



Date: October 6, 2020
To: SOAZ athletes, volunteers, families, and friends
From: Jamie Heckerman, CEO
Subject: PHASE 2 TRANSITION – Return to Activities

Thank you all for your patience and diligence in following the prevention measures & mitigation protocols implemented during the first phase of SOAZ's Return to Activities 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 has allowed us to safely return to in-person programming throughout the past seven weeks.

SOAZ is transitioning into Phase 2 of our Return to Activities action plan, effective immediately. Please note the following important criteria for in-person, sports practices during Phase 2:

- **Medium group size** – sports practice activities permitted for **50 people or less**.
- **No spectators permitted at practice**. One spectator per participant permitted at competitions.
- **Temperature screening / symptom checks required** at in-person sports practices & competitions.
- HODs, coaches, volunteers, spectators, etc. are **required to wear a mask at all times**.
- Athletes and Unified partners are **required to wear a mask at all times when they are not actively participating / competing in sports**. Immediately after completing their turn, drill, practice, etc., participants are **required to put their mask back on**.

While we are excited to have reached this milestone, we must keep 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. It is essential that everyone continue taking steps to reduce the spread by masking up, maintaining physical distance, and washing our hands thoroughly and often. Please note the following important information regarding **SOAZ's mandatory mask policy**:

- **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 with their turn, drill, practice, etc., 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/>



SOAZ 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. Please note the following information regarding the 2020-21 sports season:

- **Cancelled Sports** – the following sports are cancelled due to limitations, which prevent effective mitigation & create an unsafe environment:
 - **Fall Sports** – **Softball, Bowling, Swimming**
 - **Winter Sports** – **Soccer, Floorball, Floor Hockey**
- **Sports Offered** – the following sports have been determined to be “lower risk” with proper mitigation measures & will be offered: **Bocce, Golf**.
 - **Golf Season: August 17th** (*practices begin*) – **November 7th** (*all competitions will be held by this date*)
 - **Bocce Season: September 1st** (*practices begin*) – **November 18th** (*all competitions held by this date*)
- **Additional Important Info**
 - **Basketball Season (Winter 2021)** – At this time, SOAZ has not yet determined whether Basketball can be offered safely during the 2021 winter 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 October 15th.
 - **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. To register for an upcoming training, please visit our website’s **COVID19 page** & look under the tab labeled “COVID-19 Safety & Prevention Measures Certification Course”
 - **Return to Activities Kits** – Thanks to the generosity of our RTA presenting sponsor, Mercy Care, every delegation/school will receive a free kit, which includes educational materials, detailed mitigation protocols (temperature screenings, social distancing practices, cleaning / sanitization procedures, etc.), personal protective equipment, and more. To request a free RTA kit for your delegation/school, please complete the **RTA kit request form**.

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 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