

Frequently Asked Questions regarding (1) Restricting Spectators from Attending Sporting Events or Practices and (2) Temporary Closure of Indoor Sports Facilities in Preparation for the Winter Season

Executive Order 20-90 issued by Governor Raimondo on October 30, 2020:

“Spectators are prohibited from attending any sporting event or practice, except in the case of athletes 10 or younger. Only one parent or guardian of an athlete age 10 or younger may be present at a sporting event or practice.”

What is the new policy on spectators?

Starting on October 30 and over the next two weeks, spectators are **not** allowed at outdoor or indoor sporting events, with one exception. One parent or guardian per athlete is allowed for any child who is 10 years old or younger.

Why no spectators?

COVID-19 cases in Rhode Island are going up, and we need to take additional measures to reduce spread. We are observing instances of parents at their children’s games and practices not wearing face coverings or masks and gathering too closely for extended periods of time, which is dangerous.

Are there any exceptions to the spectator policy?

Yes. For children age 10 and under, one parent or guardian may attend a sporting event or practice. These spectators must wear face coverings or masks and stay at least six feet apart from one another.

How does this affect media members covering sporting events?

This policy does not affect members of the media.

May I watch an outdoor sporting event from my car?

Yes. Parents or household groups may watch sporting events from their cars. That avoids the problem of socializing without face coverings or masks. It is not recommended that people from separate households watch a game or practice together in a car. If they do, however, they must wear masks and open windows.

Will this new no spectator policy extend all winter?

Uncertain. This order is in place now and for at least the next two weeks. The spectator policy will be revisited in the updated sports guidance issued in early November.

Executive Order 20-90 issued by Governor Raimondo on Friday, October 30, 2020: *“All indoor sporting facilities, such as indoor ice rinks and basketball courts, may not host games, practices, or any other sport, for the period beginning on Monday, November 2, through Sunday, November 8. To the extent that such facilities are used for purposes other than sports activities, they may continue to be open. This Order does not apply to activities of professional or collegiate interscholastic athletic programs; only professional and collegiate interscholastic athletic programs may conduct indoor activities during this time. If a gymnasium or fitness center has an indoor sport facility within its establishment, it may not be used for games, practices, or any other sport for the period beginning on Monday, November 2, through Sunday, November 8.”*

What is the policy?

All indoor sporting facilities, such as indoor fields, indoor ice rinks, and basketball courts, may **not** host games, practices, or any other sports activity from Monday, November 2, to Sunday, November 8. These facilities will be closed for seven days. We know that indoor enclosed spaces are higher risk for COVID-19 spread than outdoor spaces. This pause will provide time to put additional regulations and updated guidance in place to protect public health and ensure compliance so that we can safely enjoy sports and conduct sports-associated contact tracing quickly to prevent COVID spread.

Are there any exceptions?

Yes. The Executive Order allows professional and intercollegiate athletic programs to conduct sporting activities during this time at indoor sporting facilities.

What indoor sporting facilities are covered?

All ice rinks and all multi-use indoor sports facilities that host team or group sports including courts and indoor fields that are used by groups or leagues for team games.

Are places like gyms, YMCAs, and Boys and Girls Clubs closed?

No. These places do not have to close. However, gyms, YMCAs, and Boys and Girls Clubs that use indoor courts, indoor fields, or indoor rinks for team or group sports must not use these indoor venues for team or group sport activities, including practices and games during this one-week closure.

Can a basketball court at a YMCA be used for fitness classes?

Yes. Indoor sporting facilities may still use their indoor space for activities other than sports (i.e., a fitness class), as long as all applicable Executive Orders, regulations, and guidance are followed.

Are karate studios, roller skating rinks, climbing gyms, and gymnastics studios closed?

No.

Does this affect swimming pools? If so, how?

Yes. Swimming pools may remain open for individual swimming or fitness purposes but not for swim team training or meets.

Does this affect tennis and racquet clubs? If so, how?

Yes. These clubs are considered indoor sporting facilities and may not host matches or practices in accordance with the current executive order. They may be used for individual lessons or fitness purposes, but not for team practice of games.

Does this policy affect football?

No. This policy is about indoor sports. In addition, the same factors that led the State to decide two months ago that the risk to public health was too great to allow high school football in the fall are not only still at play, but far worse now.

Are indoor tracks permitted to be used for indoor track and field?

No. Indoor sporting facilities that have indoor tracks may not host meets or practices in accordance with the current Executive Order.

Why is Rhode Island closing ice rinks for seven days?

Sports-related COVID-19 cases are going up, and one third of Rhode Island's sports-related COVID-19 cases involve ice hockey. Other states, like New Hampshire and Massachusetts, have similarly shut down rinks temporarily to ensure that safe practices will be in place to limit the spread. Every case associated with hockey involves dozens of people being quarantined. In fact, some New England hockey tournaments have led to hundreds of people being quarantined. The one-week pause will allow Rhode Island to ensure that protective measures and rules are in place and being implemented at ice rinks and other indoor sport facilities.

Why is Rhode Island closing indoor sports facilities for seven days?

Sports-related COVID-19 cases are going up along with COVID-19 cases across Rhode Island. Every case associated with sports involves dozens of people being quarantined. The one-week pause will allow Rhode Island to ensure that protective measures and rules are in place and being implemented at indoor sports facilities to reduce the likelihood of transmitting COVID-19.

Why does the seven-day closure not apply to college and professional indoor sporting facilities and sporting activities?

College and professional indoor sporting facilities and teams are highly regulated with NCAA rules and intercollegiate league rules (Big East, Ivy League, etc.) or associated professional rules being followed. For example, starting in November, college athletes are being tested for COVID-19 multiple times per week.

What about testing? Will people need to show a negative COVID-19 test to return to these indoor facilities?

This is something that will be considered as the State takes the next week to work with the sports and indoor sporting facility community and to prepare additional regulations and update our guidance.

What can we expect for winter high school sports?

High schools are not playing winter sports or indoor sports right now. We will spend the next week working with the Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL) to develop updated regulations and guidance for high school winter sports. The goal is to have kids play as many winter sports as possible in a safe manner. Given that high school winter sports are all played indoors, these activities are inherently riskier than outdoor sports. Thus, there are many issues that must be addressed and preparations that must be made in order to conduct winter sports in a safe manner that reduces the risk and spread of COVID-19. It is possible that some higher risk sports may not be played competitively this winter.

When will new regulations be in place?

New regulations and guidance for ice rinks and other indoor sports facilities and for winter sports will be in place no later than Sunday, November 8.