

World Boccia COVID-19 Competition Protocol (Version 1.0, November, 2022)

Guidance for Host Organizing Committees, Teams & Officials organising / attending a World Boccia Competition in the context of COVID-19

*With Guidance from the World Health Organization. World Boccia will review this document periodically and update it according to the pandemic evolution.

Background

This document sets out guidance for Host Organizing Committees (HOC) and provides information for attendees at international boccia competitions. This protocol should be read in conjunction with any Local, National, and International recommendations regarding the current COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this protocol is to help Host Organizing Committees and participants at World Boccia sanctioned competitions manage the specific additional risks presented by COVID-19, setting minimum requirements to ensure health and safety conditions for all participants and organisers.

SECTION 1 - Recommendations for World Boccia Event Host Organising Committees

Boccia at World Boccia sanctioned competitions is an elite sport which takes place in a very controlled environment. We expect HOCs to be able to implement new measures to provide added safety for athletes and their close support teams.

HOCs should communicate the specific arrangements for managing the risks associated with COVID-19 during their events. One way to do this will be to appoint a COVID-19 Official to help promote messaging and manage any COVID-19 related situations. It should be emphasized that each individual is responsible for taking precautions to keep themselves safe and to protect others around them.

1. General Considerations

While pursuing a World Boccia sports event, each HOC should:

- Ensure all staff members, technical officials, volunteers present their vaccination certificates against COVID-19 and participants are provided with:
 - The necessary and updated information on COVID-19 and how it spreads;
 - Individual protection equipment (IPE).

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- Inform staff members and volunteers they should immediately inform the organisers and remove themselves from the competition venue if they display any signs or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
 - Make sure all spaces, materials and sports equipment used during the competitions are regularly cleaned and disinfected/sanitised, namely equipment and other items that can be shared.
 - Design one-way circulation for athletes and others who use common areas such as Training Courts, Call Room, and Field of Play;
 - Provide each World Boccia Technical Official with their own individual equipment, to avoid equipment exchanges between them; and
 - Wherever possible, define resting areas for each delegation, with a limited number of chairs/spaces to be used exclusively by the members of the delegation.

2. PRE-EVENT MEASURES

a. Requirements to attend a World Boccia sanctioned event & Competition Entries.

- All accredited officials and athletes (including athlete assistants and carers) are strongly encouraged to be regularly vaccinated against COVID-19 and to produce their COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate.
- To attend any World Boccia sanctioned event, it will be compulsory to comply with mandatory entry requirements as defined by the HOC in the Competition Guide, which will include, **as a minimum**, to present a negative antigen COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival at the event (cf. point c). All such test results, **as well as their vaccination certificates**, must be submitted to the HOC on arrival as a mandatory requirement for attending the event. These certificates should be translated to English prior to supplying them.
- If a Sports Assistant (SA) or Ramp Operator (RO) tests positive for COVID-19 as result of a pre-departure test, he/she may be replaced providing the replacement Sports Assistant has a negative test prior to departure. The HOC must be informed of any such substitutions immediately. Athletes' replacement for medical reasons (including COVID-19) must be authorized by World Boccia and the HOC.

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- If any accredited officials, athletes, athlete assistants, carers and HOC members have a positive RT-PCR COVID-19 test in the last 90 (ninety) days [but not in the last 14 (fourteen) days], they will be exempted of presenting a negative antigen COVID-19 test prior to the event. But, in this case, the individual must present a previous Medical Declaration of COVID-19 Recovery (in English) and also will be evaluated by the medical team of the event at registration time in order to rule out the acute signs and symptoms of the infection. Those who appear to have current symptoms suggesting infectivity (e.g., fever or chills, dry cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea) will not be allowed to register and will be denied entry.
 - In this case, the HOC will provide additional testing and apply isolation measures described below until confirmation is obtained.
- Only athletes and staff members who have been formally registered can attend the event.
- Each participant and volunteer will be required to sign a declaration of compliance and waiver stating that they participate in the event voluntarily and at their own risk and commit to follow the rules stated in the present protocol. In this document, the following commitments should be included:
 - To maintain good hygiene measures at all times;
 - To avoid social interaction and physical contact with other people before travelling to a World Boccia competition.
 - During the event, to practice physical distancing, and commit:
 - To only use competition dedicated vehicles.
 - To avoid unnecessary contact with local population.
 - To only leave the Hotel to go to the Venue and back, avoiding extra activities that will imply further risk of covid-19 such as sightseeing or shopping.
- The Competition Guide should include a description of COVID-19 prevention measures which must be followed by all participants. Such measures should include the following as a minimum:
 - Regular hand washing;
 - Maintaining social distance (preferably 1,5m);

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- Following marked circulation routes in all indoor spaces (competition venue, hotels);
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth without having washed hands;
 - Avoid touching surfaces wherever possible;
 - Minimise the items which are taken to the Call Room and Field of Play to reduce the possibilities of infection.
 - Avoiding unnecessary physical contact such as handshakes, hugs and kisses.
 - Although it is not mandatory, World Boccia **recommends** all participants to wear a mask or face covering indoors at all times unless there is a valid medical reason why this is not possible.
- The Competition Guide must include a description of the COVID-19 preventative measures in force at the event (according to national and international health policies in place at that time) and must specify:
- Where and how an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 will be cared for and isolated.
 - Where and how a contact of a confirmed case will be quarantined.
 - How athletes and team staff will be notified of a COVID-19 case.
 - The location in which a large number of people can be quarantined in case of a large number of athletes or event staff being exposed to COVID-19.
 - Predetermined emergency contacts with local health authorities.
 - Common symptoms of COVID-19 and standard preventative measures.
 - The criteria for asking individuals with symptoms to leave the venue or retreat to a designated area.
 - The meaning and practical implications of quarantine, self-isolation and self-monitoring in the context of the event, e.g., rules for when a person should not attend the venue.

b. Isolation Measures

The competition venue and hotels must have an isolation area for anyone who displays symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive. In case individuals present symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, he/she should be directed to the isolation room and the Health Authorities must be notified, as well as their Team Leader and close relatives.

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The Isolation Room must contain:

- Chair or physio bed for the suspected COVID-19 patient to rest while waiting for medical referral.
- A supply of bottled water and some non-perishable food.
- Waste bin (with non-manual opening system available and disposable plastic bag).
- Antiseptic alcohol-based solution or 70° alcohol (available both at the room's entrance and inside.)
- Paper towels.
- Surgical masks.
- Disposable gloves.
- Thermometer.

c. COVID-19 Testing

COVID-19 Tests will be **mandatory** for all accredited World Boccia Officials and athletes (including athlete assistants and carers) in two separate moments as requirements to attend a World Boccia sanctioned event:

- **Pre-Arrival Test:** All abovementioned are required to present their COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (in case they have it) and a negative **COVID-19 Test** (that can be either PCR or antigen depending with the HOC local health policies at the time) taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival at the event (no more than 48 hours if it is an antigen test). These should be supplied translated to English.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: All participants (athletes, staff, officials and volunteers) who are not vaccinated (minimum 2 dosages) or have not presented their vaccination certificate to the HOC must submit a negative **PCR COVID-19 test** prior to arrival.

- Individuals with positive RT-PCR COVID-19 test in the last 90 (ninety) days (with Medical Declaration of Recovery in English and no acute infection signs and symptoms) are exempted from doing the Event Test (4th day) and Pre-Arrival Test.
- **Event Test:** On the 4th day of the event, the HOC will run a mandatory **COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test**. Its costs will be included on the Competition Entry Fee.

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Additionally, the HOC will provide to all participants the possibility of being tested before departure, if requested. These optional tests' costs shall be paid by each delegation.

Important: The HOC will cover the mandatory test costs for all competition officials as well as the departure test if it is a requirement from Officials' home countries to authorize their return.

Based on local and international health policies, World Boccia reserves the right to determine extra testing if required (at the TD and the HOC COVID Official's discretion).

d. COVID OFFICIAL

Each HOC will designate one or two COVID Officials (preferably a physician and/or nurse), who will be responsible for managing all COVID-19 related issues while organizing the event as well as during the event and will be the liaison with all participants, officials, and volunteers in this area. The **COVID Official** should be presented to all team leaders at the Technical Meetings.

COVID Officials are required to:

- Supervise all competition preparation arrangements to ensure all efforts are made to meet health and security requirements;
- Maintain contact and inform all potential participants of nation health policy requirements regarding COVID-19;
- To be available during the event and refer any suspicious cases of infection, in coordination with local and national health authorities;
- To support any participant or official and its team in case of COVID-19 infection, namely contacting their families, coordinating with hospitals and other health services, and ensuring their assistance.

An e-mail address and phone number of such COVID Officials must be informed to all accredited World Boccia Officials, team managers, staff members and volunteers prior to their arrival to the World Boccia sanctioned event.

3. MEASURES DURING THE EVENT (INCLUDING AT COMPETITION AND ACCOMMODATION VENUES)

a. At the Competition Venue

- Adequate facilities for regular handwashing must be available including single use hand drying (e.g., disposable paper towels.). Alcohol-based hand gel and hygiene facilities should be

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positioned at multiple locations in the competition and accommodation venues. Such facilities must be refilled regularly.

- All common areas (warm-up areas, field of play, changing rooms, training facilities, etc.) must be cleaned regularly and sanitised at least twice daily.
- Air circulation will be ensured regularly, namely at the beginning and at the end of each competition day.
- **Conditions for entry to the competition venue:** All attendees' (competitors, team members, technical officials, etc.) will be required to:
 - Report to the HOC any suspicion that a team member presents symptoms of COVID-19. The individual and any team members with whom he/she has been in close contact must also isolate and will only be allowed back to the competition on production of a negative COVID-19 test after the relevant local incubation period.
 - Disinfect their wheelchair.
 - Disinfect all the equipment brought into the venue.
 - Clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Participants should minimise unnecessary close contact with others, for example by avoiding gatherings at the venue's entrance/exit or in common areas.
- In-venue first aid and medical services must include designated medical providers who are able to triage and refer any suspected cases for COVID-19 testing.
- The HOC must make available:
 - Disposable gloves for the use of athletes, team staff, volunteers, and Technical Officials, if required.
 - Masks for all Technical Officials and volunteers.
 - Water refill points, preferably hands-free.
 - Containers with lids for the disposal of used tissues etc. on the field of play, around the venue and on buses.
- The venue shower rooms should be used mainly as bathrooms and athletes should preferably shower at the Hotel.

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b. World Boccia Officials, HOC Staff & Volunteers

- Although the masks use for Athletes and Team Members was updated from mandatory to strongly recommended, World Boccia Event Officials and workforce will be required to continue wearing masks within indoor public areas to:
 - Protect the Championship Workforce Infra-structure and the successful delivery of the competition;
 - Respect those participating Countries who chose to continue to wear masks at the World Championships

c. Meals and Accommodation

- Hand sanitisation points (with suitable products/equipment) should be installed at suitable locations in the hotel for the duration of the event.
- Individuals that are from the same 'bubble' (e.g. Athlete and Sport Assistant) should share rooms.
- All hotel rooms should be 'deep cleaned' prior to arrival and on departure.
- Where possible, each team should be accommodated on the same floor of the hotel and should have access to a private space or room for meals and team meetings.
- HOC should minimise opportunities for interaction, for example by staggering mealtimes, whenever possible.

d. Warm Up Area

- Athletes, Coaches and Sports Assistants/Ramp Operators and team staff are recommended to wear masks or face shield in the warm-up area and on court;
- All users of the warm-up area must adhere to their groups and schedules and must minimise contact between groups.
- Athletes, Sport Assistants and Coaches should arrive at the area immediately before their scheduled time and must leave the area as soon as warm-up time is over.
- After the warm-up of each team is completed, the staff in charge of the warm-up area will immediately clean the court and disinfect the court and chairs.
- Training groups and schedules should be consistent, minimising contact between groups.

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- During Training sessions, Athletes, Sports Assistants and Coaches should:
 - Arrive and depart strictly according to the published training session schedule.
 - Maintain social distancing, including in rest periods or when receiving technical guidance, ensuring a physical distance of at least 1.5m when involved in warming up.

e. Call Room

- At the reception of the call room, the participants will line up according to the distance markers on the floor and wait their turn to proceed to the Call Room.
- The Call Room should be large enough to allow social distancing between participating sides. (If the Call Room space is too small, the HOC should consider completing the Call Room procedures on training courts to ensure social distancing.)
- Wearing a mask is recommended in the Call room (unless there is a valid medical reason not to do so).
- If possible, each waiting area should be separated by a splash prevention board in the center of the space so that Athletes, Coaches and Sport Assistants do not mix unnecessarily.
- Air circulation must be ensured as much as possible.
- The Call Room should be a quiet area with no unnecessary conversations.
- All Technical Officials (TO) must wear a mask in the Call Room.
- TOs should enter the Call Room after all athletes have entered.
- TOs should confirm the court number in the waiting area in advance to minimise conversation.
- If an Athlete, Coach or Sports Assistant wishes to check an opponent's boccia balls, they must first sanitise their hands.

f. Spectators

To minimize the potential impact of COVID-19 spread, any contact between participants and local populations should be restricted to the minimum, therefore, spectators will be allowed at World Boccia sanctioned events only at dedicated spaces, with adequate ventilation, provided that an alternative circulation scheme is possible in order to avoid contact between public and Competition Participants and Staff. The presence of spectators will only be possible if the HOC is able to ensure

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general public is kept away from Competition courts or any other Competition specific area, in order to protect people associated to the event (e.g., participants, officials, volunteers).

Regardless, this measure will be regularly revised according to public health policies and the evolution of the pandemic and can be altered for each event, according to the HOC's national conditions.

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SECTION 2 – Amendments to World Boccia Rules to reduce the risk of COVID-19

Physical Distancing During Matches

While the risk presented by COVID-19 remains high, the following amendments to the World Boccia rules (2021-2024 v.2.0) will be followed in competitions:

1. When not throwing, players must move 1.5m away from other players

To maintain the 1.5m distance between players during play, the side not throwing MUST be out of their boxes:

Players are permitted to move outside the court to designated places – e.g. behind the back line of the box (wheels over the line).

- If they are told by the referee to move further away, they must comply (Ref. 10.6.1).
- If a player on the throwing side wishes to throw from the back of his/her box then some non-throwing player(s) may need to move further away to maintain the correct physical distance from the throwing player. When the order of throw changes, the side that has just thrown will leave their boxes and the side to throw will move to their boxes.
- At BC3 individual and Pairs competition, the non-throwing side must remove its equipment so it does not disturb another athlete's throwing.

After an athlete has thrown, the referee shows the paddle to the side which is going to throw next. The referee waits until the side not throwing goes behind the back line of the box and continues showing the paddle. When the side which is next to throw have all wheels in their box, the referee shows the paddle to the timer. And if, in the opinion of the Referee, there is deliberate disruption from the non-throwing side when moving out of the box, Rule 15.8.1 shall apply.

Once the referee has shown the paddle to the side that has to throw, if this side decides to enter the [playing area](#) to see the game, or in individual and Pairs BC3 the side decides to orient the ramp from an empty box without first entering their throwing box, the referee will show the paddle immediately to the Timer. In these two situations it will not be necessary to wait for the side to have the 4 wheels inside their throwing box (Ref. 10.7.2).

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2. Assistance on Court:

- 2.1** For BC1, BC3, Pairs BC3 and Teams Divisions, collecting balls **between ends**, including the Jack, should be done by their Sports Assistants/Ramp Operators or Coach/Coach Assistant.
 - 2.2** For BC2 and BC4 players, as well as Pair BC4 Divisions, collecting balls between ends, including the Jack, should be done by the Coach/Coach Assistant.
 - 2.3** When the Referee indicates that the side not throwing is to throw next, the Sport Assistant can move their player in or out of the box **WITHOUT** an instruction from the player.
 - 2.4** A BC1 Sport Assistant can enter the box on seeing the referee signal for the other side to throw.
 - 2.5** A Ramp Operator can move the player when they see the other side preparing or if the Referee tells them to.
- 3.** For BC1 Players using a manual wheelchair, when the Player wishes to move on the playing area, the liner or the referee can assist to move to any place.
 - 4.** For BC3 Players using a manual wheelchair, when the Player wishes to move on the playing area, the liner or referee can assist to move to any place.

All courts should be surrounded by court dividers, if possible; if a ball goes out of court it will be declared out and will remain where it lies outside the court lines. If the ball goes out and returns to the court, the referee will pick the ball up and place it out of the court.

NOTE: During the match, if the referee must touch a ball (e.g., for measurements), he/she must disinfect his/her hands immediately after the measurement. Sports Assistant may clean the balls between ends.

EXTRA TIME at the CALL ROOM – The Call Room may open a further 15 minutes earlier than the official time at the discretion of the Technical Delegate.

Equipment and Ball checks

- **Balls:** Prior to Check: Balls must be seen to have been cleaned / disinfected before inspection.
- **Equipment:** All equipment must be cleaned / disinfected prior to the start of each check.

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- Those carrying out the roll test and circumference test must disinfect their hands after each athlete's balls have been checked.
 - Those carrying out the weighing of the ball must disinfect their hands after each athlete's balls have been checked.
 - Ball check: Balls will be checked in the usual way, observing physical distancing, and the referee and/or liner will take the boccia balls onto the court.
 - Ramps: Prior to check: Box floor to be cleaned / disinfected between checks.
 - Ramp check: As per the usual check (person checking has no need to touch the ramp), observing physical distancing. The Ramp Operator or the Coach/CA will fix the stickers on the ramp, under direction of the Referee doing the check.
 - Wheelchair check: Prior to check: Measuring equipment to be cleaned / disinfected between checks. Checks will be carried out by the Sports Assistant or coach under the direction of the responsible Referee, observing physical distancing. The Sports Assistant/Coach will fix the sticker on the wheelchair under direction of the Referee carrying out the check.
 - Additional time will be made available to carry out equipment checks if necessary.

Field of Play

- Officials are required to wear a mask at all times.
- It is strongly recommended that Coaches and Sport Assistants always wear a mask.
- Athletes are advised to use a mask while inside the sports venue and may remove the mask while playing. However, using a mask or visor at all times is highly recommended.
- Ramp Operators and BC1 Sports Assistants are advised to use a visor while competing/training.

Classification:

Guidelines for classification produced by the International Paralympic Committee:

https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/2020_06_25_IPC%20classification%20hygiene%20infection%20control%20guidelines_final.pdf