***GCSTO’s COVID GUIDELINES, POLICIES & PROCEDURES 2020/2021***

as reviewed & accepted by a four member panel of the Franklin County Public Health Department on 8/18/20.

**Note:** These guidelines, policies and procedures are subject to change in terms of amendments, additions and deletions based on conditions as we adapt to the concerns of these times. By registering for this program all participants and their parents/guardians/attendees agree to abide by these guidelines, policies & procedures and any changes to these that are made by the GCSTO administration.

**GCSTO’s COVID-19 Guidelines, Policies and Procedures Protocol**

These guidelines, policies and procedures have been developed to match or surpass the requirements set forth by the Center For Disease Control (CDC), the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the Franklin County Public Health Department (FCPHD), the Columbus Public Health Department (CPHD), the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), USA Swimming (USAS), Ohio Swimming, Inc. (OSI), and our facilities. As well, GCSTO has instituted additional guidelines and measures to help protect everyone associated with our facilities and/or programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Policy Enforcement**

GCSTO maintains the rights for strict enforcement of all of our guidelines, policies and procedures. We cannot have the actions of any single individual jeopardizing the entire team’s status at our facilities nor jeopardize the facilities operational status (whether they can remain open or not to other teams or to the public). As such, these will be strictly enforced. Those not adhering will be required to leave facility grounds. Additional infractions will lead to the individual not being able to come back to the facility for the week, for the session or for the remainder of the season.

**Mandatory Acceptance of GCSTO’s COVID-19 Assumption of Risk Policy**

Every single family and each and every coach who will be with us for the season will be required to agree to and sign GCSTO’s Assumption of Risk Policy. Acceptance of this policy is part of GCSTO’s registration process. No exceptions will be made to this requirement.

**GCSTO’s COVID-19 SCREENING POLICIES**

**Daily Covid-19/Sickness Screening Policy**

***Tier #1***

1. Participants are to have their temperatures checked daily at home before coming to practice by their parent/guardian without exception prior to coming to the pool. Coaches and Check-in attendants will be required to do the same in terms of taking a personal temperature. Anyone with a temperature of 100.0F will be instructed not to come to the facility.

2. All individuals associated with the program will be sent a list COVID-19 symptoms that we will also ask them to use to pre-screen themselves or their athletes before coming to the pool. If they or anyone in their household shows any signs or symptoms they will be instructed not to bring their athlete to practice or themselves come to practice until such time as they can provide us with confirmation that they or those in their household are no longer exhibiting these symptoms or they, their athlete and the others in their household have tested negative for COVID in a test administered after that day. They will be instructed to notify us of the situation (the athlete, themselves or anyone in their household showing signs/symptoms of COVID) so that we can record the information for tracking purposes. The individual or the athlete will be asked to report to us the results of any COVID-19 test that they have done as soon as they have them, again, for tracking purposes.

***Tier #2***

1. For any individual associated with our program who does then arrive at one of our facilities, we will then ask them the same question each day at the entrance of the facility:

Are you, anyone in your household or anyone that you’ve had direct contact with outside your household showing any signs of COVID-19 such as a temperature, coughing, sore throat, headache, shortness of breath or have been tested positive for COVID-19?

A “YES” answer to this will require us to immediately turn the individual away from entering the facility. In the case of the athletes, we will immediately notify the parents in this situation that this has occurred and that they are to take the athlete home and not bring them back to practice until the athlete has been tested for COVID by a licensed tested facility and received back a negative test result in return and, as well, the individual showing signs of COVID no longer shows no signs of any symptoms of COVID unless they present to us a written note from their medical professional confirms the symptoms to be attributed to something else (allergies, asthma or other condition). Other adult individuals (coaches, check-in monitors, administrators and the like) will be subject to these same standards.

2. Regardless of a YES or NO answer all individuals entering the facility (athletes, check-in attendants, and coaches, alike) will have their temperature checked each and every day at our entrance check-in with a no-touch LED thermometer. Any individual with a reading of 100.0F will be turned away from entering the facility. In the event it is our check-in individual a coach who has cleared screening will take over check-ins. In the event of extremely hot weather we will allow the athlete to sit in the shade for several minutes before taking a second reading of their temperature. They must do so within the direct line of site of the check in individual. If it is below 100.0 the second time they have been checked and they have answered NO to our screening question they will be admitted into the facility if the check-in individual sees no other signs of sickness.

3. Even if an individual’s answer to our screening question is NO and the results of their temperature scan is below 100.0F anyone showing signs of any sickness whatsoever will be turned away from entering the facility.

4. In all cases where an individual has been turned away for a YES answer to our screening question, a temperature reading of 100.0F or above or visible signs of sickness otherwise the name of the individual and the reason that they have been turned away will be immediately reported to myself as owner of GCSTO. In the event that I am unavailable or indisposed for whatever reason we will have a 2nd and 3rd tier of notification/recording set up so that we can record such instances and subsequent results of their COVID tests for tracking purposes.

5. Any individual who has taken a vacation, traveled by mass-transit, or been subjected to a high risk environment will be required to report the nature of that to the GCSTO administration. Notification, when possible, should be done prior to the event so that we have this information beforehand. Anyone unexpectedly finding themselves in one of these situations should notify us immediately after the occurrence. GCSTO reserves the right to institute precaution with more restrictive requirements for the individual based on the nature of their exposure or to hold them out entirely until such time as they receive a negative COVID test.

**POSITIVE Covid-19 Test Reporting Protocol**

Should an individual within our program or someone in their household test positive for COVID-19 the following measures will take place:

1. The individual or the individual’s family should let the GCSTO administration know immediately, in writing, of the positive test result letting us know whether it was the individual themselves, or a family member who tested positive. The individual associated with our program will not be allowed to come to any practices/facilities until such time as they test negative for the COVID-19 virus and inform the GCSTO administration of the negative test results. GCSTO has even collected actual copies of the results in such cases but has not yet required that. We are currently checking on the legalities of requiring individuals to send an official results of tests to us but need to verify that this does not infringe on an individual’s rights in terms of HIPAA compliance.

2. Using GCSTO’s on-deck and in-water tracking system (see below) the individual or individuals swimming on either side of that athlete or on-deck with that athlete will be determined and notified that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. They then will be required to have a COVID-19 test performed and test negative before coming back to practice or must sit out 14 days and show no signs of COVID-19 before coming back to practice.

3. If we ever do have a positive COVID test in an individual who has been inside the facility we will notify the facility in such instances providing them with the exact details of when the individual was present per our tracking records.

**GCSTO’s COVID-19 ON-SITE PROTECTION POLICIES**

**Masking Policy**

All individuals associated with our program must be ***properly*** masked. Proper masking has been clearly defined in our program as wearing a suitable, tight fitting mask that is worn so that it completely covers the individual’s nose and mouth. Once inside the facility their masking procedures shall follow the guidelines below.

*If a spectator (when allowed at the facilities)*, they must then remain properly masked at all times within the facility. One spectator per athlete will be allowed for minors to insure outside witness of our practice environment as part of our USA Swimming SAFE SPORT policy guarantee to protect the welfare of our athletes while within our care. Spectators will be required to also maintain a 15ft social distance separation from any other individual and will be assigned a permanent seating arrangement in our bleacher area, again, for tracking purposes.

*If a coach or administrator*, they must remain masked up until such time as the athletes are entering the water. A coach must re-mask anytime an athlete gets out of the water and comes within a 5yd distance of the coach. Once practice is over and athletes are exiting the water proper all coaches must be masked regardless of their distance from anyone else in the pool area. During practice a coach without a mask on shall stay at least 15ft away from anyone else on deck or in the pool.

*If an athlete*, they must remain masked up to the side of the pool. Their mask may then be taken off and placed in a sealed plastic bag (to keep the effectiveness of the mask intact) and placed on their water bottle. Masks are to be put back on once the athlete gets out of the water and remain on upon exiting to their vehicle.

*If a trainer*, they must then remain properly masked at all times.

*If a pool maintenance staff member*, they must then remain properly masked at all times unless they are at least 5yds away from any other individual in the area.

***GCSTO does not accept medical excuses nor age restriction exemptions in terms of our masking policy. If they cannot wear a mask they cannot simply be a part of our program or come to the facility.***

**Parking Policy**

GCSTO requires that whenever possible anyone driving to practice is to park at least 1 space apart from any other vehicle when coming to practice. This allows “social distancing” when it comes to entering and exiting their vehicles. Anyone entering the facility is required to have their mask on getting out of their car keeping that mask on all of the way into the facility per our masking guidelines listed above. They are required to do the same exiting the facility as long as there is a chance that they could be within a 15ft distance of any other individual.

**Social Distancing & No-Touch Entrance & Exit Policy**

Individuals must remain at least 15ft apart walking up to or away from the practice facility and when entering into or exiting out of the facility. The only exceptions to the 15ft SD rule are for family members or for other individuals in an athletes carpool (as many families established social groups early in the summer).

GCSTO has been able to insure a “No Touch Entrance/Exit Policy”. All doors/gates entering into the facilities we use have been propped open by pool staff or a GCSTO coach member. Individuals are not to be touching anything in the pool grounds when on dry land. The exception will be lane ropes & the lane rope reel as we need to put in and take out lanes ropes here. We feel chlorine & UV light will do the job in these lane rope circumstances as will our sanitization procedures at the end of each use.

Per our indoor facilities we plan to have our COVID screening/check-in individual in charge of the entrance and exit of individuals. The individual responsible to open the facility will sanitize anything they touch upon entrance. The individual will also be responsible for propping open any and all doors leading into the pool proper so that, again, a no touch entrance/exit system can be established.

Weather permitting the outer door may be propped open to allow complete no touch entrance and exit right onto the deck of the pool. In the event weather does not permit such entrance/exit the alternate route into the pools will be through the entrance lobby of each facility. In the case of both, St. Charles and the Columbus Academy, there is less than 20-25ft distance between the outside entrance and the doors entering into the pool hallway (SC)/balcony (SC).

The last individual to leave the facility will be required to sanitize all doors, railings, handles and such that anyone could have touched to insure additional sanitization beyond that which the facility staff will do each day.

Anyone picking up a non-driving athlete is requested to come to the outside entrance door of the facility building to pick up their athlete so that we can assure that the athlete is escorted out after dark with proper supervision. As well, this will allow us to know that the athlete’s ride is there before they head outside in colder weather.

**GCSTO’s On-Deck & In-Water Tracking System**

Currently, GCSTO athletes are assigned specific training positions in terms of days, times and locations. No athlete may come to a practice outside of their currently assigned schedule. Only 24 athletes are allowed to train in the water at one time in a 6 lane facility (4 athletes per lane spaced as discussed below).

Each athlete is assigned a specific **On-Deck** position to which they will report upon entering the facility. That on-deck position remains the same on that day the entire session. This way, we can identify exactly who was around them each and every day for tracking purposes. All athlete on-deck positions will be at least 15ft apart.

**In-Water** training positions are assigned similarly… each athlete is assigned a specific lane (lane 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) and a specific sub-group (A, B, C, D) for each session. While resting, we have one athlete in each lane stationed at one end of the pool, another about 7-8yds down the pool, another athlete stationed yet another 7-8yds down the pool and finally the last athlete stationed on the wall at the other side of the pool. Athletes stationed in abutting lanes will be required to remain 15ft apart at rest from the athletes on either side of them. By keeping athletes in the same lane (minimum 7-8yds difference between them and anyone else in their lane at rest) and in the same subgroup that always swims next to them in the adjacent lanes (minimum 5yds difference between them and the same subgroup swimmer in the adjacent lanes) we can establish a very precise tracking pattern for every single day of practice and can maintain a safe distance between athletes within the pool.

Note that we arrange on-deck positions to mirror in-water positions in terms of who is next to who as much as we possibly can to reduce the number of athletes any one athlete comes in contact with during the entire course of the session.

While same household swimmers will be allowed to be stationed together on dryland before and after practices they will be assigned separate subgroup positions in order for us to maintain the 15ft distance between all athletes in the water (as having 2 athletes at rest side by side in a lane results in a decreased distance between each of those athletes and the athletes to the sides of them).

GCSTO staff members also take attendance every single day which adds yet another layer of tracking ability in the event that is needed.

**Athlete Passing Concern**

Since swimmers are taught to exhale underwater and only inhale when their head is above water policy makers and our sport feel that athletes passing by one another in the pool do so in safe conditions. It is only when they are idle in between swims with their heads above water do we insure the 5yd (lane to lane) and 7-8yds (within the lane) separation policy.

**Individual Contact Policy**

Individuals are not allowed to be in physical contact with anyone at all times in our program. This includes coaching staff members. The only exception is in time of emergency if those ever arise.

**Locker Room Use Policy**

GCSTO has not allowed the use of any locker rooms/changing rooms at any of our facilities. Athletes arrive to the pool with their suits on under their clothing and must depart the pool the same way. No deck changing (getting into or out of swimming suits in a public area such as on deck, in the grass, in the stands and such) is allowed.

**Restroom (Bathroom Emergency) Use Policy**

Restrooms have been used for sickness or gastric/urinary emergency, only. In the event they have had to be used we have ensured sanitization after said uses. Bathroom doors have been propped open in such cases and the bathroom sanitized upon departure by staff or facility personnel.

**Hydration Safety Policy**

We have asked our athletes to bring in large (at least ½ to 1 gallon) jugs of water for hydration at practice. This not only cuts down on the use of throwaway plastic bottles but, as importantly, we can reduce the use of drinking fountains/water fill-up stations by doing so. As well, the staff will instruct athletes to drink water just before getting in and immediately upon getting out to encourage proper hydration. Scheduled water breaks within practice should occur at 20-30 minute intervals to allow for athletes in the middle of the pool to receive proper hydration (since they must move to the side of the pool to get to their water bottles). During water breaks athletes will be monitored closely to insure that there is no sharing of water bottles and so that our 15ft SD is maintained.

**Equipment Use Policy**

Currently no equipment is allowed to be brought to practices. Once we allow this, athletes will be required to bring in their own equipment (pull buoy, kick-board, paddles and such) in a mesh bag so that no equipment whatsoever is needed from pool storage. Nor will athletes be allowed to share equipment, as well. This will stop equipment use cross-contamination. As we see how the pandemic progresses we may allow the use of standard swimming equipment and then non-standard common equipment (gymnast rings, med balls and such) as long as said equipment is able to be sanitized in between uses of different athletes.

**Spectator Policy**

We have allowed 1 spectator per swimmer inside the pool area at 2 of our 3 locations this summer. One facility has mandated no spectators but, in all cases, practices could be viewed by parents/spectators outside of the perimeter fencing. In such cases as we have allowed a single spectator the spectator had to be properly masked and had to check in at the same time as their athlete so that they could go through our screening process. They were not allowed to enter in at any other time. If they left the facility they were required to remain outside and not reenter. All spectators were also required to keep 5yds apart from any other individual while inside the facility.

We plan to follow the requirements of each indoor facility we are at in terms of spectator/guardian allowance. While we feel extremely safe not allowing any spectators into the facility for at least 4 of our 6 training groups due to the age of athletes found in these program levels and their ability to handle dressing themselves and such but we feel our youngest levels may need a parent/guardian with them for help with such things. In all cases regardless of the age of the athlete, we would like to have at least 2 additional spectators allowed into the facility to insure USA Swimming Safe Sport guidelines are followed according to our heightened standards. USA Swimming requires 2-deep adult presence while around athletes and while coaching situations will almost always allow 2-deep monitoring to occur amongst the staff, we also like to provide a layer of outside eyes/parental observation as a heightened measure of quality control.

Spectators will all be subject to entrance at check-in and, once inside the facility, will have a required seating/viewing area within the pool bleacher/balcony area that they will be required to stick to for tracking purposes. What this means is that a spectator will be assigned a consistent spot in which to sit/stand every single time they are at the pool on each day of the week at all possible so that we have a tracking system set up. As with our outdoor facilities, if they leave they will not be allowed to re-enter.

**GCSTO COVID DIRECTOR**

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