



## COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY

### PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Date: December 1, 2021  
To: All Individuals, Businesses, and Organizations in SLO County  
Subject: **COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices:  
Youth Sports and Extracurricular  
Activities**

**12/01/21 Updates:** Limited to the K-12 school setting only– Schools are now required to perform weekly screening testing of all athletes on a team, vaccinated or not, if the school deems that wearing a mask indoors during heavy exertion is not practical. Weekly screening testing is also required for musicians playing wind instruments if a bell cover is not used.

**10/18/21 Updates:** The testing and duration of quarantine guidance has changed to align with updated K-12 School Guidance from the California Department of Public Health.

This document summarizes the requirements and best practices for youth sports and extracurricular activities in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County and applies to all public and private schools and youth-serving organizations in SLO County. In this context, youth sports and extracurricular activities include small and large groups that gather in person for activities, which may or may not be affiliated with a school or organization.

#### KEY FACTS:

- In addition to community transmission levels, factors specific to each activity influence the level of transmission risk. Outdoor or indoor activities, indoor ventilation, the number of participants, their vaccination status, if masks are worn, the level of exertion, and the frequency and duration of close contact.
- Mixing groups or teams outside the community increases risk for participants and attendees and contributes to the spread of COVID-19 disease and variants across communities.
- Besides the event itself, group travel to and from events and associated social activities are often the source of COVID-19 transmission among youth groups.
- Forceful breath and vocalizations in activities such as singing, vocal projection, and playing wind instruments produce more respiratory droplets and aerosols than typical breathing or talking. Unlike typical droplet particles emitted with normal breathing and talking, aerosols

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## County of SLO Public Health Department COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices: Youth Sports and Extracurricular Activities

travel farther and remain in the air much longer and can be inhaled deep into the respiratory tract.

- Respiratory aerosols build up in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation, which can lead to virus concentrations in the air if a performer is infectious. Prolonged exposure to these conditions increases risk. The risk from infectious aerosolized particles is reduced when the particles can dissipate quickly, such as outdoors and in sufficiently ventilated indoor spaces.
- Leagues and clubs do not have the authority to contradict or override requirements issued by local and state public health agencies.
- Vaccination continues to be the primary method to reduce transmission.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- Masks are required for all individuals regardless of vaccination status in all public indoor settings<sup>1</sup> with the limited exceptions noted below. Masks are always required indoors for participants, referees, officials, coaches, other support staff and volunteers, spectators, and observers.<sup>1</sup>
- Requirements for employees are different than those for attendees. Employers must follow the [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards \(ETS\)](#).
- Note that the directives in a [SLO County Health Officer Order](#) must be followed when they are more stringent than a State requirement, including those from CDPH and Cal/OSHA ETS.<sup>1</sup>
- Any face mask that becomes wet or saturated with sweat must be replaced immediately.
- **Exceptions:**<sup>2</sup>
  - The American Academy of Pediatrics has determined that wearing masks during certain activities could pose a safety hazard if caught on an apparatus or impairing vision, therefore, the following activities are exceptions to the requirement for wearing a mask during indoor play:<sup>3</sup>
    - Competitive cheer involving tumbling, stunting, flying, spotting, or building
    - Gymnastics involving fixed apparatus or aerials
    - Wrestling
    - Water sports (do not wear wet masks)
  - If the above activities are played indoors without masks, then all the players and associated staff, regardless of vaccination status, must be tested at least weekly for COVID-19 with PCR or antigen testing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In San Luis Obispo County, all individuals are required to follow the [September 1, 2021 SLO County Health Officer order requiring face coverings in all public indoor settings](#) in addition to the [CDPH Guidance for Face Coverings](#) and the [CDPH COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California](#).

<sup>2</sup> Also applies to sports operated or supervised by schools, and all activities that occur on a school site, whether or not they occur during school hours per [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year](#).

<sup>3</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity- When should face masks be worn?](#)

## County of SLO Public Health Department COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices: Youth Sports and Extracurricular Activities

- Masks removed for the above safety reasons must be put back on when not in active play.
- **Exceptions for K-12 school activities only:**<sup>2</sup>
  - Indoor sports– If masks are not worn because school officials deem that wearing a mask during heavy exertion when actively practicing, conditioning, or competing indoors is not practical, then all players, regardless of vaccination status, must undergo screening testing for COVID-19 at least once weekly.<sup>4</sup>

Players must wear masks at all other times indoors when not actively practicing, conditioning, competing, or performing, which includes on the sidelines, in team meetings, and within locker rooms and weight rooms.
  - Band– Musicians may play wind instruments indoors without specialized masks if bell coverings are used on the instruments AND a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing is maintained between participants. If bell covers are not used, then the musicians playing wind instruments must maintain a minimum of 6 feet of distance from others AND undergo screening testing at least once weekly.<sup>4</sup>

Specialized mouthpiece masks for wind instruments are recommended but are not a substitute for bell covers. Specialized mouthpiece masks may be worn only while actively performing and must be replaced with a standard mask at all other times indoors.

### BEST PRACTICES:

- Move indoor activities outdoors when possible.
- Encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Besides protecting an individual's health and the health of those around them, a team or group of fully vaccinated participants will not miss out on games and practices because of quarantine.
- Ensure indoor ventilation meets or exceeds current standards in the [CDPH Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#).
- Inform parents and guardians of increased risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with indoor activities and crowded or close-contact outdoor activities. Incorporate notification of increased risk into standard consent form.
- Do not use indoor showers, saunas, or other indoor vapor generators in locker rooms or gyms.
- See [County of SLO COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices: Hosting Large Events](#). Notify attendees of indoor mask requirements in advance, if possible, and issue reminders during events as needed. Have masks available to attendees upon request.
- Prohibit indoor eating and drinking and provide a designated outdoor area for eating and drinking.

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<sup>4</sup>FDA-approved PCR, antigen, or pooled PCR test is acceptable, though self-collection tests must be observed by a trained observer or clinician. Exclude from regular screening testing individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days and are asymptomatic.

## County of SLO Public Health Department COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices: Youth Sports and Extracurricular Activities

- Wind musicians and vocalists should face away from other musicians, indoors and outdoors, and maintain at least 12 feet distance from audience members. Wind musicians should never empty spit valves on the floor. Recommend using a puppy pad (or similar) to catch the contents of the spit valve and discard. Sanitize hands after discarding pad.
- Limit indoor practice time for vocal arts and wind instruments. In spaces with good ventilation rates (minimum of 3 air exchanges per hour) and HEPA filtration, indoor limit rehearsal times up to 50 minutes (or longer if higher air change rates).<sup>5</sup>
- Use a microphone to amplify voice instead of projecting vocalizations and consider disposable microphone covers if performers will be sharing a mic.
- Consider weekly screening testing (PCR or antigen) of all unvaccinated participants, including coaches and staff, for high-risk outdoor sports and during times of high community transmission. High-risk sports include those with frequent or sustained close contact with others during increased exhalation. High-risk sports include basketball, football, wrestling, water polo, boxing, martial arts, soccer, rugby, roller derby, cheer, and stunt.
- Masks are strongly recommended for all individuals regardless of vaccination status when in a crowded outdoor setting.
- Avoid traveling in vehicles with others outside your family. If you do, always wear masks, allow outside air to circulate as much as comfortable, and maintain distance as much as possible. If sharing a room during overnight stays is necessary, keep masks on indoors and remove only when eating, sleeping, and showering.
- Exclude anyone who is under an isolation order because they have tested positive or is under a quarantine order because they have been in close contact with a positive person. See [CDPH Guidance for Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19](#).
- Fully vaccinated youth and adults without symptoms do not need to quarantine if they have been a close contact to an infected person. However, testing 3-7 days after last contact is strongly recommended, even for the fully vaccinated.
- Any participant with symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status, should be excluded from participation and tested for COVID-19. The presence of any single symptom consistent with COVID-19 warrants testing and exclusion from participation until symptoms have improved and the participant has received a negative test. See [CDPH Guidance for Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19](#).
- COVID-19 symptoms include fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose or congestion, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- Allowing a child with symptoms to participate in sports or extracurricular activities places all other participants at risk. It is better to miss one or two days of practice or competition to get tested than be responsible for an outbreak that shuts down a team or activity for two weeks.
- Whenever a confirmed case is identified among participants in a sport or extracurricular activity, ensure that all unvaccinated close contacts quarantine and get tested. Any vaccinated close contacts should also get tested, although they are not required to quarantine.

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<sup>5</sup> [International Coalition Performing Arts Aerosol Study Updated Guidelines 7/9/21](#)

## County of SLO Public Health Department COVID-19 Requirements and Best Practices: Youth Sports and Extracurricular Activities

- A close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of a known case (person infected with COVID-19) for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, even if everyone wore masks.
- At a minimum, a phone or telemedicine consultation with a physician is recommended prior to return to play in accordance with the [American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity](#).