



Fairfax County Health Department's COVID-19 Response In Recreational Sports

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Presentation Overview



- Fairfax Health District has experienced a significant number of cases and outbreaks associated with youth athletics over the past few months.
- Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) recently developed and shared a handout on COVID-19 investigations in youth athletic programs.
 - **Majority of information is not newly developed guidance**
 - Wanted to share our processes and be as transparent as possible, so teams/leagues/parents are not caught off guard when investigations occur.
- The handout (and this presentation) highlights FCHD's process for investigating cases and outbreaks in youth athletics.

FCHD's Goals - Athletics COVID Guidance

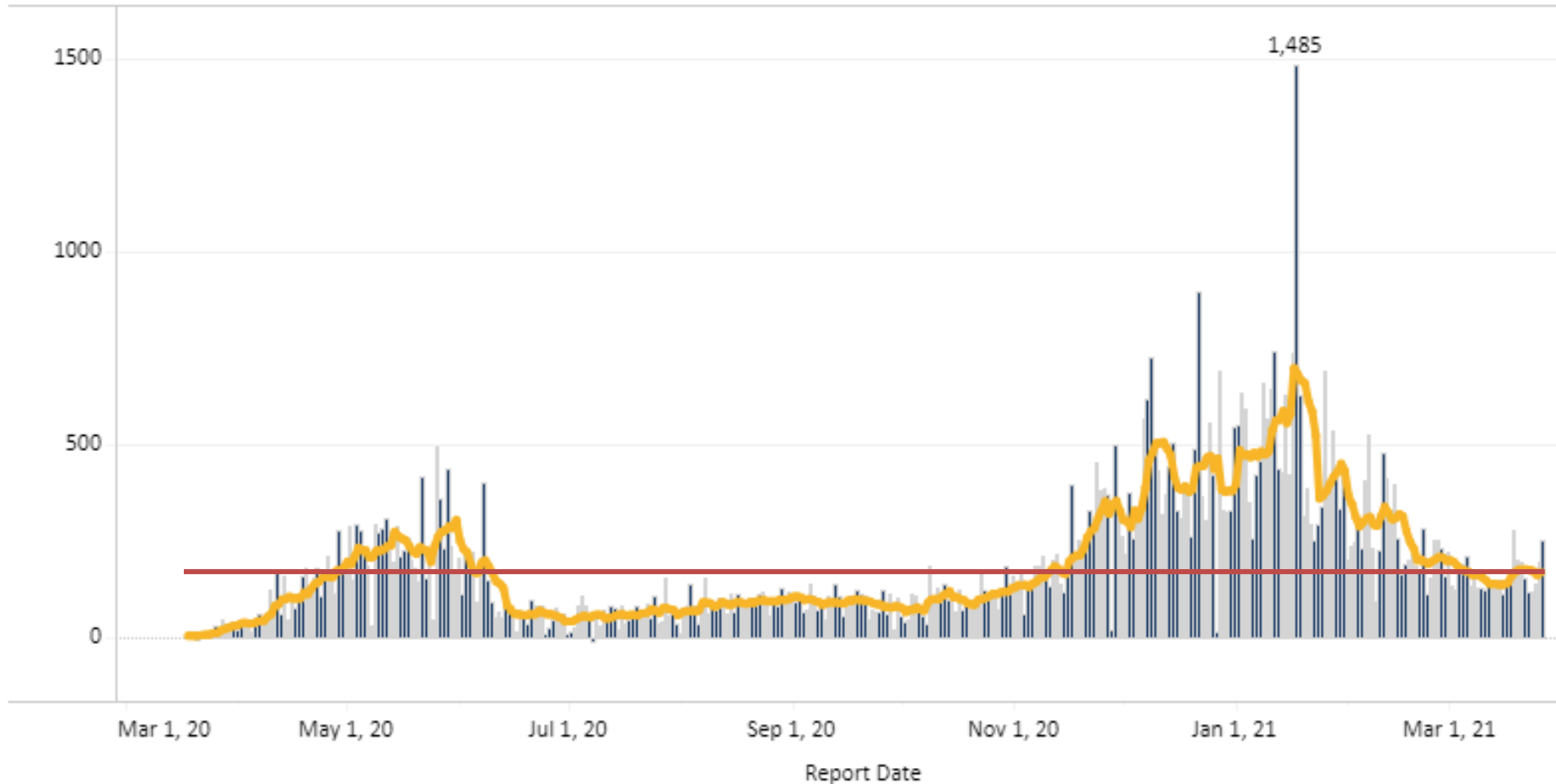


1. The Health Department recognizes and promotes the physical and mental health benefits of sports (include exercise, peer competition, and socialization)
2. Want to ensure a safe environment for all athletes, coaches, families and our community which includes thorough and timely case and contact investigations.
3. FCHD's processes will be updated based on best practices, updated recommendations, and local disease activity levels.

Current Disease Activity in Fairfax County, as of 03/26/2021



Report Date Daily Cases Counts - Fairfax



**Current 7-Day
Case Average:
170**

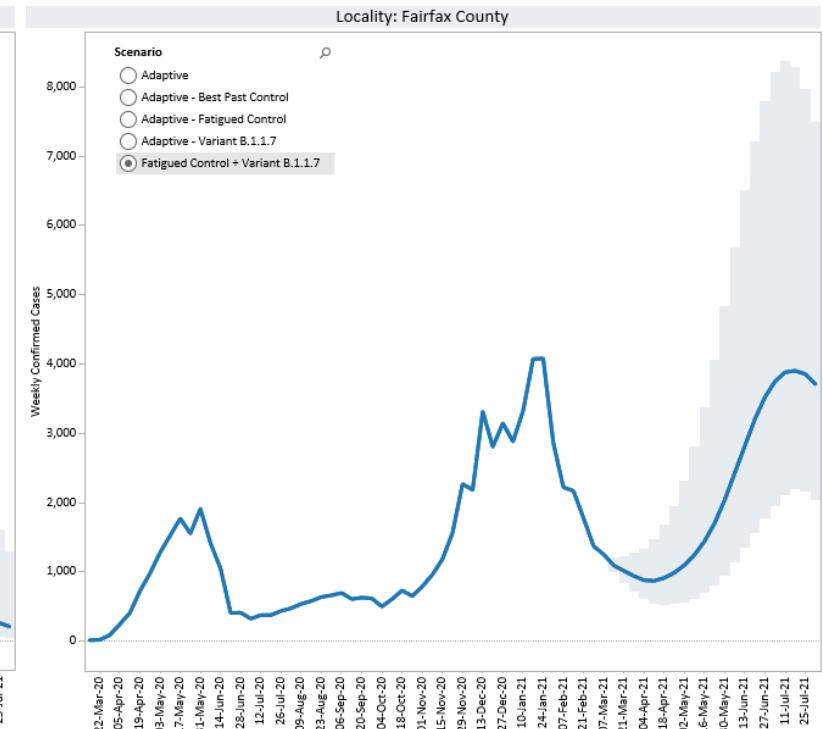
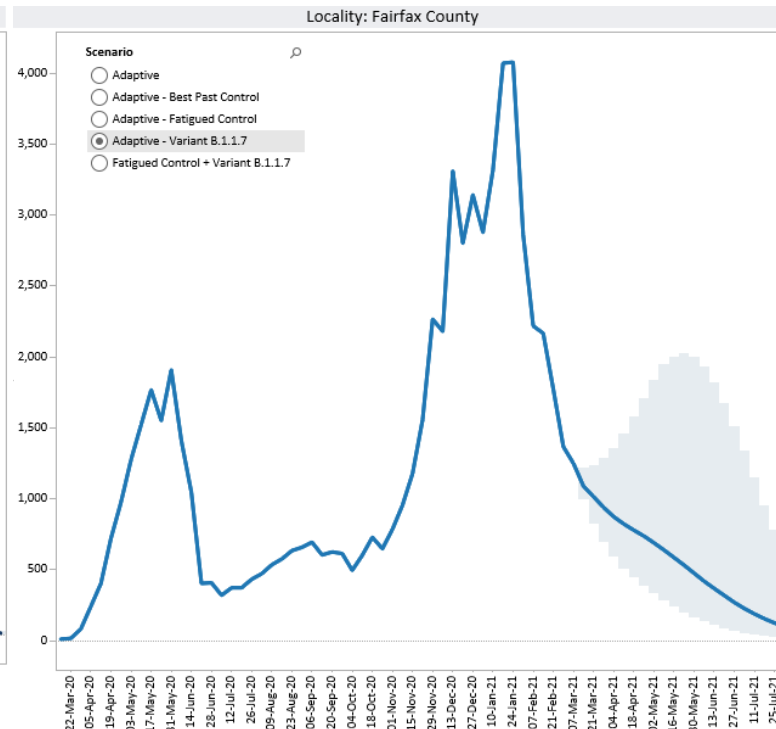
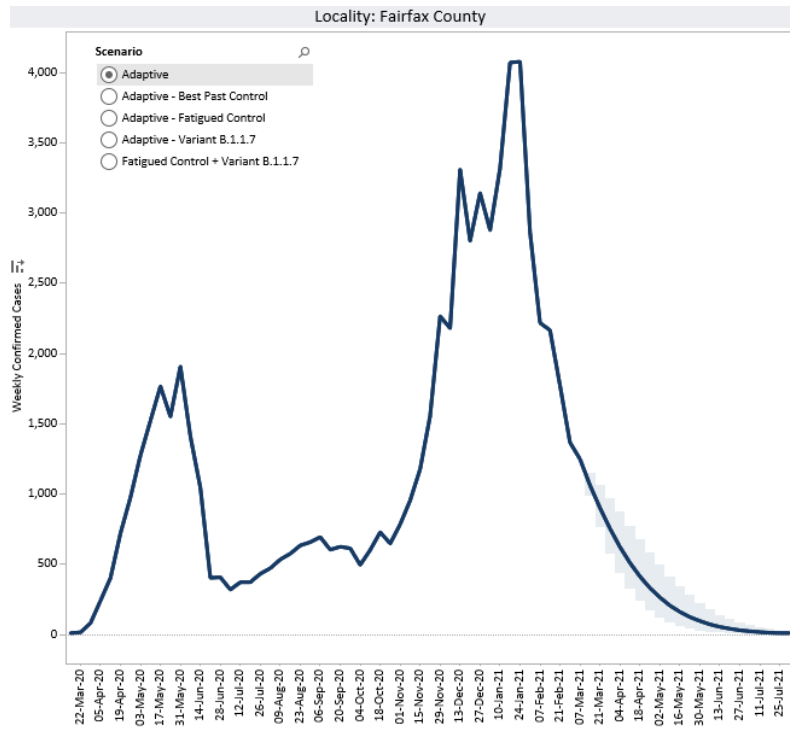
UVA Predictive Modeling: COVID-19 in Fairfax County



Current variant
Current mitigation

New variant
Current mitigation

New variant
Fatigued mitigation



Disease Activity in Fairfax County Associated with Athletics



- Since October 1, FCHD has responded to 24 outbreaks in youth athletics groups:

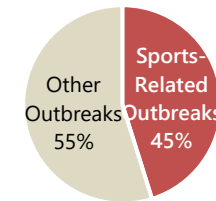
- **125 cases** (average of 5 cases per outbreak)
- The average number of contacts is **14.6**
- Youth athletics make up **7%** of all COVID outbreaks in Fairfax

Health District

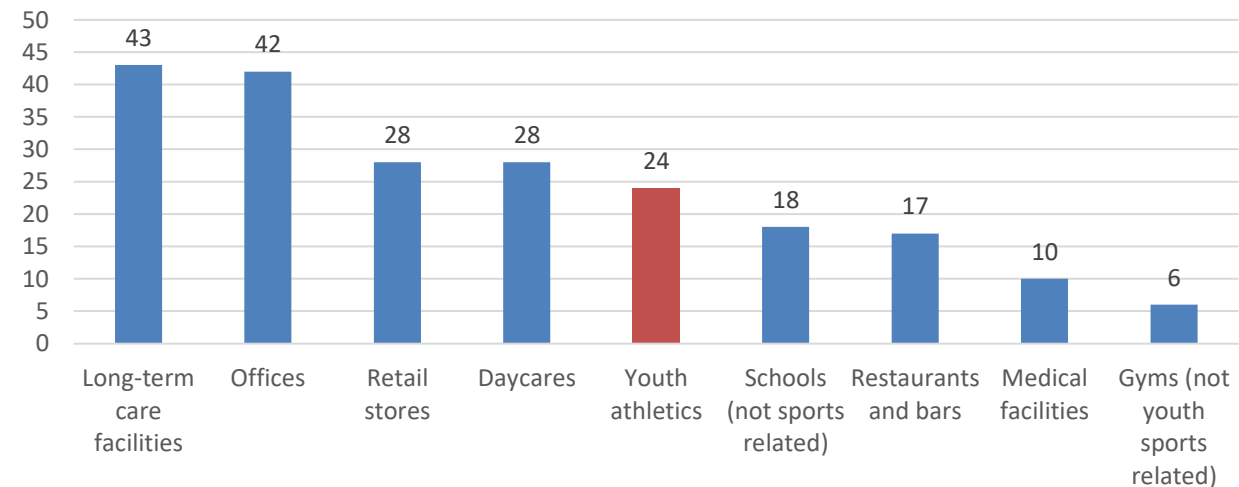
- FCHD has investigated outbreaks in the following sports:

- Basketball
- Dance
- Football
- Gymnastics
- Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Wrestling

What proportion of COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools are linked to student athlete programs?



Number of Outbreaks Investigated by FCHD, by Setting Type, October 2020-March 2021



Why are athletes at higher risk for spreading COVID-19?



- A few factors that contribute to **increased transmission** among athletes:
 - **Physical proximity** that happens in many competitive sports increases risk of spreading respiratory droplets
 - **Shared game equipment**
 - **Cumulative length of time** participants spend in proximity with one another
 - **Heavier breathing** during exercise, which increases droplet transmission
 - For sports in **indoor settings**, respiratory droplets not dispersed as easily as outdoors

FCHD Approach to COVID in Youth Athletics



- Youth athletics **pose risk of COVID transmission** (even with mitigation efforts).
- FCHD (in support of CDC and VDH) **prioritizes in-person learning** for students.
- **Team activities should be paused** in the event of a COVID case to allow FCHD time to complete investigation of the case and provide guidance to the team.
- **It is FCHD's legal role and responsibility to determine who needs to quarantine from possible exposure**
- In some circumstances, the **team may need to stop activities for 14 days.**

What am I required to report to the Health Department?



- VA Code requires outbreaks (2 or more cases) to be reported to directly and immediately to the Health Department
- Sports leagues fall under “day programs”
- FCHD has requested that individual cases of reportable diseases are also reported immediately to the Health Department.

§ 32.1-37. Reports by persons other than physicians.

B. The person in charge of any residential or day program, service or facility licensed or operated by any agency of the Commonwealth, school or summer camp as defined in § [35.1-1](#) shall immediately make or cause to be made a report of an outbreak of disease as defined by the Board. Such report shall be made by rapid means to the local health director or to the Commissioner.

C. The person in charge of any medical care facility, residential or day program, service or facility licensed or operated by any agency of the Commonwealth, school, or summer camp as defined in § [35.1-1](#) may also voluntarily report additional information, including individual cases of communicable diseases, at the request of the Department of Health for special surveillance or other epidemiological studies.

Where do I report cases and what needs to be included?



- Fairfax County Community Sports Organization COVID-19 Case Reporting
 - Online survey to report COVID cases in sports organizations to FCHD
 - HIPAA-compliant
 - <https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=XXNP8LMKD7>
 - Need to include all requested information, including team rosters and contact information.

Team/League Disease Legal Reporting Requirements



- Virginia Code § 32.1-39 and 12 Virginia Administrative Code § 5-90-100 give the Health Department the legal authority and responsibility to investigate positive COVID cases and to perform contact tracing. Reports and disclosures to the Health Department are immune from civil liability or criminal penalty. Va. Code § 32.1-38.
- All information obtained in the contact tracing process is kept strictly confidential; the Health Department is prohibited from disclosing the identities of positive cases or informants. 12 Va. Admin. Code § 5-90-100; Va. Code §§ 32.1-36, -38, -41.
- Entities (sports leagues) may voluntarily comply with the contact tracing investigation, or our Health Director can ask the State Health Commissioner to issue an order for compliance. Va. Code § 32.1-39. Violation of the Commissioner's order is a Class 1 misdemeanor; the remedies include injunctive relief and a civil penalty. Va. Code § 32.1-27.

FCHD Approach to COVID in Youth Athletics



Quarantine

- Individual public health order (not voluntary)
- Separates people who have been **exposed to COVID-19 but are not yet sick.**
- If you do not test positive or no symptoms develop in a specified time frame (14 days), you can stop quarantine.

Pausing/Stopping Activities

- Public health recommendation (can become an order if situation escalates and public health is at risk)
- Allows public health to complete investigation and to further limit exposures on teams (and other teams)
- Teams can resume activities when investigation complete or 14 days since last exposure in an outbreak.

How does FCHD determine if another player/trainer/coach was exposed?

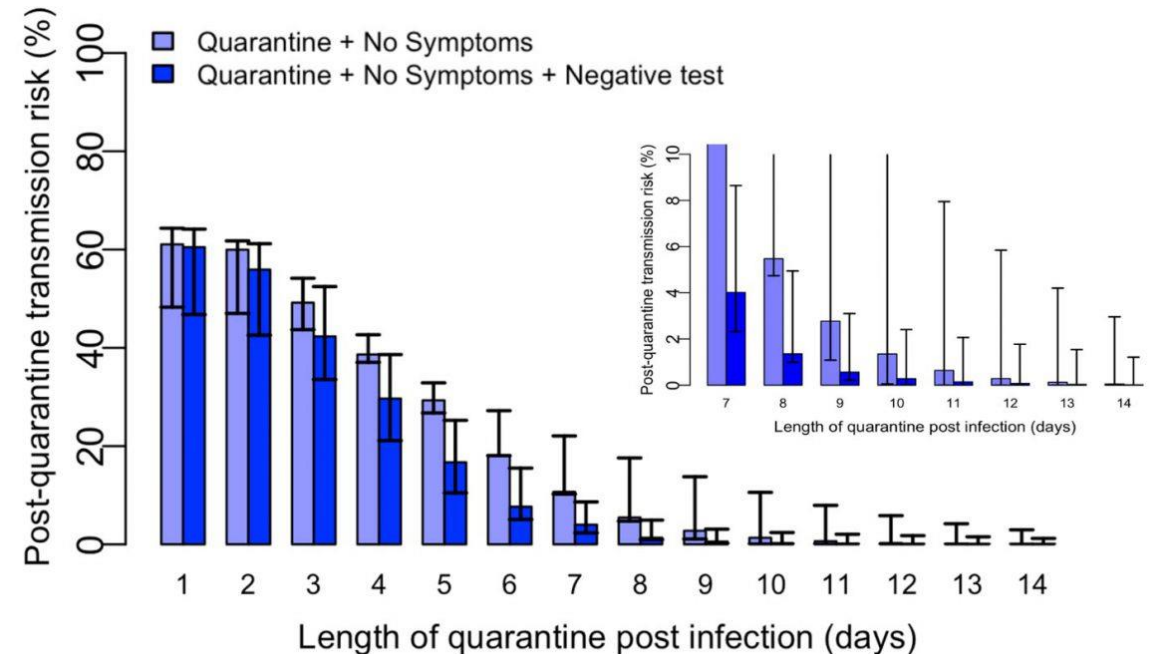


- FCHD follows CDC's definition for a close contact:
 - Being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period
 - *Having direct exposure to respiratory secretions from a person who has COVID-19- primarily used for sports with direct and intense physical contact*
 - Providing care for a person who has COVID-19
 - Living with a person who has COVID-19
- The FCHD Case Investigator will determine if someone is a close contact
 - Every situation is unique
 - Needs to consider the characteristics of the activity including the amount of direct physical interactions among players

Why is the quarantine guideline 14 days long?



- People exposed to COVID-19 could become infectious anywhere from 1-14 days after exposure
- Shortening quarantine length further increases risk of exposing others and spreading COVID
- **Both CDC and VDH recommend full 14-quarantine;** FCHD remains consistent with their recommendations



FCHD COVID Investigation Process



Sport	Team Guidance	Quarantine Guidance		Competition Guidance
Sports with direct physical contact between teammates and/or competitors (unable to maintain 6ft social distancing at all times)	All in-person team activities (practice, group workouts, competitions, etc.) are paused while FCHD’s investigation is occurring.	Single COVID-19 case on team:	Quarantine teammates based on FCHD contact investigation.	Notification to be made to competing team(s). Based on investigation, competing players may be quarantined.
		Outbreak on team (2+ linked cases):	All team activities cancelled for 14 days from the last date of exposure. Quarantine teammates based on FCHD contact investigation.	
Sports with no physical contact between teammates and/or competitors (able to maintain 6ft social distancing at all times)	All in-person team activities (practice, group workouts, competitions, etc.) are paused while FCHD’s investigation is occurring.	Single COVID-19 case on team:	Quarantine teammates based on FCHD contact investigation.	No public health actions required.
		Outbreak on team (2+ linked cases):	All team activities cancelled for 14 days from the last date of exposure. Quarantine teammates based on FCHD contact investigation.	

With differences in types of athletic activities, why is the guidance the same?



- FCHD recognizes that each sport has features that make it more or less risky for spreading COVID (e.g., indoor vs. outdoor, close contact vs. more distance between players).
- However, without further investigation, FCHD cannot make universal determinations based on the type of sport alone.
- FCHD will consider many factors of the activity in determining exposure; each situation is interpreted individually.

Who is FCHD working with to ensure coordination across the Health District?



- **Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) and Parks Authority:** collaboration to ensure safe environments are provided for players and coaches, and COVID-19 protocols are followed by participants
- **Virginia Department of Health:** ongoing discussions related to FCHD's investigation and outbreak response processes
- **Fairfax County Public Schools/Falls Church City Public Schools/ Private Schools:** coordination related to school-based athletic programs, ensuring guidance is consistent for all youth athletics investigations

Athletics Restrictions in Other Jurisdictions



- DC has restricted moderate and high-contact sports to non-contact training, no competition
- Montgomery County requires a COVID Protocol Plan to be approved by the County Health Officer or designee before organized youth sports can play/practice
- Prince George's County allows low and medium-risk sports to play and compete; high-risk sports are prohibited.
- Central Region (VA) quarantines entire teams after a single case
- Other districts in Northern VA's exact processes varies, but follow very similar structure to FCHD's approach.

How can we minimize the impact of COVID on our athletic programs?



- Perform symptom and exposure screening before each activity
- Ensure coaches are knowledgeable about mitigation recommendation and properly enforce them
- Social distance as much as possible, particularly any time masks are removed (e.g., during water breaks)
- Reduce shared equipment
- Discourage gathering areas outside of area of play (e.g., benches, locker rooms, parking lots)
- Limit nonessential visitors, spectators, and volunteers
- Reach out to FCHD with questions specific to your sport

Additional Resources



- [FCHD: When to Isolate and When to Quarantine](#)
- [VDH: Considerations for Recreational Sports](#)
- [CDC: Considerations for Youth Sports Administrators](#)
- [CDC: Sports Program FAQs](#)
- [CDC: Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation](#)
- [Virginia Office of the Governor: Executive Order 72 \(Fourth Amendment\)](#)



Q&A Session