

## New Year and New Challenges

The New Year and the new season are upon us. Although we had all hoped this season would return to normal, it looks like we will continue to have some unique challenges. Thus, we are providing some reminders related to COVID and illness to help you respond to situations in your state/region. This message is long but please read it carefully. It addresses many of the questions that have come up in recent weeks.

### Can I judge if I am ill?

Last year, we developed [guidelines to help judges](#) know what to do if they thought they had COVID symptoms or exposure. Many of the guidelines are applicable, even in non-COVID situations. All members are encouraged to be respectful of the health and safety of our judging colleagues and to stay home if they are ill. In order to find a replacement, the judge should notify the appropriate individuals in the state (e.g., the assigner or other NAWGJ representative in your state).

### What If a judge becomes ill at a meet?

The Meet Director is responsible for deciding if a judge should leave the meet due to illness. Page 3 of the USAG [“Return to Competition”](#) document describes the role of the Meet Director and the Meet Referee in these situations (see box). These conversations do not need to be hostile. Remind the judge of the health and safety considerations for all participants, judges, and spectators and why it is important for our sport and for the competition that judges follow safety guidelines.

Consult with the Meet Referee if a judge becomes ill during a meet to discuss the process to inform the judge that she/he needs to leave the meet or move to an isolation area. The Meet Director is responsible for the final decision and informing the judge. The Meet Referee is responsible for identifying replacement options and should notify the State Chair.

In making the decision Meet Directors may want to adapt a “Test To Stay” program and ask the judge to obtain a COVID test to continue.

### What is the compensation procedure for judges who become ill during a meet?

To determine compensation for judges at a USAG meet, please review the guidelines for cancellation and reimbursement on page 44 of the USAG Rules and Policies.

Cancellation and compensation guidelines for NCAA meets are included in the NCAA [Compensation Guidelines](#) on our website.

We have not received similar information from other gymnastics organizations. Please contact the organization directly.

### **Can an event require proof of vaccination for entry and participation?**

Yes. It can be required whether you are an independent contractor or an employee. The requirements should be communicated in advance so there are no surprises at the door. Some venues are requiring **either** proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test so be sure to communicate the option if one exists.

### **How can assigners handle meets that require proof of vaccination?**

This will require continuous communication between Meet Directors and assigners. Meet Directors should inform the assigners of any change in the safety protocol as soon as the information is known. Assigners can inform judges that a meet/venue will require proof of vaccination for entry. If the requirement is known prior to assigning, then assigners can let the judges know the expectation before they accept the contract. If the requirement is instituted after the assignment is made (as has already happened and most likely will continue to happen), assigners should notify all assigned judges of the new requirements and judges can then pull off the meet if they do not meet the requirements.

### **Can assigners ask about the vaccination status of a judge? Does it violate HIPAA?**

HIPAA laws are intended for people handling healthcare information or healthcare providers. Based on information we obtained from a Sports Law Attorney, it is not against the law to ask if a person is vaccinated if this is a requirement of participation. However, the information may not be disclosed to others. Rather than collect this information directly, it is probably better for assigners to make sure the judges are apprised of the expectations of the meet so they can comply or turn down the assignment rather than having the assigners try to collect information on vaccination status directly. It could be difficult for assigners to ensure confidentiality if using personal computers that aren't encrypted.

### **What if a judge tests positive after a meet?**

If a judge tests positive after a meet, the judge should notify the Meet Director. The Meet Director can contact those who were in close contact with the judge. The judge's name does not need to be disclosed. However, as a professional courtesy, the judge may want to consider contacting individuals directly so that these individuals can take immediate action for themselves and their families.

### **Whose responsibility is it?**

When confronted with an unusual situation, the first question to ask yourself is: Whose responsibility is it? Which organization is responsible? Remember that NAWGJ is a service organization that assigns meets on behalf of other programs. As such, the rules and policies of these organizations govern the decisions that will be made regarding protocols for COVID or other illnesses. Because judges are independent contractors, the Meet Director needs to apply the rules and policies of the host organization when handling issues related health, safety, participation, and continued participation.

### **Latest Updates and Resources**

Please review the latest [COVID updates](#) and resources available on the USAG website.