

# Best Practices for COVID-19 & Rugby Return to Play at the Club Level

GOAL: To safely return the community to regular rugby activities.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT: The recommendations in this document are compiled from USA Rugby and World Rugby COVID-19 Return to Play Guides. At no time, should any rugby-specific guide supersede your local government and local health regulations.

## WHY IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICES:

- **Liability:** The potential for liability issues exists in all rugby scenarios. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the sport should be on heightened alert for areas where clubs and administrators could be liable for injury, accident, and illness. Preventing problems by following Best Practices aids in limiting the potential for liability and financial damage to your club.
- **Safety:** Ultimately rugby has to be played with safety in mind, especially for minors. In the instance of COVID-19, we are not only concerned about our immediate athletes, but their families and our greater community. Following Best Practices allows clubs and administrators to increase the safety through repeated, documented, and verified rugby policy..
- **Public Relations and Loss of Integrity:** While rugby is not a major sport in the United States, there can be a negative reputation that follows the sport due to its history. It is important that the work we have done to professionalize and market the sport as a safer full-contact sport and a 'sport of value and deep ethos' are not tarnished by a lack of safety and health precautions. Following the Best Practices will allow our community to make sure we are returning safely to sport and minimizing (as much as we can) the risk of COVID-19 infection in our local communities.

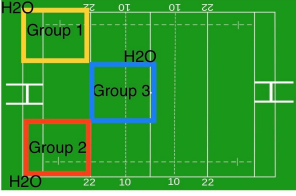







## KEYS TO BEST PRACTICES:

- **Read Them:** Read through the guide thoroughly
- **Incorporate Them:** This is a roadmap of how to return to playing rugby safely. This is a guide with information taken from other rugby guides and not necessarily mandatory. The mandatory requirement is that you follow your local regulations of COVID-19 safety and distancing.
- **Familiarization and Commitment:** Rugby is a busy sport. During practices and over time, it is easy to forget or drop some best practices. The most effective way to prevent a spread of COVID-19 is to be diligent and knowledgeable about what to do in every scenario. Additionally, as a club or administrator, you show responsibility when you are able to set expectations and stick to them.

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## **BEFORE ATHLETES TAKE THE PITCH FOR ANY TRAINING, CLUBS SHOULD**

	<p>Create a visual training set-up diagram of your practice area. Identify how small groups will be divided and move around to avoid contact both between and among the groups containing less than 10 players each.</p>
	<p>Talk with local public health officials and your club's insurers about pandemic coverage and procedures to follow.</p>
	<p>Purchase club supplies of hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes to wipe equipment mid-practice, and other necessary items for coaches and personnel.</p>
	<p>Supply players with COVID-19 symptom checklists to reference and review before they leave for practices.</p> <p>Supply coaches and administrators with tracking forms/checklists and instructions on how to track players who attend practices.</p>
	<p>Assure that the facility you use is cleaned and can have separate entrance and exit to your practice/game facility. Find out if your facility will be putting up sanitation stations or if you are responsible for your own.</p>
	<p>Create a practice plan that states the precautions your club is taking to reduce infection. E-mail and have this plan verified by your local government and/or local public health service. Submit this plan to your SRO COVID-19 Manager so they can verify that you are prepared to return to practice.</p>
	<p>Create a liability waiver form specific to your club and COVID and pandemics. Most insurance policies do not cover or accept pandemics and communicable disease claims. Make this clear for parents and other community members.</p>
	<p>Publish (email, website, social media) and/or provide handouts to parents identifying the player expectations and safety procedures put in place at practice for each phase/step of your Return To Play.</p>

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**EACH CLUB IS ADVISED TO CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING WITH COACHES:**

- They each have masks and will be wearing them at practice
- They are able to keep small groups apart and have the number of coaches necessary to each focus on a group
- They will abide and enforce local social distancing regulations
- They will not allow sharing of personal equipment, clothing, or water bottles
- They will complete the World Rugby COVID-19 training

**BEFORE MS/HS PLAYERS ARE ON THE PITCH IT IS ADVISED:**

- Players incorporate the ACTIVATE Program from World Rugby into their at-home workouts
- Players take the World Rugby COVID-19 training, or the club can require it

**HOW TO PROCEED ONCE YOU ARE READY TO GET TO PRACTICE/MATCHES**

1. Understand your local regulations on health mandates and social distancing
  - a. Figure out the number of people allowed to gather
  - b. Figure out which of the facilities that you regularly use (rec fields, schools, etc.) are open
2. Review the USAR Member Return to Play Guidance  
<https://djcoilrugby.com/2020/05/26/usa-rugby-return-to-play-guidelines-covid-19/amp/>
  - a. Figure out where your gathering allowance falls into the USAR guideline
  - b. If you are at Step 3 or 4, USAR has good checklist attached to the Guidance



3. Review World Rugby <https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/covid-19> for additional information



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## **QUICK REFERENCE CHART**

If you are wondering where your local restrictions fall within the USAR framework, this chart can help you.

SEE USARugby's Guidelines for additional details such as, needs regarding cleaning equipment, tracking/taking medical symptoms, team meetings, etc.

<b><u>Common Local Opening Term/s</u></b>	<b><u>Similar to USAR</u></b>	<b><u>Rugby</u></b>	<b><u>Contact</u></b>	<b><u>Live Play</u></b>	<b><u>Equipment</u></b>
Small Gathering/ no more than 10	Stage 3	Small group training, no cross-over between groups	None	None, not even inter-squad	No shared equipment, including balls
Mid-Large Gathering/ up to 50/ open public facilities	Stage 4	Groups size under local restriction, passing, minimal contact drills	Limited contact drills	Inter-squad limited contact scrimmage (touch is good)	Communal equipment with rigorous cleaning
Normal activity	Stage 5	Traditional training, traditional team gathering	Full contact	Inter-squad and inter-state competition	Communal equipment with rigorous cleaning

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# **USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES**

*COVID-19*

**GUIDELINES TO BE IMPLEMENTED  
STARTING JUNE 1, 2020.**

This information is a proposed framework for USA Rugby Clubs and Members to reference as they determine potential return to play plans amidst the COVID-19 climate. The collective information is in reference to general protocol offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), World Rugby and the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC); tailored to the common activities of USA Rugby Members. It is important to understand that the following outline is not official medical advice, whereby your club and athletes should more definitively refer to the instruction of your local health officials when determining a return to play calendar.

Given the close contact nature of rugby, it is important to note that our sport lives beyond most when it comes to the threat of spreading respiratory diseases. The collective rugby community must remain patient and considerate through this process. While we are all eager to return to rugby, the wellbeing of our friends, family and teammates must remain priority. It is on all of us to acknowledge responsibility and do our part to combat the spread of COVID-19.



# BE DILIGENT, BE ACCOUNTABLE

The COVID-19 pandemic is a generational global impact that requires diligence and respect. Ensuring clubs and athletes display the utmost consideration for the direction of local health officials is not only appropriate, but contingent to possible recourse of return to play protocol across the greater sports community.

Should provided guidelines from health officials and USA Rugby be discounted or circumvented, potential reinstitution of suspended rugby activities could result along with governmental consequences determined by local mandate.

IT IS ON ALL OF US TO EXEMPLIFY THE VALUES OF RUGBY AND RESPECT THE WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITY.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

### RISK IN RUGBY

- Rugby is a contact sport. To fully train and even further play matches requires intermittent physical contact. High-risk physical contact, where players are in very close proximity (such as scrum, or face to face tackle), most likely poses a greater risk should one player be an infected person. In training, this type of contact should, whenever possible be limited, as should mixing of groups who have undertaken this type of contact. Should a team-mate from high-risk physical contact or opposition player in a recent match develop an infection, all of those who have participated in the high-risk contact are likely to require isolation and testing.

### PERSONAL RISK

- Regular exercise is beneficial for your immune system. Prolonged, high intensity exercise may dampen the immune system, particularly when the individual is not used to such high-level activity. Therefore, there is a potentially increased susceptibility to COVID-19 infection in athletes. This risk is probably small and if a practical approach is applied, where players do not exceed normal training load, they should be at no higher risk than the non-exercising population.
- Those who suffer from underlying illness such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease (asthma), diabetes and some forms of cancer appear to be more severely affected by COVID-19. So too are older individuals (>60) and those who are severely obese (BMI 40+).
- Athletes without underlying conditions are not part of the vulnerable group.
- Players who have suffered a COVID-19 infection should self-isolate for 7 days and not engage in exercise for 14 days or until their symptoms settle. When player symptoms have settled, they should consult with their primary care doctor for clearance to return to activity.
- Information from China and Italy shows that up to 20% of those hospitalized have cardiac involvement – likely thought to be myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). Specialist Cardiology review may be required after prolonged hospitalization. (6–8)
- If you have concerns about exercising after COVID-19 infection you should discuss this with your primary care doctor.

# GENERAL RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

## 1. Education

- Regularly reference your local legislature and advice of medical officials as it pertains to the risk of COVID-19.
- Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and educate your club members of these details.
- Utilize [World Rugby COVID-19 Education Modules](#).

## 2. Daily screening

- Complete a [COVID-19 symptom check](#) before leaving home. This will require you to identify if you have had a high temperature or fever overnight or if you have developed the recognized symptoms.
- Have your temperature checked prior to participating in rugby activities. If your temperature is above 99.6, do not participate in any rugby or group activities.

## 3. Practice extensive hygiene protocol

- More frequent hand washing, regular disinfection of heavily used areas and surfaces and the use of gloves can reduce the risk of infection. In some situations, such as in the gym or during meetings, the use of face masks should be considered.
- At home you should also either sanitize or wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap (or use a hand sanitizer) when going to and from your home.
- Avoid touching high-contact surfaces such as door handles, public computer keyboards etc.
- Use hand sanitizers which should be available on entry and in all rooms at your facility or gathering area.
- Avoid spitting
- Use your elbow or a tissue (always dispose of used tissues) when coughing or sneezing
- Do not share water bottles or use team water bottles
- Do not use communal nutritional supplements

## 4. Observe social distance rules

- A distance of at least 6 feet between the people present helps to significantly reduce the probability of virus transmission. Due to the movement involved in sports, the distance should be kept at as generous a distance as possible.
- Office, gym and medical room facilities should be arranged to facilitate at least 6 feet of separation between individuals. Where possible, any communal areas should be outdoors or well ventilated.

## 5. Reduce body contact to a minimum

- Shaking hands, high-fives, embracing and cheering or mourning in a group is to be completely avoided. Until COVID-19 measures are reduced, physical contact (including competitive games) must be avoided, so initially only individual training can take place.

## 6. Change and shower at home

- The use of locker rooms and showers in training facilities and clubs should be suspended until further notice from your local health officials.

## 7. Temporary suspension of car pooling

- While social distancing measures are in place, the formation of carpools for training and competitions should be avoided – unless travelling with an existing housemate. The use of minivans is equally unsuitable. Your Club will apply specific policies for travelling to matches based on local legislature when rugby activities are permitted to resume.

## 8. Refrain from events such as general meetings and celebrations

- In order to comply with the distance rules, no social events should be held.
- While social distancing remains, team meetings should be held virtually to the best of your ability.
- Other options include digital/online meeting resources

## 9. Reduce the size of training groups

- While social distancing and public gathering restrictions are in place, teams will need to train in small groups which are aligned to local government measures in place at that time (example being groups of <5, <10). When small groups train, sessions should be staggered with no overlapping between groups. Smaller groups limit infection risk, and should an infection occur, the number of people who need to potentially quarantine is limited.

## 10. Where possible, outdoor activities are more safe

- Sports and exercise in the fresh air make it easier to keep to distance rules and reduce the risk of infection through the permanent exchange of air.



# DEFINITIONS

## REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE

- City or County government approved level of social activity pertaining to the risk of COVID-19.

[FIND YOUR CLUB'S LOCAL MANDATE »](#)

## TRAINING

- Non-competitive rugby activities and/or conditioning, including but not limited to;
  - Cardio
  - Strength and Conditioning
  - Set piece drills
  - Scrum, ruck and maul drills
  - Ball training

## TEAM ACTIVITIES

- Non-competitive and inactive team gatherings, including but not limited to;
  - Athlete, coach and administrator meetings
  - Pre and post-match socials
  - Non-competition team outings and trips

## COMPETITION

- Match and tournament related events whether inter-squad or participation of multiple teams;
  - Sanctioned match play
  - Scrimmage and friendly competition
  - Organized tournaments
  - Cross-state match play

## INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Terms of USA Rugby provided Accident and Liability Insurance

## COMMUNAL EQUIPMENT

- All training gear and items commonly used in rugby, including but not limited to;
  - Clothing/Jerseys
  - Boots/cleats
  - Towels
  - Rugby balls
  - Field markers
  - Tackle pads
  - Kicking tees
  - Water bottles
  - Dietary supplements
  - Recovery products
  - Scrum Caps
  - Etc.

## NO CONTACT RULES

- Refrain from practicing to limit risk of transmission;
  - High-fives
  - Handshakes
  - Hugs
  - Fist bumps
  - Handling of another individual's equipment

## PPE

- Personal Protective Equipment
  - Facemask or face-cover to limit respiratory transmission
  - Gloves
  - Standard precautions for medical staff



# DETERMINING YOUR RETURN TO PLAY PLAN

## STEP ONE

### REFERENCE LOCAL HEALTH MANDATE

- Visit [CDC Territorial Health Department Directory](#)
- Find your City or County Website
- Determine current allowance of social activity as provided by your local government.

## STEP TWO

### REFERENCE USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

- Determine city or county stage on USA Rugby Return to Play guideline. (Page 6)
- Follow suggested rugby activity and cross-reference each element with local health protocol.

## STEP THREE

### IMPLIMENT CLUB OR PLAYER PROTOCOL

- Develop rugby activity plans for training and competition based on determined stage.
- Present activity plans with local health officials for assurance of safety and public welfare.
- Contact local SGB/College/Union to present proposed activities.

# RETURN TO PLAY STAGE GUIDELINES

	REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE	TRAINING	TEAM ACTIVITIES	COMPETITION	INSURANCE
STAGE ONE	STAY AT HOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home individual training</li> <li>Participant should be symptom free before engaging in training activities</li> <li>Use of personal equipment</li> <li>Rigorously clean and disinfect home training area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All communication and interaction done via virtual method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No competition or inter-squad rugby activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accident and Liability Insurance claims <u>not</u> accepted</li> </ul>
STAGE TWO	STAY AT HOME LIFTED SOCIAL DISTANCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual training at home or state approved outdoor locations</li> <li>Use of personal equipment</li> <li>Adhering to social distancing rules if not at home</li> <li>Coaching occurs virtually</li> <li>Rigorously clean and disinfect training area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All communication and interaction done via virtual method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No competition or inter-squad rugby activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accident and Liability Insurance claims <u>not</u> accepted</li> </ul>
STAGE THREE	SMALL GATHERINGS NO CONTACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group size under local government approved amount</li> <li>Non-contact drills and activities</li> <li>No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms within previous 14-days</li> <li>Temperature check all participants on arrival must register lower than 99.6 F</li> <li>No use of communal equipment, including balls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All communication and interaction done via virtual method or at distance of 6ft</li> <li>Coaches: Permitted on site, continue to adhere to social distancing protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No competition or inter-squad rugby activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted</li> </ul>
STAGE FOUR	MID-LARGE GATHERINGS OPEN PUBLIC FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group size under local government and facility approved amount</li> <li>Limited contact drills</li> <li>No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms within previous 14-days.</li> <li>Temperature check all participants on arrival, must register lower than 99.6 F</li> <li>Rigorous cleaning of communal equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team meetings and gatherings under local government approved amount.</li> <li>Team meetings and communication preferred virtually</li> <li>Coaches: Permitted on site, continue to adhere to social distancing protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inter-squad scrimmage permitted with limited contact.</li> <li>Uncontested scrum, ruck and mauls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted.</li> </ul>
STAGE FIVE	NORMAL SOCIAL ACTIVITIES FULL TRAINING & COMPETITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional training and contact protocol</li> <li>Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional team gathering protocol</li> <li>Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inter-State &amp; Cross-State competition permitted with permission from local legislature.</li> <li>Fan and crowd attendance permitted with permission from local legislature.</li> <li>Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted.</li> </ul>



# USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY

## SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATOR CHECK LIST - PHASE 3 & 4

### VENUE PREPERATION

- ☐ Alert facility management of training event and activities. Ensure rugby activities are permitted.
- ☐ Extensively clean and sanitize all shared contact materials and equipment.
- ☐ Prepared temperature-check station
- ☐ Provide social distancing rules, whether by signage or verbal communication.
- ☐ No shared water coolers

### PLAYERS

- ☐ Ensure players have not shown recognized symptoms in last 14 days.
- ☐ Conduct World Rugby Symptom Checker
- ☐ No carpool travel to venue
- ☐ Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- ☐ Change and shower at home
- ☐ Bring individual equipment
  - ☐ Boots
  - ☐ Jersey
  - ☐ Water bottle
  - ☐ Supplements
  - ☐ PPE
- ☐ Communicate no contact rules

### COACHES

- ☐ Ensure coaches have not shown symptoms last 14 days.
- ☐ Conduct World Rugby Symptom Checker
- ☐ Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- ☐ Ensure coaches adhere to 6ft social distancing rules.
- ☐ Bring PPE and wear throughout training.
- ☐ Prepared training plan with non-contact drills.
- ☐ Collect a detailed list of all participants/staff/visitors at any training session.

### OFFICIALS

- ☐ Preferred: No requirement for officials during training activities.
- ☐ Ensure officials have not shown symptoms last 14 days.
- ☐ Conduct World Rugby Symptom Checker
- ☐ Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- ☐ Change and shower at home
- ☐ Ensure officials adhere to 6ft social distancing rules.
- ☐ Bring PPE and wear throughout training.



**DISCLAIMER: Completion of the above check list does not guarantee prevention of virus infection.**



# USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY

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## SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATOR CHECK LIST - PHASE 3 & 4

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### SPECTATORS

- ☐ Preferred: Refrain from spectator gathering during training.
- ☐ Ensure spectators have not shown symptoms last 14 days.
- ☐ Conduct World Rugby Symptom Checker
- ☐ Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- ☐ Ensure social distancing rules are communicated.
- ☐ Bring PPE and wear throughout training.

### WARM-UPS

- ☐ Athletes continue to wear PPE while not engaged in training activity.
- ☐ Warm-up practices occur with 6ft social distance procedure
- ☐ Continue to ensure no shared materials or equipment.

### DEPARTING VENUE

- ☐ Extensively clean and sanitize all equipment and potentially shared contact surfaces.
- ☐ Inquire with venue management on disinfection of field surface, if necessary. Particularly synthetic field venues.
- ☐ Ensure attendees do not congregate post rugby activities.
- ☐ No exchange of personal items

### CONFIRMED CASES

- ☐ If positive for COVID-19 prior to return to play activities;
  - ☐ Individual must obtain doctor approval to participate in small gathering rugby activities.
- ☐ If positive for COVID-19 after return to play activities;
  - ☐ Require individual to isolate
  - ☐ Suspend further small gathering rugby activities
  - ☐ Inform all participating individuals of confirmed case and have them follow CDC guidelines for possible symptom recognition.



# RETURN TO PLAY FAQ

## RECOGNIZED SYMPTOMS

Symptoms that may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever



Or at least two of the following:

- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M EXPERIENCING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?

- Do not participate in any rugby or team activities if experiencing symptoms, precaution is most important. Immediately inform your club administrator and consult your primary doctor.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

- Immediately inform your club administrator of your case, and refrain from rugby or team activities for a minimum of 14 days. Individuals may not return to play until cleared by their primary care doctor.

## WHERE CAN I FIND INFO ON MY REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE?

[VISIT DIRECTORY »](#)

## HOW LONG WILL EACH PHASE LAST?

- It is unclear how long each phase will last, or how long until sanctioned rugby activities and competition will be able to return as normal. These timelines will be determined by local government and health officials based on the level of infection and preparedness of COVID-19 in your region.

## IS INFECTION OF COVID-19 COVERED BY MY USA RUGBY INSURANCE?

- It's important to note there will not be coverage for liability and accident claims related to COVID-19 regardless of timing, return-to-play protocols or government mandate.
- Communicable Disease are common insurance exclusions, where pandemics are also traditionally not covered.

## WHERE CAN I ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT MY CLUB'S SITUATION DURING PHASES?

- We would first suggest you refer to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines or contact local health officials with immediate questions. Inquiries with USA Rugby can be submitted via email by contacting, [membership@usa.rugby](mailto:membership@usa.rugby).

## WHERE CAN I FIND FUTHER INFORMATION ON RETURN TO PLAY SUGGESTED PROTOCOL?

- Visit the Resources information on Page 9 of this document.



# RESOURCES



## CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

[VISIT DIRECTORY »](#)

GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

[PREVENT THE SPREAD »](#)

CLEANING & DISINFECTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

[READ GUIDELINES »](#)

CONTACT TRACING

[READ GUIDELINES »](#)



## WORLD RUGBY

WORLD RUGBY COVID-19 SYMPTOM CHECKER

[DOWNLOAD »](#)

WORLD RUGBY COVID-19 EDUCATION MODULES FOR COACHES & ADMIN

[TAKE COURSES »](#)



## UNITED STATES OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE (USOPC)

USOPC COVID-19 UPDATES & RESOURCES

[VISIT RESOURCES »](#)



## USA RUGBY

USA RUGBY REAL TIME COVID-19 UPDATES

[VISIT DEDICATED WEBPAGE »](#)