

Return to Play Guidelines



The purpose of these guidelines is to create a comprehensive return to play plan for Starlings Volleyball, USA Affiliate Clubs that is compliant with CDC, federal, state and local regulations. Return to play activities include but are not limited to: tryouts, lessons, practices, scrimmages, camps, clinics, and tournaments.

Many of these recommendations are based upon current guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and USA Volleyball. The knowledge surrounding COVID-19 is constantly changing and circumstances are different based on geographic region. The following considerations are meant to supplement – not replace – any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which Starlings Affiliate Clubs must comply.

Until COVID-19 is either eradicated, a vaccine is developed, or a cure is found, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of infection and as a result Starlings Volleyball, USA strongly encourages all directors, coaches and participants to follow these recommendations as safety precautions. The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, nor does Starlings Volleyball, USA assume any liability or responsibility for the recommendations provided herein.

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General Guidance

CDC Recommendations:

- **Clean & disinfect** frequently touched surfaces (including balls).
- **Thoroughly wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Wear a cloth face covering** that covers your nose and mouth in public settings.
- **Stay at least 6 feet away** from non-household members (aka “Social Distancing”).
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with tissue when coughing or sneezing, then discard the tissue.
- **Stay home if you are sick.**

Check local public health recommendations and mandates in your area, found on your state and local government website, and consider local shelter-in-place and face-covering ordinances before planning club activities of any kind. Find a directory of state health departments [here](#), and get the latest data on COVID-19 cases and deaths by U.S. county [here](#).

How to Use This Document

This document is not a prescriptive list of protocols. It is a summary, synthesis and set of links to the work of various organizations and is intended to help you plan your Club’s Return to Play. So please...

Use it as a research tool

Use it as a template for letters and communications

Use it as a template to build your own Return to Play plan

Disclaimer

These guidelines are provided for general informational purposes only and are not intended as, or should be relied upon as, specific medical or legal advice. All Starlings Club Directors are strongly encouraged to consult with qualified medical personnel and/or public health officials for medical advice. Also, consult with federal, state and local orders and/or laws for legal considerations. If you use any considerations provided herein, you do so at your own risk and specifically release Starlings Volleyball, USA and their employees in connection with your use of the enclosed guidelines and supplemental documents. Starlings Volleyball, USA makes no warranties or statements as to the completeness, reliability, and accuracy of the information contained herein.

Risk Categories

Risk categories are assigned relative to other ways of participating in a sport or activity, based on the latest public health and scientific understandings of COVID-19 and how it can be transmitted.

Activities are segmented into three types of risk posed both to participants and others, based on general characteristics.



Lowest Risk

Individual exercise or training at home, alone or with shared household members, with owned and sanitized equipment

Medium Risk

Individual exercise or training in public, alone or with shared household members, with owned and sanitized equipment; individual exercise or training in public with non-shared household members physically distant.

Highest Risk

Any group play or training with non-household members not physically distant in private or public; any usage of shared equipment.

Below you can see examples of how this can be applied to the sport of volleyball:

VOLLEYBALL



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (passing drills, blocking, hitting, setting, serving, general fitness, strength training), at home (backyard, driveway, in-home), alone or with household members; use personal net at home to play with household members.



Medium Risk

The above individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members or individual skill development with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize volleyballs.



Highest Risk

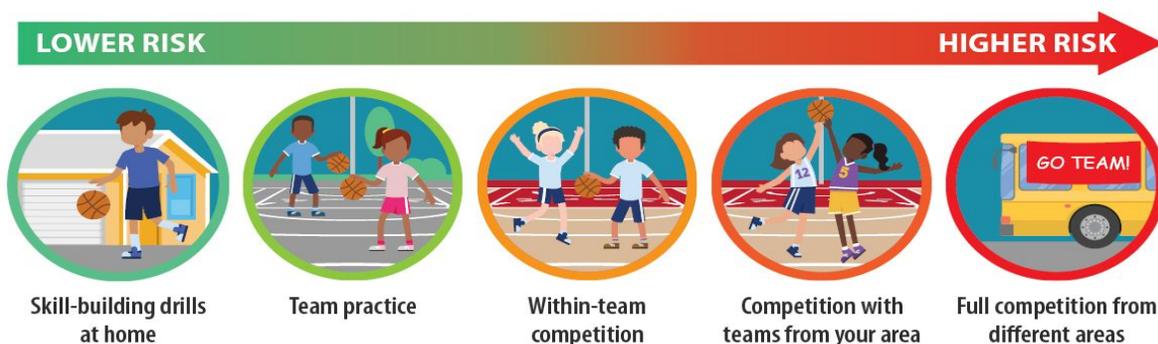
Participate in any team or group play; not maintaining recommended physical distancing guidelines; not sanitizing volleyballs.

Source: [USA Volleyball](#)

Assessing Risk

The way sports are played, and the way equipment is shared can influence the spread of COVID-19 among players. When you are assessing the risk of spread for your volleyball club activities, consider:

- Physical closeness of players, and the length of time that players are close to each other or to staff. For volleyball specifically, it's important to maintain social distancing, and play may be modified to safely increase distance between players.
- Coaches can also modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups (cohorts) that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups.
- It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. Minimize equipment sharing, and clean and disinfect shared equipment between use by different people to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread. ([Click Here](#) for a list of approved cleaning products)
- Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play (e.g. during practice or on the sideline). During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, attention should be given to maintaining social distancing by increasing space between players on the sideline or bench.
 - Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.
- Age of the player. Older youth might be better able to follow directions for social distancing and take other protective actions like not sharing water bottles. If feasible, a coach, parent, or other caregiver can assist with making sure that athletes maintain proper social distancing.
- Players at higher risk of developing serious disease. Parents and coaches should assess the level of risk based on individual players on the team who may be at [higher risk for severe illness](#), such as children who may have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems.
- Size of the team. Sports with a large number of players on a team may increase the likelihood of spread, compared to sports with fewer team members. Consider smaller team sizes if feasible.
- Nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers. Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- Travel outside of the local community. [Traveling](#) outside of the local community may increase the chances of exposing players, coaches, and fans to COVID-19, or unknowingly spreading it to others.



Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and player families about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity
 - Actively encourage sick coaches, families, and players to stay home. Anyone who has tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#) *must stay home*.
 - Coaches, players, and families, who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
 - Here are the CDC's criteria for return policies:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used. Consider what option is best for your club and facility, and keep a generous supply of hand hygiene products.
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease). Face coverings should be worn by coaches, staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.
 - Wearing cloth face coverings is most important when physical distancing is difficult.
 - People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided to all participants on the [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
 - Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old;
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#)
 - Include COVID-19 prevention messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff, volunteers, officials, and families. This could include links, videos, and prevention messages in emails, on organization websites, and through the team and league's [social media accounts](#).
 - Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- Clean and disinfect ([click here](#) to find a product) frequently touched surfaces on the court or play surface (e.g. drinking fountains) at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects and equipment (e.g. balls) should be limited, or cleaned between use by each individual or team practices if possible.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Identify an adult staff member or volunteer to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent inhalation of toxic fumes.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash and wash hands after removing gloves.

- **Shared Objects**

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- Do not let players share towels, clothing, or items they use to wipe their faces/hands.
- Keep each player's belongings separated from others' and in labeled areas.

- **Ventilation**

- If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors.

- **Water Systems**

- To minimize the risk of diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g. drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and disinfected but encourage staff and players to bring their own water to minimize touching water fountains.

- **Modified Layouts and Social (Physical) Distancing**

- Space players at least 6 feet apart on the court while participating in the sport
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact: high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
- Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
- Create distance between players when explaining drills or the rules of the game.
- If keeping physical distance is difficult with players in competition or group practice, consider relying on individual skill work and drills.
- Encourage players to wait in their cars with guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group.
- Limit the use of carpools or van pools. When riding in an automobile to a sports event, encourage players to ride to the sports event with persons living in their household.
- If practices or competition facilities must be shared, consider increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to leave before another group enters the facility. If possible, allow time for cleaning and/or disinfecting.
- Provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on floors, to make sure that coaches and players remain at least 6 feet apart.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

- **Protections for Staff and Players at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19**
 - Offer options for individuals at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 such as virtual coaching and in-home drills that limits their exposure risk.
 - Limit youth sports participation to staff and youth who live in the local geographic area to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if practices can be held. [Click here](#) to find your State & local mandates.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**
 - Keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches, and make sure that each group of players and coach avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible.
 - Teams might consider having the same group of players stay with the same coach or having the same group of players rotate among coaches.
 - Consider staging within-team scrimmages instead of playing games with other teams to minimize exposure among players and teams.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between groups and with guardians as much as possible.
 - Increase the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to depart before another group enters the facility. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between uses.
- **Gatherings, Spectators, and Travel**
 - Avoid group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings, where spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
 - Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- **Communication Systems**
 - Select a COVID-19 contact person within your club staff. All coaches, staff, and families should know who the COVID-19 contact person is and how to contact them.
 - Put systems in place for individuals self-reporting if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#)
- **Coach and Staff Training**
 - Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually, or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.
 - Consider creating a roster of trained back-up personnel.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., [symptom checking](#)) of coaches and players safely, respectfully, and in accordance with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws.
 - Youth sports program administrators may use examples of screening methods found in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#).
- **Sharing Facilities**
 - Encourage any organizations that share or use the youth sports facilities to also follow these considerations.

Preparing for when someone gets sick

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Sick coaches, staff members or players should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that coaches, players and families know that sick individuals cannot attend any youth sports activity, and that they should notify the designated point of contact if they or their child become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
 - Immediately separate coaches and players with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) at any club activity. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick](#). Individuals who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated and sent home as well, and follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#) (see "Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts" below). If symptoms develop, individuals and families should follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
 - Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area).
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.
- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - In accordance with state and local privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations, youth sports organizations should notify [local health officials](#), Starlings coaches and headquarters, and club families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and other applicable laws and regulations.
 - Work with [local health officials](#) to develop a reporting system your club can use to notify health officials and close contacts of cases of COVID-19.
 - Advise those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and to follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

SUMMARY

Guidelines for Individuals

Adhere to the most stringent federal, state or local guidelines when participating in any activity.

Before Activities

- Be symptom free for at least 14 days prior to any activity.
- Stay home if you are sick or do not feel well.
- Be aware of and disclose any potential contacts with affected individuals.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Practice social distancing regularly.
- Wear a face mask to reduce exposure to airborne particles.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Keep a list of people you have been in contact with each day.

During Activities

- Refrain from attending any activity if displaying any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Comply with all permissible regulations approved for the venue.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Refrain from contacting other participants and attendees (high fives and huddles).
- Practice social distancing as often as possible.
- Wear a face mask while at the venue.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Bring hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.
- Properly dispose of your personal drinking cups, bottles, or utensils used.
- Keep a list of people you were in contact with during the activity.

After Activities

- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Monitor your health and report any symptoms after every activity.
- Practice social distancing as often as possible.
- Wear a face mask when possible to reduce exposure to airborne particles.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Wash and sanitize all gear, uniforms and apparel used during the activity.

SUMMARY

Guidelines for Clubs and Club Facilities

Adhere to the most stringent federal, state or local guidelines when participating in any activity.

Before Activities

- Disinfect the venue and all equipment, including volleyballs, where club activities will take place.
- Verify that club staff and participants are symptom free before participating in any activities.
- Provide hand washing or sanitizing stations throughout the venue.
- Turn off water fountains at the venue or post approved signage.
- Establish social distancing protocols.
- Use signs and tape/barriers to establish distancing areas.
- Create and display signage clearly outlining the venue's COVID-19 policies (inside and outside).
- Screen participants prior to entry to the facility (Sample Questionnaire in "Additional Resources")
 - You may want to purchase a NO-TOUCH Thermometer for screening ([click here](#) to view)

During Activities

- Continue to clean and disinfect the venue and equipment, including volleyballs, where the club activities will take place.
- Enforce social distancing requirements.
- Regularly sanitize commonly touched surfaces during the club activity.
- Remove anyone from a club activity if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Limit the number of people in the facility to be compliant with local guidance.
- Modify drills or activities to limit/reduce potential violations of social distancing requirements including but not limited to: high fives, huddles, and team meetings.
- Use hand whistles as opposed to regular whistles when possible.

After Activities

- Sanitize all surfaces and volleyballs that were used during club activities.

Participant Monitoring & Engagement

- Consider no spectators or non-essential personnel (or strict social distancing; ex: remove bleachers), including parents. Athletes and coaching staff only.
- Consider [screening coaches and athletes](#) before entering facility:
 - View the *Starlings Volleyball, USA recommended Screening Questionnaire* on the "Additional Resources" page below *and* be sure to follow your local/state guidelines and recommendations.

Additional Resources

- [Starlings Volleyball, USA recommended Screening Questionnaire](#)
- [Coaches Checklist](#)
- [Social Distancing Volleyball Drills](#)
- [Keep Youth Athletes Safe \(poster\)](#)
- [Stay Safe \(Banner\)](#)
- [Template of a Letter to Parents](#)
- [Recommended No-Touch Thermometer](#)
- [Latest COVID-19 Information](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection](#)
- [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [Guidance for Park Administrators and Visitors](#)
- [Guidance for Schools and Childcare Centers](#)
- [Guidance for Park Administrators](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention](#)
- [Handwashing Information](#)
- [Face Coverings](#)
- [Social Distancing](#)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Persons at Higher Risk](#)
- [HIPAA and COVID-19](#)
- [CDC communication resources](#)
- [Community Mitigation](#)
- [CDC Considerations for Youth Sport](#)
- [NFHS Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)
- [Managing Stress and Coping](#)

Support Coping and Resilience

- Encourage employees to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
- Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage individuals to talk with people they trust about how they are feeling.
- Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline:
 - 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746