



Date: March 26th, 2021
To: SOAZ athletes, volunteers, friends, and family
From: Jamie Heckerman, CEO
Subject: **SOAZ Spring Season Update**

Special Olympics Arizona is dedicated to the protecting the health and safety of our athletes, volunteers, coaches, officials, staff, and all that contribute to the success of our athletes. **As such, please note the following guidance and modifications for the 2020-21 Spring Sports Season:**

2021 Virtual Cheer Competition: There will be no area-level cheerleading competitions held this year. Instead, SOAZ will be hosting a one-night, Statewide Virtual Cheer Event planned for **Friday, April 9th**. This date was moved back one week due to Good Friday being on the initial date. Please save the date and join us to watch the live event!

2021 Virtual Summer Games: Registrations for the first ever SOAZ Virtual Summer Games – SOAZ Breaks the Internet – will be sent out by **Friday, March 26th**. The sports being virtually offered include Athletics (Track & Field) and Powerlifting. **Volleyball will not be offered during the 2020-21 season.**

- The events being offered for Virtual Summer Games can be found on our website under the **'Season Updates'** tab or by clicking [here](#).
- To ensure that all Coaches/Volunteers have been certified, we will be hosting another COVID-19 Training on **Tuesday, April 6th at 4:30pm**. The link to register can be found below:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=JZihmwljNUKGvkKaAuSBn0jbffslf-VFhQMWKaoHzdBURDFTTKFWUklCMTRLTUVNQURBQ1c1WkgzTi4u>.
- Prior to the statewide virtual competition, delegations/teams are expected to train as they normally would by completing a minimum of **eight hours of practice**. However, this can be broken down into either **one-hour practices, twice a week for four weeks** or **half-hour practices, four times per week for four weeks**.
- Given the unprecedented nature of this competition, **athletes will also be permitted to participate individually even if their delegation does not plan to compete as a team**. Athletes may practice at home and submit their scores to the local Area Director to be included in the SOAZ Virtual Summer Games.
- To determine which Return to Activities (RTA) phase your county is currently in, please reference SOAZ's [RTA County Status Dashboard](#), which is updated every Thursday afternoon and indicates which delivery model each individual county must operate under for the following week.
 - Practices must be held VIRTUALLY in all counties operating under Phase 0 of SOAZ's Return to Activities action plan.
 - In-person practices can resume once counties meet the criteria to transition back into Phase 1 of SOAZ's Return to Activities (RTA) action plan.
 - Practices must adhere to all RTA guidelines & policies outlined in the below resources –
 - [Return to Activities Guidelines](#)
 - [RTA County Status Dashboard](#)
- Mass Text Notification System



- SOAZ will notify Heads of Delegation and Head Coaches of a change in RTA delivery model via a mass text notification system.
- To prevent excessive notifications, communication will only be sent out when a county's status & delivery model changes. No communication will be sent if conditions allow for practice to continue in the same delivery model the county was previously operating in.
- **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***. 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:
 - Text SOAZ to (844) 480-1167
 - You will receive a welcome message confirming your entry

Per Governor Ducey's [Executive Order 2021-06](#) – *“Businesses, whether for-profit or non-profit.... still maintain the right to institute & enforce policies to mitigate against COVID-19 spread including the use of face coverings and physical distancing, and retain the right to refuse service to those who do not comply with the policies”*. Keeping in mind that COVID-19 remains in our communities & many individuals in our SOAZ family are at a higher risk for serious complications from coronavirus, **SOAZ will continue enforcing its mandatory mask policy during Phases 0-2 of SOAZ's RTA action plan:**

- Everyone in attendance at any in-person SOAZ event is required to wear a mask. This mandate applies to all members of our community – athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, staff, parents/guardians, spectators, etc. *If someone does not have a mask to wear and extras are not available, that individual will not be permitted to enter. No exceptions will be made.*
 - HODs, coaches, volunteers, parent/guardians, spectators, etc. are required to wear a mask at all times – no exceptions. Masks must be worn properly, covering both the nose & mouth.
 - SOAZ athletes and Unified partners are required to wear a mask in common areas (ex. restrooms) & all situations where maintaining a safe social distance of at least six feet is not possible.
 - SOAZ athletes & Unified partners are **encouraged, but not required to wear a mask while actively participating / competing** in sports training and competition. However, as soon as a participant is finished actively competing or practicing, they are required to put their mask back on immediately.
 - *PLEASE NOTE: If a venue/facility requires masks to be worn at all times, athletes & Unified partners must wear a mask while participating/competing in sports.*

Anyone who is unable or unwilling to wear a mask due to a medical condition or personal preference is not permitted to participate in in-person SOAZ programming until SOAZ enters Phase 3 of the Return to Activities action plan. Until then, we encourage these individuals to participate in SOAZconnected's virtual programming opportunities from the comfort and safety of their own home. To find a list of upcoming virtual activities and their respective registration links, please visit <https://specialolympicsarizona.org/soaz-connected/>



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 have updated the website to reflect our new phase structure, which includes updates on practice capacity.

SOAZ will continue working with everyone in our community to navigate this journey together through information and shared responsibility. We must do our best as individuals & communities to practice good hygiene and careful prevention strategies. Wash your hands often, wear a mask over your nose & mouth, 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