



USA  
FENCING

RETURN TO  
FENCING

# HEALTH & SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

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FOR  
THE RESUMPTION  
OF NATIONAL EVENTS

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MAY 2021

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## OVERVIEW

**USA Fencing (USFA)** has developed these Protocols for the Resumption of National Events. The measures covered in this document have been developed based upon the recommendations given by accredited health authorities, including The Mount Sinai Department of Rehabilitation and Human Performance, USA Fencing Sports Medicine, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** as well as various tournament-related individuals, groups and committees within USA Fencing. USFA will ensure that national tournaments will operate in compliance with local and state laws, regulations, executive orders and other legal mandates regarding COVID-19.

The following are regulations that will be implemented by USFA at the competition venue to help create a safe environment within our national events. Compliance with these protocols will be mandatory for all participants, officials, coaches and all other individuals in attendance. They are based in significant part upon current guidelines promulgated by the CDC, the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee and other publicly available resources.

The protocols in this document are not intended and should not be taken to provide any sort of guarantee against infection by Covid-19 or any other communicable disease. Risks of infection can be reduced by adherence to these protocols but not entirely eliminated. Persons attending national events must acknowledge and assume all such risks. These protocols are also not intended and should not be taken as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, nor do USFA, its employees or other personnel assume any liability or responsibility for the efficacy of the procedures provided herein.



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# REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIALS, PARTICIPANTS & ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines before, during and after participating in local and regional tournaments or club activities.*

## REQUIRED BEFORE COMPETITION

- All participants in the tournament, including athletes and staff as well as all coaches or other credentialed individuals, must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test result in order to enter the facility. The COVID-19 PCR test must be taken no more than 72 hours prior to the start of travel for all credentialed individuals. Additional information on testing protocol will be released in the coming weeks.
- Self-monitor and be symptom-free for at least 14 days prior to attending any tournament (See USOPC Self-Monitoring Instructions, below).
- Do not attend the event if you have had close sustained contact in the last 14 days with anyone who was sick or known or believed to have COVID-19.
- Do not attend the event if you are sick or do not feel well.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Wash and sanitize all fencing equipment prior to your arrival at the competition venue. Consult the manufacturer for proper cleaning instructions to avoid possible damage to your equipment.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Practice social distancing where appropriate.
- Wear a surgical or cloth mask covering both mouth and nose to reduce exposure to airborne contaminated particles and reduce exposure to others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.



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## REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIALS, PARTICIPANTS & ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

### **MAIL IN PCR TESTING:**

USA Fencing has entered into a partnership with Inspire Diagnostics to offer mail-in PCR testing kits with no out of pocket cost to all NAC participants and staff. Those who registered for the April, May or June NACs or were hired as tournament staff were emailed further details regarding access to this testing. Tournament participants are NOT required to use this testing method; however, it is being made available as a USA Fencing member benefit for those who choose to utilize the service.

**VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS:** Individuals who have completed the COVID vaccine series prior to the competition must still obtain a negative PCR test result in order to participate in a USA Fencing national event. Throughout the course of the season, as guidelines and recommendations for individuals who have been completely vaccinated change and evolve, new updates may be put into place for vaccinated individuals.

**PARTICIPANTS RECOVERED FROM HAVING COVID 19:** Individual participants that have fully recovered from the virus and are cleared by a physician AND a sports cardiologist may be allowed to compete in the event if they are not able to produce a negative PCR test. These participants will be required to provide a report of clearance from a physician AND a sports cardiologist clearance that includes serology test results and results demonstrating both an ECG and echocardiogram within normal limits. In addition, negative rapid antigen results must be provided 10 days prior to the first day of competition to the USA Fencing National Office to compete/participate in the National Tournament. Non-athlete participants will be required to provide the clearance report and negative rapid antigen tests, but will not be required to provide clearance from a sports cardiologist. The above reports should be emailed to [nationalevents@usafencing.org](mailto:nationalevents@usafencing.org)





## REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIALS, PARTICIPANTS & ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

### REQUIRED DURING COMPETITION

- All attendees at USA Fencing tournaments will be required to wear a face mask covering both mouth and nose at all times, including athletes during competition. Face coverings must be two-layer cloth masks or surgical face coverings. Single-layer gaiters, bandannas, masks with vents and inserts that clip into the fencing mask and do not fully contact the athlete's face **are not permitted**. Athletes who do not comply with this policy **will not** be allowed to compete. Other individuals, including spectators and coaches, who do not wear a mask or face covering will be assessed a Group 3 penalty for "any person not on strip disturbing order" which includes a yellow card warning for the first infraction and a black card resulting in expulsion from the venue for a second infraction. There will be no exceptions, for athletes or any other tournament attendee, to the mask mandate.
- **Each participant will be permitted to have one additional individual accompany them into the competition venue.** This person may be one coach OR one parent OR one legal guardian OR one spouse OR one other guest. The plus one must be registered through the USA Fencing database prior to the start of the tournament.
- All current Member and Affiliate Clubs that have athletes competing will be permitted to register as many coaches as they wish to send. This credential is in addition to the plus one allocated to each athlete. All registered coaches must have a current Coach membership or +Coach add-on.
- All officials, participants and any accompanying persons wishing to enter the competition venue will be required to submit to a temperature check.
- Any individuals presenting with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will be subject to additional health screening by USA Fencing's Sports Medicine officials to determine eligibility to enter the venue.
- Participants must come to the tournament already dressed in freshly washed clothing. Clothing should be suitable for public display and, if competing, to wear under fencing uniforms, such that uniforms can be put on at the venue without the need for private changing rooms.
- Participants must refrain from shouting and/or screaming after scoring a touch or at other points during a bout. Fencers will receive yellow/red cards for this behavior based upon the "disturbing order" rule.
- Social distancing will be enforced while inside the convention center. Participants and accompanying persons must maintain appropriate distance from others in the competition venue whenever possible.



## REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIALS, PARTICIPANTS & ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

### **MASK MANDATE PROVISIONS**

Due to the mask mandate, USA Fencing has agreed on several provisions to account for the additional equipment:

- The rest period during direct elimination bouts has been extended to 90 seconds.
- Referees should make allowances for fencers needing to adjust/reset their mask; consider this akin to retying a shoelace or fixing an equipment fastening. Chronic mask slippage is to be treated in the same manner as, for example, non-conforming hair falling out of position; fencers are expected to make reasonable provisions for keeping their face coverings fixed in place, and referees may enforce that via Group 1 penalty if necessary.
- Consider the face covering a required piece of safety equipment. Fencers not properly equipped are not permitted to take part in the competition.
- Masks may be temporarily lowered or repositioned in order for the wearer to eat or drink, for the minimum necessary time to complete that act.

- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Participants must refrain from contacting other participants, officials and attendees before, during and after bouts (handshakes, body contact, etc.).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Participants and accompanying persons must bring your own water. Concessions may be available depending upon local and state protocols.

### **REQUIRED AFTER COMPETITION**

- Once a participant has completed their event, the participant and plus one are required to leave the competition venue.
- Coaches that have been designated as a plus one may remain until they no longer have any athletes competing in the event. Once a coach's athletes are eliminated from that day's event, he or she must leave the venue. If a coach has athletes competing in multiple events in the same day, he or she may return when athletes are admitted for the next event.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Following the conclusion of competition each day and after the conclusion of tournament, monitor your health and report any symptoms.



## REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIALS, PARTICIPANTS & ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

Participants and accompanying persons who entered the competition venue should alert the National Office if they test positive for COVID-19 during competition or within 14 days following the tournament.

- Practice social distancing whenever possible.
- Wear a surgical or cloth mask covering both mouth and nose when possible to reduce exposure to airborne contaminated particles.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Promptly wash and sanitize all gear, uniforms and apparel used during the competition. Consult the manufacturer for proper cleaning instructions to avoid possible damage to your equipment.

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## GENERAL PROTOCOLS FOR VENUE

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines before, during and after participating in local and regional tournaments or club activities. And:*

### BEFORE COMPETITION

- Signage will be posted in prominent locations in the venue, outlining the tournament's COVID-19 policies on masks, social distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.
- Processes for regular cleaning and sanitation of the competition venue will be created through coordination with the venue owners and operators. This will include periodic cleanings throughout the tournament days and also after the conclusion of competition each night.
- Maximum allowable number of individuals permitted in the venue at one time will be discussed and confirmed with local, state and federal authorities to ensure compliance with all regulations.
- USA Fencing will coordinate with suppliers and the competition venue to procure sufficient quantities of sanitation equipment (Examples i.e., cleaning solutions, hand sanitizer stations, alcohol/bleach wipes) and PPE (i.e., masks and gloves).
- After tournament setup has been completed, the competition venue will be cleaned and sanitized before competition commences.



## GENERAL PROTOCOLS FOR VENUE

- Drinking fountains and shared water dispensers will be disabled at the competition venue, except for the no-touch varieties, for filling water bottles.
- Quarantine spaces will be identified in the competition venue in order to isolate any individuals that may develop symptoms of COVID-19 while at the venue.

### DURING COMPETITION

- Regular cleanings and sanitation of high touch surfaces and equipment will be conducted, per the agreed upon schedule between USA Fencing and the venue, on all days of competition.
- Temperature check stations will be set up at all competition venue entrances. All individuals wishing to enter the competition venue will be subject to a temperature check before being admitted to the venue.
- Any individuals presenting with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will be subject to additional health screening by USA Fencing's Sports Medicine officials to determine eligibility to enter the venue.
- Social distancing and wearing of surgical or cloth face masks will be strictly enforced by venue and USA Fencing officials. Any individuals refusing to comply with these regulations will be asked to leave the venue.
- Remove anyone from the tournament immediately if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, following the steps outlined in the preceding section.

### AFTER COMPETITION

- All surfaces and equipment that were used during each tournament will be cleaned and sanitized after the conclusion of the competition.
- USA Fencing will keep contact information on file for all competition participants, accompanying persons, coaches and officials who enter the venue for 30 days after each tournament.





## PROTOCOL FOR VENDORS & SALE OF MERCHANDISE

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines before, during and after participating in club activity. And:*

- All vendors will be required to wear a surgical or cloth mask covering both mouth and nose
- Hand sanitizer stations will be made available for use at all booths.
- Use of cash as a form of payment will be minimized wherever possible.
- Vendors must regularly sanitize and wipe down high touch surfaces and merchandise out for display.
- If equipment demos are to be permitted by vendors, an approved protocol for sanitization of demo products in between uses must be provided for approval by USAF.
- Vendors must monitor the number of shoppers inside and around their booth to ensure sufficient spacing for social distancing.
- Vendors must monitor lines for checkout and shopping to ensure 6 ft. of distance is maintained between all individuals in booth.
- Vendors should mark floors to indicate appropriate social distancing for lines.

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## PROTOCOLS FOR OPERATIONS OF THE BOUT COMMITTEE AREA

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- Officials working Bout Committee and IT must wear surgical or cloth masks covering both mouth and nose and disposable gloves.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be at all tables where tournament officials are stationed.
- Bout Committee officials will wipe down frequently touched tables and surfaces periodically.
- The Bout Committee area will be set up with barrier shields to separate members of the Bout Committee from tournament participants.
- Floor markings will be taped, showing 6 ft. of space from the table each BC Official is stationed at. No more than one fencer will be permitted at the table at which each Bout Committee official is stationed. With a BC official at a given time, and all other fencers for that event



## PROTOCOLS FOR OPERATIONS OF THE BOUT COMMITTEE AREA

should wait behind the line until called by the officials member to come forward. Athletes must ensure 6 ft. between themselves and any others waiting in line.

- Bout Committee officials will not take the bout slips from the fencers.
  - Each slip will have a barcode which will be scanned by the fencer.
  - Slips will be scanned by the fencer, and the BC official will record the score on the computer while the slip is shown to them.
  - Once completed, the slip will be dropped in a box by the fencer, on the side of the table closest to them and furthest from the BC official member.
- The exchange of administrative supplies such as pens, pencils, clipboards, etc. between tournament officials will be minimized.
- Items typically shared, such as clipboards and weapon testing equipment, will be assigned to specific officials and checked out for the duration of the tournament where possible.
- Clipboards and weapon testing equipment will be sanitized at the end of the tournament, before putting back in storage containers.

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## PROTOCOLS FOR SHARED OFFICIALS SPACES

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- Spacing between tables in rest and meal areas will be at least 6 ft., and the number of chairs stationed at each table will be reduced to allow for social distancing as appropriate.
- Lunch will be determined by local venue protocols. Meals will be prepackaged or served by venue staff to minimize the need for shared serving utensils.
- Pre-packaged sets of napkins and silverware will be provided in officials meal rooms.
- Bottled water will be provided for tournament officials or no-touch water dispensers will be set up in officials areas to fill personal bottles.
- Community games and other shared items will be removed from officials' break areas until further notice.



## PROTOCOLS FOR REFEREE AREAS, COMPETITION PODS & STRIPS

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- Anyone watching the bouts must practice social distancing.
- Participants must refrain from contacting other participants, officials and attendees before, during and after bouts (handshakes, body contact, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes will be available at all scoring tables.
- Referees and pod captains will be required to wear masks and disposable gloves.
- Fencers will not touch or sign score sheets after each bout.
  - The referee will show each fencer the scoresheet after the bout for verification.
  - Once verified, the referee should sign or initial the sheet to acknowledge it as final before giving to the athlete to take to the Bout Committee.
- Reel clips and other frequently touched equipment at the competition strips will be sanitized throughout the competition day.
- Markings will be taped on floors along strips to show the proper distance those watching the bout should remain away from the referee area and fencing strip.
- No individuals will be permitted to stand directly behind the referees in the areas beside each strip.
- Separate entrance and exit points will be designated for the competition area to help reduce crowds and foot traffic in these areas.
- Clipboards, weights and shims should not be shared among officials, coaches, parents or participants.
- For competition strips with streaming cameras and equipment, all equipment will be wiped down and sanitized after each official finishes using the equipment.
- The full competition venue will be cleaned and sanitized after each tournament day and prior to the commencement of the next competition day.



## REQUIRED PROTOCOLS FOR SPORTS MEDICINE AREAS

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- Space for sports medicine areas will be expanded to allow for social distancing of athletes and medical staff as appropriate.
- All sports medicine officials will be required to wear cloth or surgical masks covering both mouth and nose per the mask mandate.
- Manual and one-on-one therapies will be minimized to avoid direct contact and longer periods of exposure for officials and athletes.
- Training tables will be covered with exam table paper and changed after every athlete that uses the table. Training tables also will be wiped down regularly with alcohol or bleach wipes.
- A secondary, isolated space will be designated for the quarantine of any individuals exhibiting potential symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will be kept in the isolated space until local health authorities have been contacted and appropriate course of action is determined.
- Electronic documentation processes will be utilized where possible to minimize need for hard copies and exchange of paper, pens, etc. while ensuring compliance with all applicable healthcare laws, regulations and mandates.

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## PROTOCOLS FOR OPERATIONS OF THE ARMORY

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- All officials in armory will be required to wear masks and some type of protective glove to avoid direct contact with equipment and athletes.
- Barrier shields will be mounted on the front of the armory tables to separate the armorers and fencers during the inspection process.





## **PROTOCOLS FOR OPERATIONS OF THE ARMORY**

- Armorers will sanitize gloves after servicing each fencer's equipment. Hand sanitizer will be available at each station for easy and efficient access.
- The armory will be set up with the following measures in place to protect armorers and athletes:
  - A single line should lead to the armory, with markings taped on the floor to indicate 6 ft. of spacing between each person in line
  - At the front of the line, a mark should be taped on the floor that fencers will not cross until they are called forward. The first fencer in line should wait at this mark.
  - Space armorer stations at least 6 ft. apart to ensure appropriate distancing for armorers and fencers standing in line.
- Markings will be taped on the floor, at least six feet in front of each armorer, where athletes should stand while their equipment is being checked. Only the fencer OR the fencer's plus one will wait in line for equipment check.
- The following process will be implemented for checking each athlete's equipment:
  - Armorers will call the athlete in front of the main line up to drop his or her equipment. The athlete should then advance to the armorer that called him or her and drop the equipment at the table for inspection.
  - While his or her equipment is being checked, the athlete should step back to the marking on the floor in front of the table, to allow for at least six feet of space between the athlete and the armorer and the armorer.
  - Once the check is complete, the athlete will be called back up to the table, retrieve the equipment and exit the line. The armorer will then call the next athlete forward.
- A "Pause" will be scheduled every 30 minutes for sanitation of tools and workspaces by the armorers. Weapons check should stop completely during this time.
- A time will be scheduled for equipment check for all events. Fencers will not be able to have their equipment checked at any time other than the one indicated by the schedule OR during one of the "open" periods after the last event of each competition day has begun. Fencers who come to have their equipment checked outside the permitted times will be asked to exit the line and return later.



## REQUIRED PROTOCOLS FOR AWARDS

*Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:*

- All officials conducting awards ceremonies will be required to wear masks and disposable gloves.
- Processes will be modified to eliminate direct contact during presentation of awards. This will include:
  - The role of presenter will be omitted from the awards ceremonies for the 2020-21 season.
  - Medals will be placed on trays at a table beside the awards stage for pick-up by athletes as they are announced.
- Markings will be taped on the floor to indicate where the athletes will line up before the ceremony and ensure appropriate space between markings to allow for social distancing.
- Athlete biographical information will be collected by electronic means in advance of the ceremonies to reduce wait times and exchange of administrative materials.
- Neither other fencers nor the athlete's plus one will be permitted to stand with the athlete while waiting for the ceremony to begin.
- Group photos will not be permitted in the awards area to discourage gatherings of crowds.

**Please Note:** Award ceremonies will not be held at the April, May or June NAC and will resume with the protocol listed above at the USA Fencing National Championships and July NAC.

Athletes who finish in the top 8 at the April, May or June NACs will be able to pick up their medals at the Satellite Bout Committee in the Final Room.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[www.usafencing.org/coronavirus](http://www.usafencing.org/coronavirus)

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## DISCLAIMER

These protocols are provided for general informational purposes only and are not intended as, nor should be relied upon as, specific medical or legal advice. All event organizers and participants are strongly encouraged to consult with qualified medical personnel and/or public health officials. Also, consult applicable federal, state and local laws, orders and/or guidelines. USAF and its divisions make no warranties or representations as to the completeness, reliability, and accuracy of the information contained herein.



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