

Michigan-Specific Purposeful Use of Pools Talking Points

The aquatics community wants to be a part of the solution that gets purposeful aquatics activity – like swimming lessons and competitive swimming – back in pools in a way that minimizes the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

- We applaud the public health professionals and policymakers on the front lines of the COVID-19 response who are doing incredibly difficult jobs under the most challenging of circumstances. Their efforts and sacrifices are inspiring to all Americans.
- As policymakers consider how to best re-open segments of society, the Michigan aquatics community wants to help be part of the solution.
- Competitive swimmers need to swim miles of laps to condition themselves for swim meets. Circle swimming is an effective and safe way for swimmers to get their conditioning in, while also being at least six feet apart.

The Michigan aquatics community has developed guidelines – from the time participants leave their homes to the time they return – that will help mitigate the risk of transmission and will allow aid in contact tracing should an individual test positive.

- These guidelines are based on the best available information from the CDC, discussions with public health and aquatics experts, and in consultation with USA Swimming in Colorado Springs – the training site for our Olympic Athletes.
- The guidelines include temperature checks, health questionnaires, social distancing in and around the pool, face coverings except when in-water, and encouraging those who are ill to stay home, among many others.

We are advocating, specifically, for the return and maintenance of purpose-driven, coached, aquatic activity like swimming lessons, aquatic-based physical therapy, and competitive swimming.

- We are seeing swimming lessons, lifeguard trainings, and even competitive swimming activities resume in places across the country in a way that minimizes the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Individuals are wearing masks around the pools, they are socially distancing, and during lessons, some are even wearing face shields.
- Most participants and athletes aren't showering at the facilities, but instead come in prepared for their activity, hop in the pool, and once they're done, they dry off and leave. This minimizes social interaction.

COVID-19 is not transmitted through chlorinated water.

- According to the CDC, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread to people through the water used in pools, hot tubs, or water playgrounds. Proper operation and disinfection of pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds should kill the virus that causes COVID-19.

- We believe that working together with policymakers, public health officials, and the swimming community, we can open pools in a safe way that minimizes the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Unlike many other sports, swimming does not require direct contact between teammates or coaches and social distancing can be maintained throughout practice.

Learning to swim is essential.

- Swim lessons are vital to ensuring that young children remain safe in the water.
- Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death for children under the age of four years old and the second leading cause of accidental death for children under 14 – with minority children disproportionately impacted. With aquatic venues shuttered, life-saving swim lessons have grinded to a halt.
- Swim lessons can be safely administered with proper protective equipment and protocols.
- With children out of school for the summer, re-opening instructional aquatic facilities would provide a critical resource to parents looking for ways to safeguard their children in the water.
- We also must get lifeguards back in the pool, ensuring they are trained and certified to protect swimmers in the water.

Purpose-driven swimming has significant mental and physical health benefits.

- Aquatics-based exercise and rehabilitation programs have proven to be key contributors to improved mental and physical health.
- We want to ensure that individuals who need pools for their health and well-being are able to access them safely and quickly.
- Regular physical activity is a core component for long-term health and plays a role in reducing risk factors for contracting COVID-19.
- For many individuals, including senior citizens, those with disabilities, or those prescribed physical therapy by their doctor, aquatics-based exercise may be the only physical activity they are able to safely participate in, mainly because the buoyancy of the water offers low-impact on the joints.

Michigan already experiences higher drowning rates than most states, and continued lack of access to swimming facilities for instructional purposes could lead to increased drowning deaths.

- As indoor pools remain closed and access to outdoor pools is limited, it's likely families and individuals will seek higher risk bodies of water during the summertime, such as lakes and rivers.
- Michigan had the fifth most drowning deaths in the U.S. from 2009-2018.
- According to the Great Lakes Surf Rescue Project (GLSRP), from 2010-2020 there have been 871 drownings in the Great Lakes. So far in 2020, there have been 33 drownings in the Great Lakes, 17 of which occurred in Lake Michigan. In 2019, there were 97 total drownings in the Great Lakes, with 48 happening at Lake Michigan.

We hope that by being good actors, policymakers will agree to allow our facilities to open – and remain open even as cases increase.

- We see the same data as everyone else, and we know that as segments of society continue to open, cases will increase. We are professionals that want to be part of the solution to minimize the risk of transmission at aquatic facilities by following strict safety protocols.
- We are following best practices for reducing transmission in and around the pool and we are working with policymakers to ensure they know that aquatics participants are doing their part.