



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding CYO Operations in the COVID-19 Environment



CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics. The Diocese of Cleveland CYO is beginning our 84th consecutive year. We are proud to be recognized as one of the top youth sports programs in the United States. We take seriously the task of building and passing on the CYO legacy that has served young people and families since 1937 in NE Ohio. Based on our Catholic mission and values, CYO serves more than 21,000 children every year with over 5,000 volunteers, all screened and trained, who implement CYO at the parish, school, and diocesan levels.

When COVID-19 required us to cancel all CYO programs in March, 2020, we quickly realized that the pandemic had given us a new question to reflect on, pray about, and work through:

“How do we live as Christians and operate CYO in the midst of a pandemic and thereafter in a way that experiences the kingdom of God with our people and brings the hope, healing, and Good News of Jesus Christ into the world?”

We have kept a steadfast focus on this question. We formed sport specific tasks groups to identify how to best continue serving children and families through CYO. We have identified best practices and safety guidelines for each of our fall sports. We will continue to improve on these as we cooperate with parents, Catholic school leaders, athletic director’s and coaches to provide sports participation opportunities in a changing pandemic environment for children throughout the Diocese of Cleveland.

1. When a parish is not offering a CYO sport, can children participate in CYO at another parish while still attending school or PSR back at their original parish and/or school?

- *Yes. The CYO Charter and Bylaws (CBL) provides for ways for all eligible children to participate in CYO. That may include playing for a nearby parish if their own parish does not offer a CYO sport or program. The parish has the right and responsibility to decide which CYO sports to offer at their parish. The parents have the right and responsibility to have their child participate in CYO when they have met the eligibility guidelines in the CBL. While CYO recognizes and supports the value of in school cohorts and pod groups, the out of school interactions of a child that occurs within their family & the wider community are not within our control. Therefore, CYO continues its commitment to welcome all children connected to our Catholic faith and to find a place for every child to play.*

2. Can a child who is participating in remote school or PSR only participate in CYO?

- *Yes. When remote school or remote catechetical education is offered to parents as a viable option and is selected by parents for their child, the child is eligible to participate in CYO because they are members of the parish and/or school. This decision is made by the parents based on the options that have been made available to them. Our goal is to keep all of our young people active in and connected to our Catholic Church through CYO. We hope that their participation in CYO with school and parish children will contribute to the child and family returning to on site participation in school and in the Church as soon as safely possible.*

3. What do you do if an athlete, family member of an athlete, coach, or parishioner tests positive related to a CYO practice or game?

- *CYO parents have been informed to contact the CYO Athletic Director or Coach if their child or a family member in the home of the child is infected with COVID-19. The Athletic Director will immediately notify the CYO Member Administrator. The Athletic Director will work with the member administrator to contact the the County Board of Health and proceed to follow the directives and procedures of the Country Board of Health. The Athletic Director will notify the parents of team members and coaches who were in direct contact with the individual, without identifying the name of the individual. The Athletic*

Director will communicate with the County Board of Health, the member administrator, and appropriate parties throughout the process.

4. Is CYO aware of the different county health department COVID-19 related guidelines and how is CYO responding to the recommendations?

- *Yes. We are monitoring information at the county, diocesan, state, and national levels. This fluid situation requires being attentive to current information while making decisions that hold the safety of the child and the mission of the Catholic Church and CYO as our top priorities. CYO operates as a diocesan-based program for children, families, parishes, and schools. The eight county departments of health have different guidelines based on their current local experience of COVID-19. CYO is attentive to all of the country guidelines. CYO has one set of guidelines that will be followed at all sites regarding physical distancing, mandatory mask wearing, and daily monitoring and attendance record keeping.*

5. What is CYO's relationship with the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) and their rulings and recommendations regarding sports in the COVID-19 environment? (MAK)

- *CYO staff monitors OHSAA recommendations and announcements daily. OHSAA regulates public school sports in grades 7 – 12. Catholic schools and parishes are classified in the category of Church, Independent. While CYO is not governed by OHSAA, we are attentive to their operations and directions as a reference point regarding youth sports for seventh and eighth graders. OHSAA has provided Return to Play recommendations for the fall sports of [football](#), [soccer](#), [volleyball](#), [cross country](#), [field hockey](#), [tennis](#) and [golf](#). CYO formed sport specific task groups comprised of local parochial High School coaches, sports leaders with local and national expertise, Dr. Sean Cupp, Cleveland Browns team doctor, and Dr. Joe Congeni, Director of Akron Children Hospital Sports Medicine Center. Each task group worked to develop CYO sport specific protocols for the operation of CYO sports.*

6. What is happening with tackle football for grades 7 – 8?

- *The National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) developed a three-phased approach to returning to tackle football. OHSAA has accepted these recommendations and CYO is using an adapted version of these phases for CYO tackle football. CYO is communicating frequently with our Catholic High Schools regarding their following of the guidelines. CYO began phase one practice on Saturday, August 8. CYO is now in phase two, which includes practicing with all children and coaches, while maintaining physical distancing. Athletes may wear equipment although there is no physical contact in phase two. Before advancing to the next phase, the safe operation of the prior phase must be completed. The OHSAA presented a 32-page document to Governor DeWine's office on how to safely proceed with tackle football. OHSAA and CYO are awaiting a formal and official response.*

7. What is our legal liability and risks regarding a child, coach, or fan contracting the COVID-19 virus at a CYO related practice or contest?

- *We have had multiple conversations and consultations with our Catholic Charities and diocesan legal departments. CYO officials met with our diocesan administrator, Fr. Don Oleksiak, and the diocesan attorney, Mr. Kevin Burke (and others) on Aug. 3, 2020. It was stated at that meeting that the actions taken to prepare for CYO fall sports, along with the waiver changes, makes*

operating CYO sports this fall a manageable risk at this time. The following Covid-19 Disclaimer was added to the CYO pre-participation form as a result of those conversations.

I recognize the possibility and risk of exposure or infection of COVID-19 or other communicable diseases associated with my child's participation in CYO and that such exposure or infection may result in my or my child's or other family members' exposure to or infection of COVID-19 or other communicable diseases, among other risks, and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, death or other damages or expenses. I understand that such exposure or infection can occur for any number of reasons which are both foreseeable and unforeseeable and which include, but are not limited to, my child's own actions or inaction, the actions or inaction of others (whether negligent, intentional, or otherwise), and equipment failure.

Each parent must sign the release BEFORE their child can participate in CYO.

Our CYO Charter and Bylaws has added the following statement to enable CYO to respond as quickly and effectively as possible when needed to keep our operations as safe as possible.

CYO Administration will continue to monitor pandemic related developments. We retain the right and responsibility to make changes in the best interest of CYO participants and their families. We will keep you informed in an ongoing basis.

8. How will CYO monitor teams and sites to assure compliance with the new sports guidelines for practices and games?

- *CYO Member Athletic Directors are responsible to operate their program and monitor their athletes and coaches to assure COVID-19 safety compliance at CYO related practices and gatherings that occur during the week. CYO administration will provide detailed checklists for coaches, athletic directors, principals, and pastors to assist with this process. CYO administration will work with contest site directors, athletic directors, and auxiliary CYO commissioners to assure compliance with COVID-19 safety guidelines at CYO contests and gatherings. There will be audits regarding the use and safe keeping of the COVID-19 Monitor and Attendance form that must be completed every time that a team gathers.*

The Covid-19 pandemic is a battle of human psychology. We all want a quick fix, a vaccine sooner rather than later, a technical solution that will allow us to get on with our lives – NOW! Current developments remind us again and again that viral pandemics do not work that way. This pandemic requires that we change our thinking and change our behavior – how we think and what we do. That is hard work individually and together. CYO gets it that people are fearful and tired and longing for the pandemic to end. We are too. We ask for and request your full and active cooperation in service to our mission: ***CYO inspires young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics.***

Thank you to our Pastor's, Principal's, CYO Athletic Director's and CYO Coaches for your hard and detailed work to operate our parishes, schools, and CYO programs as safely as possible in a pandemic environment. Let us continue to hold one another and our young people in prayer.

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