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Practical COVID Guidelines for WWR Competition Organisers

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1. Introduction

World Wheelchair Rugby (WWR) have produced this Resource to assist Local Organising Committees (LOC), who are hosting licensed/sanctioned Tournaments, to organise a Tournament that manages Covid-19 to the extent that the health of athletes and everyone else involved in the delivery of the Event is protected and the risk of infection is minimised.

The information contained within this resource has been produced by a Working Group and drawing upon work developed by LOCs and colleagues that have had to face the challenges of dealing with Major Sports Events during a Pandemic, without a clear idea of how to proceed.

2. Risk Management Plan:

It is important to produce a Risk Management Plan for the Event; identifying as many potential risks and how you will manage and/or mitigate those risks if any of them occur. Appendix 1 provides an example that you are welcome to follow or there are many other examples available on the internet. Put together a Risk Matrix that identifies both likelihood and consequence that you can apply to any risk to indicate how important it is to address that risk. In addition to Covid-19 Risks to the Tournament, also include other areas where problems might occur such as Accommodation and Transport.

It is important for the Risk Management Plan include the *WWR COVID-19 Medical Mitigation Regulation and any other document that are relevant.*

When you start to struggle to identify further risks, a good tip is to think of the things that are keeping you awake at night. What is it that is worrying you? Also try and think of as many 'What if...' Scenarios as you can. If you are able to think of things, then there's a chance it could happen, so be prepared and work out what you will do if it does.

Event (Team Manager's) Handbook:

This is a vital document that contains everything those involved in the Tournament need to know. It is up to you whether you include the *WWR COVID-19 Medical Mitigation Regulation* within the Event Handbook or keep it as a separate document. As an LOC you will be producing a number of schedules, including the Covid-19 Testing and Screening Schedules, Transport Schedule, Meals Schedule, Meeting Room Schedule, and Team Training Schedule. All of these need to tie in with the Classification Schedule and the Chair Checks Schedule that WWR Management Team members will be drawing up. It's a massive task to co-ordinate all of these and you will need to decide whether you include all of these within the Event Handbook or as a series of individual schedules.

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3. Must Have's

It is essential that all those travelling to the Host Country meet the specific Entry Requirements detailed by that country. LOCs need to be able to answer enquiries from competing Nations and WWR personnel on their Country's Entry Requirements and be in a position to notify people of any changes to these requirements. Previous experience shows that these Entry requirements are often difficult to determine from Government and Border Force websites, so the early interpretation of the Entry Requirements is of real value to all those who are visiting.

The wearing of Face Masks (**Please refer to WWR COVID-19 Medical Mitigation Regulation**) is required by all participants at all times. The only exceptions are as follows:

- When eating and drinking
- Athletes on court (during warm-up and game play)
- Athletes leaving the court, having been substituted, are permitted a short respite to allow them to cool down and to stop sweating (for those who do sweat) before they return to their Bench area and put their masks on. Ensuring that there is a designated area identified for these athletes is important and that Referees and the Game Commissioner are aware of this area, is important.
- Referees during the match play

4. The Local Situation

Any Host whose Country's Entry Requirements include the need to Quarantine on Arrival for a significant period is highly likely to struggle to attract Nations to compete at their Event. Similarly, if the Nations that are likely to attend have stringent Quarantine requirements in their return post competition, then this could also be a significant factor on whether Nations attend or not. Similarly, this is also likely to have an impact on the availability of Classifiers and Officials. In terms of Classification, this could mean the difference between having a Type A or a Type B Panel and the implications on how many athletes can be seen and how protests are managed.

You may find that there is a difference between the WWR Mask Wearing requirements for the Tournaments and the situation within the Host country, where the wearing of face masks may be far more liberal and with limited mandatory situations. If this is the case, the LOC will need to explain to those attending that in order for the Event to proceed, the participants will need to adhere to the more stringent WWR requirements and that this is in place to protect the health of all those involved, reduce the risk of infection, and point out that the risk factors and immune levels make many of those involved in wheelchair rugby far more susceptible than that of the general population.

5. Your Covid-19 Team

It makes good sense to have one or more people looking specifically at Covid-19 for your event. Many Tournaments appoint a Covid-19 Officer. This may or may not be someone who is medically qualified. If this person is not someone who is medically qualified, then WWR strongly recommend that you do have someone on the LOC who is a Medical Provider to guide and advise you before and during the event. You may find that this is a role that you will have to pay for if you do not have someone who is a willing volunteer. Your Country's Paralympic Committee/Organisation may be able to guide you or suggest someone.

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There are a number of Functions that need to be undertaken and you will need to work out whether this will be the remit of one individual/organisation or if a number of people/organisation(s) can carry out various roles. As mentioned above, your designated Covid-19 Officer does not have to be a medical provider, but you still need a medical provider to be part of your team. Will the Doctor personally administer the Lateral Flow (Antigen) Tests and PCR tests that are carried out during the Tournament or will this be assigned to someone suitably trained or an organisation that does the tests on site and then sends the samples to its own Laboratory? Who is going to be responsible for writing your COVID-19 Medical Mitigation SOP? Will they also produce the Risk Assessment(s)? Are they writing up various Protocols for the Event Handbook or are these separate tasks assigned to different people? You may be in a fortunate enough position, financially that you can commission an organisation or individual to produce everything you need.

Getting the Teams and the various groups, such as Classifiers and Officials to take some responsibility also helps to spread the workload. You will be wanting everyone to complete daily Screening Questionnaires, see Appendix 2, so get the Teams and Groups (each a separate sub-bubble) to make someone responsible for seeing that everyone in that Team or Group has completed their daily Screening Questionnaire and submitted it to the Covid-19 Officer or whoever is designated to check them. Even if you are making completing the Screening Questionnaire an online task, you still need someone to make sure that everyone has done it each day.

There is a lot of expense involved in getting the Covid-19 aspect of the Championships correct. It is suggested that you seek to broker Partnerships with Healthcare providers who can help you to reduce the cost of various items that you will need to purchase. For example, a Hospital already buying PPE, Sanitisation Gel and Lateral Flow Test kits will be purchasing in such volume that the price they pay, in comparison to what you will pay for your much reduced requirement will be a potentially huge saving to you.

6. Communication

All host country will develop a playbook which will disseminate COVID-19 related information. Recommend playbook initially disseminated 3 months prior to start of event, and resend every month or more frequently, as necessary.

There may be duplication between the Playbook and the Event Handbook. This isn't a problem if the information is consistent and actually helps in reinforcing the messages.

Before the Event: Getting to meet with the Competing Nations at an early stage by running a Covid-19 Workshop(s) via Zoom, Skype or Teams has been found to have been very beneficial for a number of events. This provides the LOC and WWR with an opportunity to set the scene, cover what is in the Covid-19 Plan, outline the Event Bubble and sub-bubbles, talk about potential scenarios and cover what possible sanctions might be in place if there are breaches of the Event Bubble and/or particular protocols or rules. It also gives the Teams the chance to better understand the challenges facing the LOC and WWR, to ask questions they may have and to offer suggestions from other experiences they may have had. This is also an opportunity to 'get them on your side' and have them working with you, rather than against you.

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The meeting creates the chance for members of the WWR Management Team (Technical Delegate, Head Official, Chief Classifier and Head Table Official) to also be involved and to discuss their specific areas, if felt necessary and again it is a rapport-building opportunity with the Teams. Some events have had just one meeting, others have had more. It will be up to you to gauge what is right for your situation.

Clearly there will be a large amount of other communication with the Teams regarding Covid-19, particularly around the Country's Entry Requirements and what Teams might need to do, before, during and after the Event. Much of this will be by e-mail but also expect several telephone calls, especially if rules and regulations change close to the start of the Tournament. Being able to definitively answer questions on Covid-19 in a short timeframe will give reassurance to competing Nations' confidence that you as the LOC are fully in control.

It's also worth considering, when answering a question from an individual country, is this information something that I need to share with all of the Teams or even wider. If you have the time and a long enough run-in before the event, you can consider whether you send the Teams a Newsletter with the latest information on Covid-19 at that time. This is a great way to get across a lot of information in an easy-to-read format.

As a LOC you will be in regular contact with the Technical Delegate (TD) and on occasions with the wider WWR Management Team (HO, CC and HTO). The TD will ensure that the WWR Team are aware of the Covid-19 situation and will pass on all relevant information. At least one Meeting with the WWR Management Team is probably a good thing, so that the Chief Classifier, the Head Official and the Head Table Official can all fully understand how things will work and can then relay this information to their Teams.

During the Event: In the past, many events would set up a central point where all those involved in the event could pick up information from 'Pigeonhole' to 'In-Trays'. Since the Pandemic, there's been a move away from this in order to limit the need to commit information to paper. As such, the vast majority of communication is likely to be electronic usually by e-mail. Getting received and read receipts for e-mail traffic is the best way to know that your messages have been received and read. Some groups will also set up Whatsapp groups to help them with their communication. A group for the LOC, the TD and the WWR Management Team is a very useful communication tool. Signage around the Accommodation and the Venue is also a good way to get information across, although you may need to produce this in several languages.

Post Event: Getting Feedback from the Teams and others involved in the Event is a key part of any Event. This is an opportunity to find out how well your Covid-19 Plan, and the actions you took, were received by those attending. This information can be fed back to the TD, who can reference it in their Report and make any recommendations for future Licensed/sanctioned Tournaments.

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7. Plans and Documents Required

COVID 19 Medical Mitigation Plan

You will need to produce a detailed Covid-19 Medical Mitigation for the Tournaments. Please refer to the WWR COVID-19 Medical Mitigation SOP.

There are examples in the Appendices. Most Plans include information on the following areas:

- Event Covid-19 Group
- Entry Requirements
- Covid-19 Testing Strategy
- Testing and Screening Regimes
- PPE and Face Masks
- Event Bubble and sub-bubbles
- Medical Support
- Positive Test Scenarios
- Transport
- Accommodation
- Event Venue
- Training and Chair Checks
- Classification
- Competition
- Hygiene and Sanitisation Protocols

8. Equipment

Covid-19 increases the amount of equipment that you need to purchase to make your event work. From PPE to Testing Equipment and Hygiene and Sanitisation products. As mentioned earlier, if you can partner with a Healthcare provide who is purchasing in bulk, you may be able to reduce some of these costs. If you contract an organisation to carry out the Covid-19 Testing Regime then you will not have to pay for PCR and Antigen Testing kits as these will all be factored into the price you are given. However, they will also be factoring in a profit element to that price but it may help your cash-flow to pay an invoice at the end of the Event, rather than purchase testing Kits and other Equipment prior to the Event.

You can never have enough Hand Gel and Sanitisation Points placed around the Hotel and the Venue. The LOC can take a lead by using them every time they pass one, which will in turn encourage others to do likewise. Similarly, the LOC and WWR Management Team need to fully enforce and police the wearing of masks. If you are not hard on this at the start of the Event, it will get away from you and people will ignore it. Hand out warnings for first breaches and then start issuing sanctions. These may be financial penalties and you may want to consider whether someone who repeatedly infringes is removed from the Tournament. If it's an athlete, a word of warning to the Coach before it gets that far, should suffice.

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9. Testing and Screening Regime

The LOC will need to decide whether to take responsibility for all, some or none of the Testing Regime and whether you contract it out to a specialist organisation to carry out. They may also be able to provide you with additional Medical Support that you need for the Tournament, which may influence your decision.

The Screening Regime is something that has been referenced already in regard to Teams and Groups appointing someone responsible for ensuring that daily screening is undertaken by everyone involved in each of their sub-bubbles. The LOC's Covid-19 Officer will also need to check daily that these have been done for all Teams and Groups. The Screening Regime is important as it acts as an 'Early Warning System' for the LOC and you are able to respond with additional testing if anyone displays symptoms.

10. Logistics

Transport: Consider how you will get Teams and others to and from the airport or other entry points to the Hotel accommodation. You will need to avoid mixing up Teams, groups and individuals. Each Team should have their own Transport for this journey. If a group of Classifiers arrive at the airport at the same time, they may travel to the Hotel together but they should not mix in with a group of Referees or one of the Teams, even if they have been on the same plane/train/ferry as them. Each Coach/Mini-bus/Taxi/Car that is used to transport a Team, group or individual needs to be cleaned thoroughly before it can be used to transport anyone else. That includes even transporting the same team, the following day, if that's the next time that vehicle is used. The same principles apply to transporting the Teams, Groups and individuals from the Hotel to the Arena. Essentially, it is about maintaining the security of each sub-Bubble within the overall Event Bubble and reducing the number of interactions between sub-Bubbles.

Accommodation: A decision on whether certain groups have individual rooms or whether people within groups can share will need to be made and this will impact upon your financial position. If it is possible, it is good to allocate a separate floor for each sub-bubble. If not, you will need to consider how you manage the room allocations to limit sub-bubbles colliding. It's quite rare to have exclusive use of a Hotel or Accommodation but this is the ideal scenario and then you don't have to think about how you deal with interaction with other guests during the stay.

Most Hotels have a limited number of Accessible Rooms and you will need to decide what the most equitable way of distributing these is or whether you keep these rooms purely for showering for all teams, possibly on a rota basis. The accessibility and quality of the facilities available at the Venue will also impact on this decision.

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Catering: Meals at the Hotel will need to be scheduled to allow time for Hotel Staff to clear away and sanitise before the next Team or Group can use a particular area. They may also want these areas to ventilate for a specific period before allowing the next group access. Some Hotels have very large dining areas, others have more than one restaurant and it may also be able to use Conference Rooms as auxiliary dining areas. Liaise with the Hotel well in advance of the Event to work these things out and find out how Meals are served, whether at Table or Buffet style.

Packed Lunches, either provided by the Hotel, the Venue or by an outside caterer may be needed at the Venue on some or all days. Think about the processes involved in arranging and distributing these in order to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

Meetings: Teams and Groups will want to have Meetings. There will be Technical Meeting that needs to be scheduled as early as possible for all of the Coaches and Team Managers with the LOC and WWR Team. Depending on the number of rooms available at the Hotel and/or the Venue, you will need to build in a clearing, sanitising and ventilating period of time between groups using the same room.

Chair Checks: These will be carried out prior to competition by WWR Officials, who will require a range of PPE such as Face Visors and gloves. Agree what is required with either the TD or the Head Official.

Classification: The Chief Classifier will inform you of the necessary PPE that the Classification Team require. The Classifiers will need a designated area for people to report to, an office environment of some kind, a Testing area with a list of specific equipment and an area for Field Testing, such as a Gym or part of the Sports Hall. They need a great deal of privacy to carry out the Classification process and there will need to be an area where they post the Results for all to see. The Classifiers themselves will take responsibility for cleaning, sanitising and ventilating the areas and equipment that they use and will have to factor this into their Schedule. The LOC will need to make sufficient cleaning and sanitisation products available to the Classifiers.

Ceremonies: The current advice regarding Ceremonies is reduce them to the absolute minimum that you can or don't have them at all. However, it is important for the Oaths by a Player, a Coach and an Official to be read out prior to the start of the Tournament. Find a way to avoid the microphone being passed from one person to another. Either have someone holding the microphone for each person and sanitising it after each Oath is given or have a microphone on a stand that they can all use and have it sanitised and height adjusted after each Oath.

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Closing Ceremonies should be kept to the minimum. WWR appreciates that this is an opportunity to thank a lot of people, including sponsors but this is probably the single largest gathering of athletes, officials, volunteers and any guests that would occur in the entire Tournament. If you can find other ways in which to celebrate the winners and thank all those who need to be thanked, then be creative and do it. One suggestion is that you distribute the medals to the 3rd placed Team immediately after their game has finished. That way you avoid having large numbers of people congregating in the Arena. Similarly, with the First and second placed Teams after the Gold Medal match. Medals and other gifts should be given to athletes by their Coach, Team Manager, or someone else within their sub-bubble.

Signage: Good and plentiful signage around the Hotel and Venue helps the LOC to get the messages they want regarding Covid-19 to be got across to a lot of people. Try and make the signage as visual as possible, rather than lots of text in lots of languages. A picture paints a thousand words!

Spectators/Visitors: The LOC will need to make a decision on whether to allow spectators into the Event. WWR appreciates that ticket sales and merchandise can help reduce the financial burden on the LOC and you may well have factored in secondary spend (on food and drink at the Venue outlets) when negotiating the Hire Cost with the Venue. Financial aspects aside, your decision on whether to admit spectators needs to be based on protecting the health and safety of the athletes and others involved in the Event.

Spectators at the Event will require a range of additional protocols and you will need to think about whether you have any form of social distancing between spectators and how you will manage this and the reduced capacity level that it creates. Spectators means the need for additional Volunteers or Staff to manage them in terms of seating, access and egress and of course the cleaning and sanitisation of spectator areas between matches or between Ticketed Sessions.

11. Finance

A Licensed/sanctioned Tournaments during a pandemic is going to cost more. There is no escaping this fact. The Teams participating will incur additional costs and the LOC will have to carefully consider their budget and the effect that any particular decision may have on the overall costs.

Currently, under the WWR Return to Competition Model, it is the responsibility of the Teams to cover the cost of anyone who tests positive and is forced to isolate in the Host Country beyond the end of the Tournament. This will include accommodation, food, transport, and flight changes costs. If a member of the WWR Officials tests positive, then these costs will be borne by the LOC. It is very difficult or even impossible for LOCs to get insurance cover for such eventualities, therefore it must have a reasonably sized Contingency built into the budget to cover those potential costs. Some Events are asking Teams to pay an additional sum, over and above the Tournament Entry Fee, to cover these costs, should they arise. If the funds are not used, they would be returned to the Teams. Other LOCs are taking a Credit Card number from Teams on arrival, and this will be charged if the need arises to cover those extra costs.

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Cash Flow is a very important factor in running a large Sports Event and LOCs will need to consider how they manage this, given the additional costs that Covid-19 brings. Getting the Teams to pay their deposits and final payments by the stipulated deadlines is vital. Getting sponsorship monies banked as early as possible is another way to help manage the situation as is agreeing payment terms with many of your suppliers.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Risk Management Plan

Appendix 2 Screening Questionnaire