

USATF COVID-19 Question and Answer Session notes

June, 2020

1. How are the requirements for health/safety plans for sanctioned meets being monitored through the process?

They should be monitored in the same way health / safety plans were monitored with any sanction before this guidance.

2. Many masters athletes are very resistant to the idea that those 65+ should not participate in meets. They see it as age discrimination. Can we be provided with the evidence that leads to that age cutoff? How can any of this be enforced, or do we just let people police themselves?

The CDC lists eleven very specific conditions who are at higher risk for severe illness. Our recommendations are taken directly from the CDC. They specifically list those ages 65 and older as one of the eleven criteria for higher risk for severe illness with COVID-19. Remember that USATF guidance recommends that those who meet the CDC criteria for higher risk not participate. Individuals are free to make their own decision. (The advice and recommendation of the CDC and the working group is that if you have one of the 11 CDC designated risk factors, you should not participate in USATF events at this time.)

3. If a meet is targeted for masters athletes will any additional scrutiny be given to the planning when a sanction is applied for?

No additional scrutiny, but violations of the event hosting guidance could result in the sanction and accompanying insurance being void.

4. Will we be able to hold track meets and other running events once facilities such as Colleges are willing to hold events at their facilities?

As long as the facility allows, the local public health authority approves, and the event follows the event sanctioning guidelines, then those track meets can be held.

5. Will meet management/administration best practices be developed and published by the working group? How will they be distributed? Will updates be published and labeled as such?"

Our Event Hosting guidance lists advice for developing a Medical Response Plan, which includes recommendations to follow the WHO Key Planning for Mass Gathering Events. This WHO document includes best practices for event administration and should be given consideration for meet management and administration decisions. We have added the links to the WHO Key Planning for Mass Gathering events to our Event Hosting Guidance webpage.

6. Beginning in July, our state will allow up to 500 socially distanced outdoor competitors. USATF guidance now says 'can be as high as 100-250 people and will differ by locale'. What would be the limit in order to get a sanction?

The limit is whatever the state / local gathering limit is as of the date of the event.

7. Does the Criteria for entry to facility and participation apply to an outdoor road race as well?
The gathering limit applies broadly in the same definition as state and local gathering limits. For example, if state guidance limits include an outdoor festival, then a road race should follow the same state and local public health authority guidance.

8. What is your guidance on spectators at a road race?
The event should follow state and local gathering guidance and input from the local public health authority.

9. Can you provide us with an example of a Medical Response Plan?
The details recommended for a Medical Response Plan are included in the guidance. Because of the broad nature of USATF sanctioned events (differing stadiums, road courses, etc.) and the local public health requirements and virus conditions in different locations, some Medical Response Plans will be very simple, and others may be much more complex. It will not be a one size fits all template. Because coordination with the local public health authority is a requirement of the event hosting guidance, the local public health authority should be the determiner of the adequacy of any Medical Response Plan for a local event.

10. I have an Association RW Championship, with several distance options, scheduled for 9/27/20. I expect about 10-15 entries, 3-4 lap counters, 3-4 volunteers for registration table and water table (can be same people), 5 officials = 21-28 people.

What do I, as race director, need to do to meet guidelines?

Follow the steps in the Event Hosting Guidance to make a determination

11. How do I get a non-contact thermometer for 1 day use?
Thermometers are available for purchase online or the local public health authority may be able to assist.

12. How do we start the race(s) on the waterfall line(s) yet keep 6' spacing?
RW events on the track fall under the moderate risk criteria, which includes 2x negative COVID testing (among others), and 6' spacing does not have to be maintained during the start or race itself. (Expand on distance events) To be clear, the low risk and moderate risk criteria are primarily dependent on the ability to social distance (as well as minimize contact with contaminated surfaces). In all distance races not in lanes on the track, there is no way for an athlete to freely socially distance during the race – therefore, distance events fall into the moderate risk category and require the added step of negative testing.

13. Are masks needed? By whom?
Masks are not required as part of the USATF event Hosting guidance, but state / local regulations should be followed. USATF encourages all meet officials, staff, coaches, and spectators to wear masks, as well as athletes when not warming up or competing.

14. Athletes can't wear masks while competing. Do they need to wear them until start and after finish? Where do they put them during the race?

Athletes should leave their masks with their other gear or put in their pocket when they begin to warm up.

15. Who is policing the championships for adherence to guidelines by a USATF Championship or Sanctioned by USATF event?

It is up to the event to follow the rules associated with a sanction, just as before COVID-19.

16. What is the protocol for reporting an infraction of stated guidelines by a volunteer, a spectator, a competitor?

The protocols are the same as maintained in any emergency response and/or security plan maintained by the event organizer. In addition, the association should be immediately notified if guidelines are not being followed.

17. The new appendix document related specifically to LDR -- what type of recommendations/rules will be applicable for Mountain and Trail-specific events? These are very different than 20,000 person road races (and event a 2,000 person road race for that matter). Trail and mountain running is typically a socially distanced event for many! Who on the task force knows about trail and mountain running to provide the proper input to the recommendations/guidelines?"

The same guidance applies to MUT events. The start and course width rules are designed to reduce exposure risk.

18. How soon will we know about National Dates and meetings and what are drop dead dates? any word on cross country and USATF JO?

We're continually monitoring the situation, and the regional situation with the virus is continually changing. A good way to view this is with a calendar analogy -- You ask about XC (first day of summer -- three months from now – three months ago). JOTF has been cancelled. It's too soon to determine the fate of JOXC.

19. With the data for deaths from covid being so clearly dominated by age, why are the restrictions for youth so severe? They appear to be at no direct risk, and studies show that they do not transmit the virus to adults.

This assertion is incorrect. We must follow the guidance of the CDC. The CDC notes that the data on children transmitting the virus to other children or adults is unclear, with multiple peer reviewed studies showing direct children to adult transmission (but with other studies a low incidence or children transmitting the virus). The CDC's current recommendations are to apply their guidelines to all age groups.

20. With the data from deaths from covid so clearly showing that pre-existing conditions dominate the risk equation, why are USATF recommendations for masters athletes have the 65 year old cutoff?

The CDC specifically defines over 65 years of age as one of the 11 CDC designated risk factors.

21. Why doesn't USATF treat adult athletes and parents of youth athletes as adults? Give them facts as USATF understands them (including references would be nice). Let the event directors describe their events. Then let these adults make up their own minds on whether they should participate.
 Individuals are free to make their own decisions about competing. USATF can set guidance for sanction and accompanying insurance coverage.
22. Why are the USATF recommendations for a small marathon of non-elite runners the same as for a shorter elite race? the non-elite runners will quickly space out, while the elite runners will stay in a pack. Clearly different risk levels.
 The USATF / USOPC risk stratification as part of the Guidance is rooted in competitors' ability to freely social distance in an event while competing. Even in a distance event track race of a handful of people, competitors – by nature of the competition cannot freely socially distance. There are also studies suggesting that athletes running in open air can leave aerosolized particles in their wake as long as 8m (or about 30 feet) in distance.
23. Why is USATF trying to be my mother? Let me make up my own mind"
 All competitors can make up their own mind about participation in a competition. USATF, however, determines the criteria for awarding a sanction (and the accompanying insurance coverage) for an event.
24. Does the ""Logistical Information and Guidance for Event Directors and LOCs"" document apply to USATF national championships? Can national championships scheduled for regions in Phase 3 and Phase 4 proceed with their events within the guidelines? Most have cancelled and the remainder are waiting
 National Championships will only be held in accordance with the stated guidelines. USATF only directly puts on the following national championships (Toyota Indoor and Toyota Outdoor, Youth Indoor and Youth Outdoor, Junior Olympics T&F and JO XC). LOCs help administer other USATF championship events. Keep in mind, for those national championships put on by an LOC, they may be handling their communication strategies a bit differently.
25. Current CDC guidelines do not delineate age 65 for 'at risk individuals'. CDC only indicates that ""older adults"" might be at higher risk. New York State defines the age as 70+. How did USATF decide that they ""strongly recommend that individuals"" ""over the age of 65"" ""not participate in the sanctioned event in any capacity""? Why 65?
 See: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html>
 See: <https://www.usatf.org/covid19/logistical-information-and-guidance-for-event-directors-and-local-organizing-committees>
 Note: This recommendation (age 65+) effectively eliminates the vast majority of certified officials in our Association from participating in any sanctioned events. We cannot hold events without certified officials.

The CDC guidelines specifically list age 65 and older as a risk factor. It is on the CDC webpage listed in the question (in the table halfway down the page).

USATF is following CDC guidelines. Keep in mind, the USATF guidance RECOMMENDS that individuals who have CDC risk factors do not participate. If individuals who have one or more CDC risk factors choose to participate in the event, they will be ignoring the guidance and recommendations provided by USATF.

26. The COVID 19 Guidance has various risk factors . Why not cancel all remaining 2020 Events until 2021 ? The low risk is the safest but it will require a lot from meet personnel and a lot of time for a Track and Field Meet especially for an Indoor Meet.

The decision to cancel is up to the event organizer, but they can't hold an event unless the conditions are met. If they choose to hold the event, they need to follow guidance. It's evolving. Event hosting guidance takes into account risk mitigation.

27. Who will liability fall on if an athlete or fan contract COVID19 during a practice or USATF sanctioned event. (Will Insurance cover clubs or host?)

Event organizers are responsible for putting on events in accordance with the guidelines.

Violations of the event hosting guidance could result in the sanction and accompanying insurance being void.

28. Will there be qualifiers at this point, as well as Championships?

That's to be determined. Associations should rely on local health authorities for guidance.

29. Will associations be penalized for not meeting necessary requirements for accreditation?

From Associations Chair Dave Shrock: The Accreditation SubCommittee is continually assessing the evolving challenges associations face because of COVID-19 and will amend the 2020 accreditation standards this fall. The 2019 accreditation cycle currently being assessed will not be affected.

30. With the lack of High Schools allowing clubs rental or usage of tracks, how are we to function or even attempt to have a season at this point?

We all hope that as the states open back up, these situations resolve themselves. We are monitoring the situation closely and we understand we are all in the same situation. Our hope is that the tracks open back up soon to the public and practices and competitions resume in accordance with local guidance. The safety and well-being of all our members is our top priority.

31. Will there be PPE provided for those hosting or officiating events?

Yes - at our national championships (Youth XC, Elite), but for other events, the organizing committee is responsible. We would encourage you to work with local health authority to receive guidance on inventory.

32. Are the National Office Liaisons for committees/councils contacting the remaining championships for 2020 and discussing their plans for implementation of the Event Hosting Guidance? Or is this the responsibility of the Committees/Councils?
Our events team is in constant contact with each committee.
33. Under Step 4 of the Event Hosting Guidance when listing Low Risk and Moderate Risk categories, are the procedures listed the only way that to meet that categorization (eg, HJ/PV ""Meets criteria for Low Risk only if pits are covered by a tarp that is removed and disinfected after each athlete"") or are those suggested as examples of best practices and alternative methods that reach the same goal are acceptable (eg, HJ/PV - instead of disinfecting the tarp coverings after each athletes [which may not be feasible when the field is down to only a few jumpers and no time for tarps to dry], limit field size to 10 athletes and have 10 separate clearly labeled tarps and each athlete only jumps onto ""their"" tarp covering the pads)?
Either mechanism for PV/HJ tarps is acceptable - either disinfecting between jumpers or each athlete has their own tarp which is only used for them.
34. There's a reference to ""Appendix 1"" in Step 4 and ""Appendix 2"" in the intro paragraph to Step 5. Are these appendices available? "
Links to those appendices are under the Return to Play section in the website, and on the Event Hosting Section.
35. In stage 3 it limits groups to 10. Can you organize a physically distanced T&F competition with different events held at the same venue with 10 participants in each event? (EX: 10 at Shot, 10 at Long Jump, 10 in different running events, etc?)
That guidance for Phase 3 has been updated to include a gathering size up to the state / local gathering size limit. No more than that limit can be in the facility.
36. In California they have a term 'Stable Cohort' relating to families or groups of athletes who consistently train together..how would this affect training groups?"
USATF Return to Training guidelines addresses this and recommends grouping athletes from the same family or those who cohabitate together in the same training group for practices.
37. What level of detail should be required for the safety document in an event sanction? Detail of screening (self or event responsibility), social distance precautions, volunteer and spectator precautions, athlete distancing?"
As much detail as is required by the local public health authority, and the specific requirements listed in the USATF Event Hosting Guidance, should be followed.
38. Fall Championship Outlook for all levels of USATF?
We don't know.
39. What infrastructure support can USATF provide for health screening and tracking? (We need an app or every club / race will invent own)

The CDC advises that each event should first check with their local public health authority for their recommendations (may differ by state). If they do not have a preference, each is free to select their own mechanism for entry screening, but we would recommend using the CDC's recommended screening questions under their Guidance for employers. Some small events may choose to use a paper form. Other large events may find it better to use an app.

40. Is there a specific task force or effort working on making and promoting XC as a safe event for the fall. This is a leadership opportunity that has a short fuse that might be nearly past. High school everywhere are within 2 weeks of deciding on fall sports. Can we help NFHS make this work? Can we be ready to be an alternative? It could be a bridge too far and we could say that too. Time is of the essence. We don't know definitively that its safe.

With XC in the fall, there are three primary concerns. One is that, as with many things related to COVID-19, it is extremely hard to try and predict the future status of the viral outbreak. Just think to how things were regionally and nationally with COVID-19 just 2-3 months ago in mid-March to mid-April, compared to how they are now, and it illustrates just part of the range of how things could be 2-3 months from now in XC season. Second is that for an event to be considered to be low risk, all competitors must freely have the ability to social distance throughout the competition. Many XC events could find that to logistically be a challenge. Finally, the science on how the virus could be transmitted via aerosolized particles with the heavy breathing of distance running outdoors is unsettled. There are data that suggest that while larger respiratory droplets normally fall to the ground within 2m of being exhaled, smaller aerosolized particles from a person running could leave a wake as long as 8m – however, this needs to be confirmed with well-controlled, peer-reviewed studies.

41. What can be done with insurance or other guidance that can make working with university facilities feasible? We're both facing the same issues and 'no' is easy. (Other facilities too) Each university is different- they have own internal guidance and requirements. No is not an easy answer. This is a complex issue.
42. Can USATF take a stronger stance on safety protocols including masks? There is both the real and perceived nature of our sport to the public. This impacts politicians and their support or not of events. The more runners are seen practicing good hygiene the more trust we garner? USATF guidance is to follow CDC and state / local regulations on wearing a mask. We recommend that all officials, spectators, coaches, and fans at practices / events wear a mask, as well as athletes when not competing.
43. Comment on the limited availability to tests as a competition requirement when test-on-demand is not an option in many areas. "
Availability of testing will certainly affect the ability to host events in select areas of the country. Keep in mind that many T&F events and road / RW / MUT events can be modified to meet the low risk criteria, which does not require testing -- just survey and temperature screening. We are currently working with the USOPC to reallocate a portion of the funding they give USATF for elite athlete medical support to make COVID testing available for elite athletes who need the test to be cleared for competition.
44. Are there any consideration from USATF to assist Associations or obtain partnerships with sponsors to cover the costs of PPE for athletes/clubs.

As we look toward 2021, USATF will take this into consideration.

45. Will those individuals administering temperature checks be required to be licensed health care workers?

They are not required to be health care providers but should be trained to follow proper procedures, as mandated by the local public health authority. Health care providers would be preferred, and the guidance states the “Medical Response Plan should include detailed procedures for dealing with any individuals who do not meet screening criteria or display signs of illness.”

46. What type of PPE and COVID related marketing signage/apparel and information have been developed for distribution to Associations within USATF Membership? A lot of youth athletes are asymptomatic and may not have been tested. How has USATF legal prepared for COVID-19 related to claims from members participation while at USATF sanctioned events or practices? Will our meet and practice insurance cover those have come in contact with these athletes?

USATF is carefully following CDC guidelines. USATF’s waivers have been modified to account for this particular COVID-related risk. The CDC website has signage that can be printed and posted at events. For any event, individuals are participating at their own risk. If they are allowed to practice, they need to do so under the guidance of the respective local guidelines.

47. At a youth Track and field meet we have ~3,000-10,000 athletes participating how many temperature check stations we have.

You will need enough temperature check stations (and a medical seclusion area nearby for those who indicate symptoms or have elevated temperature) to effectively handle the event size. This is true with all sizes of events.

48. How often should we check?

Screening needs to take place anytime someone enters the stadium (or once cleared the first time each day, and a non-removable wristband is given).

49. Youth athletes participate in multiple events. Should they have their temperature checked before each event?

Screening does not need to be completed again, once the athlete / coach / etc. enters the facility, unless they begin to present with symptoms.

50. Will there be best practices developed and published regarding social distancing in terms of meet management? i.e. packet pickup, warmup areas, athlete check-in/clerking marshaling, etc.?"

It needs to be developed internally, by the LOCs and event hosts, reference WHO guidance for mass sporting events. It varies with local health authorities and what stage or phase the state or municipality is in.