



Phase 3 Return to Competition Recommendations

U.S. Masters Swimming has moved to a third phase of our return to competition as of May 2021. 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. Phase 3 provides 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. These guidelines will be revised as needed as conditions continue to evolve.

Phase 3:

Although no set of guidelines is exhaustive, we recommend the sanctioning of safe events under the following guidelines:

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 be vaccinated for COVID-19, but we understand it is a personal decision based on individual factors. USMS is not requiring COVID-19 vaccination for participation in sanctioned events or club activities. If a facility, local municipality, or agency requires participant vaccination as a condition of hosting or permitting USMS activities, those requirements must be factored into planning those activities.
3. LMSCs are empowered to make decisions about whether they're able to sanction events within the scope of this phase. LMSC sanctions chairs should review meet 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!