

Introduction

Many of us in speech and debate wish to return to in person tournaments. In person tournaments offer different, and arguably better, benefits than their virtual counterpart. However, given the ongoing COVID pandemic, precautions should be taken when hosting in-person tournaments. The committee agreed early on in our process that the guiding principles for our recommendations would be choice and transparency. Tournament hosts should provide prospective tournament participants with information in the tournament invitation about specific protocols that will be enforced during an in-person tournament. This information will allow all parties to make an informed choice about whether to attend a particular in-person or an alternative online tournament (if available). The following suggested protocols should be considered a floor not a ceiling, in terms of safety. Given the daily changes to cases and variants, as well as regional differences across Texas, we recommend that tournament hosts and participants continue to monitor CDC guidelines on in-person activities for vaccinated and unvaccinated persons to determine appropriate precautions for their team and tournament. Given the challenges of documenting student vaccination status and age restrictions on vaccinations currently, we encourage tournament hosts and participants to follow guidelines assuming low levels of vaccination rates for participants at any given tournament.

Tournament Prerequisites

TFA sanctioned tournament hosts will be required to provide information listed below on the tournament registration website within six weeks of the tournament. These items should be made available at least 8 weeks in advance so that the tournament can be officially added to the 'TFA Circuit' on Tabroom.com; however, they must be made available at least 6 weeks in advance. Failure to make these items available at least six weeks before the date of the tournament may put the IQT status of the tournament in jeopardy.

Required tournament invitation information:

1. In the tournament invitation and on the tournament registration site, the tournament host must communicate whether the tournament will be in-person or virtual.

A tournament that chooses to host some events in person and some online should communicate that information when registration is open. Once a tournament host commits to a virtual tournament, the tournament host may not switch to in-person unless it is prior to six weeks before the tournament. However, if circumstances dictate that the tournament needs to move from in-person to online, even within the six week window, the tournament

host should communicate that to participants. If a tournament registrant chooses to drop because of the switch to virtual, the school should not be assessed drop fees.

2. Whether in-person or virtual, tournament hosts should post the tournament schedule for all events on their registration website at least six weeks before the tournament.
3. If in-person, the tournament host must also communicate what protocols they will follow when hosting an in-person tournament. Tournaments should select, and publish on their registration page, one of three options:
 - a. The established TFA protocol (found in this document)
 - b. The tournament host's own specific protocols, including but not limited to, the TFA established protocol with exceptions (wearing of masks, social distancing, food distribution, etc.)
 - c. No protocol (e.g. no specific actions or behavior requirement for COVID safety will be followed).

Contact Tracing Information and Consent Form:

The tournament host should post a contact tracing information and consent form as a part of registration. A sample form is at the end of this document. This form would confirm that steps have been taken by the attending school to confirm that all attending students are vaccinated; recently tested negative; and/or have not had significant exposure within the last 14 days (Significant exposure is defined here as being indoors within 6 feet for at least 15 cumulative minutes *without* the use of a surgical or cloth mask covering both the nose).

The form should also indicate that expectations for social distancing protocol have been communicated to all tournament participants, including coaches, judges, and competitors. Acknowledgement of the form represents agreement to adhere to those guidelines. Failure to submit a school form means that the tournament host may drop the school from the tournament.

Protocols - Expectations for Adherence

To reiterate, all in-person tournament protocols must be posted as part of the online tournament invitation. The host school should also provide a copy of the protocol and expectations as a part of any registration material. The consent form would confirm that participating schools [all coaches, chaperones, school judges, and competitors] have read the protocol and agree to adhere to it when attending the tournament.

Tournament hosts should adhere to CDC guidelines for social distancing. Those updated guidelines can be found [here](#).

Any changes to protocols the tournament will follow after registration opens should be communicated on the registration website and to already registered schools as soon as changes to the protocols are made.

Physical Spaces - Protocols

In order to maintain recommended social distancing Tournament hosts should consider carefully their physical space limitations and whether or not that will influence the number of entries in any given event.

While CDC guidelines for reopening schools have indicated that space should not be a consideration in reopening in the fall, the nature of speech and debate, including close proximity of judges and competitors for extended periods of time, means we would recommend continuing to plan for socially distanced rooms.

When assigning rooms for events, tournament hosts should maximize the distance between competitors. A tournament host should not utilize rooms that would not adhere to CDC guidelines for social distancing between competitors and between competitors and judges in any particular event [e.g. offices, storage closets, conference rooms, small band practice rooms]. On the day of the tournament, and prior to the arrival of competitors, each room should be prepared with signs indicating where competitors should sit to maintain social distancing.

Participating schools should be assigned rooms (as appropriate for their entry size for social distancing) to gather before and during the tournament. If possible those rooms should be reserved for this purpose only and not used as competition rooms.

If a cafeteria is used as a part of pre-tournament gathering spaces, effort should be made to ensure tables for school entourages remain socially distanced.

Each physical space that will be used should be furnished with appropriate cleaning supplies so that competitors and judges can wipe down their desks or tables after use.

In short, tournament hosts need to take any steps and precautions necessary to maintain suggested CDC social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting guidelines. Such efforts should reduce the possibility of disease spread.

Considerations for Judge and Competitor Food

Food and drink in hospitality lounges should be individualized as much as possible. Judges and coaches are used to “buffet” style food in their hospitality areas. Such food distribution processes (process in which the person would get food for themselves) should be minimized. For meals that are not individualized, servers should be appropriately masked and gloved to serve food to coaches and judges. If individual servings for meals can be arranged, that would be the preferred method of food delivery (e.g. breakfast tacos, muffins, breakfast bars, box lunches or dinners) and distributed in a safe manner. Drinks should be served only in individual cans or bottles. Non-disposable drinkware, unless provided by the coach/judge, should be discouraged.

Although concession stands typically suffice for student food options, tournaments should provide an option for schools to purchase food for students as a part of registration. For students, tournament hosts should attempt to follow the same guidelines as they do for coaches and judges. Sandwiches or sack lunches which could be individually wrapped could be sold as well. Box lunches could be ordered in advance of the tournament and distributed. If available, lists of nearby restaurants who are willing to deliver could be provided to tournament participants. These arrangements should be clearly stated and communicated to tournament participants.

Tournament Registration and Set-up Recommendations

All of the following suggestions are features available in the Tabroom.com tournament registration website. Tournament hosts should implement these features on their tournament registration page. If using an alternative to Tabroom, tournament hosts are encouraged to seek out options that mirror the suggestions made here.

Food requests: Tournaments should indicate at registration whether food will be provided [for free or a fee] for participating schools. If a tournament chooses to provide a food option for participating schools, registration for the tournament should include selection of meal option[s]. A concession fee can be added based on number of meals ordered. If using Tabroom, information about that set up can be found [here](#). Tournament hosts may choose to have participants pre-pay for their meals in order to have an accurate count for meals. If a participating school declines tournament provided food options, the participating school will be responsible for providing their competitors and judges with food consistent with the other CDC guidelines applicable at the time of the tournament.

Schematics: If using Tabroom, Live Updates should be enabled for all events to provide text or email blasts of the schematics for each round. This tabroom feature (found in the set up for each event) allows participants to receive schematic information for themselves, their team

members and school judges. Tournament hosts can select to enable live updates when setting up their tournament registration. Information for that set up can be found [here](#).

Traffic flow: In the virtual environment in 20-21, several virtual tournament tabrooms found staggered release of pairings for different events assisted in the flow of the tournament. In -person tournament hosts should consider staggering pairings to help with the flow of traffic in the school from schools' rooms to competition rooms. If using Tabroom, tournament hosts should create "room pools" so that Tabroom will cluster rooms physically as instructed for each event in order to minimize room use. If using Tabroom, you can find instructions on pooling rooms [here](#).

For a full manual on Tabroom use, you can find one [here](#).

Registration - Day of Tournament

Tournament hosts are strongly encouraged to use the online/onsite registration on their chosen tournament platform. Using on-site e-registration provides an alternative to the typical in-person registration line. In order to enable on-site e-registration if using Tabroom, please find information on settings for on-site registration [here](#)

During registration, the tournament host should communicate appropriate rooms designated for each school as a gathering space. A member of the tournament staff should verify that schools have arrived by checking the school's assigned room. During this check-in, any fees that can be collected could be collected from the participating school.

If in-person registration is preferred, or a school chooses not to assign individual rooms, registration should be organized to minimize contact with tournament personnel. Registration should be set up so that check in is done in a socially distanced manner. One coach from each attending school should register for the school to minimize contact. All registration materials should be contained in one packet/folder.

Attending schools should be willing to take care of financial obligations prior to the tournament when possible.

Participating Schools Arrival Protocols

Tournament hosts should provide a safe arrival environment. When arriving at the in-person tournament, if possible, schools should be directed to a single entrance to the school to better control social distancing expectations. Host school personnel should direct schools to their designated holding areas. Each participating school should be assigned space for their team within the building in the cafeteria, usable hallways, or classroom space. That space should not be shared with other schools unless they are socially distanced. Coaches and chaperones should

be responsible for monitoring and encouraging their team members to remain in their area(s) until competition begins.

Once a participating school arrives on-site, coaches, judges, chaperones and students should proceed directly to their school's assigned area. Masks should be worn appropriately and social distancing should be practiced according to state and local guidelines. Schools should congregate only in their assigned area. The tournament host may outline and enforce consequences for violations of this protocol.

Tournament Recommendations - Once Competition Begins

As mentioned earlier in this document, prior to coming to a tournament, coaches, judges and competitors should all sign up for live updates alerts on Tabroom.com and/or Speechwire. If some other tabulation program is being used, then there should be some way that competitors and coaches can access schematics online.

Competitors should remain in their assigned socially distanced area until schematics are released. If disclosure of arguments is used in an event, that disclosure should happen in a socially distanced manner or electronically. Once schematics are released, competitors should proceed directly to their competition rooms. Competitors should enter the room, and use the space that has been designated for them by the tournament. The judge assigned to the round should use their designated space in the competition room.

If CDC and/or state/local guidelines mandate at the time of the tournament, competitors and judges should wear masks appropriately at all times. If a competitor chooses to remove their mask while speaking, they should remain at an acceptable distance from competitors and judge(s). Judges should NOT require competitors to wear or discard a mask.

Evidence exchanges should take place digitally and in a timely fashion (should not create round delays). When the debate is concluded, including potential oral comments, the debaters and judges will return to their assigned socially distanced areas in the competition rooms.

In individual events, if space in the room can be made for competitors to remain socially distanced, then the room will be marked off for socially distanced spectating. If space is not available that will accommodate the section of competitors at one time, competitors will remain outside the room, maintaining social distance from other competitors in the hallway. When they are called into the room, they will perform and leave immediately after the performance, returning to their school's assigned socially distanced area.

If spectators are allowed in an event, and room size will accommodate them adequately, spaces will be marked in the rooms where competitions are taking place for socially distanced spectating. If there are more potential spectators than spaces available, the judges will be instructed to request that those persons excuse themselves from the room.

After Tournament Contact Tracing

It is the obligation of a participating school's adult supervisor (coach) to inform the tournament host if a participating coach, judge or student tests positive for COVID-19 within CDC recommended guidelines for exposure timeline.

If such a circumstance arises, the coach should first contact the tournament host/administrator. The participating school's coach should let the tournament host know that one of their tournament participants has been diagnosed with Covid-19. The participating school coach should disclose the event in which the diagnosed contestant participated. It will be the obligation of the tournament host, in conjunction with their school administration, to inform other schools participating in that event of this possible exposure. Pairing information from Tabroom.com or other online sources may be used to assist in contact tracing. Steps should be taken to protect the identity of the participant and meet any privacy concerns or legal requirements.

The initial communication should have wording similar to the following:

"The tournament director of the (insert tournament name here) has been notified of a positive COVID case in X event. Please notify your students who competed in that event to self-monitor for possible symptoms."

Appendix: Sample Form

The following wording should be copied to the school's letterhead and signed by the appropriate administrator from that school. It should then be submitted as requested on the tournament website. Failure to do so may mean the school will not be allowed admission to the tournament.

By completing the registration for (Insert Tournament Name Here), (School Name) have read and understand all of the tournament protocol. The school agrees to the following terms of participation.

Our school is the degree-granting institution for every student from our school competing in the tournament. Each student represents the school. Our school is responsible for every student, coach, and judge attending the in-person tournament under our school's name and gives the students permission to compete and the judges permission to judge.

There will be at least one school-approved chaperone who will always be accessible by the tournament staff if needed.

We confirm and have taken all possible and available steps to ensure that all tournament attendees including coaches, students and judges have not demonstrated Covid 19 symptoms in the past seven days.

We agree to adhere to any requirements for social distancing at the tournament. That may include staying at least six feet away from participants not from our own school, appropriate wearing of masks when not competing, and frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer.

We agree to remain in our socially distanced area until pairings/schematics are released. We will proceed directly to our competition rooms. Participants agree to sit in the designated areas in the room. Participants also agree to appropriately wear masks except when speaking. Participants also agree to immediately leave the room once oral comments have been given and the round is completed.

We understand that coaches and judges will adhere to requests for meals. That may include submitting food requests prior to the tournament. We acknowledge the failure to do so may mean judges and coaches will then be responsible for their own food needs. We also understand that the concession stand for students may be limited to light snacks. We acknowledge that we, the individual school, may be expected to provide food for our students.

We agree that if at any time the tournament discovers a student or school does not meet all the aforementioned criteria and/or requests, the student(s) and/or school will be immediately disqualified from the tournament and forfeit any payments given to the tournament.

