipment at home, Heads of Delegation should contact their SOAZ Area Director to request loaner equipment (ex. Basketballs) for your participants to use while practicing under Phase 0.

The health and safety of our athletes & community continues to be our highest priority as we monitor the situation & consult with public health officials from our local state department for further direction. Please visit our website at <https://specialolympicsarizona.org/covid-19-updates/> for the most updated information & resources regarding SOAZ's Return to Activities action plan.

We look forward to continuing working with everyone in our SOAZ community to navigate this together through knowledge, information, and shared responsibility. We must do our best as individuals and communities to continue practicing the proposed mitigation strategies from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and the [Arizona Department of Health Services](#). Please continue to practice smart and careful prevention strategies. Wash your hands often, use hand sanitizer, avoid high-fives and handshakes, and avoid contact with your face. If you do not feel well, please stay at home to protect yourself & others.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Jamie Heckerman
President & CEO
Special Olympics Arizona