



Health, Housing & Community Services Department
Public Health Officer

COVID-19 INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR YOUTH SPORTS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE CITY OF BERKELEY

DATE: September 15, 2021

The City of Berkeley values the many benefits of youth sports and extracurricular activities. However, the latest surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, fueled by the highly infectious Delta variant, necessitates we strongly recommend actions to protect our younger population, especially those not able to be vaccinated while taking into consideration community transmission rates as noted on [CDC COVID tracker](#) and case data on the [City of Berkeley COVID-19 Dashboard](#). The City of Berkeley Public Health has drafted supplemental guidance on school sports and extracurricular activities for public and private K-12 schools operating in the City of Berkeley, along with other youth sports and extracurricular activities outside of the school setting.

The purpose of this guidance is to reduce the spread of COVID-19 infection in our communities by supporting a safer environment for all who participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. Following this guidance is important regardless of the vaccination rates among adults or children. Please see for further recommendations that also take into consideration transmission rates.

The City of Berkeley recommends for all youth sports and extracurricular activities in the City of Berkeley the following precautions which align and supplement the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance found in [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year](#) updated on September 1, 2021:

- 1. Masks are required indoors for all participants, coaches, personnel, and spectators.**
Everyone must wear face masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Masks are required for both competition and practice, during physical education, conditioning/weightlifting, and other indoor activities, in accordance with CDPH's [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) and/or the [City of Berkeley Health Officer Order](#)

which require all people to wear masks while in indoor public settings, including school settings.

Exceptions:

- Participants in indoor water sports, such as swimming, water polo, or diving, may remove their face masks while they are in the water. Participants must wear face masks when not in the water.
- Participants in competitive cheerleading, gymnastics, wrestling, or certain martial arts where masks cannot be worn due to the risk of suffocation or impairment of vision. Participants must wear masks when not actively engaged in a match or competition.

During youth sports and other extracurricular activities, masks are recommended outdoors when maintaining 6 feet of distance between households is not practical (e.g., athletes and coaches on the sidelines or spectators in the stands).

Any face mask that feels wet or becomes saturated with sweat should be changed immediately, as wet masks are less effective at filtration.

Masks decrease COVID risks indoors. It is recommended to relocate the following high-risk extracurricular group activities outdoors, when practical:

- Cheer, stunt, drill team, etc.
- Choir or any singing
- Drama and dance
- Playing wind instruments (regardless of bell covers and mouthpiece masks)

2. Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for all participants who are old enough to be eligible for vaccination, as well as for coaches, staff, and volunteers. Leagues, teams, and tournaments/events can require that all participants and personnel be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Having all athletes and staff in a league fully vaccinated will greatly decrease the risk of transmission of the virus among teammates and between teams, and will provide excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. It will also decrease disruption in team activities, since fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are close contacts to a case of COVID-19.

When COVID-19 transmission is high, it is safest to limit high-risk sports and

extracurricular activities, including indoor sports, outdoor football, and water polo to youth who are fully vaccinated. In addition, activities that involve singing, shouting, band, or exercise, especially when conducted indoors, should be permitted only for youth who are fully vaccinated, as noted in [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools](#).

3. State guidance on school-based sports and extracurricular activities

The requirements and recommendations in CDPH’s [K-12 Schools Guidance](#) also apply to all extracurricular activities that are operated or supervised by schools, and all activities that occur on a school site, whether or not they occur during school hours, including, but not limited to, sports, band, chorus, and clubs. Masks are required for all persons while playing all indoor sports, unless wearing a mask during play has been determined to pose a choking hazard by a well-recognized health authority, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics’ [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity](#).

For (1) the playing of musical instruments that cannot be done with a face covering (e.g., wind instruments); or (2) when wearing a mask during play poses a choking hazard, at least one of the following options is required:

- Conduct these activities outdoors;
- Use modified face coverings and bell coverings when playing wind and brass instruments, and maintain 6 feet of physical distancing; OR
- Perform at least weekly screening testing with either PCR testing (1:1 or pooled PCR) or twice weekly antigen testing of all individuals, including those who are fully vaccinated.

4. Regular testing of unvaccinated participants and staff, including volunteers, in high-risk activities

If it is not feasible to limit participation to fully vaccinated individuals, perform regular COVID-19 screening testing in **unvaccinated** youth and staff involved with all indoor high-risk sports and extracurricular activities. Where resources allow, consider testing for all sports and extracurricular activities. Testing is not required for asymptomatic people who are fully vaccinated or who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

Testing Types and Frequency

- Test once a week if using a PCR test, such as school-based Color or Cue PCR tests, or PCR testing performed at a clinic or medical facility.

- Test twice a week if using a rapid antigen test, such as BinaxNOW.
 - A positive antigen test from someone who is asymptomatic (has no COVID-19 symptoms) should be retested with a PCR test within 24-72 hours to confirm. These tests should be treated as true positives and patients should be advised to isolate until confirmatory PCR results are back.
 - A negative antigen test in a symptomatic individual should be retested with a PCR test within 24-72 hours to confirm. Symptomatic individuals who receive a negative antigen test result should remain in isolation at home until they receive a negative PCR test result or complete their isolation.
- Do not accept home/self-testing results.
- Individuals who test positive should be sent directly home to isolate. COVID-19 positive individuals should be picked up immediately and kept in isolation on the program/school site until pick up.

5. Large Events

Large events indoors (>1,000 people), including assemblies, performances, and sporting events are subject to the [City of Berkeley Health Officer Order for Vaccine Verification](#).

Very large events outdoors (>10,000 people outdoors), including sporting events, are subject to the recommendations and guidance in CDPH's [Beyond the Blueprint for Industry and Business Sectors](#).

6. Prevent spread of COVID-19 off the field

Remind participants and families that COVID-19 often spreads off-the-field, especially in situations when groups let their guard down and eat or socialize together with their masks off (post-game parties, locker rooms, carpools).

Locker rooms

- Limit congregating in locker rooms
 - Players should arrive dressed to play as much as possible.
 - Use locker rooms only to change or use the restroom. Don't use the locker room for coaching or pregame, halftime, or postgame talks.
 - Avoid having different teams use a locker room at the same time
- Ensure mask use in locker rooms.
- Consider closing showers.

Team buses and vans

- Masks are required.
- Keep windows open.
- Turn the fan on high and set it to outdoor air.
- If more than one vehicle is used, have the same people ride together.

Carpooling

- Everyone in the vehicle should wear a face mask.
- Open the windows.
- Turn the fan on high and set it to outdoor air.
- Encourage participants and staff who carpool to ride with the same people each time travel occurs.

Travel

- When traveling overnight, team members not from the same household should sleep in separate rooms or in consistent groups when feasible. Keep masks on whenever visiting other members' hotel rooms.
- Socializing with other teams is strongly discouraged.
- Teams that travel out-of-state or outside the Bay Area are encouraged to follow CDC recommendations for quarantine after travel.

7. Return to sports or physical activity after COVID-19 infection

The American Academy of Pediatrics' [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity](#) recommends that children and youth who have had COVID-19 be screened by their healthcare provider prior to returning to sports or physical education. This screening may be done in person or by phone depending on the severity of their previous COVID-19 symptoms. Most students will not need further specialized testing before resuming physical activity, but it may be recommended for some.