Youth Sports and COVID-19 – Where Are We and Where Are We Headed?

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How’s Your COVID-19 Quarantine Going?
A UNH Update

Department responses and plans

Summer and fall internships

Reopening plans and plans for Fall instruction

Some exciting news - new transcripted option in Outdoor Leadership and Management (OLM); new concentrations in Community Recreation and Sport; Event Planning; and Tourism Management; Lifetime Activity Program (LAP)
Youth Sports Takeaways – Pre-COVID

Some Positives:
• Participation rates are relatively **high** and **have stabilized**
• Demand for youth sports appears to be **growing** in the past 5 years
• The **participation gap** between boys and girls **continues to narrow** (74.9% vs. 61.1%)
• Multisport play is starting to **make a comeback**, but…

Things to Work On:
• Boys continue to participate at a **higher rate than girls**
• Significant barriers to participation continue to be **cost, time commitment**
• Youth with more access to economic resources have **higher participation rates**
• The average sport drop-out age **continues to decrease**
• Playing **one sport** year-round **continues to grow**
• Fewer than **30%** of youth sports coaches **have been trained**
Youth Sports Worry About Weathering Pandemic, and Future Play

Will parents and children be eager to return to team sports once the threat of the coronavirus outbreak has passed?

Coronavirus Could Cause Youth Sports Recession

Kids are at home instead of on ball fields—and the slumping economy means some could stay there.

April 21, 2020

Will youth sports “tournacations” and megacomplexes survive COVID-19?

Pandemic costing youth sports millions, creating uncertainty

by SCHUYLER DOHAN The Associated Press | April 27, 2020 at 4:00 a.m.

Local parent frustrated after youth sports league cancels season without refund
What Does Youth Sports Look Like Post-COVID?

• When can we start?
• Can we manage sports and social distancing guidelines?
• What role, if any, will PPE (masks) or increased/improved testing play in coming back?
• How virus fears and realities affect coaching/volunteers?
• What about kids who are immuno-compromised?
• What is the future of travel sports?
• What will the demand be for low-cost, in-town recreational sports?
• Will parents and kids be willing to re-invest time and money into competitive youth sports?
• What will municipal budgets look like on the other side?

Some questions to ponder. There are LOTS of others, I’m sure…
What Does Youth Sports Look Like Post-COVID?

- Phased reopenings
- Individual training then small groups
- Few or limited spectators
- Drop-off/Pickup procedures
- Social distancing (e.g. dugouts, stands, positioning of umpires/officials)
- Use of PPEs when social distancing can’t be maintained
- No concessions
- Temperature checks, verification of health, no recent contact with COVID
- Constant cleaning of equipment, etc.
- Training/practicing in specific groups
- Can financial risk be mitigated?

Some questions to ponder. There are LOTS of others, I’m sure…
Some Thoughts and Predictions

- Start-up predictions vary from **Summer to “Sometime” in the Fall**
- Variation in virus prevalence and control **by geography**
- Significant **revenue loss** from cancelled camps, tournaments, and facility reservations
- Loss of **economic impact** for towns and cities due to cancelled events
- Loss of tax receipts and **stresses on municipal budgets**
- More than **22 million** people have filed for unemployment
- Sport participation tends to **rise and fall with the economy**
- Discretionary income will be reduced and **existing inequities** are likely to increase
- Youth sport organizations may have **reduced access to facilities**
- Predicted **reductions in philanthropic giving** and grants
- Significant number of private **youth sport providers will fold** or consolidate
Parks and Recreation WILL Help Rebuild Our Communities Post-COVID

We Build Healthy:

People

Places

Communities

What can we do to help shape youth sport priorities and meet youth sports needs in a post-COVID world?
Parks and Recreation - Post-COVID-19

- Time now to **plan** – volunteer recruitment and coach training
- Recreation programming will **help in recovery** (mental, physical, and social health)
- **New Habits** - Free play, pick-up sports, family time, close-to-home
- Role for **low-cost, in-town, local** youth sport leagues and options
- Opportunities for **individual and dual sports** to increase in the near term
- Return towards **development-focused youth sports**
- Push and document the **value of youth sports** and **public recreation**!
- Dare I say…..E-sports?
State of Youth Sports – Some Data and Reports

- State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports (Aspen Institute, 2019)
- Coronavirus and Youth Sports (Aspen Institute, 2020)
- Coronavirus and Youth Sports – What the Future Holds (Aspen Institute Webinar) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpVgXQwtmhU&feature=emb_logo
- Return to Play – COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool (Aspen Institute, 2020)
- Leaders Chart Path Back to Playing Fields for Amateur Sports (NY Times, 2020)
- The National Youth Sports Strategy (US DHHS, 2019)
- Teen Sport in America: Why Participation Matters (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2018)
- Sports Specialization and Intensive Training in Young Athletes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016)
- The Astronomical Cost of Kid’s Sports (Time Magazine, 2017)
- Effects of a Facilitated Fee Waiver Program on Participation in Youth Sports (Berk & Moon, 2016)
Participation rates remain relatively flat since 2012.
37.9% participated in a team sport on regular basis (core = organized, engaged participation).
17.1% engaged in no sport activity.

Down from high of 2.11 team sports in 2011.

Average Length of Participation:
- Field Hockey (5.7 years)
- Skiing/Snowboarding (4.3 years)
- Tackle Football (4.1 years)
- Flag Football (4.1 years)
- Baseball (3.3 years)
The size of the youth sports industry in the United States

Game over: Middle-class and poor kids are ditching youth sports
- CBS News

Kids aren't playing enough sports. The culprit? Cost
- ESPN

The Astronomical Cost of Kids’ Sports
- Time