



CHEER CANADA Recommendations for return to play for disabled athletes

Cheer Canada is keen to ensure that athletes with disabilities, for instance on Adaptive Abilities, Special Abilities teams, and those on classical teams, aren't left out of our considerations when planning for a return to play. Recent statistics from the ONS* show that disabled people are significantly more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 than their non-disabled counterparts. We therefore recommend that coaches of these teams take significant extra precautions in planning and managing the return to training for those athletes. After adjusting for region, population density, socio-demographic and household characteristics, the relative difference in mortality rates between those classed as "limited a lot", in the latest census, and those without disabilities was 2.4 times higher for females and 1.9 times higher for males. There are a number of socio-economic factors which adjust for these risks to our athletes, for instance many elderly people are disabled and the issue with care homes will have had a large impact on the data as represented above. Even so below are the additional considerations and recommendations for return to play for teams with disabled athletes.

For those returning to play with disabled athletes on your team, the following are some additional considerations we advise you make in order to ensure your more vulnerable athletes are kept safe.

- We advise that disabled athletes, especially those who were put onto the governments vulnerable list, have a conversation with their GP about their return to sport and provide you with a note to confirm they GP is happy that they're not going to be at too great a risk by returning at that time. GP notes can incur a cost to the athlete so please bare this in mind when requiring that as part of the athlete's ability to return.
- At the start and end of sessions, and in breaks during longer sessions, we advise that mobility and other disability support equipment is disinfected as a part of your sanitation routines.
 - For athletes who use separate mobility equipment for sport and day to day, we advise that where possible, they transfer to their sports device outside of the training environment and leave their day to day mobility device in a separate area.
- Where possible we highly advise that athletes and staff working in a disability inclusive environment wear masks and other appropriate PPE when working in close contact with each other.
- Ensure that your accessible routes, which may not be your usual routes in and out of the facility or onto the floor, are also disinfected and cleared between sessions so they are safe for the athletes to use.
- If an athlete needs a support worker in order to participate in the sport (or to manage day to day activities while participating, for instance as an interpreter, consuming water, washing their hands, etc) you will need to include them in your count when considering the amount of individuals you can have in the class/facility.
 - As the level of risk of infection is reduced, we advise you relax the inclusion of support workers in your bubble count to enable a larger number of athletes to participate together whilst the support worker is still in the space enabling the disabled athletes to participate fully.

- If an athlete has a support worker they are in regular contact with but who isn't required to assist them during the activity, it is advised they are supported to stay at a reasonable close distance so they are available to support but not be present during the sporting activities. For instance, have them in another room of the facility, or waiting just outside, or in a vehicle.
 - As the level of infection risk is reduced we advise that you relax the distancing of support workers who are needed by athletes and allow them to once again be present in the space even if not needed for direct participation.
- Research carried out by RNIB found that almost two thirds of blind or partially sighted people say they've found maintaining a social distance difficult. When working with athletes with visual impairment we recommend these additional considerations.
 - If athlete's usually need guiding to find their way around try to implement verbal guiding rather than contact guidance you would have done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Ensure that your visually impaired athletes are made aware of sanitisation stations and any new installations like protective screens and contactless payment terminals.
 - Tactile floor markers may be helpful to support your visually impaired athletes to distance appropriately.
- When using a mask make sure to take extra consideration that athletes with hearing impairments may struggle to understand you. There are masks available that have clear screens in the front, otherwise known as "lipreading masks" for working with athletes with hearing impairment. If using such a mask make sure that the design and build ensures it's still protective against droplet transmission.
- When you are at a point where you begin or are regularly participating in contact activities with the team, at a level where that's appropriate, that you ensure you maintain physical distance where possible by having athletes step away as soon as a stunt comes down or other contact activity has stopped, take those teaching moments and those hold moments at physical distance before moving back into close contact to repeat or retry the activity. This could be baked into your choreography to assist with making it a part of your team's culture.
- When you return to stunting we recommend that you split the contact bubbles into smaller groups so that the same 4 or 5 athletes in each larger group are working together throughout training, this helps reduce the possibility of viral transmission across the larger group.

Some athletes with disabilities may not be currently comfortable to return to play at this stage, or they may not get the agreement from their GP to do so. We advise that teams ensure this opt in ethos is supported, and that they don't indirectly discriminate against these athletes, by putting undue pressure on those athletes to return immediately, and instead ensure there is still a place on the team for them when they feel it's personally safe for them to return and/or they have agreements from their doctors to do so.

*ONS statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/article/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbydisabilitystatusenglandandwales/2marchto15may2020>

Further general ideas for review:

- *Ventilate the space*
- *Restricted timing on how much contact participation is allowed in sessions, for instance restricting to 10 minutes stunting total to begin with and then increasing this as the level of risk is reduced.*