

Understanding COVID-19 and Risk Factors in Resuming Kendo Activities

Information presented by AUSKF Insurance Committee - June 2020

This document must be distributed to all AUSKF Regional federations, clubs and dojo. Individual members, sensei, volunteers, and parents should review this document. Each federation and their dojo/clubs and members should make concerted efforts to follow these and other guidelines set by AUSKF to ensure due diligence and mitigate liability.

Regional federations and dojo/clubs should **create a written management plan** to be included in regional federation and dojo/club charters or guidelines to be easily passed on to leaders of the organization(s) and their subsequent replacements. This plan should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. This document can serve as a basis for such a plan.

Note: AUSKF will also distribute its own documentation regarding “Guidelines for returning to in-person practice sessions”.

The following information is adopted from a sports and recreation insurance organization. Some areas have been modified to reference kendo activities. All subject areas are easily adapted to kendo activities and events. References to “staff” may apply to sensei, higher ranking members/leaders, volunteers, parents, facility staff, etc. The term “players” may reference kendo students or kenshi.


Note: The use of this document is for reference and has been reviewed by the AUSKF insurance broker. More information can be obtained by the US Center of Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

Mitigating risk for COVID-19 transmission during AUSKF kendo activities

Different levels of transmission risk factors for kendo and other activities:

The following factors should be considered when a dojo, club, or regional kendo federation makes decisions regarding cancellation or how to best mitigate coronavirus risks. Know the risk factors for your particular kendo activity (kendo, iaido, & jodo) and tailor a plan to fit your specific needs.

- Be knowledgeable on what is happening in your specific community. If coronavirus is present or widespread in your community, you should increase your level of aggressiveness in applying risk management.
- **Type of competition: the risk of transmission increases** from lower levels, beginning at Level 1, to higher levels as organizations move from:

- LOW Risk**
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- **Level 1:** Virtual conditioning and training at home under instructions from a sensei (instructor)
 - **Level 2:** At dojo/club location with *conditioning & and basic kendo training**, **no contact based practice maintaining social distancing (including sensei)**, no sharing of equipment and **no** physical contact by anyone
 - **Level 3:** At dojo/club location with conditioning and basic kendo training, **no contact based practice with some social distancing**, includes sharing of equipment, and limited physical contact for correcting techniques, does **not** include kendo uchikomi keiko, ji-keiko (sparring), kakari-keiko, tsubareri-ai, or other waza session
 - **Level 4:** Dojo (keiko) practice session **within-dojō member keiko**, resumption of typical kendo practices with some limitations
- HIGH Risk**
- **Level 5:** Competition, seminars, or other activities with kenshi from within your geographic area or national or international activities.
- *Note: **Conditioning** is similar to warm-up exercises. **Basic kendo training** is similar to suburi, ashi-sabaki, and other individual kendo skill level drills. Face (mouth and nose) masks must be worn by all members during at-location activities.*

- Analyze separately the risks from the perspective of staff, participants, spectators, and third-party vendors. Mitigation plans may need to be customized for each group.

- According to the **CDC**, the risks to older adults and those with serious chronic medical conditions are elevated. According to U.S News & World Report, children and teens are at a lower risk and typically have milder symptoms or none at all and the death rate is much lower than middle aged and older populations. Exposure transmission to seniors may occur in their role as sports participants, coaches, spectators, or parent/guardians. Mitigation plans should be adopted to protect those with the highest level of risk.
- Playing locally vs travel: Local play entails less transmission risk than air, bus, or train travel. Sensei and participant travel to out-of-town conferences or competitions is a higher risk activity.
- Spectators: Higher spectator transmission rates can be expected when spectators are indoors, confined in a small enclosed space, seniors, or have compromised immune systems.
- Crowd size: The larger the crowd size, the greater the transmission risk. Sports organizations may adopt guidelines to reduce risk by limiting attendance to one person per participant; maintaining separate entry and exit points; not allowing congregating at common areas such as concessions, bathrooms, and information boards; and enforcing social distancing guidelines of 6 feet between non-family members.
- Sport specific player contact: Some sports have more spacing and less close contact between players such as baseball, softball, cross country, track & field, tennis and golf. Other sports such as basketball, soccer, football, and lacrosse have much closer spacing and player contact. **Sports with higher levels of close contact should limit such exposure during practices to a certain number of minutes and should concentrate on conditioning and drills that don't require close contact.**
- Sport specific shared equipment: Different sports have different levels of touching shared equipment followed by the touching of participant mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Player ages: Younger age groups have more difficulty in following instructions about social distancing; touching mouth, nose, or eyes; sharing water bottles; etc.
- Size of team: Dojo with higher numbers of participants have increased transmission risks. Consider breaking up teams into pods that have limited close contact with other pods within the same team.

Sample risk management guidelines to mitigate COVID risks:

(Note: references to staff means **sensei, volunteers, coaches, team specific staff, and general league staff members** which may include directors/officers, umpires/referees, gate workers, scorekeepers, concessions, field maintenance, janitorial, etc.)

Management:

- **COVID Coordinator:** Appoint a COVID coordinator to oversee all aspects of the COVID risk management plan including development from appropriate resources, implementation, monitoring, updates/changes, communications, staff training, regulatory compliance, and answering player, parent, and staff questions about COVID concerns.
- **Compliance with State and Local Guidelines:** Make sure that the sports organization is in compliance with all state and local COVID guidelines including return to play dates and maximum group sizes.
- **Training:** Train all players and staff on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- **COVID Self-Reporting:** Be familiar with and comply with all regulatory requirements, privacy policies, and information sharing regulations as regards COVID-19 self reporting of symptoms or positive tests by players or staff as well as by related family members with whom they have had **close contact**.
- **Spread Out Scheduling of Practice and activities:** There should be enough time between practices and activities to allow one group to vacate the premises before the next group enters as well as for proper sanitation of surfaces and other equipment.
- **Back Up Staff:** Have a backup staffing plan in the event that staff members become infected.
- **High Risk Staff:** Limit staff with underlying conditions from attending or working the sporting event.
(Source: TX Checklist For Youth Sports Operators.)

- **Documentation:** In the event of COVID transmission litigation, the sports organization must be able to **provide written documentation of the implementation of the COVID risk management program.**

Communications:

- **By the first in-person practices session and on yearly basis:** Dojo and federations should disseminate information to all staff, players, parents, and spectators about the COVID risk and practices that should be undertaken to mitigate risks. Information should be disseminated by way of email, social media, coach talks, and public announcements.
- **Self-Reporting of COVID Symptoms:** Be prepared to disseminate information to concerned parties about any COVID-19 incident while complying with all regulatory requirements and privacy laws.
- **Staff Meetings:** Consider cancelling in-person staff and federation meetings and replace with Zoom meetings or conferencing by telephone.
- **Risks to Seniors:** Provide notice to all parents or guardians of the enhanced risks of players being in direct contact or anyone 65 or older for 14 days after participating in a sport event or practice. (Source: TX Checklist For Youth Sports Operators.)

Pre-Event or pre-practice session:

- **Stay Home When Appropriate:** Players, sensei, staff, and spectators should be instructed in communications to stay home when they are showing symptoms of COVID-19, have a temperature over 100.4 Fahrenheit, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have had close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- **Symptom Checking:** Conduct pre-event observation and/or questioning of all players and staff about the existence of any COVID symptoms including cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19. (Source: TX Checklist For Youth Sports Operators.)
- **Temperature Check:** Players, staff, and spectators should be asked to take their own temperature before leaving the house and they should stay at home with any reading of **100.4 Fahrenheit or higher according to CDC definitions of reportable illnesses** for contagious disease. The sports organization can assign a staff member to use an infrared non-contact forehead thermometer to take the temperature of all players and staff before they enter the field/facility. Any reading of 100.4 or higher should result in a denial of entry. These thermometers are now commonly available for under \$100. (Note: The CDC Considerations for Youth Sports guidelines no longer suggest taking temperature checks at home or on location but this still may be a requirement of state or local governments.)
- **No Congregation:** Players and team staff should not congregate prior to a practice or competition event and should stay in cars until right before warm ups for the practice or competition and should avoid other groups that are leaving the prior event.
- **Team Check-in Process:** Team staff and players should continue social distancing during the team check in process for competitions. There should be a single point of contact for teams during events.
- **Disinfect Hard Surfaces:** When arriving at team seating or sideline areas, team staff should disinfect all hard surfaces such as benches, railings, and equipment racks.

Post-Event:

- **Cleaning:** Team staff should clean and dispose of all trash from player seating or sideline areas when departing practice or games.
- **No Congregation:** Players and team staff should quickly exit the practice or playing location after the event and go directly to their cars without congregating with other teams or spectators in common areas.

Social Distancing:

- **6 Ft. Rule:** All players, staff, and spectators should practice social distancing of 6 ft. whenever possible, especially in common areas.
- **Pre And Post Event Social Distancing:** Social distancing should be practiced by players and staff during all locker room activities, instruction, explanation of rules, pre-game strategy, and post game briefing sessions.
- **Restructure Practices:** Restructure practices to greatest extent possible to concentrate of conditioning, drills, skill building and limit close contact to a specified number of minutes during simulation drills and scrimmages.
- **Breaking Up Large Teams:** Consider breaking up large teams into pods during practice that have limited close contact with other pods on the same team.
- **Pre-Game Warm Ups:** During pre-game, players and staff should maintain the 6 ft. distance if possible during warm ups and drills and should only have close contact during actual competition.
- **Social Distancing Monitors:** Identify adult staff members to help maintain social distancing between players, staff, and spectators (if allowed by state law).
- **No Handshakes/Celebrations:** Players and staff should refrain from handshakes, high fives, fist/elbow bumps, chest bumps, group celebrations, etc.
- **Waiting in Cars:** Players and team staff should wait in their cars with parents/guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up or game instead of assembling in groups.
- **Car Pools:** Discourage the use of car pools to transport participants who do not live in the same household.
- **Spectator Social Distancing:** Spectators should follow social distancing of 6 ft. whenever possible and should avoid being in groups of greater than 10 persons. Where social distancing is not feasible, spectators should wear face coverings and wash hands or use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) frequently.
- **Limiting Spectator Attendance:** Some sports organizations may choose to limit spectator risk by limiting attendance to essential staff and limited family members.
- **Off Site Activities:** Avoid off site team activity events such as swimming, team meals, bowling, watching professional teams, dinners, parties, social gatherings, etc.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) And Personal Disinfectants:

- **Educate:** Teach players and staff and reinforce the use of wearing cloth face coverings. Wearing face coverings is most critical when physical distancing is difficult.
- **Face Coverings for Coaches And Staff:** All sensei, volunteers, parents, staff should wear PPE such as face coverings and gloves whenever applicable. (Note: CDC Considerations For Youth Sports does not suggest the use of gloves except for when removing garbage bags or disposing of trash.)
- **Player Face Coverings:** Players should wear face coverings in close contact areas and situations where applicable. Players should be allowed to wear face coverings during competition if they choose to do so as long as they don't compromise the safety of any and all participants.
- **Parent / Spectator Face Coverings:** Parents and spectators should wear face coverings whenever they are at the facility and in close contact with a non-family member.
- **Don't Touch Face:** All persons wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch their face covering and to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) frequently.
- **Player Provided Hand Sanitizer and Wipes:** Parents should provide all players with hand sanitizer for use between play periods as well as antibacterial wipes for disinfecting player provided equipment.
- **Staff Provided Hand Sanitizer and Wipes:** Staff members should provide their own hand sanitizer for frequent use and antibacterial wipes for disinfecting hard surfaces and shared equipment.

Playing Equipment:

- **Spacing Of Player Equipment:** Player equipment should be spaced accordingly to prevent close contact.
- **Player Provided Equipment:** Players should be encouraged to bring their own equipment and to not share with others. Player provided equipment should be kept separate and in individual bags or containers.
- **Limit Team Shared Equipment:** The use of team shared equipment (e.g. protective gear, balls, bats, etc.) should be limited whenever possible and should be sanitized after each use if possible. Otherwise, limit use of team shared supplies and equipment to one group of players at a time and sanitize between use.
- **Water Bottles:** Water and sports drink jugs **should no longer be provided by sports facilities or sports organizations. Sensei, kenshi and staff should bring their own water bottles to all team activities** to help to reduce transmission risk. Individuals should take their own water bottles home each night for cleaning and sanitation. Visiting teams should also bring their own water bottles.

Facilities:

Events and activities of larger groups should have particular attention.

- **Foot Traffic Control:** Larger facilities should encourage social distancing by designing multiple foot traffic entry and exit points.
- **Water Fountains:** Should be closed with tape and signage stating that they are not to be used. Or, if they are to remain in service, should be sanitized at least hourly during use but participants should be encouraged to bring their own water bottles.
- **Concessions (including lunch/bento/coffee/tea/water):** Concessions should be discontinued unless the sports organization is in a position to strictly enforce precautions. Precautions include 6 ft spacing markers in concession lines between customers; staff instructed to not report to duty if they don't feel well, have symptoms, or have a temperature; staff required to wear gloves and face masks; steps taken to prevent cross contamination; and frequent sanitation of all surfaces.
- **Restrooms:** Small restrooms should limit occupancy to one person at a time and larger rest rooms should provide 6 ft distance markings.
- **Cleaning/Disinfecting:** Sports facility owners/operators and team staff should use disposable disinfectant wipes on all training areas, locker rooms, equipment, common areas, door handles, railings, water fountains, seating, bathrooms, etc. on a regular basis.
- **Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizer Stations:** Facilities should provide hand washing stations that are foot activated and hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) stations.
- **Information Boards:** Discontinue the use of physical posting of brackets, rules, etc. and instead post online. (General posting can breakdown social distancing)

Sports Organization Provided Supplies:

- **Hand Sanitizer:** If hand washing stations are not readily available at the facility, sports organizations should provide hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) and should schedule mandatory use at breaks.
- **Food:** If food is offered, provide in pre-packaged boxes or bags for each player or staff member and don't share utensils.

Personal Discipline:

- **Hygiene/Hand Washing/Touching Face/Laundering:** Players and staff should practice proper hygiene, wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol), abstain from touching their face (mouth, eyes, or nose), refrain from spitting, and cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue and throw tissue in the trash. Carry small bottles of alcohol-based disinfectant when hand washing facilities are not available. Clothes should be laundered after all workouts.

- **Healthy Practices:** All players and staff should practice healthy habits including adequate hydration to keep mucous membranes moist, consume a varied, vitamin-rich diet with sufficient vegetables and fruits, and get adequate sleep.

When Someone Gets COVID-19 Or Has Close Contact:

- **Educate:** Make sure that sensei, staff and family members understand that any sick person should not attend any activities and that they should notify the COVID coordinator if they or any other staff member or player becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms, tests positive, or has had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive.
- **If COVID Symptoms Exhibited During Event:** If a sensei, player or staff member exhibits symptoms during an event, they should immediately be separated and sent home or to a health care facility depending on the severity of the symptoms. They should not be allowed to return to activity until they have met the CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation.
- **Sensei, Player or Staff Member Return To Kendo Activity:** See [CDC guidelines on When You Can Be Around Others After You Had Or Likely Had COVID-19](#). Here is a summary:
 - **They think or know they had COVID-19, and had symptoms:** Players and staff can be with others after: 3 days with no fever, and symptoms improved, and 10 days since symptoms first appeared. Depending on healthcare provider's advice and availability of testing, player or staff member might get tested to see if they still have COVID-19. If they are be tested, they can be around others when they have no fever, symptoms have improved, and they receive two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.
 - **They tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms:** Players and staff can be with others if they continue to have no symptoms after 10 days have passed since test. Depending on healthcare provider's advice and availability of testing, they may get tested to see if they still have COVID-19. If they have been tested, they can be around others after they receive two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart. If they develop symptoms after testing positive, they must follow guidance above for "They think or know that they had COVID-19, and had symptoms."
 - **They have been around a person with COVID-19:** Sensei, players and staff who have had **close contact** with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness. It is possible that someone could be able to spread COVID-19 for up to 14 days even if they do not have symptoms. According to CDC, "...factors to consider when defining close contact include proximity, the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), whether the individual has symptoms (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk) and whether the individual was wearing a facemask (which can efficiently block respiratory secretions from contaminating others and the environment). Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure. Recommendations vary on the length of time of exposure but 15 min of close exposure can be used as an operational definition. In healthcare settings, it is reasonable to define a prolonged exposure as any exposure greater than a few minutes because the contact is someone who is ill. Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction (e.g., did the person cough directly into the face of the individual) remain important."
- **Sensei, player or Staff Has Close Contact:** Anyone with close contact with a person exhibiting symptoms should also be separated and sent home and should follow CDC guidelines for self-monitoring and procedures for community related exposures.
- **Cleaning / Disinfecting Surfaces:** Any areas, surfaces, or shared objects used by a sick person should be closed off and not used until after cleaning and disinfecting. If possible, it is recommended to wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting.
- **Notification:** Notify local health officials, staff, and family members immediately of any lab confirmed case of COVID-19 while complying with local state and privacy and confidentiality laws as well as with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

- **Multiple Infections:** If 3 or more dojo members test positive for COVID-19, work with state and local health care officials about continued operation of the dojo or federation. (Source: TX Checklist For Youth Sports Operators.)

Risk Warning and Assumption of Risk:

- **Waiver/Release:** Waiver/release agreement forms should be updated to address the risk of communicable diseases such as COVID-19 in addition to injury. AUSKF provides a member waiver/release form which should be signed by all members, including visitors, to your dojo/club.
- **Coronavirus Warning Signage:** Post conspicuous signage at sports facility in highly visible locations (ex: entry, exit, and rest rooms) warning of coronavirus risks and what steps can be taken to reduce such risks. Here is some sample language that may be reviewed by local legal counsel:
 - **Coronavirus Risk Warning**
 - It is suggested that seniors or others with compromised immune systems not participate in or attend this event due to risk of infection.
 - Do not enter if you are exhibiting any signs of illness such as sneezing, coughing, sniffles, have fever, or don't feel well.
 - Do not enter if you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and have not been cleared or if you have had close contact with someone who has.
 - If you are repeatedly sneezing or coughing, you may be asked to immediately leave the premises.
 - All sensei, kenshi, staff, volunteers, and spectators should practice responsible social distancing by remaining at least 6 ft apart whenever possible.
 - All sensei, kenshi, staff, and spectators should wear face coverings whenever applicable.
 - Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer upon entrance, during the event, before and after you eat, and as you leave. Hand washing and hand sanitizer stations should be provided.
 - Avoid touching your face including your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Small public restrooms should limit occupancy to one person at a time.

For more details on the sample mitigation guidelines above, see [**CDC Considerations For Youth Sports.**](#)