



AMERICAN CIRCUS EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

COVID-19 Response Guide

For Circus Arts Education Organizations

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The purpose of this guide:

The purpose of this guide is to help circus arts education organizations think through decision making about resuming, adapting, reducing, or pausing circus arts educational programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Decision making during this time will require time, energy, resources, creativity and resilience. This response guide contains suggestions, resources, and templates.

Note: The American Youth Circus Organization/American Circus Educators Association is not a governing or regulatory body. In the USA, circus arts education is not a regulated industry with mandated requirements such as permitting, inspections, or licensing. This response guide contains suggestions and we recommend that you check with your insurers, lawyers, and medical advisors at your discretion, and are in compliance with national, local and state regulations, restrictions and guidance.

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INTRODUCTION

Circus arts education faces unique challenges in responding to COVID-19. Many circus activities involve close physical contact or specialized equipment that is difficult to disinfect. Mitigation strategies for preventing disease transmission can potentially cause other safety concerns in circus settings. There are no strategies that will work for all organizations, as circus arts education programs are very diverse, covering a wide range of activities and participants.

Making decisions about operations with these challenges in place is difficult, as is balancing the safety and business impacts of those decisions. Every circus arts education organization must do its own assessment and planning, customized to specific circumstances and factors. However, we hope that this guide and accompanying resources will help give the circus arts education community perspective in framing decisions about operating in these unpredictable times.

HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

1. CONTEXTUAL PUBLIC HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Use available public health data and legal governmental requirements and recommendations to assess your situation.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- Globally, health and medical experts are still working to gather vital information about the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and the COVID-19 disease it causes.
- Decisions should be based on ongoing scientific research from qualified sources on specifics about the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the relative effectiveness of mitigation strategies based on various factors (type of surface, length of time, infectious dose, air movement, droplet size, indoors or outdoors, etc).
- ACE recommends following the [CDC](#), [WHO](#), and [EPA](#) for recommendations.
- As new scientific information becomes available, governments, businesses, and organizations may need to adapt their mitigation measures.

GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- U.S. circus arts education organizations are subject to specific restrictions determined by their state or tribal and local government and must follow the most recent national, state, and local government orders. Phased plans at the national level [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#) and the state, region, county, tribal and/or city level are the most direct guidance available.
- Different local governments have different requirements and orders.
- Consider if the government policies in your state regarding public health and risk of transmission are adequate for safety as it pertains to your circus education program.
- The Guidelines for Opening Up America Again are based on 'gating criteria' including documented downward trend of positive COVID-19 cases, adequate hospital capacity, and testing capacity. ACE views gating criteria as essential to determining public health risk levels, within which mitigation strategies can be assessed.
- Consult local public health or government officials as to what category your circus arts education organization or specific programming is viewed as and in what phase you will be allowed to operate those programs or activities (fitness center/gym, group sport, personal training, camp or youth recreation, childcare, education, social work, etc.).



2. RISK ASSESSMENT

See ACE's [COVID-19 risk assessment template and guide](#) for full information and directions.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT:

1. List all activities and calculate risk factors.
2. Decide on and prepare for appropriate mitigation strategies, including minimum state and local orders and recommendations.
3. Consider what circus activities can be done while social distancing (as defined by the CDC), and what circus activities can take place without sharing equipment or with the ability to disinfect equipment in between use.
4. Calculate risk factors after mitigation.
5. Understand that though risk can be reduced, it cannot be eliminated. Even with mitigation strategies in place, students and staff may still become infected.
6. Plan for what actions to take if someone who was in your facility has symptoms or a confirmed case of COVID-19, such as ability to trace who else was in the space at the same time, rigorous cleaning procedures, closing the facility for the recommended duration, and communication with your community.

3. CREATE A PHASED PLAN

Create your own phased plan for your circus organization, with specific program activities and risk mitigation strategies for each phase, based on your state/local government phases and your risk assessment.

Be prepared to “monitor and adapt,” and have a system in place for regular review and updates.

<h1>YOUR SCHOOL'S PHASED PLAN</h1>
PHASE 1:
PHASE 2:
MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:
PHASE 3:
MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:

<h1>EXAMPLE PHASED PLAN</h1>
PLEASE NOTE: These are not officially recommended protocols and are not adequate or appropriate for all situations.
PHASE 1 EXAMPLE: No one allowed in the facility. Online classes only.
EXAMPLE STATE'S PHASE RECOMMENDS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only Essential businesses are allowed to operate
PHASE 2 EXAMPLE: Open only for indoor or outdoor private training or lessons with an extremely low maximum capacity of (insert number chosen).
MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum (insert number chosen) feet between people no activities or skills that require spotting Increased hygiene protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> handwashing before and after entry to the facility disinfecting of any surfaces touched, including all equipment
EXAMPLE STATE'S PHASE RECOMMENDS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gyms stay closed Allows 'personal training' with 'increased social distancing protocols and hygiene personal protection in place'
PHASE 3 EXAMPLE: Open for indoor lessons in solo skills such as juggling, conditioning, stretching, acrobatics, and aerials. No partner skills in which it would not be possible to maintain social distance.
MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing practices in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum (insert number chosen) feet between people no activities or skills that require spotting small class sizes low maximum capacity of the space of (insert number chose) Specific hygiene protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> handwashing before and after entry to the facility disinfecting in between uses of any surfaces touched, including all equipment only equipment able to be disinfected is used, unless personal equipment kept separate from any other contact
EXAMPLE STATE'S PHASE ALLOWS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Gyms and fitness centers' to operate 'with social distancing protocols and increased hygiene in place'

YOUR SCHOOL'S PHASED PLAN (continued)

PHASE 4:

MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:

PHASE 5:

EXAMPLE PHASED PLAN (continued)

PHASE 4 EXAMPLE:

Open for all circus activities, face coverings required for activities with close physical contact (spotting, partner acrobatics or partner aerials, etc)

No activities with large groups congregating (no concurrent classes with over (insert number chosen) students total, no youth camps, no performances with an audience and cast over (insert number chosen), etc).

MITIGATION STRATEGIES COULD INCLUDE:

- Specific hygiene protocols
 - handwashing before and after entry to the facility
 - daily disinfecting including all equipment
 - only equipment able to be disinfecting is used, unless personal equipment kept separate from any other contact

EXAMPLE STATE'S PHASE ALLOWS:

- All business to operate without social distancing measures in place
- prohibits large gatherings over (number decided by state.)

PHASE 5 EXAMPLE:

Open for all circus activities with no physical distancing requirements or limitations on gathering size

All equipment able to be used and shared

Basic hygiene protocols still in place (handwashing, disinfecting equipment and surfaces when possible and on a regular schedule).

EXAMPLE STATE'S PHASE ALLOWS:

- All business to operate without restriction





COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

PURPOSE:

Think through the purpose and aim of your circus arts education organization - why you do what you do. What is your organization aiming to provide through circus arts? Health and fitness benefits, sense of community, social and emotional support, income and livelihood, individual purpose and fulfillment? Keep this purpose in mind as you continue balancing costs and benefits, along with your risk assessment and business considerations, in making operating decisions. Are you able to preserve your purpose and the safety of your community in your operations? Are there other ways you can realize your purpose? Are there others within your community with whom you can partner to reach your goals?

ACCESSIBILITY:

Consider accessibility and inequity. Mitigation practices may cause barriers for some people based on financial resources or physical conditions (for example, online registration could be a barrier for people without internet access, or wearing face coverings may not be an option for people with certain health conditions or disabilities). Aim for universal design whenever possible.

COMMUNITY:

The health and well-being of students, staff and everyone in your community must be the highest priority when making decisions about the operations of your circus arts education organization. Keep in mind the potential mental health impacts of the pandemic on your community members when planning operations, and provide support or resources if possible. Consider connecting your community with information about other useful resources for meeting basic needs and COVID-19 impact aid. Keep in mind that your community is not only a responsibility - it's also a wonderful resource. Be sure to ask for support and input.

BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS

COMMUNICATION:

- Make a plan for notifying your community of operating changes and new policies, such as an [update letter](#).
- Create a [policy notification form](#) with updated policy information for students to sign.
- Post visible signage of new policies in all relevant spaces.

LIABILITY:

- Update your liability [waiver/release](#).
- Require an additional signed COVID-19 specific [Assumption of Risk](#).
- Have an attorney familiar with your state law review any releases, waivers, or other legal documents before utilizing them.
- Review your insurance coverage and contact your insurance carrier for guidance on your duty of care and what constitutes reasonable care in preventing COVID-19.
- Understand that simply following governmental orders does not necessarily absolve liability.

FINANCES:

- Based on your phased plan, make projections of potential income and expenses.
- Mitigation practices may require increased expenses such as cleaning products, equipment and staff time, and may result in reduced income due to reduced registration or capacity.
- Calculate length of time operations are possible at each phase. Estimating these implications in advance allows you to balance necessary measures for community health with business viability.
- Consider earmarking funds that may need to be refunded to clients, and keeping them separate from current cash flow analysis.
- Research negotiating expenses with vendors such as landlord, utilities, etc.
- Consider fundraising strategies such as soliciting donations, fundraising events, and fundraising campaigns.





LEGALITY:

- Be sure to follow your local and state government orders.
- Stay up to date with human resources, workers compensation, and other state and local regulations.
- Know the local legal requirements for action you must take if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 or is presumptive positive. Have in place a monitoring plan, a reporting plan, and a plan for additional precautions to implement and how to inform your community of them. Also know what you need to do to keep medical information legally confidential.

STAFF:

- Consider holistic support for staff and how staff changes impact all parties.
- Research and follow state and local laws:
 - [Labor laws](#) concerning paid sick, medical and family leave
 - [“COVID-19 and the American Workplace”](#) from the Dept of Labor <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic>
 - [Working conditions](#)
 - [“Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19”](#) from OSHA <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
 - State or local labor laws specific to COVID-19 impact.
- Consider how contracts and internal policies can adapt to ensure the safety and health of your staff are prioritized. Consider revising non-compete clauses or any other restrictions that would negatively impact staff decisions based on health or perceived risk.

OPERATIONS:

- Assess the spectrum of options for your organization during the pandemic:
 - Evaluate if your previous/current model is still viable.
 - Evaluate ceasing operations, or hibernating or pausing operations and re-entering the market in the future.
 - Consider adaptation of your current value proposition and how your model could shift to support it:
 - Diversifying your program offerings, approach, methods, and operations (online, disciplines offered, etc).
 - Changing your scale, aiming for sustainability.
- Make sure to think through how to communicate the operation plan you decide on to your community.

DECISION MAKING CHECKLIST

- Conduct a contextual public health assessment by referencing national, state, and local public resources.
- Conduct a risk assessment for all program activities (link template)
- Create a phased plan for your organization based on your operational needs
- Adapt your liability waiver and add an Assumption of Risk (link) if applicable
- Integrate all financial, legal, operational, communication, community, and equity considerations throughout.



CONCLUSION

Though facing unique considerations, circus arts education programs are not alone in being strongly affected by this pandemic and balancing decision making challenges. Other sectors and industries are responding thoughtfully and responsibly with fresh perspectives, and we recommend seeking inspiration and guidance from diverse perspectives and integrating them into your approach. Flexibility, creativity and tenacity are required when responding and making decisions - all qualities that are uniquely embodied in circus arts.

This guide and additional resources were created by an ACE task force consisting of Tara Jacob, Daniel Parks, Amy Cohen, Bev Sobelman, Alysha Perrin, Carrie Heller, Caroline Calouche, and Jamie Hodgson. Approved by the AYCO Board of Directors. Reviewed by ACE Safety Consultants Jonathan Givens, Elena Brocade and Zoe Sheppard, ACE Safety Committee members Jonathan Deull and Elsie Smith, Michaelyn Everhart (medical resident), Kate Robertus Vilain (MPH Epidemiology and Biostatistics), Tim Williamson (MD, Associate Professor of Medicine/ Physician Vice-President of Quality and Safety, The University of Kansas Health System), and CB Baga, Associate, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. Design by Melissa Hoefler

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