COVID-19: Camps and Summer Programs in Massachusetts

Monday, June 15, 2020

With this unprecedented school year winding down across the Commonwealth, there has been uncertainty about organized, out-of-the-home activities for children this summer and how to ensure that kids are safe when taking part in these programs.

As part of Phase 2 of its Reopening Massachusetts plan, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and relevant state agencies have issued guidance for a number of summer programs, which we summarize below. Phase 2 officially began on June 8 when Order 37 went into effect. Check out our previous alerts here and here for reopening plans across New England.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES AND YOUTH LEAGUES

On June 1, 2020 Governor Baker issued Order 35 to clarify preparations for Phase 2 of the Commonwealth’s reopening plan. During Phase 2, organizations that operate outdoor sports facilities (including athletic fields, courts, outdoor pools, and sailing and boating facilities) will be allowed to reopen their premises and facilities for supervised youth sport leagues, summer sports camps, and other athletic activities.

Operators of athletic programs must follow all applicable guidance for summer camps, outlined further below. In addition, the framework provided in the order and EEA guidance also contains the following restrictions:
- **Outdoor facilities**: open and available for organized youth (and adult) sports activities.

- **Indoor athletic facilities**: open and available exclusively for the use of supervised sports programs, including sports camps, for participants younger than 18.

- **Group size**: limited, with programs separating participants into groups of 12 or fewer, including coaches and staff.

- **Inter-team games, scrimmages, and tournaments**: not permitted for any organized sports activities.

- **Contact sports**: must limit activities exclusively to no-contact drills and practices. This includes basketball, football, baseball, soccer, field and ice hockey, lacrosse, and other sports where ordinary play puts players in direct contact or close proximity.

- **Locker rooms**: must remain closed, as well as weight rooms and other indoor common areas.

In addition, personal equipment, including gear worn by players, may not be shared and should be disinfected regularly. Shared food or drink is also not permitted. Phase 3 contemplates adjustments to group sizes and allowing games and tournaments, with some limitations still in place.

### RECREATIONAL DAY CAMPS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Recreational camps and municipal or recreational youth programs not traditionally licensed as camps may open during Phase 2. These programs must engage in preparedness planning prior to opening, and are required to follow certain minimum health and safety requirements, including:

- Screening all staff and children with a temperature check before entering the space.

- Requiring parents or providers to wear masks or face coverings during pick-up and drop-off, which should be conducted on a staggered schedule.

- Encouraging children over two-years-old to wear face coverings (at the discretion of parents or guardians) except when outdoors and maintaining six feet of social distance.

Recreational camps are open in Phase 2 with activity restrictions and limited opening for groups 12 or fewer. Camps may have multiple groups of 12 campers and counselors, provided physical distancing is maintained between and within groups. Critically, all campers and staff must be Massachusetts residents. Additionally, the following guidance is in place:

- Snacks and meals should be brought from home in pre-packaged, or ready-to-serve individual portions to minimize handling and preparation. When this is
not feasible, staff must prepare and serve meals. No family-style food service.

- Camps may not take campers on field trips or any other offsite travel.
- Shared items that cannot be cleaned or disinfected must be removed from activity rotation.
- Camps must ensure that two properly trained health care supervisors are present at all times at camp in the event a camper becomes symptomatic while there.

Additional guidance is available here, with the Department of Early Education and Care’s full guidance here.

Phase 3 contemplates a relaxation on activities, including the use of shared equipment, as well as for out-of-state staff and campers. Residential camps are also expected to open during Phase 3.

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