

***BISFed COVID-19 Return to Competition Protocol  
(Version 2.0, October 2021)***

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

\*With Guidance from the World Health Organization. BISFed 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 BISFed-sanctioned boccia 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 BISFed Event Host Organising Committees**

Boccia at BISFed-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 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 BISFed 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 competitions 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 Technical Official with their own individual equipment, to avoid equipment exchanges between them; and
  - Wherever possible, define resting areas for each delegation, with limited number of chairs/spaces to be used exclusively by the members of the delegation.

## **2. PRE-EVENT MEASURES**

### **a. Requirements to attend a BISFed sanctioned event & Competition Entries.**

- All accredited officials and athletes (including athlete assistants and carers) are strongly encouraged to be double-vaccinated against COVID-19 and to produce their COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate. To attend any BISFed sanctioned event it will be mandatory to present a negative COVID-19 Test taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival at the event. All such test results must be submitted to the HOC on arrival as a mandatory requirement for attending the event.
- If a Sports Assistant (SA) 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. No substitutions will be allowed for registered athletes who test positive for COVID-19.
- Only athletes and staff members who have been formally registered can attend the event.
- Each participant and volunteer will be required to sign a waiver stating that they participate in the event voluntarily and at their own risk. In this document, the following commitments should be included:



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- To wear mask and maintain good hygiene measures at all times (with the exceptions determined in this document);
- To avoid Social interaction and physical contact with other people before travelling to a BISFed 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;
  - Wearing a mask or face covering indoors at all times unless there is a valid medical reason why this is not possible.
  - Maintaining social distance (preferably 1,5m);
  - 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.
- The Competition Guide must include a description of the COVID-19 preventative measures in force at the event 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.



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- 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.

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.



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**c. COVID-19 Testing**

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

- **Pre-Arrival Test:** All abovementioned are required to produce their COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (in case they have it) and a negative COVID-19 PCR Test taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival at the event.
- **Event Test:** On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the event, the HOC will run a mandatory COVID-19 PCR Test. Its costs will be included on the Competition Entry Fee.

Additionally, the HOC will provide to all participants the possibility of being tested before departure, if requested. The cost these optional tests will be in charge of each delegation.

**Important:** The HOC will cover the PCR 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.

**d. COVID OFFICIAL**

Each HOC will designate one or 2 COVID Officials, 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.

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.



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An e-mail address and phone number of such COVID Officials must be informed to all accredited BISFed Officials, athletes, staff members and volunteers prior to their arrival to the BISFed 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 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 in 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.
  - Pass over a floor mat soaked in disinfectant solution.
  - 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.



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- 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.

### **b. 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.

### **c. Warm Up Area**

- Receptionists must wear masks.
- Athletes and team staff must wear masks in the warm-up area.
- Athletes may remove the mask only when warming up on the court. However, it is recommended to always use a mask or face shield.
- Coach and Sport Assistant must wear a mask.
- In addition, it is recommended that Sport Assistants use a face shield.
- 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.



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- Training groups and schedules should be consistent, minimising contact between groups.
  - 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.

**d. 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.)
- Receptionists must wear a mask.
- All participants must have their temperature measured before entering the Call Room.
- Any individual with a temperature above 37,5°C should be reported to the HOC Medical Representative and will not be permitted to enter the competition venue or participate further unless and until a negative test result for COVID-19 is produced. He/she will be sent to the isolation room and Health Authorities will be notified.
- Wearing a mask is compulsory 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 circulator 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.



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**e. Spectators**

To minimize the potential impact of COVID-19 spread, any contacts of participants with local populations should be restricted to the minimum, therefore, no spectators will be allowed at BISFed sanctioned events. Regardless, this measure will be regularly revised according to public health policies and the evolution of the pandemics.



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**SECTION 2 – Amendments to BISFed 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 BISFed rules (2021 v.1.1) 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. 10.5.1).
- 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 competition, the non-throwing side should remove its equipment only when it disturbs 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 four 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 15.7.1 shall apply.

Once the referee has shown the paddle to the side that has to throw, if this side decides to enter the court to watch 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. 14.3).



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BISFed recognises that players who use manual wheelchairs and are not eligible for a Sports Assistant, or those who do have a Sports Assistant but take longer with communication, may still be at a disadvantage to those in powered wheelchairs.

The following amendments will be made to compensate for this:

### **2. COVID Assistants**

- 2.1 BC2, BC3 and BC4 athletes may bring a Covid Assistant onto the field of play. If athletes decline this option, the duties will be performed by the referee or the liner.
- 2.2 COVID Assistants will sit behind throwing boxes 1 or 6.
- 2.3 There will be no communication from the Sport Assistant or Covid Assistant to the player [Rule 16.1] and if a Covid Assistant is moving a player back into the box and, in the opinion of the Referee, is positioning the wheelchair without any instruction from the player, Rule 15.6.3 will apply.

### **3. Role of COVID Assistant**

3.1 The role of the Covid Assistant will be:

- -To assist the player to move out of or into the box. To collect their players' balls between ends.
- To collect Jack and fouled/dead balls when needed.
- To assist Players using a manual wheelchair, to move on the court to any place.

3.2 The player does not need to instruct the Covid assistant to move him/her - when the Referee indicates that the side to throw has changed, the Covid Assistant can assist the player to move.

3.3 After return to the throwing box from the court, the Covid assistant must leave the throwing box immediately.

3.4 A player cannot ask the Covid Assistant to move his/her wheelchair to a specific position in the throwing box. *If, in the opinion of the Referee, the Covid assistant is positioning the chair (either with or without instruction from the player) Rule 15.5.5 shall apply*

### **4 For players with a Sport Assistant:**



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- 4.1 For BC1, BC3, Pairs BC3 and Teams Divisions, collecting balls, including the Jack, should be done by their Sports Assistants.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 A BC1 Sport Assistant can enter the box on seeing the referee signal for the other side to throw.
- 4.4 A Ramp Operator can move the player when they see the other side preparing or if the Referee tells them to.
- 5 For BC1 Players using a manual wheelchair, when the Player wishes to move on the court the Sport assistant can assist to move to any place.
- 6 For BC3 Players using a manual wheelchair, when the Player wishes to move on the court the Covid Assistant can assist to move to any place.
- 6.1 After return to the throwing box from the court, the Covid Assistant must leave the throwing box immediately.
- 6.2 Player cannot ask the Covid Assistant to move his/her wheelchair to a specific position in the throwing box.

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), the Sports Assistant or the Covid Assistant may clean the balls between ends and the referee must disinfect his/her hands immediately after the measurement.

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

### **Equipment check**

- 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 weighing of the ball must disinfect their hands after each athlete's balls have been checked.
  - Those carrying out the roll test and circumference test 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.
  - 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 Sports Assistant 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 Covid Assistant under the direction of the responsible Referee, observing physical distancing. The Sports Assistant/Covid Assistant 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, Coaches, Sport Assistants and Covid Assistants must always wear a mask.
- Athletes must use a mask while inside the sports venue but 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](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/2020_06_25_IPC%20classification%20hygiene%20infection%20control%20guidelines_final.pdf)