

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S RETURN TO SPORT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQS UPDATED OR ADDED JUNE 15, 2020 ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN BLUE

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RETURN TO SPORT GUIDELINES

Q: What is the directive from the provincial government?

A: The Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture has advised that the sport sector may begin the process towards return to sports. The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has asked all sectors to think about three things: processes to open safely, measures to keep people safe to avoid further outbreaks, and a plan in the event that a case or an outbreak should occur.

Q: What health guidelines are in place?

A: PHO orders and recommendations include:

- Prohibition of gatherings of 50 people or more;
- Physical distancing of at least two metres;
- Frequent hand hygiene;
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection and

- Self-isolation for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 for a minimum of 10 days (or self-isolation for 14 days if returning to Canada from another country)
- Symptom screening for staff and participants

Q: What is viaSport's role in Return to Sport?

A: For our sector, Premier Horgan and the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Lisa Beare, have asked viaSport to work with the sport sector in developing a set of guidelines on how to resume sport and operate safely during this pandemic.

Those guidelines have been reviewed by cross-ministry officials within government and WorkSafe BC. The sector return to sport guidelines will be used by Provincial Sport Organizations as they finalize and implement sport-specific plans.

Q: When will the sector guidelines be available?

A: The sport sector guidelines are available on the viaSport website: <https://www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/ReturntoSportGuidelines.pdf>

Q: What information is included in the Sport Sector guidelines?

A: The guidelines outline protocols related to PHO orders and recommendations and provide further direction and best practices related to facility access, facility operations, sport-specific programming and participant information. It will also include links and references to BCCDC, Health Canada, WorkSafe BC, etc. As well as tools and templates for sport organizations to use.

Q: What is mandatory versus recommended?

A: It is mandatory to follow any [PHO Orders](#) and directives from your Local Health Authority. PHO Orders that are in place as of June 3, 2020 and apply to sport are for Mass Gatherings and Workplace Safety Plans. The Return to Sport Guidelines are a reference tool that outlines best practices and health recommendations in order for a sport organization to make informed decisions related to their sport specific plans.

Q: Are approvals required on the Return to Sport plans?

A: The sector Return to Sport Guidelines have been reviewed by public health officials and WorkSafe BC. Sport-specific plans developed by Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) or at the club level do not require government approval, but must be approved by the organization's (PSO's or club's) Board of Directors. Provincial Sport Organizations may have additional requirements related to Local Sport Organizations plans being submitted to the PSO in order for activities to be sanctioned, please check with your PSO.

Q: What guidelines take precedence (PSO, viaSport, BC Recreation and Parks Association)?

A: Organized sport activities must be in alignment with the viaSport guidelines. Sport specific guidelines should be developed to outline how the viaSport guidelines can be applied within their specific sport. Sport guidelines developed by the National Sport Organization may or may not be appropriate within the context of BC and what PHO orders are in place. For that reason, Provincial Sport Organizations should establish their own guidelines for activities in the province of B.C.

viaSport guidelines are general and apply to all sports in B.C. Local Sport Organizations should align with guidelines from their Provincial Sport Organization. The Provincial Sport Organization may set additional standards within their sport but may not lower the threshold of the standards set by the viaSport Guidelines. In the event that PSO guidelines do not meet the minimum standards outlined in the viaSport guidelines then the viaSport guidelines take precedence.

The BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRAPA) Guidelines apply to public recreation facilities and parks.

Q: As a Local Sport Organization do I need to wait for an approved sport-specific plan to be released from my Provincial Sport Organization?

A: Local Sport Organizations should follow the guidance and best practices of their Provincial Sport Organization as it relates to returning to their sport.

Q: Where can sport specific plans be found?

A: viaSport will post links to sport specific plans on our website at <https://www.viasport.ca/sport-specific-guidelines>. Those plans posted on viaSport's site have been developed by the Provincial Sport Organizations and approved by their Board of Directors.

Q: Should our Return to Sport plans just be specific to sport delivery? What about return to work or office safety for our staff and organizations?

A: Organizations need to create safety plans that relate to different venues (office versus field of play) and activity types.

SPORT ACTIVITY CHART

Q: What types of activities are allowed within the current phase?

A: The current phase as of June 3, 2020 is outlined in the [Sport Activity Chart](#) as Transition Measures. Low risk activities that can occur with the following public health recommendations in place:

- Ability to maintain physical distancing
- Minimal sharing of equipment
- Focus is on skill development, not competition
- Community focused

Q: What will future phases look like in regards to sport activity?

A: viaSport has developed a [Sport Activity Chart](#) that outlines the types of activities that can be considered as we transition through the different phases. You will see that there is a range of activities that may be allowed within a given phase, it is however still the advice of the PHO to move slowly. Therefore, sport specific plans may progress at different speeds and may look to have more phases than are outlined in this chart.

Q: What is the maximum allowable group size?

A: The maximum group size is 50 people. Sports will need to consider other factors to determine what number is appropriate for their space and the ability to maintain physical distancing. As we transition back to sport, we should be cautious to not jump to these maximum numbers too quickly. Maximum capacity within a facility is determined based on the ability of individuals to physical distance, see page 10 of the [Return to Sport guidelines](#) for further details.

Q: What is the definition of community focused?

A: Community focused sport activities take place within the home sport community or clubs where participants are members. This means avoiding cross-regional, inter-provincial or cross-country travel for sport. During this transition phase, activities should remain within the club and not cross-clubs.

Q: What is the difference between recreational activities and organized sport activities?

A: Organized sport is defined as any organized sport activity that involves a number of people doing something together in a structured way and is facilitated by a Provincial Sport Organization or Local Sport Organization.

“Recreation” as defined by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association is the “experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.” Physical activities would include those undertaken as leisure, fitness training and sport-related activities that are done at the discretion of the individual (e.g. – use of parks, hiking trails, public recreation facilities), and are self-led.

Recreational facilities have been given the go-ahead to begin re-opening in certain municipalities by their public health authority. This allows the facilities to open up access to the public to participate in recreational activities under their own risk. Refer to the [BC Parks and Recreation Association Guidelines](#) for further details.

Q: Will sports that include sharing of a ball or integral piece of equipment be allowed to resume activities in phase one?

A: Sharing of equipment creates greater risk of spread of the virus. Therefore, in order to resume activities the sports will need to have guidelines in place that look to mitigate that risk. This should include regular cleaning, disinfection between users (where possible), hand washing before and after use/play, etc.

Q: Are individuals over the age of 50 permitted to participate in organized sports?

A: Older adults are considered a vulnerable population and are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Those at increased risk due to compromised immune systems should not take part in recreational or sport activities. However, it is up to the individual to understand their risks and make a decision about whether or not to participate. As a sport organization if you are planning programming for older adults you will need to ensure that health guidelines are being followed and look for further ways to mitigate risk, such as smaller group sizes and specific timeslots for this population group.

Q: What is the definition of competitive activities?

A: Competitive activities are formal, organized games, matches and tournaments between participants where scores are recorded and standings are kept. In the initial return to sport, the majority of sport will be geared towards community participation and training rather than games and provincial competition. The introduction of competition will vary from sport to sport. Some sports will be able to introduce in-club play or modified games during this initial phase of re-opening if they deem those activities to be low risk. Organizations should re-introduce these activities slowly and be cautious of group sizes. Leagues and regional competition are not considered appropriate until it has been advised that sport can move from Transition Measures to Progressively Loosen (see Sport Activity Chart). Larger scale competitions and events will need to wait for further direction from the PHO.

Q: What is the definition of non-contact? Is any type of contact allowed?

A: Contact activities are those in which participants come into physical contact with each other (e.g. – body checking, tackling, etc.). Non-contact activities are those in which participants do not come into physical contact and the rules allow them to maintain physical distancing of 2m. There may be occasional instances where participants come closer than 2m but these occurrences should be brief (i.e. – one individual runs past another) and during the current phase of the province’s Restart Plan should be avoided wherever possible.

Q: How will sports know it is safe to move between Phases?

A: As of June 10, 2020 we are in what the Sport Activity Chart refers to as Transition Measures. This phase is aligned with Phase 2 of the B.C. Restart Plan. We continue to follow the advice of public health officials about when we can move to Phase 3 of the Restart Plan. Once Phase 3 has started, we look at when sport can move to the next stage of the Sport Activity Chart. This may not occur immediately after an announcement of the provincial government to move to Phase 3. viaSport will provide further direction as it is received from government.

RETURN TO SPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Q: What is the role of an organization’s Board of Directors in Return to Sport?

A: Depending on the membership affiliation of your sport, the respective boards have fiduciary responsibility and are accountable for the decisions and work of the organization. Each board should understand and be comfortable with the level of risk the organization is taking on and approve the adoption of their organizations sport-specific Return to Sport Plan before implementation begins.

Q: What support do local sport organizations have in the return to sport process?

A: viaSport, Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs), the viaSport Regional Alliance, and your municipalities are resources to support local sport organizations in the return to sport process. Local sport organizations should reach out to these groups should they have specific questions or are needing support. If there is uncertainty about the meaning of any aspect of the Restart Plan or the sport guidelines, viaSport will strive to provide clarity.

Q: Will there be a sport specific return to sport date, depending on each sport return to play protocol?

A: Each sport will have different dates in which they will resume based on the type of sport, access to facilities, the ability to adapt to Public Health Guidelines and the development of their sport-specific plans.

Q: The Office of the Public Officer announced that sport and recreation are allowed in phase 2 that started on May 19, 2020. Why has my club not resumed activities?

A: Although sport and recreation are now allowed in phase 2, local sport organizations will need to make sure they have a detailed return to sport plan in place that aligns with health guidelines before activities can start.

Local clubs should adapt and adopt their Provincial Sport Organization's return to sport guidelines. Local sport organizations must get board approval of their return to sport plans and post their plans and messaging beside fields of play as well as communicated to their members.

A [PHO Order](#) is also in place that requires all employers to have a Safety Plan in place. Sport organizations need to ensure that they have assessed their risks and have plans in place to mitigate those risks before resuming activities.

Q: What requirements are private sport organizations expected to follow?

A: Every organization has the responsibility to follow provincial health orders and must have in place a COVID-19 safety plan before re-opening. Organizations should seek out the appropriate guidelines in order to make informed decisions and plan appropriately. Private companies are encouraged to follow the sport sector return to sport guidelines, reach out to viaSport for support or connect with their sport's PSO.

Q: What is required for informal or unaffiliated sport organizations or leagues?

A: In the absence of affiliation with a Provincial Sport Organization, sport groups should refer to the viaSport guidelines and relevant sport-specific guidelines to develop their own safety plan.

Q: Who is responsible for oversight and ensuring that sport organizations are following their plans?

A: Each organization is responsible for ensuring that they are in compliance with public health and the viaSport guidelines. WorkSafe BC has jurisdiction to inspect organizations that fall within the Workers Compensation Act. The Ministerial Order related to Protection Against Liability of Sports only protects those organizations that are properly implementing applicable emergency and public health guidance (see [Ministerial Order M183](#) for further information).

Q: Is travel for sporting activities allowed?

A: Sport organizations should not promote activities that promote non-essential travel while the province is in Phase 2 of the Restart Plan. Activities should be limited to within the club or training group during this phase.

Depending on where you live in the province, it may be normal for you to travel to a neighbouring community to participate in your sporting activities. If you choose to do so it is recommended that you reduce the number of groups that you are coming into contact with.

For high performance athletes who may need to travel a greater distance in order to access facilities or certain training environments, you will need to assess your level of risk and be informed about what is occurring within the community that you are travelling to.

Q: If I individually choose to participate in activities, what can I do to protect myself?

If you don't feel well, are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, you have travelled outside of Canada or you live in a household with someone who has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID – please stay home. If you are healthy and choose to participate in physical activities outside the home:

- Wash your hands before and after participating
- Bring your own equipment, water bottle and hand sanitizer
- Comply with physical distancing measures at all time
- Avoid physical contact with others, including shaking hands, high fives, etc
- Leave the field of play as quickly as possible after you finish
- Follow the rules and guidelines as set out by the facility and sport organization

FACILITY GUIDELINES

Q: What is the municipality's role in decision making related to Return to Sport and access to their facilities?

A: Municipal decisions will be made locally; community by community. This will impact sports organizations who use municipal facilities, and/or multiple facilities across jurisdictions. Municipalities will want to ensure that all user groups have a return to sport plan in place that is aligned with the sport sector guidelines before utilizing their facilities. If possible, you should consult resources available from local health authorities.

Q: Are gym facilities able to open their doors?

A: Local orders were in place for Island Health, Interior Health and Fraser Health to close gym facilities; however, those bans have been lifted as of May 19th, 2020. Gyms in BC can open if they follow provincial health guidelines and their local health authority. Check with your local health authority to see if they have developed guidelines.

Q: Is there a centralized clearing house where clubs can go to get up to date info on the status of the facility they use?

A: Clubs will need to be in contact directly with the municipality/facility that they use.

Q: Where will the responsibility for ensuring the cleaning protocols, restricted space, etc. are maintained? Is that a responsibility of the municipality or the local association?

A: The facility owner or operator has overall responsibility for cleaning protocols within the facility. However, anyone renting/utilizing their space is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient protocols in place as well as ensuring all equipment used in properly cleaned.

Q: If I need support with cleaning protocols and/or administrative/engineering controls (i.e. physical distancing measures in facilities), what resources are available?

A: In the sector Return to Sport Guidelines, we provide guidance on facility access and use and facility operations as it relates to provincial health standards, however, you can also contact [Recreation Facilities Association of BC](#) (RFABC) for additional resources and support dan@rfabc.com

Q: If a sport organization utilizes multiple facilities, should they have a safety plan for each venue?

A: Yes. Most aspects of your safety plan will be transferrable from venue to venue. However, there may be some additional guidelines or restrictions in place there are set and controlled by the facility. It is recommended to consult with the facility operators in the development of your plan.

HEALTH GUIDELINES

Q: What is the difference in the level of authority of the PHO versus the Local Health Authority?

A: In a provincial state of emergency the PHO has the authority to set orders as needed that apply across the province. The Local Health Authorities, may set additional standards within their region but may not lower the threshold of the standards set by the PHO.

Q: How can you reduce the risk of transmission?

A: B.C. public health officials have referenced a [Hierarchy of Controls for COVID-19](#), outlining that the most effective method of reducing transmission is physical distancing, followed by engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.

Q: What tools are available for symptom screening?

A: Assessment tools are available for participants to use to assess their health before participating in an activity. [B.C. COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool](#) or wellness questionnaires can be used.

Q: What symptoms would mean sending a participant home?

A: If a participant is showing two or more signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite) they should not participate in sport activities.

See Appendix C in the [viaSport Guidelines](#) for a sample illness policy.

Q: Can frontline healthcare workers participate in sport?

A: Healthcare workers are required to take the same precautions as everyone else. If their work activities have been determined as no risk then they may choose to participate in sport activities, provided they are not showing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Refer to the Risk Assessment Tool for Healthcare workers as a guide:

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_HCW_RecommendationsRiskAssessmentExposures.pdf

Q: What are the recommendations related to cleaning and disinfection?

A: According to the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), general cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces should occur at least once a day. Surfaces that are highly touched (including bathrooms) should be cleaned twice a day. Follow [Health Canada Guidelines](#) on what products to use for cleaning and disinfecting.

Q: What resources are in place related to communicating personal hygiene and protection against COVID-19?

A: [COVID-19 Protection poster](#)

[Physical Distancing poster](#)

[Handwashing poster](#)

[Do not enter if you are sick poster](#)

Q: Are there any guidelines for first aid during the pandemic?

A: In the event that first aid is required to be administered during an activity, all persons attending to the injured individual must first put on a mask and gloves.

[A guide for employers and Occupational First Aid Attendants](#)

[First aid protocols for an unresponsive person during COVID-19](#)

[Lifesaving Society BC: Resuscitation and First Aid Recommendations \(see page 29\)](#)

INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

Q: Is COVID-19 covered under insurance?

A: It is important to note that most insurance policies exclude coverage related to communicable diseases or pandemics, including Directors and Officers Insurance. Therefore, return to sport discussions should include acknowledgement of the inherent risk to the resumption of sport during a pandemic and clear strategies to mitigation of these risks.

Q: Who is covered under the Ministerial Order for Protection Against Liability for Sports?

A: To be eligible, organizations must be a registered not-for-profit society under the B.C. Societies Act. The intention of this order is to protect amateur sports and the people and volunteers delivering sport through not-for-profit sport organizations. Private entities are ineligible for protection under this Order.

Q: What do sport organizations have to do to qualify?

A: In order to qualify, non-profit sport organizations must ensure that they are upholding orders and guidance of the PHO and viaSport's Return to Sport guidelines.

Q: How long will this Ministerial Order be in place?

A: The order will remain in effect for as long as the state of emergency remains in place.

Q: What exactly does liability protection mean? Is the government covering or indemnifying sport organizations?

A: This order ensures that directors, officer, volunteers and staff of not-for profit amateur sport organizations will not be held liable for damages caused by exposure to COVID-19, provided they are complying with provincial health officer orders.

Q: Is the protection under this Ministerial Order only for claims related to COVID-19?

A: Yes, this order ensures that directors, officers, volunteers and staff of not-for profit amateur sport organizations are not held liable for damages caused by exposure to COVID-19, provided they are complying with provincial health officer orders and viaSport's guidelines.

Q: Does the Ministerial Order mean that insurance is no longer needed for the amateur sport organizations delivering sport programming in the province?

A: No, sport organizations should continue to have general liability insurance to cover the day-to-day operations. This protection is only for damages related to COVID-19.

Q: With this additional coverage, does an organization still need to have a Return to Sport plan approved by their board?

A: Yes, all provincial and local sport organizations should have return to sport plans for their specific sport based on the Return to Sport Guidelines created by viaSport and in conjunction with plans from local health authorities and facilities.

Q: What happens when the state of emergency is lifted?

A: The Order is only in place as long as the state of emergency is in place. The issue addressed by this Order gives near-term certainty to people so they can get back to playing and enjoying sports in their communities. The province is looking at other ways to address the insurance issue in the long-term.

Q: Does this order apply to contact/combat sports?

A: It applies to all amateur sports organizations, including combat sports. But as per viaSport guidelines, this does not permit organizations to introduce full-contact activities. All sport activities must still align with PHO orders and Return to Sport guidelines.

Q: What is the definition of a Sport Organization?

A: The Ministerial Order defines a Sport Organization as a disability sport organization, a local sport organization, a multi-sport organization or a provincial sport organization. Local sport organizations are defined as a non-profit society operating with a sporting purpose that is responsible for the regulation, governance and development of all areas and levels of a sport within the Province.