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## SAFE SPORT CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETURN TO TRAINING

As we reopen the clubs across Canada and begin to reintegrate back into the gymnastics environment following COVID-19 closures, there are several key considerations that must be made from a Safe Sport perspective. The guidelines provided below are best practice recommendations from Gymnastics Canada (GymCan) that are to be read in conjunction with the detailed reopening protocols developed by your provincial gymnastics associations.

Please note: The guidelines below are not an exhaustive list, and given the ever-changing circumstances of COVID-19, these guidelines may be changed or updated, as necessary.

### Supervision:

GymCan encourages a phased approach related to supervision and parent/guardian viewing that respects and upholds health and safety regulations, as well as, Safe Sport policies as we return to train. Across all phases, we maintain that it is important to create an open and observable environment to foster safety, enhance protection and reduce vulnerabilities for both the athlete and coach, integrated support team members, and staff.

In **Phase One**, when numbers permitted to enter the gym are strictly limited due to public health regulations and government restrictions, GymCan encourages clubs across Canada to use their discretion and create the safest and healthiest (e.g., physically, mentally, emotionally) environment possible with adequate supervision. If in-person parent/guardian spectating is not possible due to public health regulations and government restrictions, our expected minimum standard for supervision is for clubs to uphold the Rule of Two at all times, without exception. In addition to this requirement, we recommend that clubs offer an electronic streaming option with audio that allows parents/guardians to tune-in remotely to view training at any time. For more on the Rule of Two, please see the following GymCan resource: <http://www.gymcan.org/uploads/programs/rule-of-two-best-practice-guidelines-en-updated-final.pdf>. If your training program involves a hybrid of in-person and virtual training, please also consult the Safe Sport in Virtual Spaces GymCan resource: <http://www.gymcan.org/uploads/programs/safe-sport-in-virtual-spaces-en.pdf>.

Please note: If you are a small, rural club and you do not have the support staff to ensure you are able to fulfill Rule of Two guidelines, please work with your provincial association to find suitable alternatives. Examples of alternative options may include:

- A rotation of Safe Sport screened parents/guardians to serve as the second adult supervising the training environment.
- Collaborating with other local gyms or sports clubs to develop a rotation of Safe Sport screened and certified coaches to support one another in the early stages of reopening.

In **Phase Two**, when the numbers permitted to enter the gym have increased – and with the advice of public health authorities – GymCan encourages clubs across Canada to re-introduce options for in-person parent/guardian spectating. Examples of options for parent/guardian viewing may include, but are not limited to:

- A rotating schedule that allows a pre-determined number of spectators in the facility at one time and assigns parents/guardians to specific viewing timeslots. If permitting in-person viewing, we encourage you to designate a specific space for spectators and indicate the parameters of the space with appropriate signage.
- A hybrid of an in-person viewing schedule paired with an electronic streaming option with audio that allows parents/guardians to tune-in remotely to view training at any time. This may include closed circuit television with audio in common areas or setting up a tablet in the gym with appropriate speakers and creating a Zoom (or other electronic streaming platform) link for each scheduled training.

In **Phase Three**, when strict restrictions on numbers are lifted by government and public health officials, Gymnastics Canada expects that full parent/guardian viewing on a daily basis is reinstated.

### **Communication:**

Given the ever-changing nature of COVID-19 circumstances, it is critical to prioritize open and consistent communication with all members within your club, including, parents/guardians, athletes, support staff, and administrators. Tips for maintaining clear and open communication include but are not limited to:

- Ensure all staff, athletes and parents/guardians are aware of and understand their roles and responsibilities in following national, provincial and club-specific protocols to promote their personal safety and the safety of others;
- Prepare all staff, athletes, and parents/guardians for reopening by sharing protocols and answering questions. Examples of preparation activities may include:
  - Facilitating mock trainings with staff and parents/guardians prior to athletes' re-integration in the gym;
  - Facilitating virtual "drop-in" meetings for athletes and parents/guardians to attend and ask questions about new protocols; and,
  - Create digital walk-throughs where participants are invited to join on live-stream or view a pre-recorded video that shows the club administrator walking through the gym and explaining new protocols with visual aids.
- Create signage that is clear, large, and easy to interpret for participants of all ages; and,
- Prepare contingency plans in the event of unforeseen circumstances or future temporary club closures.

### **General Participant Well-being:**

It is GymCan's top priority that all participants across Canada return to train in a safe and positive environment. As we reopen gyms across Canada, please make sure that your behaviours and actions reflect your commitment to participant well-being and are implemented with participants' best interests in mind. Please adhere to all health and safety regulations available through the national, provincial, and local health authorities. We encourage coaches and administrators to be patient,



positive, and forward-looking with the athletes and develop progressive training plans that aim to assist athletes' in their return to peak performance. A progressive plan should consider the physical, emotional, psychological, and social well-being of all individuals in the environment, incorporate athlete input, and be mindful and compassionate of the new challenges and stressors present in the gymnastics environment.

Other considerations to foster a safe and positive environment and emphasize participant well-being include:

- Being mindful and reminding one another of the importance of healthy training and lifestyle habits, including, nutrition, rest and recovery, and injury prevention;
- Establishing, monitoring and reinforcing clear, appropriate, and consistent boundaries with athletes of all ages and skill levels;
- Recognizing the current circumstances as an opportunity for personal and professional development. Reflect on learning opportunities presented in the environment and assist athletes and/or staff in developing or refining important personal skills, such as, adaptability, communication, and resilience;
- Finding unique successes every day and expressing these successes out loud (e.g., achieving skill progression, keeping a positive attitude despite challenges, displaying effort, boosting team morale, encouraging others);
- Creating an open and trusting space where there are opportunities to express anxieties, worries, or concerns. For example:
  - Develop a “parking lot” board in the gym where staff, athletes, or parents/guardians may write down questions or concerns;
  - Allot time for wellness check-ins at the beginning and end of training for athletes and/or staff to share thoughts, provide feedback, or discuss challenges;
  - Encourage staff and athletes to track thoughts, concerns, motivations, needs, strengths, etc. in a personal journal or training logbook;
  - Create clear expectations and/or schedules for staff that outline cleaning roles and responsibilities with the purpose of avoiding burn-out or potential conflict;
  - Support the well-being of all staff members with regular check-ins and share mental health resources with local access; and,
  - Reach out to and consult with integrated support team members equipped to address specific support measures and needs.
- Consistently involve athletes in training program development, including, helping athletes understand the technical and strategic reasons behind return to train plan and incorporating their feedback. It is important to have athlete input to ensure goals are realistic, build trust, increase accountability, and provide athletes with a shared sense of responsibility;



- Listen well, ask questions, and provide supportive, encouraging, and goal-focused feedback that communicates a sense of security and acceptance;
- Carefully monitor return to train progress and work together to adjust goals, as necessary; and,
- Collaborate with GymCan, the provincial associations, and other clubs to set up opportunities to share best practices and successes.

Please remember: the challenges and/or stressors evoked by the current circumstances should not be channeled into behaviour or actions that fall below the standard of a safe and positive environment at any time. This encompasses behaviours or actions including, but not limited to, the use of inappropriate language (e.g., name-calling), comments that are belittling, intimidating, or demeaning, body shaming or negative comments about physical appearance, and/or excessive physical measures, such as, denying access to nutritional needs (e.g., food, water), daily weigh-ins on a scale (in public or privately), conditioning to the point of sickness, overstretching, or disregard of medical advice. These tactics have the potential to cause harm and are not considered appropriate methods to support general well-being or regain peak physical fitness. For more information on GymCan's Safe Sport policies, please visit: <http://www.gymcan.org/programs/safe-sport/policies>

It is our collective responsibility to ensure safe, positive, and fulfilling experiences for all of our participants. Please do your best to raise Safe Sport awareness within your clubs or provincial associations and take appropriate measures to address or intervene any potential issues at the club-level before they escalate. If you have concerns about the well-being of a participant, please consult the following webpage for more information: <http://gymcan.org/programs/safe-sport/reporting>.

#### **Important links:**

- Public Health Agency of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>
- Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en.html>
- Gymnastics Canada Safe Sport Policies <http://gymcan.org/programs/safe-sport/policies>
- World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/>
- United Nations – Coronavirus <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus>
- Coaching Association of Canada's Safe Sport Training <https://safesport.coach.ca/>

