



Date: June 15, 2020

To: SOAZ athletes, volunteers, families, and friends

From: Jamie Heckerman, CEO

Subject: SOAZ Return to Activities Action Plan

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. Now that the country is beginning to reopen, we are all excited about the prospect of returning to activities & sharing in the positive elements of playing, coaching, volunteering, and simply being fans of Special Olympics once again.

We are following the directives of the Governor and Arizona Department of Health. As stated in the Governor's press conference on May 28, 2020, recreational and amateur sports can resume with limitations & proper mitigation measures. To ensure an abundance of caution, Special Olympics Arizona has conducted extensive research and consulted with local public health officials and other experts outside the organization throughout the process of developing our return to activities action plan. As such, please note the following important information about the upcoming fall 2020 sports season:

- **Sports Offered** – the following sports have been determined to be “lower risk” with proper mitigation measures & will be offered: **Swimming, Bocce, Golf**.
- **Cancelled Sports** – the following sports are cancelled due to limitations, which prevent effective mitigation & create an unsafe environment: **Softball, Bowling**.
- **Next Steps** – More information will be shared with delegations/schools soon regarding the following:
 - **Return to Practice** – SOAZ's return to activities approach is divided into three phases, which build upon each other & gradually ease restrictions throughout the different stages of progress required to achieve the ultimate goal of playing with no restrictions or recommendations related to COVID-19. Following this protocol, **in-person sports training/practices are scheduled to resume on July 27th, 2020**.
 - **Education/Training** – all Class A Volunteers (HODs, coaches, team chaperones & volunteers, etc.) are **required** to complete SOAZ's **COVID19 Safety & Prevention Measures certification course** prior returning to sports practice or attending any other in-person SOAZ activity. The certification will be conducted virtually and recorded.
 - **Return to Activities (RTA) Kits** – Thanks to the generosity of our RTA presenting sponsor, **Mercy Care**, every delegation/school will receive a free return to activities kit, which includes educational resources for coaches, detailed mitigation protocols (temperature screenings, social distancing practices, cleaning/sanitization procedures, etc.), personal protective equipment, and more. **SOAZ will be sending out a survey to all programs to assess needs and PPE quantities for each delegation's RTA kits.**

While we are eager to resume in-person programming & activities, we also recognize our responsibility in protecting our athletes & keeping all individuals in our community healthy & safe. Be advised that there are still risks and possible exposure to COVID-19 when travelling or being in public. We must do our best as individuals and communities to continue practicing the proposed mitigation strategies from the CDC and the Arizona Department of Health. We remind each individual and family that they must assess the risk and make certain determinations for themselves. [Please refer to this page of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention website for all tips](#) or review the following FAQ document from the [Maricopa County Department of Health](#). 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.



While it is a new, and at times uncertain, environment, we look forward to working with everyone in our SOAZ community to navigate this together through knowledge, information, and shared responsibility. The health and safety of our athletes & community continues to be our highest priority as we monitor the situation daily & consult with public health officials from our local state department for further direction. We will provide ongoing updates as more information becomes available. Visit our website at <https://specialolympicsarizona.org/covid-19-updates/> for the most updated information & resources regarding SOAZ's Return To Activities Action Plan.

While we can't be together in-person for a little while longer, we hope you'll stay in touch with us through **SOAZconnected** – a digital strategy designed to promote the physical, emotional, and social well-being of our athletes, their families, and all members of our community through interactive, virtual engagement opportunities in health & wellness, sports & fitness, arts, and education. Join the [SOAZconnected Facebook page](#) and subscribe to notifications to find out how you can continue participating in SOAZ programming from the comfort of your home. Check it out daily for new tips, tricks, challenges, and social hangouts! Feel free to post or comment with questions, to share advice, cheer each other on, and more! You can also visit the [SOAZconnected page](#) on our website to find more information & resources.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Jamie Heckerman

President & CEO

Special Olympics Arizona