



USMS COVID-19 Sanction Guidelines (updated 9.16.21)

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, U.S. Masters Swimming remains committed to providing guidance for event directors and LMSCs to navigate a return to competition. Though challenges remain, most areas of the country are now allowing events to be held and USMS encourages providing competition opportunities for members where it has been deemed safe. USMS strives to provide flexibility for the sanctioning LMSC to determine appropriate safeguards for their region of the country and ensure the safety of USMS members while considering the requirements of the facility and local and state health expectations.

Although no set of guidelines is exhaustive, we recommend the sanctioning of safe events under the following guidelines. These guidelines will be revised as needed as conditions continue to evolve.

1. Federal, state, and local health guidelines and orders, as well as facility requirements, supersede all advice in this document when they are more restrictive than USMS guidance. If social distancing and/or gathering requirements prohibit any of the parameters listed here, LMSC sanctions chairs should NOT sanction the event.
2. USMS encourages members to continue following safety measures recommended by the CDC and local health officials to avoid COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination policies, perspectives, and expectations vary widely throughout the country, which makes a single national policy for all USMS events challenge. USMS is not requiring COVID-19 vaccination for participation in sanctioned events or club activities. If a facility or government agency requires participant vaccination as a condition of hosting or permitting USMS activities, those requirements must be factored into plans. Furthermore, USMS clubs and locally sanctioned events may decide to require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test in order to participate. If a COVID-19 vaccination is required, it's recommended to have a policy for the consideration of medical or religious exemptions, a clear process of verification, and considerations for swimmer privacy. Examples may be available from other local entities requiring vaccination.
3. LMSCs are empowered to make decisions about whether they're able to sanction events within the scope of these guidelines. LMSC sanctions chairs should review event information, safety plans, and additional documentation carefully to ensure that they adhere to federal, state, and local guidelines, as well as the guidelines in this document.
4. Since permits are required for most open water events, you'll want to work with your local and/or state health department and share with them your additional safety protocols.
5. In-person competitions may be held with event directors and LMSC sanctions chairs considering participation limits based on the size, layout and features of the facility to allow for appropriate physical distancing. For larger events, multi-session meets and open water events with multiple staggered groups are encouraged.
6. Event directors shall submit a COVID-19 safety plan to the LMSC sanctions chair for review. Sanctions will not be granted without a safety plan in place. It is requested that LMSC sanctions

chairs forward safety plans to events@usmastersswimming.org so the National Office can gather comprehensive best practices and assist as needed.

7. Do not allow anyone exhibiting COVID-19-like symptoms to compete or enter the facility.
8. Work with the facility to ensure enhanced sanitation practices are followed and provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations for attendees.
9. Per [CDC guidance](#) (updated July 28, 2021), at indoor facilities in [areas with substantial or high COVID-19 transmission levels](#), it is recommended that both vaccinated and unvaccinated attendees wear a mask covering the nose and mouth at all times except while swimming.
10. Event directors are responsible for clearly communicating event procedures and safety plans in published event information and providing email updates and virtual meetings (i.e. open water safety briefings) to attendees as needed including communicating any possible exposure post-event if positive tests from attendees are reported. [Here are positive test protocol recommendations](#) from the [Aquatics Coalition](#).
11. The most recent [USMS liability release form](#) must be executed by each participant during the event registration process. To be clear, USMS liability insurance doesn't cover transmission of viral or bacterial infections.

Most of all, use common sense to make events as safe as possible for all attendees. We'll be cheering for you, from a safe distance!