

Perceptions of COVID-19-Related Adaptations in Youth Travel Sports

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has impacted nearly every area of life, and youth sports is no exception. States and counties have published and are regularly modifying their guidelines for permitting youth sports to return. Governing bodies, sports facilities, and event operators have created modifications and adaptations for participants and spectators to ensure a safe environment.

This study sought to evaluate the current perceptions and attitudes of parents, athletes, coaches, officials, and administrators towards COVID-related adaptations. Over 2,900 survey responses were collected in March 2021 from parents, coaches, and athletes who participate in youth travel sports, predominantly from seven Midwestern states (Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin).

RESPONDENTS FEELINGS TOWARD YOUTH SPORT COVID-19 ADAPTATIONS

Respondents wanting at least seven of the nine adaptations removed: **50%**

Respondents wanting at least four of the adaptations remain in place: **35%**

YOUTH INDOOR AND OUTDOOR RESTRICTIONS

Respondents – no restrictions for indoor tournaments: **45%**

Respondents – no restrictions for outdoor tournaments: **76%**

Attendance Restriction for Indoor & Outdoor Venues

INDOOR RESTRICTIONS

No restrictions: 44.94%

Restrict to immediate family: 33.40%

Restrict to extended family and friends: 13.67%

Restrict to one family member: 6.35%

Restrict to players and coaches only: 1.64%

OUTDOOR RESTRICTIONS

No restrictions: 76.46%

Restrict to immediate family: 11.23%

Restrict to extended family and friends: 11.02%

Restrict to one family member: 0.94%

Restrict to players and coaches only: 0.35%

LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR REMOVAL OF COVID-RELATED ADAPTATIONS

Support for the removal of face coverings for participants: **75%**

Support for bench and dugout modifications: **73%**

Support for limiting spectators: **71%**

Support for limiting amenities: **71%**

Support for altering arrival and departure time: **60%**

Support for limiting personal contact between athletes: **58%**

Support for face coverings for spectators: **57%**

Support for social distancing for spectators: **55%**

Support for facilities scaling back sanitization to pre-COVID levels: **36%**

YOUTH SPORTS TRAVEL IMPACTS

31%

Respondents – NO affect on travel plans or habits

90%

Respondents – Confidence in lodging

31%

Respondents – Allocating less money in their budget toward youth sports travel

61.5%

Respondents – COVID-19 had no impact on sports travel

SPORTS PARTICIPANTS & SPECTATORS AT VENUES

Respondents - no entry requirements for participants (coaches, players, and officials): **51%**

Respondents – no entry requirements for spectators: **44%**

Health Screening Procedures for Spectators/Participants

INDOOR RESTRICTIONS

Required: 51%

Self-Assessment: 70%

Temp Taken: 27%

Health Screen Questions: 24%

Proof of Negative Test - 4 Days: 2%

COVID-Test On Site: 2%

OUTDOOR RESTRICTIONS

Required: 44%

Temp Taken: 33%

Self-Assessment: 33%

Health Screen Questions: 32%

COVID-Test On Site: 3%

Proof of Negative Test - 4 Days: 2%

FOUR TYPES OF YOUTH SPORTS PARENTS BASED ON PERCEPTION OF REMOVING COVID-RELATED ADAPTATIONS AND ATTITUDE TOWARD COVID

Normalcy Overdue Group: **29%**

Ready to Return Group: **20%**

Middle of the Road Group: **28%**

COVID Cautious Group: **23%**

Four Main Groups Defining Characteristics

- 1. Normalcy Overdue Group** – eliminate all of the COVID-related adaptations utilized by youth sports venues and strongly believes that we should have “returned to normal” before now.
- 2. Ready to Return Group** – similar to the Normalcy Overdue group with two key exceptions, a lower adaptation removal score and 96% believe that society should return to normal now.
- 3. Middle of the Road Group** – eliminate half of the COVID-adaptations
- 4. COVID Cautious Group** – keep all of the COVID-related adaptations utilized by youth sports venues and strongly believes that we should return to normal when herd immunity is reached.

SUPPORT FOR RETURN OF AMENITIES AT YOUTH SPORTS VENUES

Open Concessions: **93.5%**

Open Merchandise: **75.9%**

Open Merchandise: **68.7%**

Open Playgrounds: **49.7%**

Open Drinking Fountains: **33%**

Open Entertainment Centers: **32.1%**

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