

U.S. FIGURE SKATING

As the nation begins to reopen businesses after weeks of stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important for your skating programs to have a plan as you welcome back eager customers.

First and foremost, facility management must make the health and safety of its staff, participants and the greater community its No. 1 priority.

While we all want our lives to return to "before COVID," don't expect things to be "business as usual" in the immediate future. At this time, it's especially important to have a plan that delivers on your program goals while addressing the new challenges of our daily lives.

Because each ice rink and associated business is unique, there is no "one-size-fits-all" guide. However, U.S. Figure Skating offers the following recommendations based on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) social distancing and sanitation practices to help slow the spread of the coronavirus and ensure your participants feel safe and comfortable in your rink.

If you have questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. We're here to help!

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GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO ON-ICE ACTIVITIES

Assess Your Situation

Skating clubs and ice rinks across the nation are unique entities that operate under various local contexts. Before welcoming back skaters, review your local government and health agency's COVID-19 response to develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures for your situation.

It is the responsibility of each skating director, coach and facility staff member to enforce policies and procedures intended to keep all participants safe. By following these guidelines as well as those of local government and health agencies, skaters and their families will be able to make informed decisions as to when they can return to the ice.

Organize

- In accordance with your city, county or state's gathering restrictions, limit the number of skaters allowed on the ice at a single time.
- Implement ways to minimize contact between participants and staff.
- Purchase adequate disinfectant cleaning materials.
- Shorten programs and stagger ice times to create a buffer between sessions.
- Establish amount of time ("15 minutes") skaters have to pack up and exit the facility.

- Online bookings and payment are recommended.
- Recommend that only one parent/guardian accompany younger children if needed.

Staff

- Conduct formal training for all staff, coaches, instructors and volunteers on new procedures and protocols.
 - Post a check list for them to follow.
- Monitor staff health. Employers may ask:
 - Are you experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you knowingly been exposed to anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - Have you taken your temperature? If yes, what is it?
 - Do not permit any staff to work with any symptoms or contact with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- Keep meticulous logs of users by date/time in case of need for contact tracing.
- Plan for increased levels of staff and volunteer absences.

Communicate Early and Often

- Email skaters and their families with your facility/club's new policies and procedures, making clear your expectations.
- Consider making a video to review procedures and policies.
- Coaches should provide preferred method of communicating with parents (email, text, lesson plan notes, etc.).
- Appoint a COVID-19 point person to communicate with rink management and monitor local, state and national developments.

Social Distancing

- Enforce CDC's social distancing of 6 feet apart and advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.
- Post signage reinforcing social distancing and illness prevention measures. (The CDC has free posters and handouts available on their website).
- Use tape to mark readiness areas 6 feet apart where skaters can put on/take off skates.
 - Areas may be in hallways, spectator areas, etc.
 - Leave all personal equipment in skating bag or car.
- Divide coaches and skaters into "training groups," if ice time can accommodate.
 - Number and assign each coach a designated area along the boards where they must stand to teach private lessons.
 - Coaches must remain in the area and may not skate alongside any student.
 - Limit coach/skater contact; coaches should not help students up unless the student is unable to get up. Coaches should use verbal cues when instructing students rather than physical contact.

- All warm-ups should be done outside of the building. Weather permitting.
- Locker rooms should be closed; skaters and coaches should come prepared to take the ice.
- Skaters should enter/exit ice at staggered times and separate entrances.
- Clearly label entry/exit and flow through the building.
- Lesson plans should ensure skaters are 6 feet from each other.
- Utilize markers and new activities to ensure this spacing is maintained.
- Provide 6-foot markers in spectator areas.
- Do not allow any gatherings in the lobby or bathrooms.

Provide a Clean Environment

- Follow all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for sanitization.
- Schedule between-session cleanings.
 - Wipe down dasher boards, door handles, and other frequently touched surfaces.
- Require skaters (or parent if a younger child) to wipe down their readiness area before/after use.
- Limit personal items on the dasher boards.
 - Spread out personal items across the bench.
 - Do not share water bottles, tissue boxes.
- Ensure adequate trash cans for tissues.

Equipment

- Disinfect all rental equipment between usage.
 - Personal items, such as shoes, should no longer be left as collateral held for rental equipment.
 - Helmet rentals should be ceased unless proper sanitation can be ensured.
- Create policies playing music and using the music equipment. Keep sanitizing wipes next to the music player and affiliated equipment.
- Use sanitizing wipes before/after using pole harnesses.

Plan Ahead

- Develop flexible refund policies should stay-at-home orders be restored or if rink is forced to close.
- Create an emergency plan with rink management for a possible outbreak.
 - Have a communication strategy to alert all who may have been exposed.
 - Identify a contact person to receive reports from skaters/families/staff of new illness.
 - Designate one person to speak publicly for the club/programs to members, media, health officials, etc.

LEARN TO SKATE USA PROGRAMS

Beginning skaters generally need more person-to-person contact with instructors, from helping them get up to retying their laces. For this reason, those involved in the Learn to Skate USA program will need to be extra vigilant in following facility and local authority guidelines. Before returning to the ice, write down your plan and clearly communicate it. Create and print a checklist of duties related to COVID-19 for staff to easily reference. Here are some guidelines to consider as you reopen Learn to Skate USA programs.

Manage Participants

- Limit group sizes to align with the physical distancing restrictions put in place by your local health officials and local facility.
 - This may affect how many people are allowed in the facility or on the ice at one time.
- Have a traffic flow plan that directs participants through the facility while limiting possibilities to congregate.
- Require participants come dressed and prepared to enter the ice after putting on skates.
- Strongly consider not offering any beginner classes (Snowplow Sam 1, Basic 1, Adult 1) until physical distancing restrictions have been eased.

Tools of the Trade

- Strive to have all rental equipment cleaned and disinfected between usage.
 - Skaters who require a helmet should bring their own. All helmet rentals should be ceased unless proper sanitation steps can be followed.
 - Personal items, such as shoes, should no longer be left as collateral held for rental equipment.
- Dispose of all plush and stuffed animal-type toys; replace with hard plastic toys that will be disinfected between uses. Consider using more on-ice drawings and toys/games that do not require direct contact by the skaters (e.g. bubbles).

Pre-Planning

- Time block and map out hypothetical situations to ensure you've adequately planned for procedures related to arrival, pre-lesson preparations, on-ice lesson, post-lesson wrap-up, and departure.
 - Avoid overlaps in audiences.
 - Allow time to disinfect lobby areas, bathrooms, tops of dasher boards and rental equipment between sessions.
- Utilize online payment/registration systems. Take payments over the phone if necessary.
- Expand registration process to include rental skate information.
 - If skaters need rental skates, have them set aside and ready upon arrival.
- If sessions are generally very crowded, consider removing free-skate/practice time at the end of classes or adjusting session times to ensure that students and instructors can maintain a 6-foot distance at all times.

Prepare for Arrival

- Stagger arrival times or use separate entrances for arrival and exit; use pop-up secondary lobby areas, if possible, to avoid congestion.
 - If limiting entrances, make sure you are following local fire department regulations.
 - If using separate entrances and pop-up lobby areas, be sure to create clear signage directing skaters to these areas.
 - If staggering classes, be sure to post the staggered class schedule in multiple areas and strictly adhere to your schedule.
- If seating is generally very close together, use tape to mark readiness zones for skaters to take skates on and off and prepare for class.
- Have instructors assigned to each level/class assist with the arrival procedures.

During Class

- Have skaters enter the ice at staggered times or separate entrances.
- Have instructors adjust lesson plans to keep skaters 6 feet away from each other.
 - Utilize markers and new activities to ensure this spacing is maintained.
- Provide 6-foot markers or indicators in the spectator areas to ensure parents/spectators stay 6 feet apart when observing class.
- Have skaters exit the ice at staggered times or use separate entrances.

After Class

- Establish the amount of time (“15 minutes”) that skaters have to pack up and exit the facility.
 - Communicate verbally and with signage.
 - Consistently enforce time limit.
 - Lobbies should not allow groups of skaters or family members to linger.

Plan Ahead

- Develop flexible refund policies should stay-at-home orders be restored or if your rink is forced to close.
- Create an emergency plan for a possible outbreak with rink management.
 - Have a communication strategy to alert all who may have been exposed.
 - Designate one person to speak publicly for the club/programs (to members, media, health officials, etc.).