



Reopening New York

Professional Sports Competitions with Fans Guidelines

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During the COVID-19 public health emergency, owners/management of professional sports teams and professional sporting venues should stay up to date with any changes to state and federal requirements related professional sports and incorporate those changes into their operations. This guidance is not intended to replace any existing applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and standards

	Mandatory	Recommended Best Practices
Physical Distancing (Patrons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that the total number of patrons at professional sports competitions occurring in indoor or outdoor venues is limited to no more than 10% of the maximum seated capacity for a fixed seating venue or 10% of the maximum occupancy for a flexible seating venue, exclusive of team staff, athletes, and venue personnel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of April 1, 2021, ensure the total number of patrons in outdoor venues is limited to no more than 20% of the maximum capacity or occupancy; or, if an outdoor venue doesn't have a set capacity/occupancy, limit to no more than 1 patron per 100 square ft. or a party of 4 patrons per 250 square ft., exclusive of team staff, athletes, and venue personnel. ✓ Only permit patrons entry to the venue if they wear an acceptable face covering at all times except when seated at their assigned seat/area to eat or drink. ✓ Patrons must maintain a distance of at least 6 ft. is at all times, except individuals who are members of the same immediate party/household/family. ✓ Develop an audience seating arrangement that ensures at least 6 ft. of distance between patrons who are not in the same immediate party/household/family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require reservations and assign seats to patrons prior to entering the venue to ensure distancing. • Within a row, limit seating such that at least 2 seats are unoccupied between each group of patrons, unless venue seating naturally allows 6 ft. of distance between seats. • Limit seating in traditional seating arrangements to every other row unless venue seating naturally allows 6 ft. of distance between rows. • Encourage patrons to remain seated once the competition begins, unless patrons are traveling to use the restroom, purchase or pick-up items from the concession or retail area(s) or exit the venue. No loitering in common areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Where practical, recommend that individuals from different parties/households/families maintain 9-12 ft. of distance. ✓ Where possible, minimize the number of groups in each row to avoid close contact when individuals leave their seat to use the restroom or visit a concession area. ✓ Maintain adequate lighting in the venue for as long as possible before the competition so that patrons can be seated according to social distancing requirements. ✓ Consider closing any patron/fan experience gathering areas that present risk of congregation and commingling of patrons immediately before, during, and after games. ✓ For events that require bag security checks, implement a restriction on bags, or require patrons to bring items in clear bags. ✓ Consider closing any common seating areas at the venue that encourage congregation (e.g., shared seating, benches, couches). ✓ Discourage any unnecessary physical contact among patrons who are not members of the same immediate party/household/family. ✓ Establish a system of enforcement of the requirements within this guidance, including but not limited to face coverings and social distancing. Such system of compliance may specify penalties for patrons in case of violations (e.g., one face covering warning allowed before ejection from venue).



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Physical Distancing (Patrons, Cont’d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure the audience seating arrangement takes into account the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrons must be separated from the area of play where team staff and athletes are located by 12 ft. or an appropriate physical barrier. • Seats should be made available in small groups or “blocks” that allow members of the same party/household/family to sit together and remain distanced from other groups of patrons. • Where applicable, suites or boxes must have patron capacity limitations (i.e., lesser of 10 people or 25% of max. occupancy of such space). ✓ Maintain sufficient venue personnel to direct or guide patrons to their seats to ensure adherence to social distancing requirements and avoid congregation. ✓ Put in place measures to reduce bi-directional foot traffic using barriers, tape, or signs with arrows in narrow aisles (e.g., between rows of seats), hallways, or spaces, and post signage and distance markers denoting spaces of 6 ft. in all commonly used areas and any areas in which lines are commonly formed/people may congregate (e.g., lobbies, restrooms). ✓ Eliminate any pre- or post-game “on-field,” area of play passes. ✓ Prohibit “tailgating” and other unauthorized gatherings on/around premises before/after the event. Parking areas at venues shall not open more than 2 hours in advance of any event to discourage congregate activity. 	
Physical Distancing (Team Staff, Athletes, and Venue Personnel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that all team staff, athletes, and venue personnel maintain 6 ft. of distance from others, notwithstanding proximity or contact that may occur during competition/other core activities. Provided that certain functions/core activities require coming within 6 ft. of others, these functions shall be identified and a protocol for mitigation of risk shall be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider establishing a tier system to control movement and access within the venue for all essential personnel (e.g., tier 1, 2, 3 individuals and associated rights of access within venue).



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Physical Distancing (Team Staff, Athletes, and Venue Personnel, Cont’d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure team staff and athletes on the sidelines are at least 6 ft. apart to ensure appropriate social distancing, and minimize congregation of individuals. ✓ Ensure team staff, athletes, and venue personnel are only permitted entry into the venue if they wear an acceptable face covering at all times, except for athletes when engaged in training, warming up, or competition and broadcast media personnel when it interferes with the core activity. ✓ Establish protocols for team staff and athletes to limit the use of frequently shared spaces such as locker rooms, restrooms, lounges, team benches, etc. ✓ Limit the number of individuals allowed on or near the field of play to only athletes, essential team staff (e.g. coaches), other essential personnel deemed necessary. ✓ Ensure that only team athletes and essential staff are allowed in designated team areas (e.g., locker rooms, athlete lounges, training areas, athlete medical areas). ✓ Ensure media interactions, including post-game interviews, follow appropriate social distancing or use of physical barriers at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To limit congregation of team staff and athletes on the sidelines, use ancillary seating (e.g., a row of empty stands), so long as 12 ft. of space or an appropriate physical barrier separates them from patrons. ✓ Establish separate entrance(s) to the venue for team staff and athletes to limit intermingling/congregation and to facilitate health screening. ✓ Discourage any unnecessary physical contact that is not normally core to professional sports activities among team staff, athletes, and venue personnel. ✓ Allow on-site media personnel to be spaced out within the venue to limit congregation in spaces that may not permit appropriate distancing/accommodate physical barriers (e.g., broadcast booths, media rooms). ✓ Assign venue personnel to pairs/small groups to limit the number of close or proximate contacts. ✓ Stagger schedules for team staff and venue personnel to observe social distancing for any gathering (e.g., coffee breaks, meals, and shift starts/stops).
Operational Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that all team staff, athletes, and venue personnel receive training on COVID-19 safety and sanitation protocols. ✓ Where applicable, stagger consecutive event times and provide sufficient time between events to avoid crowding at exists and entrances and ensure thorough cleaning and disinfection of the venue after events end. ✓ Prohibit any direct, close contact patron-athlete interactions (e.g., autographs, distribution of "match worn" sporting equipment). ✓ Ensure that all patrons are ticketholders, in order to appropriately manage capacity restrictions, plan and control for the movement of individuals, and prevent unnecessary congregation near entrances/exits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider shortening/eliminating, intermission(s) or game break(s) featuring incidental entertainment or attractions. ✓ Due to the increased risk that activities such as singing, shouting, projecting one’s voice loudly, or playing wind instruments could potentially lead to increased production of respiratory droplets, consider ways to reduce the amount of high aerosol-producing programming at this time or implement appropriate risk mitigation measures (e.g., additional spacing, PPE). ✓ Consider extending the perimeter and entryway to allow for additional space to validate patron entry credentials (e.g., valid ticket, proof of negative diagnostic test result or proof of immunization) and process patrons during ingress.



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Operational Activity (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To the extent practicable, assign patrons designated entry times at particular gates to reduce congregation during ingress. ✓ Open a sufficient number of gates at the venue during ingress and egress to reduce congregation, and ensure that all open gates are staffed to control movements. ✓ Maintain sufficient venue personnel (e.g., security, guest services) on site to monitor traffic flow, limit the number of patrons to the allowed capacity, ensure patrons adhere to social distancing and gathering guidelines, and eliminate congregation and loitering. ✓ Require patrons to purchase tickets in advance of the event, in order to manage and track capacity limits, and provide contactless check-in ticketing and pay ahead options. ✓ For any food services, operate in accordance with DOH’s “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Food Services,” and discontinue food/beverage self-service (e.g., condiments, soda) and only allow employee served food/beverages at concessions areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abide by any applicable curfews on food and beverage services (as of March 18, 2021 cease operations no later than 11:00 PM). ✓ Close off any seating areas and retail merchandising areas where social distancing can’t be maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rearrange patron waiting areas (e.g., queues, lobbies, parking areas) to maximize social distance among other patrons and minimize interaction with others in the area. ✓ Implement touchless payment options, as available, to minimize handling cash, credit cards, etc. where possible. ✓ Encourage patrons to order food and beverages in advance or remotely at the venue, and make items available in dedicated pick-up areas or provide delivery options for patrons. ✓ Provide disposable or single-use programs, pamphlets, etc. to patrons, if such items are used; and make available digitally to be viewed on personal electronic devices.
Air Filtration and Building Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For venues with indoor areas, ensure building HVAC system filtration meets the highest rated filtration compatible with the currently installed filter rack and air handling systems, at a minimum MERV-13, or industry equivalent or greater, as applicable, and as certified and documented by a certified HVAC technician, professional, or company, ASHRAE-certified professional, certified retrocommissioning professional, or New York-licensed professional building engineer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For venues with central HVAC system filtration at a minimum of MERV-13, or industry equivalent or greater, consider adopting additional ventilation and air filtration mitigation protocols per CDC and ASHRAE recommendations, particularly for buildings with air handling systems older than 15 years. See “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans” for details.



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Air Filtration and Building Systems (Cont’d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For venues with central air handling systems that cannot handle the abovementioned minimum level of filtration (i.e., MERV-13 or greater), have a certified HVAC technician, professional, or company, ASHRAE-certified professional, certified retro-commissioning professional, or New York licensed professional building engineer certify and document that the currently installed filter rack is incompatible with abovementioned minimum level of filtration and/or the air handling system would be unable to perform to the minimum level of heating and cooling that it was otherwise able to provide prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency if such a high degree of filtration was installed. Retain such documentation for review by state or local health department officials. ✓ Facilities that have a central air handling system that is unable to meet a filtration rating of MERV-13 or greater must adopt additional ventilation and/or air filtration mitigation protocols per CDC and ASHRAE recommendations. See “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans” for details. ✓ Venues that do not have central air handling systems must adopt additional ventilation and air filtration mitigation protocols per CDC and ASHRAE recommendations. See “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans” for details. ✓ Before occupants return to a venue that has been entirely closed, complete pre-return checks, tasks, and assessments to ensure a healthy and safe environment. These systems include, but are not limited to, mechanical systems, water systems, elevators, and HVAC systems. 	
Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that all individuals wear acceptable face coverings at all times when within the venue, except as otherwise authorized within this guidance (e.g., patrons eating/drinking while seated/socially distanced from others who are not members of their same party/household/family, athletes in practice/competition). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourage the use of gloves and/or eye protection for team staff or venue personnel that have regular, close or proximate interactions with athletes or patrons (e.g., athletic trainers, physicians, conditioning coaches, ball handlers, attendants, trainers, medical staff, ticket takers, check-in staff, security staff, restroom attendants).



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Protective Equipment (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Install physical barriers between workstations where team staff and venue personnel are frequently interacting with other team staff, venue personnel and/or patrons (e.g., ticket stations/kiosks), as feasible and where distancing can't be otherwise maintained. ✓ Provide team staff, athletes, and venue personnel staff within the venue with an acceptable face covering at no-cost, and advise them to regularly clean or replace their face coverings if they become wet or soiled. ✓ Train team staff, athletes, and venue personnel on how to adequately put on, take off, clean, and discard PPE. ✓ If team staff or venue personnel that have regular close or proximate interactions with athletes or patrons (e.g., athletic trainers, physicians, conditioning coaches, ball handlers, attendants, trainers, medical staff, ticket takers, check-in staff, security staff, restroom attendants) do not wear gloves, they must perform hand hygiene before and after such interactions. ✓ Implement measures to limit the sharing of objects (e.g., check-out registers, ticket scanners), as well as the touching of shared surfaces; or, require team staff, athletes, venue personnel, and patrons to wear gloves when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched surfaces; or, require them to perform hand hygiene before and after contact. 	
Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adhere to hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection requirements from the CDC and DOH and maintain logs on site that document date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection. ✓ Provide and maintain hand hygiene stations, including handwashing with soap, running warm water, and paper towels, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol for areas where handwashing facilities are not available. Make hand sanitizer available throughout common areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prohibit any spitting within the venue at any time and any products that require spitting (e.g. smokeless tobacco, sunflower seeds). ✓ Encourage athletes to shower at their hotel or residence following a competition rather than at the locker room provided at the venue. ✓ Place receptacles around the venue for disposal of soiled items, including PPE. ✓ Have personnel, who are visible to patrons, designated for the cleaning and disinfection of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces.



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Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide and encourage team staff, athletes, and venue personnel to use cleaning/disinfection supplies before and after use of shared and frequently touched surfaces (e.g., ticket scanners, microphones, radios, railings, elevator buttons), followed by hand hygiene. ✓ Conduct regular cleaning and disinfection of the venue and more frequent cleaning and disinfection of high risk areas used by many individuals and for frequently touched surfaces. Refer to DOH Guidance and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) products identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against COVID-19. ✓ Clean and disinfect all seating (e.g., chairs, armrests) after each event, to the extent possible. ✓ Ensure that all saunas, hot tubs, cryotherapy chambers or similar enclosed spaces remain closed, unless medically necessary and authorized by the respective professional sports league, association, or governing body, in which case, such spaces must be cleaned and disinfected between each use. ✓ Regularly clean/disinfect sporting equipment handled by multiple athletes/team personnel (e.g., balls, bats). ✓ Ensure that athletes perform hand hygiene before and after inserting or removing mouthguards. ✓ Clean and disinfect any medical areas including tables and surfaces between each use or exam. ✓ Team staff/venue personnel who handle used or dirty towels, linens, and other items must adhere to CDC precautions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To the extent practicable, prohibit any spitting within the venue at any time and any products that require spitting (e.g., smokeless tobacco, sunflower seeds). ✓ Encourage athletes to shower at their hotel/residence following competition rather than at venue locker room. ✓ Collect and launder linens (towels, uniforms, clothing) on site if possible and encourage athletes to deposit used linens in designated bins without handling by other individuals such as equipment managers or attendants. ✓ Assign cleaning staff to certain areas of the venue (e.g. locker rooms) in order to limit cross contamination throughout the facility. ✓ Consider closing or limiting access to communal fixtures or amenities in the venues that might present a risk of patron congregation or multiple touchpoints, such as promotional brochure stands in favor of individual distribution upon request.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Once approved by DOH to host professional sports competitions with patrons, venues with an indoor or outdoor capacity of 10,000 attendees or greater must, for each event, submit event details to DOH at least 5 days in advance. See “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans” for details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Distribute clear and concise information to patrons about safety/health precautions, including a pre-event announcement outlining safety and health protocols in effect at the venue.

WEAR A MASK.

GET TESTED.

SAVE LIVES.



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Screening and Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Require and ensure all patrons, public-facing venue personnel, athletes, and team staff over age 2 have received a negative diagnostic test result for COVID-19 using an FDA or DOH authorized PCR or other nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) of comparable analytical sensitivity performance performed on a specimen collected within 72 hours of the event start time. Negative results for COVID-19 from an FDA authorized antigen test performed on a specimen collected within 6 hours of the event start time may also be accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All patrons must present proof of the negative test result (e.g., mobile application, paper form) to venue personnel prior to, or immediately upon, arrival. • Alternatively, patrons, venue, personnel, athletes, and team staff may provide proof of having completed the COVID-19 vaccination series at least 14 days prior to the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Perform screening remotely (e.g., by telephone or electronic survey), to the extent possible. ✓ Refer to DOH’s guidance regarding protocols and policies for employees seeking to return to work after a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or after the close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19. ✓ Recommend vaccinated patrons, venue personnel, athletes, and team staff receive a negative diagnostic test result, as DOH and CDC continue to evaluate the effect of immunization on potential COVID-19 transmission.



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Screening and Testing (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue personnel/team staff must be tested for COVID-19 through a diagnostic test prior to their 1st event/competition and must be tested weekly thereafter for as long as they are actively working at the events/competitions at the venue and interacting in close contact with patrons /athletes. Alternatively, venue personnel and team staff may provide proof of having completed the COVID-19 vaccination series at least 14 days prior to the date of event(s)/ competition(s). • Deny entry to any individual who fails to present a negative diagnostic test result or proof of immunization. Any team staff, athlete, or venue personnel who receives a positive diagnostic test result for COVID-19 must be excluded from the event/competition until they have consulted with the appropriate health authorities and received clearance to return to work. Further, any patron who receives a positive diagnostic test result for COVID-19 must be denied entry to the event/competition, as well as any members of the patron’s party who may have been in close contact with the patron within the past 10 days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implement mandatory health screening for all team staff, athletes, venue personnel, and patrons, prior to any in-person professional sports activities, including practices and competitions. ✓ Require temperature checks for all patrons and deny entry to any patron who presents with a temperature of 100.4° F or greater, as well as any members of the patron’s party who may have been in close contact with the patron within the past 10 days. ✓ At minimum, screening must use a questionnaire that determines whether the individual has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Symptoms • COVID-19 Contacts • COVID-19 Positive Test • Recent Travel See “Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans” for details. 	



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For purposes of this document, professional sports are defined as any sporting event at which participants are paid or which are professionally organized. This guidance does not apply to youth or collegiate sports, horse racing, auto racing, or events that occur in arenas but are not professional sports competitions (e.g., concerts). In accordance with this guidance, professional sports arenas, stadiums, and venues with an indoor or outdoor capacity of 10,000 attendees or greater may host professional sports competitions with a limited number of fans or spectators. Effective April 1, 2021, professional sports arenas, stadiums, and venues with an indoor capacity of 1,500 to 9,999 attendees or outdoor capacity of 2,500 to 9,999 attendees may host professional sports competitions with a limited number of fans or spectators. Venues must submit plans to the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and/or the county health department or local public health authority, as required – see [“Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Professional Sports Competitions with Fans”](#) for full details.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, owners/management of professional sports teams and professional sporting venues should stay up to date with any changes to state and federal requirements related professional sports and incorporate those changes into their operations. This guidance is not intended to replace any existing applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and standards

	Mandatory	Recommended Best Practices
Screening and Testing (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Require team staff, athletes, venue personnel, and patrons to immediately disclose if and when any responses to screening questions change. ✓ Implement pre-travel screening questionnaires for any teams traveling domestically or internationally. International travel must comply with all federal, state, and local guidelines including quarantine of travelers upon their return as necessary. ✓ Ensure any team staff or venue personnel performing screening activities, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious individuals entering the venue. ✓ Deny entry to any patron who fails the screening questionnaire or who receives a positive diagnostic test result for COVID-19, as well as any members of the patron’s party who may have been in close contact with such patron within the past 10 days. ✓ Deny entry to any team staff, athlete, or venue personnel who fails the screening questionnaire or who receives a positive diagnostic test result for COVID-19. Such team staff, athlete, or venue personnel must be sent home or to a designated accommodation with instructions to contact a healthcare provider for assessment and, if applicable, diagnostic testing. ✓ Notify the state and local health department immediately upon being informed of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result by an individual currently or recently at the venue. ✓ Designate a site safety monitor, who, when notified of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case through a diagnostic test result for an individual who is currently or was recently present at the venue, must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify the state and local health department of the confirmed positive case; • Assist with contact tracing efforts to identify close or proximate contacts who may need to quarantine; 	



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	Mandatory	Recommended Best Practices
Screening and Testing (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to known individuals who may have been exposed to the positive case at the venue that a positive case was reported, contact tracing will be performed, close contacts will be notified, and additional cleaning and disinfection of the exposed area will be performed, and; dispatch appropriate staff or personnel to clean and disinfect the exposed areas. <p>✓ Cooperate with state and local health department contact tracing efforts by identifying individuals at the venue who may have been in, or around, the same area at, or around, the same time as the positive individual within the 48 hours before such individual began experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or had their sample collected for the diagnostic test, whichever is earlier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an athlete, team staff member, or venue personnel with access to areas used by team staff or athletes receives a positive diagnostic test result, ensure that neither practices nor competitions proceed until contact tracing is completed and isolation of infected persons and quarantine of exposed persons has been implemented; In the case of team staff, athlete, or venue personnel showing symptoms of COVID-19 while in the venue, notify individuals in the surrounding area(s) or individuals who may be considered a close contact immediately with information on where the individual has been throughout the venue and further notify them if the symptomatic person tests positive for COVID-19 through a diagnostic test. <p>✓ Require each patron (or, if patron is a minor, an adult from their party/household/family) in attendance to provide contact information before or immediately upon arrival to the event, providing their full name, date of birth, address, and phone number or e-mail for use in potential contact tracing efforts. To the extent practicable, such patron information should also include seat assignment at the event/competition. Maintain record of the sign-in data for a minimum period of 28 days.</p>	