



Date: July 6, 2020

To: SOAZ athletes, volunteers, families, and friends

From: Jamie Heckerman, CEO

Subject: POSTPONEMENT of Return to Activities

While we are extremely eager about the prospect of returning to activities & sharing in the positive impact of in-person SOAZ programming once again, we also 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.

In light of the spike in COVID-19 cases here in Arizona in recent weeks, SOAZ is exercising an abundance of caution & has made the difficult decision to **postpone our return to in-person programming & activities until Monday, August 17th** to align with the Governor's recommendations for reopening schools. 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 changes to the upcoming fall 2020 sports season:

- **Cancelled Sports** – the following sports are cancelled due to limitations, which prevent effective mitigation & create an unsafe environment: **Softball, Bowling, Swimming**.
 - **NOTE: Governor Ducey's recent closure of swimming pools through 7/27 has led to many pools reporting they will not be reopening this season. As a result, SOAZ will not be hosting any swimming competitions this season. However, delegations with access to a training facility (i.e. a swimming pool) that can meet all requirements & modifications outlined in Phase 1 of SOAZ's Return to Activities guidelines are eligible to resume training on 8/17 after coaches have complete the COVID19 Safety & Prevention Measures certification course.*
- **Sports Offered** – the following sports have been determined to be “lower risk” with proper mitigation measures & will be offered: **Bocce, Golf**.
 - **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. For more information on SOAZ's phased approach, please visit our website.
 - **Golf Season Timeline**
 - Practice Start Date – **Monday, August 17th** (subject to change pending local & state guidance)
 - Season End Date – **Saturday, November 7th** (all competitions will be held by this date)
 - **Bocce Season Timeline**
 - Practice Start Date – **Tuesday, September 1st** (subject to change pending local & state guidance)
 - Season End Date – **Wednesday, November 18th** (all competitions will be held by this date)
- **Additional Important Info**
 - **Soccer Season (Fall 2020)** – At this time, SOAZ has not yet determined whether Soccer can be offered safely during the 2020 fall sports season. SOAZ will continue its research & consultation with experts in the coming weeks to make a final determination and notify our community via an official memo sent out no later than August 31st.
 - **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 practices or attending any other in-person SOAZ activity. The certification will be conducted virtually and recorded. **Please visit our website for more information on how to register.**



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.

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 CDC and the Arizona Department of Health. [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 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