



BC Speed Skating

Return to Skating Guidelines

June 17, 2021

Introduction

These guidelines represent a template for the safe and successful operation of the sport of speed skating in British Columbia during the COVID-19 pandemic. A complete summary of the nature of the COVID-19 virus is not included in these guidelines; a succinct summary can be accessed through the [HealthLinkBC COVID-19](#) factsheet.



The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have had, and will continue to have, far-reaching effects on lives across British Columbia (BC). The effects will be summarized in these guidelines by addressing risks to BC Speed Skating Association (BCSSA) members and organizations in the following two categories:

Participant Wellness	Organizational Wellness
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid transmission of the COVID-19 virus 2. Foster competitive spirit 3. Prevent return to sport injuries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Maintain financial health of organizations 5. Cultivate the speed skating community 6. Prevent personnel burnout and conflict

These guidelines must be used as a template for BCSSA and member clubs of BCSSA (“clubs”) to develop their own **COVID-19 Safety Plan** (“plan”). Each club’s plan must, at minimum, be in compliance with orders and guidance issued by the Provincial Health Officer and must be available to the public (posted at a venue and/or on the organization’s website). The Board of Directors of each club is responsible for ensuring the plan meets these minimum requirements. Clubs will be required to coordinate with their venue(s) to ensure adherence to the venue’s COVID-19 response plan. Venue plans may vary greatly across the province based on the nature of the venue and requirements of the municipality and local health authority.

Throughout these guidelines, Return to Skating Plan content will be categorized as follows:

- Mandatory for inclusion in a club’s written plan
- Recommended for inclusion in a club’s written plan
- Optional for inclusion in a club’s written plan

Points that have been significantly updated from the previous version of this document are identified by the NEW symbol. BCSSA will continue to release updated guidelines due to changes to sport sector guidelines and/or Orders of the Provincial Health Officer.

Participant Wellness

1. Avoid Transmission of COVID-19 Virus

Avoiding transmission of the COVID-19 virus is the ultimate goal. The information below refers to speed skating “participants” (skaters, coaches, officials) and “support personnel” (parents/guardians providing support to skaters such as setting up equipment, club equipment managers, club registrar etc. involved in an official capacity). The sport sector guidelines have been divided into sports being played outdoors and sports being played indoors. Speed skating training and skating may occur outdoors or indoors. When applicable, the difference between outdoor and indoor requirements are specified below. If not otherwise specified, the requirements apply to all environments.



Please note that a graduated return to full sport activity is strongly recommended. Clubs may choose to be more conservative than the requirements below, but cannot relax the requirements as detailed in this document.

● Stay Home if You Are Sick

- Conduct daily symptom screening using a wellness questionnaire or [self-assessment](#). Clubs will need to consider what format works best for their club (e.g. online screen, paper journal, etc.).
- Implement and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any club participation while sick.

● Personal Hygiene

- Share and post signage on [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#). Enforce no-spitting policies.
- Coaches should consider options such as electronic whistles to avoid blowing into a standard whistle.
- Provide supplies for members to use during club events for hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Examples include hand sanitizer, disposable tissues, and a trash bin (preferably with a closed lid) for disposing tissues and other PPE.
- Consider alternatives for vulnerable populations, including those with compromised immune systems. Reducing the group size for these individuals may be an option.
- Ensure that participants bring their own labelled water bottle, preferably filled at home.



● Environmental Hygiene


- Communicate with the venue to determine, and follow, their cleaning plan for venue-owned equipment.
- Avoid sharing equipment. This will preclude participation in some games and drills. Consider making it mandatory that the participant supplies their own skating protective equipment. If skates and/or skating protective equipment are lent by the club, they must be disinfected after each use.
- Develop [disinfection protocols](#) for sport-specific equipment that must be shared, such as protective padding and corner blocks. Limit the number of coaches/assistants who touch the corner blocks. Given the logistical constraints with cleaning and disinfecting protective padding, individuals should perform hand hygiene before and after moving the protective padding. Avoid touching any other surfaces (especially the individuals' face) at all times. Limit the number of individuals assisting with moving the protective padding.



● Physical Modifications

- Clubs will be required to work with their venue(s) to establish flow of participants through the buildings, use of spaces within the building (locker rooms, equipment storage rooms, washrooms, etc.), and other modifications to decrease common touch points (e.g. using doors that open automatically). Where possible, consider the use of larger areas (such as lobby areas or indoor sports fields) vs contained areas (such as change rooms) for putting on skating equipment. Participants may be required to arrive at the rink with their (freshly laundered) skin suits already on. Clubs should consider detailed arrival and departure plans that allow for staggering of subgroups. A [COVID-19 club host](#) could assist with directing participants.
- In the event that a participant requires first aid, all first aid attendants must be wearing a mask, eye protection (goggles or safety glasses), and gloves. Ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) is readily available in the event of an emergency. PPE could be added to the club first aid kit and/or cut kits already used at club practice. Clubs should coordinate with their venue(s) to determine if any additional first aid requirements are in place in the venue plan.

● Safe Social Interactions: Travel for Sport

-  Recreational travel is now allowed within BC; this includes travel for sport. Participants are no longer required to choose a single “home club”.
- From a developmental perspective, participants are encouraged to follow a gradual return to training and competition, which may include focusing on smaller and/or more local sport opportunities in the early stages of return to sport.

● **Safe Social Interactions: Group Size**

- The size of sport gatherings (“group size”) is inclusive of participants and any allowed support personnel. See page 3 for the definitions of participants and support personnel.
- Ensure maximum numbers are also in compliance with the venue’s plan, which may specify how many participants can be on an ice surface (or other designated training area) at a time.

Outdoors	Indoors
<p>Child/youth sport: no maximum group size.</p> <p>Adult (22+) sport (including mixed youth/adult groups): maximum group size of 50 participants + allowed support personnel.</p>	<p>NEW Maximum group size of 50 participants + allowed support personnel.</p>

● **Safe Social Interactions: Spectators**

- Spectators” (no formal support role in the sport event, including no access to the field of play or back of house) fall outside the jurisdiction of BCSSA.
- Spectators must follow all relevant Orders of the Provincial Health Officer.

Outdoors	Indoors
<p>NEW Maximum 50 spectators allowed.</p>	<p>No spectators allowed.</p>

● **Safe Social Interactions: Physical Distancing**

- Off the field of play, 2m of physical distance must be maintained at all times.
- **NEW** On the field of play, physical distancing is not required. This allows for activities involving close proximity and intentional contact; however, these activities should be carefully considered in relation to their value.

Outdoors	Indoors
<p>Field of play is defined as the immediate area where training is occurring.</p>	<p>Field of play is limited to the ice surface; excludes player’s benches and change rooms.</p> <p>During off-ice (indoor) training, the field of play is defined as the immediate area where training is occurring.</p>

● Safe Social Interactions: Masks

- The sport sector allows for the use of medical masks or non-medical masks (also known as “face coverings”). If using a non-medical mask, provide education on [what constitutes a non-medical mask, and the proper use of non-medical masks](#).
- Exemptions allowed in the [EPA mask mandate order](#) should be allowed.
- Venue rules and enforcement regarding masks are outside the jurisdiction of BCSSA.

Outdoors	Indoors
<p>NEW Masks not required.</p>	<p>NEW On the field of play, masks are not required for participants. Support personnel must wear masks when on the field of play (e.g. parents setting up protective padding).</p> <p>Off the field of play, masks are required for the duration of the time inside the venue.</p>

● Member Communication and Training

- It is prudent for clubs to maintain timely and accurate communication with their members. A summary message from the club to their members should be issued as changes occur.
- Ensure communication is adjusted to the level of the audience. Young participants will require simple and clear instructions when on-site (e.g. “make sure you have enough room between you and your neighbour for airplane arms”). Young participants may require visual cues to help maintain physical distance, e.g. bingo dabber dots drawn on the ice to mark their “home base”.

● A Plan in the Event That a Case or Outbreak Should Occur




- A “case” is defined as a single case of COVID-19. An “outbreak” is defined as two or more cases. All cases must be addressed quickly to avoid outbreaks.
- Develop or adapt an Illness Policy that clearly advises members of the steps to follow should they begin to feel sick.
- Ensure that attendance (participants and support personnel) is kept at all club events, including each practice session. Attendance should be kept by one person, as compared to a sign-in sheet that requires multiple touches on the pen. This information will be required in the event of an outbreak and members should be aware in advance that it will be shared with public health should an outbreak occur.

2. Foster Competitive Spirit

Speed skating has been described as “racing on skates”. Individuals who enjoy racing may struggle to find enjoyment in the modified racing opportunities that meet COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

● Plan for Competition Disruptions

-  Games, tournaments and competitions are now allowed in the sport sector. Clubs may run races and unsanctioned minimeets. BCSSA will consider issuing sanctions beginning in August 2021.
- Event cancellations and postponements will be updated regularly on the [BCSSA Calendar of Events](#).
- Maintain communication with venues to review existing venue bookings, including cancellation policies for competition bookings.

● Create Alternate Competitive Opportunities

- Regularly include practice activities that have a racing component to keep skaters engaged. Examples include: unsanctioned time trials, flying laps and the Provincial Relay Challenge.
- Consider organizing opportunities at local outdoor venues (e.g a skate-a thon). Contact local cities, ski resorts and x-country ski clubs who have ice surfaces that could be rented. Start planning early to ensure all insurance requirements are met, especially if the venue has not previously been used by the club. All venues where club activities are held must be listed in your insurance documents.
- Create a Strava Club for your speed skating club and/or join the [BCSSA Strava Club](#) for regular challenges.

3. Prevent Return to Sport Injuries

Athletes returning to sport after a forced period of lockout may be at higher risk of injury if the return to sport is not well managed.

● Provide Holistic Education Early

- Explain the risk of return to sport (RTS) injuries, which may be caused by an abrupt RTS (without an appropriate build of intensity and volume of training).
- Educate members regarding a focus on controllable factors and address areas with opportunities for improvement: mental wellness, mental performance, nutrition, sleep hygiene, rehabilitation of previous/chronic injuries, biomechanical (movement pattern) deficiencies.
- Provide age-appropriate links to trusted sources such as [Canadian Sport Institute Pacific](#).

● Follow RTS Training Principles in Club Programming

- Address biomechanical deficiencies for fundamental movement skills (examples: jump, throw, run, kick, hinge, squat, lunge) and sport-specific movement skills.
- Focus on general athletic abilities first: aerobic, strength, explosive movements (jump and sprint).
- Gradually increase training volume and intensity.
- Introduce competition and competitive-like activities only once a solid athletic base has been established.

Organizational Wellness

4. Maintain Financial Health of Organizations

Speed skating clubs should prepare for the possibility of increased expenses and decreased revenues when returning after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, clubs should ensure they are protected from financial loss due to legal action.

● Mitigate Financial Loss Through Solid Governance

- The Sport BC insurance policies that cover BCSSA members and member clubs contain a contagion exclusion. In summary, the Sport BC policies will not cover any claims related to COVID-19. The Province's Order in Council No. 459 protects those providing "community recreation or leisure activities" from liability in the event of damages resulting from COVID-19, provided that all applicable guidelines were being followed. Clubs are strongly encouraged to read the [Order in Council](#) in full and seek independent legal advice where required. Clubs are also reminded to follow through on requirements to maintain their standing as a Society, including [requirements on holding an AGM](#).
- Clubs should be aware that the BCSSA Agreements and COVID-19 Return to Sport Acknowledgement have been updated. All members are required to sign these documents when registering via IceReg. It is strongly recommended that each club seek independent legal advice.
- Review all contracts into which the club has entered (including venue rental, coach/personnel compensation, registration fees). Ensure any cancellation deadlines or other clauses are noted and addressed as required.
- Develop a [WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) to protect the club's 'workers'. Best practice would be to include all those who do 'work' on behalf of the club, including those who work on a volunteer basis. It is mandatory, by order of the Provincial Health Officer, for all employers in BC to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan. Clubs who use multiple venues for training should have a COVID-19 Safety Plan for each venue. COVID-19 Safety Plans should be clearly communicated to club 'workers' and training on any required skills should be provided.
- Despite restrictions on group sizes, ensure the [Rule of Two](#) is followed virtually and in-person at all times.

● Offer Alternative Membership Options

- Consider offering memberships in 'blocks' (e.g. a 4-week session). This may be a more appealing option financially for some members, and will help to create subgroups of participants.
- Consider offering part-time memberships (season-long). This may be a more appealing option financially for some members.
- Consider a temporary reduction in membership fees to maintain or grow numbers.
- Consider discounts such as sibling discounts.
- Consider temporarily eliminating skate rental fees, especially if participants are required to supply all other equipment due to sanitary issues.
- Include information on local grants (e.g. [KidSport](#)) on club websites.
- Consider offering payment plans throughout the season.

● Offer Additional Training Opportunities to Increase Membership Value

- Investigate venues and resources for offering inline training. Participants do not need to be on speed skating style of inlines to benefit from inline training. Ensure you have permission to use the venue (even if it is an empty parking lot) and verify if there are any permit and/or insurance requirements by the venue owner.
- Increase dryland training opportunities. Dryland training has the added benefit of often being done outdoors, which is preferable for group gatherings over indoors. Ensure you have permission to use the venue (even if it is an empty parking lot) and verify if there are any permit and/or insurance requirements by the venue owner.
- Offer technical training on local outdoor ice surfaces. Contact local cities, ski resorts and x-country ski clubs who have ice surfaces that could be rented. Start planning early to ensure all permit and/or insurance requirements are met, especially if the venue has not previously been used by the club.
- Offer virtual training opportunities. Ensure you are following best practices for digital safety (e.g. follow the [Rule of Two](#), minors must be supervised, use secure platforms). Clubs are required to contact BCSSA prior to offering virtual training opportunities to ensure the virtual training meets insurance requirements.

5. Cultivate the Speed Skating Community

Speed skating is, by comparison, a small sport in BC. Clubs are encouraged to take active steps to maintain and build the local speed skating community. As BC emerges from early Phases of BC's Restart Plan, individuals will be returning to a 'new normal', which may include a simpler and more local lifestyle.



● Build Club's Sense of Community

- Use social media to share the club's activities and accomplishments. Be sure to have photo consent forms signed for all participants; this can be done using the IceReg platform.
- Continue to reward ongoing skater accomplishments with [PACE Awards](#).
- Use club management and communication apps to build a virtual community and communicate important updates easily.
- Host social events virtually.
- Pursue club affiliation opportunities such as club uniforms.

● Promote Local 'Racing on Skates'

- Create informal challenges for community members to race on their skates. For example, create a social media video showing how to do the speed skating starting procedure ("go to the start, ready, GO!"). Include a statement to clarify that 'pick-up sports' racing is not sanctioned by the local club and participants must be following the rules of the ice surface they are using.

6. Prevent Personnel Burnout and Conflict

● Create and 'Staff' Additional Club Roles

- Designate a COVID-19 club ambassador to liaise with the club's venue(s). This could be an existing member of the Board of Directors; carefully consider volunteer workload before designating.
- Designate a COVID-19 club host(s) to guide members through the return process. The host will provide communication directly to the members, help direct traffic within the venue, and be available to answer questions. It is recommended that the host is not a club coach or equipment manager, as these individuals are typically otherwise engaged during the times a host would be most valuable. In the event that clubs do not have enough personnel for a club host, consider pre-recording a short video to demonstrate what to expect at a club event as an alternative.

● Proactively Address Conflict

- Have the Board of Directors and/or coaches regularly engage with participants and guardians to gauge their tolerance to the risks associated with club activities. Opening lines of communication will help participants feel heard and accepted. Expect and respect that individuals will have differing levels of risk tolerance. Consistent and explicit engagement may proactively identify risks that are intolerable to the club and must be addressed.
- In the words of BC's Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, "Be calm, be kind, be safe". Issue regular reminders that sport is for leisure and enjoyment. If sport is no longer enjoyable, a careful review of the causal factors is in order.

Disclaimer

This disclaimer is referenced from the Disclaimer in the archived viaSport Return to Sport Guidelines with permission.

The BC Speed Skating Return to Practice (BCSSA RTP) Guidelines is intended to be used for the purposes set in this document. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, because information known about the COVID-19 coronavirus and recommended health and safety measures can rapidly change no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided in the BCSSA RTP Guidelines.

It is important to note that the BCSSA RTP Guidelines is not a legal document and is to be used as a guide only. It is not a substitute for actual legislation or orders of the PHO. In the event of an ambiguity or conflict between the BCSSA RTP Guidelines and the Public Health Act, regulations or orders thereunder, the Act, regulations and orders prevail. Each Provincial Sport Organization should comply with the requirements of the provincial and local government and health officials in terms of public gatherings and sporting events when determining when it is safe to return to activities. Nothing in this document is intended to provide legal advice. Do not rely on this document or treat it as legal advice.

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Anyone using the BCSSA RTP Guidelines does so at his or her own risk. BCSSA shall not be responsible for any loss or damage of any kind arising directly or indirectly from the use of the BCSSA RTP Guidelines including, without limitation, reliance on the completeness or accuracy of the information provided.

References and Resources

These guidelines heavily reference the [viaSport Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.](#). Other references consulted include:

- [The Recreation & Parks Sector Guideline for Restarting Operations](#)
- [WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plans](#)
- [BC's Restart](#)
- [COVID-19 Orders, Notices & Guidance](#)

⚠ At minimum, each member club of the BC Speed Skating Association is required to have a written and publicly-accessible plan to outline their Return to Skating Plan. The club's plan must be approved by their Board of Directors.

The Return to Skating Plan must include the elements required in the WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan. At the club's discretion, it is recommended that other elements discussed in these Guidelines are also included.

Further revisions to the guidelines may occur as the season progresses due to changes to sport sector guidelines and/or Orders of the Provincial and/or Regional Health Officer.

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