

RLC Restaurant & Entertainment Task Force

Sub Working Group for Aquatics - Full Report, 5/27/2020

Overview:

Through the [“Public Health Principles for a phased reopening during Covid-19: Guidance for Governors”](#) document released by Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the authors look at 3 areas to mitigate safe practices: Contact intensity, Number of Contacts, and Modification Potential. Using the model, our working groups evaluated the major areas of our industry, and how they would fit into the model.

Limitations: It is important to note that our group did not discuss water park, splash park, or water playground operations in this round of review.

General Guidelines for Aquatic Venues

- To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 the following universal actions are required for aquatic venues:
 - No use of changing areas and locker rooms (swimmers arrive in suits/cover ups)
 - No shared equipment (pool toys, towels, goggles, personal flotation devices, etc)
 - Clean shared spaces such as restrooms, touch points, chairs, tables, and other pool furniture
 - Organize and control deck space
- To ensure proper water quality and a safe swimming environment, aquatic venues should follow [CDC guidance](#), which includes:
 - Maintain free chlorine levels continuously between 1–10 parts per million.
 - Maintain the pH level of the water at 7.2–7.8.
 - Maintain stabilizer (CyA) levels below 90 parts per million
 - If CyA is used, minimum chlorine level shall be 2 parts per million.
 - Test pH and disinfectant levels at least twice per day (hourly when in heavy use).
 - Maintain accurate records of disinfectant/pH measurements and maintenance activities.
 - Maintain filtration and recirculation systems according to manufacturer recommendations.

Lap Swimming/Swim Team

Category	Contact Intensity	Number of Contacts	Modification Potential
Swim Team / Lap Swimming	Low	Low	High

Organized swimming programs/structured lap swimming allows physical activity in a sport with low to mid-level contact intensity (when passing within a lane), low level contact (limited occupancy), and high potential for modification (increase or decrease of usage with social distancing practices).

This is possible as lap swimming/training is a non-contact sport, has no shared equipment, has established engineering controls (swimming lanes) and is in an environment, per the CDC, that has not shown any evidence that Covid-19 can be spread through chemically balanced pools using chlorine or bromine. Lap swimming facilities range in size from 4- to 6-lane 25-yard pools up to pools that can have

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22-lane, 25-yard pools. Lanes vary in width from 6 feet to 8 feet at almost all facilities. Indoor aquatic venues are equipped with strong HVAC systems to remove combined chlorine/chloramines from the air quality, and should remain active at all times.

Governing bodies at the national level such as USA Swimming and at the state level including Louisiana Swimming have established and published strategic plans and checklists for swimming programs to use for the return to swimming pools as well as the potential for broader use as education about Covid-19 becomes more available. This publication can be found at https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/coaching-resourcesdocuments/covid-19-team-resources/facility-reopening-plan-guidelines.pdf?sfvrsn=8a533a32_2

As the state continues to re-open, we recommend continued support of lap swimming at occupancy levels recommended by the state while maintaining social distancing practices.

Policy Recommendation: Continue to allow lap swimming to occur while requiring physical distancing in the water and on deck. Consider assigning a lane capacity to help regulate lane spacing. Example: ___ athletes per 25-yard lane, or ___ athletes per 50-meter lane.

Water Aerobics / Water Therapy

Category	Contact Intensity	Number of Contacts	Modification Potential
Water Aerobics / Water Therapy	Low	Low	High

Organized water aerobics and water therapy sessions allow physical activity and rehabilitation and are particularly beneficial for older adults to stay active. Water aerobics and water therapy are low-level in contact intensity and number of contacts, with a high potential for modifications.

Water aerobics and water therapy require no direct contact with others and require no shared equipment. Water aerobics sessions are typically conducted in small groups of adults.

Organizers of water aerobics and water therapy activities should structure activities to ensure that social distancing guidelines are met. Modifications should include restricting group sizes to 10 participants or less. Instructors should teach from the pool deck rather than in the water, to increase distancing from participants. Participants should not share any equipment, such as pool noodles or water weights.

As the state continues to re-open, we recommend continued support of water aerobics and water therapy at occupancy levels recommended by the state while maintaining social distancing practices.

Policy Recommendation: Allow water aerobics and water therapy to occur while requiring physical distancing in the water and on deck.

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Organized Recreational Swim

Category	Contact Intensity	Number of Contacts	Modification Potential
Organized Recreational Swim – Policies and crowd managers while open	Medium	Low	High

Organized recreational swimming with personnel and policies in place to enforce social distancing rules is deemed medium in contact intensity, with low-level number of contacts. The potential for modification is high.

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) and the CDC emphasize the following key points in reopening recreational pools:

- Signage
- Access Control
- Staffing
- Cleaning/Sanitization
- Pool Chemicals/Maintenance

Signage:

The aquatics facility should post signage at entry/exit points and around the facility. Patrons should be informed of capacity load of the pool area, social distancing rules, and the location of hand sanitizing stations. Information on the [CDC's current guidance on COVID-19](#) should be posted.

Access Control:

Facility managers should determine how and if employees and patrons will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. A single entry point should be established, with markings throughout the facility to indicate 6-foot spacing in areas likely for patrons to congregate. Determine which staff members will monitor access and enforce social distancing rules. This cannot be the responsibility of a lifeguard. Facilities should require children to be accompanied by an adult and for small children to be accompanied by an adult in the pool to ensure physical distancing requirements are being met. Facilities must follow capacity limits set by state/local government, and also consider that 6 feet must be maintained in all directions from each person, including on deck if the pool must be evacuated for any reason. Where possible, use a reservation system. Pool furniture such as lounge chairs should remain stationary and not allowed to be moved.

Staffing:

Additional staffing besides lifeguards may be needed. Extra staff may be needed to ensure patron compliance with social distancing rules. Cleaning staff may be required to complete full cleaning. Lifeguards cannot be responsible for policing social distancing or for enhanced cleaning. Employers should provide staff with personal protective equipment, including face masks and gloves at a minimum.

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Cleaning and Maintenance:

Maintain pool chemicals and maintenance while the pool is closed. When the pool opens, continue to test chemicals at least 2 times per day (or hourly when the pool is busy) to maintain proper chlorine and pH levels. Establish a routine cleaning schedule before opening, between shifts, and after closing each day. Frequently touched surfaces such as pool railings and ladders, doorknobs, light switches, pool furniture, slides, and restroom fixtures should be included in the cleaning schedule. Follow CDC guidance for EPA-approved disinfectant cleaners for hard (non-porous) surfaces and soft (porous) surfaces.

Organizations such as the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) have established plans and checklists that may be used by facility operators.

As the state continues to re-open, we recommend allowing recreational swimming at occupancy levels recommended by the state while maintaining social distancing practices, but only with policies and crowd managers while open. **There should be strong mitigation measures taken by management to limit crowd size and interaction.**

Policy Recommendation: Begin reopening recreational pools, but only with distancing policies and crowd managers in place. Facilities that cannot control crowds, enforce mitigation, or without a designated crowd manager should remain closed. To open, facilities should have adequate signage, access control, staffing, and cleaning/maintenance protocols in place before opening. To allow for adequate spacing in the event of a required pool evacuation (e.g., closure due to lightning, thunder, or in-water fecal release), total facility capacity at all times shall not exceed 1 individual per 200 square feet of deck space within the pool gates. Pool surface area shall not be considered when determining available deck space. All persons within the pool gates, including staff, must be counted towards occupancy. State government should consider limiting access to aquatic venues to adults and minors accompanied by an adult who must remain inside the aquatic facility at all times. The state should consider limiting or prohibiting special group visits such as birthday parties, camps, and special events, as these events tend to increase contact intensity, increase the number of contacts, and lower the modification potential by the management. The state should consider prohibiting the consumption of alcohol at aquatic facilities.

Open Swim/Play Swim (Congregate Swimming)

Category	Contact Intensity	Number of Contacts	Modification Potential
Open Swim/Play Swim – No crowd managers/lifeguards	Medium	Medium	Low

Due to the uncontrolled nature of congregate swimming, this working group is not ready to recommend an uncontrolled reopening of commercial swimming pools. Uncontrolled, congregate swimming pool environments without crowd managers and internal controls have the potential to become medium to high contact events, with a medium to high number of contacts, and low modification potential. While the water itself is not unsafe (if properly treated and regularly tested), the pool facility and deck could pose an issue. Until social distancing guidelines are significantly relaxed, this working group is unable to formulate a plan for this category.

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Swim Lessons/Learn-to-Swim Programs

Category	Contact Intensity	Number of Contacts	Modification Potential
Private, Semi-Private, and Single Household Swim Lessons (Direct Contact) - Instructor in water	High	Low	High
Group Swim Lessons (Direct Contact) - Instructor in water	High	Medium	Medium
Advanced Stroke Lessons (No Direct Contact) - Instructor on deck	Low	Low	High

Swim Lessons/Learn to Swim programs are vital to safety due to the high rates of drowning in the United States. Drowning is the number one cause of death for children under five and the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children between the ages of one and fourteen. 10 people drown each day in the U. S.

Swim Lessons/Learn to Swim Programs are divided into two separate groups: Beginner Lessons (or assisted lessons) and Advanced Swim Lessons (non-assisted lessons).

Beginner Swim Lessons/Assisted Lessons have high contact intensity (between instructor and student). These swim lessons involve a low number of contacts (limited occupancy) and high potential for modification (increase or decrease of usage with social distancing practices and protective wear). Example of protective wear being plastic face shields.

Advanced Swim Lessons have a low contact intensity, with no shared equipment. These lessons typically have engineering controls (lane lines) and social distancing can be ensured.

Governing bodies at the National level such as United State Swim School Association and United States Swimming have developed plans for swim teams to return with social distancing and checklists for swim teams and Advanced Swim Lesson/Learn to Swim programs. These programs allow for the broader use as education about Covid-19 becomes available.

This publication can be found at

https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/coaching-resourcesdocuments/covid-19-team-resources/facility-reopening-plan-guidelines.pdf?sfvrsn=8a533a32_2

As the state continues to re-open, we recommend continued support of Advanced Swim Lessons at occupancy levels recommended by the state while maintaining social distancing practices.

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Policy Recommendations: Advanced swim lessons should be treated as lap swimming, as long as the instruction can occur from out of the water (on-deck instructor). The state should consider allowing beginner swim lessons in either private (1:1), semi-private (2-3:1), or same household groups, provided the in-water instructor can properly protect their face using face shields. Group swim lessons (more than 3 students in a group) should be avoided until further social distancing guidelines are relaxed.