

Dear Coaches and State Coordinators,

I write to provide guidance regarding the protocols we presently intend to impose to minimize the risk of a COVID outbreak during the 2023 National Championship. These protocols have been reached after consultation with our Host Committee and with local health authorities, and they reflect the present epidemiological realities as well as the unusual risk posed by COVID to a competition like ours, which brings people from around the country and world to a single location, puts them in close proximity to one another, and then tries to send them home again several days later, often to locations that can only be reached if they are allowed to board an airplane.

With that said, if COVID numbers nationally remain as they are now, we anticipate that we will be imposing on teams to only a limited degree, while still giving teams the option to take more conservative approaches.

We are therefore announcing the following, all of which are consistent with the policies the National Board adopted in October 2022 that were published to State Coordinators at that time:

1. The NHSMTC will not inquire into the vaccination status of participants or observers or require a particular vaccination status for participants or observers.
2. Spectators will be welcome.
3. Either the day before departing on travel to the National Championship or during the morning of Thursday, May 18, 2023, each official member of each competing team, its attorney coach, and its teacher coach must take a rapid antigen test.
4. Each teacher coach shall report whether their team is available to compete in person, as defined below, not later than noon on Thursday, May 18, 2023. That report will be submitted through a link on the Materials page of the Championship website and will be circulated early next week as a reminder. Any team that does not report its competition status shall be barred from participation in any National Championship activity until they report their status. These reports are subject to the Rules of Competition, and any misrepresentation will be subject to the most serious sanctions available.
5. Any team member or coach who experiences symptoms of COVID during the competition must test using a rapid antigen test, and the coach of any such member must report immediately any positive result.
6. Teams will provide antigen tests at their own expense. Because the availability of tests varies substantially depending on locality, teams that plan to test on site are advised to bring the tests they will need with them.
7. If a member of a team is unable to compete in the National Championship due to a positive COVID test, that team will compete virtually in all rounds of the National Championship and will participate virtually in all National Championship activities unless the National Board in its sole discretion permits the team to appear in person.
8. A team that has an alternate who could replace the team member who tested positive for COVID may petition the National Board to be allowed to compete in person without the member who tested positive. The National Board will decide such petitions on a case by case basis, in its sole discretion, but it will only *entertain* permitting that team to compete in person if (a) each member of the team agrees to test before the competition round and tests negative, (b) the opposing team and judges are informed of the potential exposure and agree

- to continue in person, and (c) both teams in the competition round wear effective (ideally N95) masks throughout the round.
9. Participation by teams with a member who tested positive for COVID in mass activities (the pin exchange, the banquet) will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but - at the least - each member of the team will be required to wear an effective mask throughout the activity, when not eating.
  10. No testing requirement will be implemented for spectators.
  11. Because we cannot be certain whether any team will experience a positive test, all teams must have an adequate number of effective masks with them during the competition. Teams are encouraged to bring these masks with them rather than relying on acquiring them in Little Rock.
  12. Because we cannot be certain whether any team will experience a positive test, all teams must have with them at least three electronic devices (ideally, laptop computers or tablets rather than cellular phones) capable of being used to conduct a virtual round of competition.
  13. Except as provided above, neither participants nor guests will be required to wear masks during rounds of competition or mass events.
  14. Any participant or guest who wishes to wear a mask may do so, including while competing, and judges will be instructed that they cannot in any way allow the decision to mask to impact their scoring, rulings, or evaluation of any participant.
  15. No additional waiver of liability for COVID-related concerns will be required.

We have not received any request from any team for any particular COVID protocol for its trial rounds (for example, because it has a competing team member who is immunocompromised). Should we receive one, we will address it on a case-by-case basis. Any such request should be made as soon as practicable.

As a reminder, any costs associated with quarantine or changes to travel shall be borne by the participants. Neither the NHSMTC nor the Host Committee will provide funding for additional hotel stays, food, or changes to travel for a team affected by a COVID diagnosis.

We recognize that no one wants to consider the possibility of COVID striking our competition, but we must all be responsible in our approach to limiting that risk and the consequent risks it poses. We appreciate your cooperation in this collective endeavor.

Sincerely,  
Paul Kaufman  
Chair, NHSMTC Board of Directors