

Group Running

Operational Preparedness for COVID-19

Last Updated: 5/18/20



Overview

The Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) and Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) have created this group running operational preparedness guide for COVID-19.

Groups should monitor all guidance from local, state, and federal authorities, and the Center for Disease Control regarding COVID-19. The safety and well-being of clubs members, participants, volunteers, and staff must be the top priority. Clubs should respect and follow the guidelines of their locality, and may use this operational preparedness plan as a guide for how to best meet the requirements of their community.

For CARA, the State of Illinois' reopening is currently guided by the Restore Illinois phased plan. At this time, CARA plans to begin group run gatherings (long runs and track workouts) after reaching Phase 4 of the state's plan. Phase 4 allows persons to gather in groups of up to 50 persons.

Through operational changes, by adjusting how we gather, clubs may be able to provide group runs within the guidelines considered safe and appropriate.

CARA, and all clubs, should be prepared to modify their plans to comply with any future guidelines from local, state, or federal authorities.

Considerations

Our preparedness plan includes considerations for:

- Participant Advisements / Expectations
- Managing Positive COVID-19 Cases
- Meeting Locations
- Gathering Size
- Pre-Run Gathering
- Group Run Organization
- Hydration Stations
- Post-Run Gathering

Participant Advisements / Expectations

The following advisements and expectations should be routinely communicated to participants for all group runs:

- Do not participate if you are feeling sick or ill, and or have a fever, or if you have been in contact with someone unrecovered from COVID-19.
- Persons from high risk groups for COVID-19 complications should consult their physician before participating.
- Do not engage in traditional forms of physical contact (hand shakes, high-fives, hugs, partner stretching, etc.).
- Do not engage in close group pictures/selfies. Always maintain social distance guidelines.
- Don't spit or "nose rocket" your nose in public – bring along tissues or a small towel or a hanky if you need to get rid of some snot during your run/walk. If you must spit, do so away from people and areas that will have foot traffic.
- Do not share personal items, such as hydration, energy gels, towels, etc.
- Participants are encouraged to wear a face covering. Masks or face covers should be required anytime persons cannot maintain social distance, or if local guidelines require.
- Participants should self carry personal hydration (bottles/packs), and use hydration stations or fountains for refill only.
- Participants whose actions do not meet expectations, and or are creating risk for themselves or others, should be required to exit the group temporarily or permanently.

Managing Positive COVID-19 Cases

- For those participating in groups runs, should you test positive for COVID-19, and have attended group runs in the past 14 days, please notify your club and or group leader. Do not participate in any group gathering until you are recovered from COVID-19 and have received approval from your doctor.
- Club leaders should strictly maintain the confidentiality of a member who notifies them of a positive test.
- Groups that would have had contact with an infected person during the previous 14 days, should not meet for 14 days.

Meeting Locations

- Choose locations that provide large open spaces allowing for groups to spread out pre- and post-run for social distance guidelines, always maintaining at least six feet of distance apart.
- Avoid gathering in a location that may cause conflict for others in the area, including businesses, customers, and residents.
- Never block entryways, sidewalks, trails, or access to bathrooms or fountains. Ensure that others have room to get past the group while maintaining social distance guidelines.
- Avoid meeting indoors, where participants may encounter multiple touchpoints (doors, counters, etc.), and where there could be limited airflow.
- Choose locations where a run route is available that allows for social distancing for the group, and while passing others.
- Consider the public perspective of gatherings of any size, even those within local guidelines, and whether the meeting location exposes the group to negative backlash. Meeting at less popular locations may aid the group in avoiding negative attention.

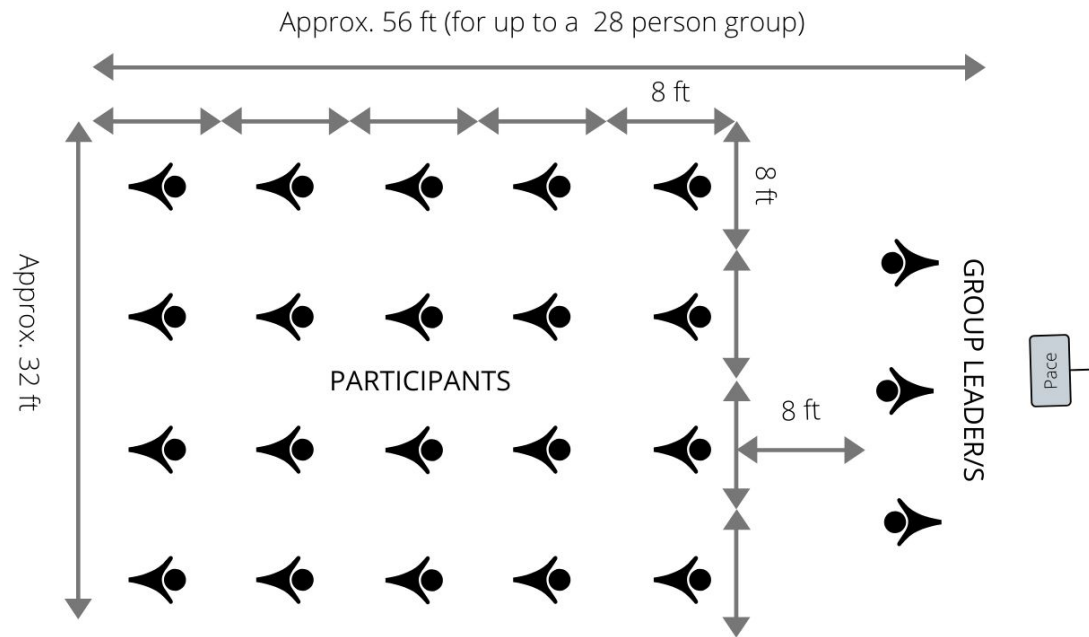
Gathering Size

- Runners should not gather until local guidelines allow for group gathering.
- Groups should limit their size to remain in compliance with local guidelines.
- Groups whose attendance could exceed local gathering limitations should split up, and not meet or run together as a full club/group.
- Consider having groups meet by pace, in smaller groups, with meeting locations well separated from other pace groups.
- When clubs are gathering as separate groups, ensure that the groups maintain separation, and do not at any point gather together.

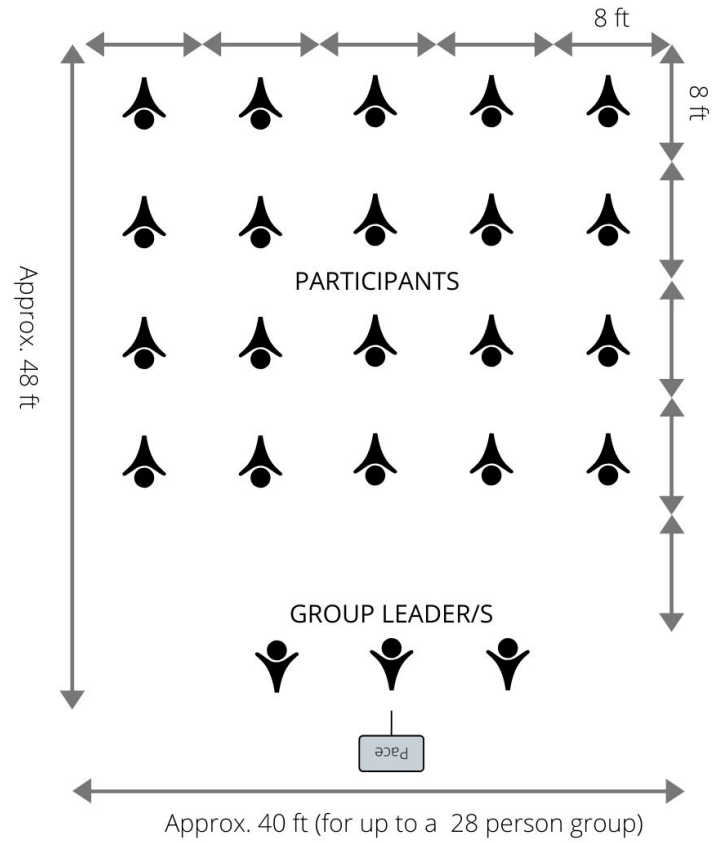
Pre-Run Gathering

- Groups should gather using a larger area, giving everyone the room to practice social distancing.
- If groups need to split up to maintain appropriate gathering size, each groups should not organize side-by-side. Use a larger footprint to maintain separation.
- As runners gather in their groups, they should maintain at least 6-feet of distance from each other.
- Consider using signs (yard signs or signs held by group leaders) to direct participants to their pace group's assigned meeting spot.
- Groups should not meet directly adjacent to restrooms, hydration, or fountains to allow all persons to access these areas without experiencing congestion.
- Provide announcements and instruction prior to the run directly to their pace group / small group, not to the full running club.
- If multiple groups within range of each other, are groups should depart one-by-one from fastest pace to slowest. As each group departs, the next group's leaders should wait at least one-minute before departing. This time gap between starts prevents multiple groups crowding trails/paths, or from arriving at stop lights or hydration stops at the same time.
- Diagrams with gathering examples are on the following pages.

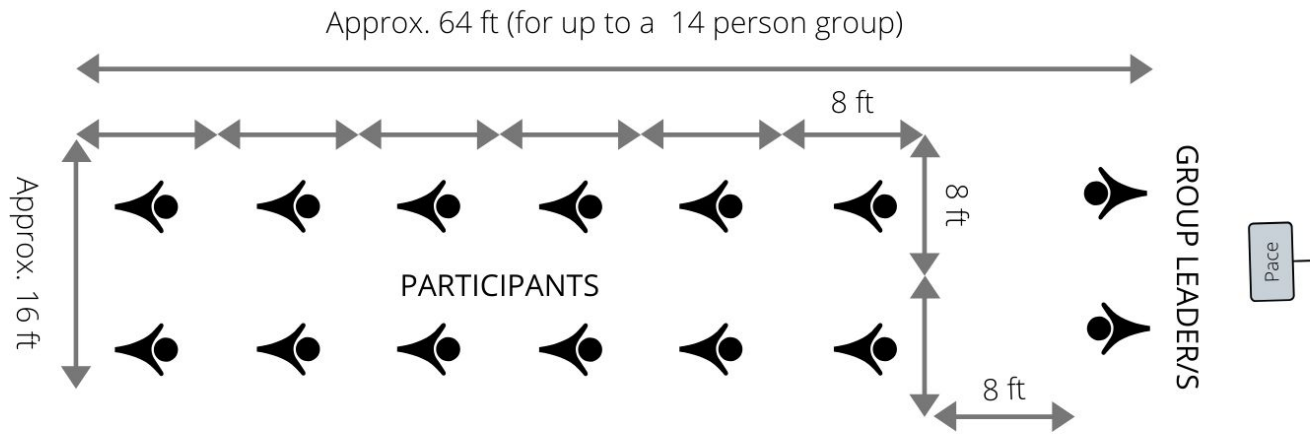
Pace Group Example 1:



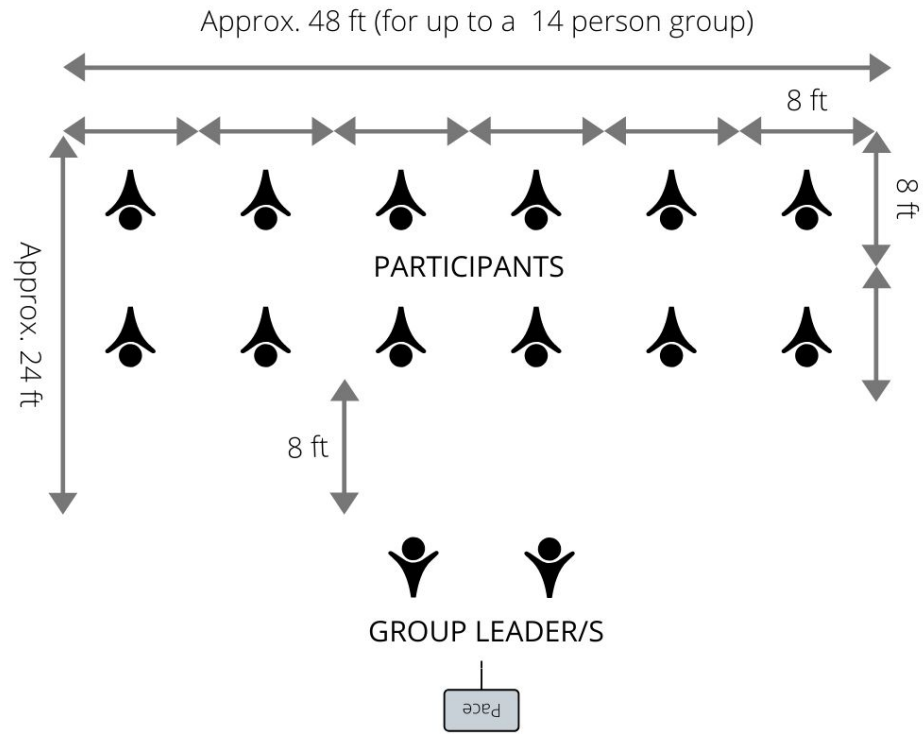
Pace Group Example 2:



Pace Group Example 3:



Pace Group Example 4:

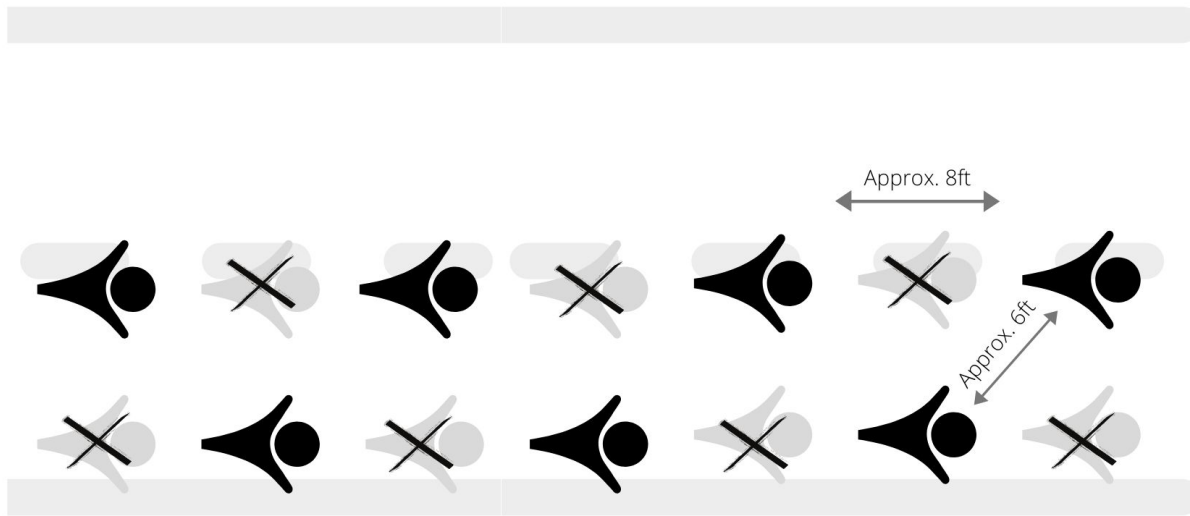


Group Run Organization

Group Leaders should instruct and manage participants to follow adjusted group running formations.

- Standard two-by-two formations should be adapted to allow for social distancing.
- Adapted group formations should provide at least six-feet between runners.
- Group leaders should weekly review instruction pre-run, and maintain formations through the run.
- Pace groups with multiple group leaders should place leaders throughout the group to ensure appropriate distance between runners.
- As groups stop during the run, groups should step off the path/trail at least six feet, and should maintain social distance while stopped.
- Groups should be respectful of others on the trail/path, and understand there may be a heightened sensitivity from other trail users. Give other trail users as much space as possible, and avoid “swarming” where the group splits and goes around others on both sides. Participants should refrain from making negative comments to other trail users, or responding to negative comments received.
- Groups should continue to use signals and or call out for passing, obstructions, or stops as usual.
- An example adapted group run formation to consider is on the following page.

Group Running Example 1:



Hydration Station Management

For running clubs that provide hydration stations, CARA shares its plans for operational preparedness for its hydration stations.

CARA hydration station operations will be adapted as follows:

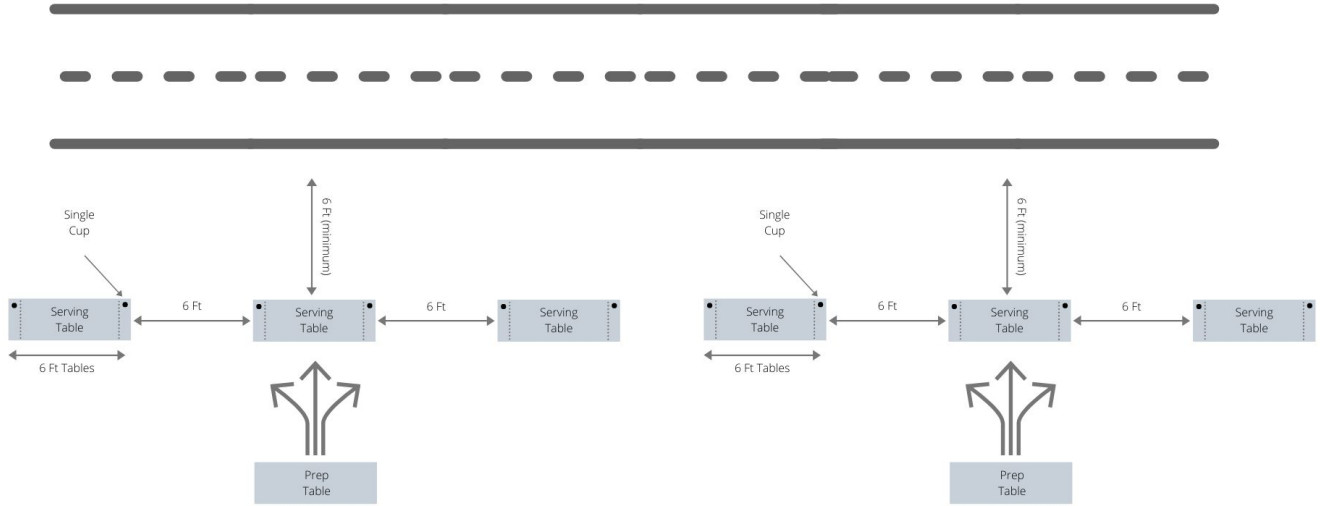
- Participants will have access to hydration stations with cups, where permits permit. However, all will be expected to self carry personal hydration (bottles, packs, etc.) and refill only as needed at stations to reduce the need to stop and receive fluids as often.
- The frequency of stations may change from approx. 2-3 miles, to 4-6 miles.
- Runners should arrive to training with their self carry hydration full.
- Hydration stations will not be available pre-run / post-run at most sites. Stations will serve runners during their run to avoid gathering of multiple groups around pre-/post-run stations.
- Should runners self carry only one bottle, they should carry water, and use cups (where permitted) to drink Gatorade Endurance.
- Hydration stations will operate under adapted operations designed to provide safe hydration refills. Details for station operations are on the following pages.

Staff Supported Hydration Stations (i.e Lakefront Trail)

- Runners will have access to cups at hydration stations, but will be expected to self carry personal hydration (bottles, packs, etc.) and refill from cups as needed at stations to reduce the need to receive fluids as often. Participants may drink from cups if needed.
- Hydration workers will implement increased sanitation and hygiene standards, including wearing a mask, wearing gloves, and washing hands or using hand sanitizer prior to handling any materials.
- Station frequency will be reduced from every 2-3 miles to 4-6 miles since participants will self carrying bottles that can be refilled.
- Stations will have an increased footprint to serve more runners quickly, and to avoid congestion around single hydration tables.
- Actual station size and hydration product inventory will be based on expected serving need.
- Stations will implement contactless delivery of hydration.
 - Cups filled and set-up on a prep-only table/s that only the hydration workers may access.
 - Cup pick-up tables will be placed at least six feet apart from the trail, each other, and prep tables. Cups may not be reused, even for the same runner.
 - Hydration workers will move cups from the prep table one-by-one to pick-up points at the ends of each serving table. Each station will have 6-12 pick-up points.
 - Group leaders should instruct runners to maintain social distance as they arrive at hydration stations, and to wait their turn away from the tables. Runners can approach the serving end of tables one-by-one to receive fluids. Only one person should be at each serving end of a table at a time. Runners then proceed forward to refill their bottle, then to dispose of the cup. Group leaders should move through stations as efficiently as possible, avoiding holding at stations for discussion or pictures.

CARA Training Hydration Station

Social Distancing Set-Up / Lakefront Trail



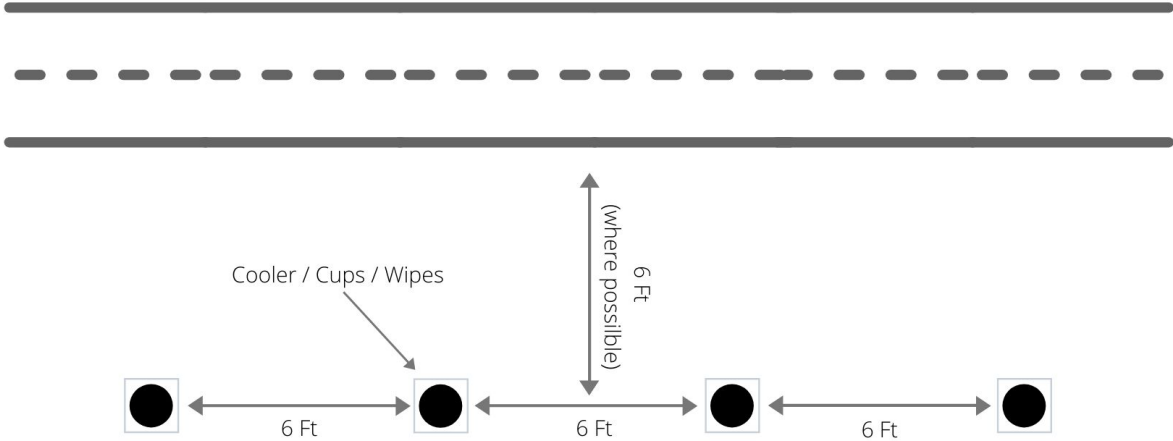
Cups poured only at prep tables by hydration workers with gloves, mask, and sanitizer. Cups then moved by worker from prep to serving tables. Serving tables serve only participant at a time per side of the 6-ft table. Participants only have contact with their own cup. Participant receives cup, then moves away from table so next participant can be served. Trash bags/cans placed away from tables for cup disposal without participants having to come back to tables for garbage.

Self Serve / Un-Staffed Hydration Stations (i.e Suburbs)

- Hydration stations will be open but with reduced frequency (from typical 2-3 miles apart to now 4-6 miles apart)
- Runners will have access to cups at hydration stations, where permitted, but will be expected to self carry personal hydration (bottles, packs, etc.) and refill as needed at stations to reduce the need to receive fluids as often.
- Stations will have an increased footprint to avoid congestion around coolers. Coolers should be spaced at least six feet apart.
- Stations will allow for self filling from coolers. Participants will have access to sanitizer wipes pre-run to self carry for cooler and or hand cleaning.
- Group leaders should instruct participants to maintain social distance as they stop at hydration stations. There should be no sharing of fluids, energy gels, salt tablets, towels, or other items runners may have traditionally shared.
- Group leaders should move through stations as efficiently as possible, avoiding holding at stations for discussion or pictures.

CARA Training Hydration Station

Social Distancing Set-Up
Self-Service Set-Up (Suburban or Start/Finish Locations)



Self carry hydration bottles/packs highly encouraged, and in some locations required per Forest Preserve requirements. Coolers spaced at least 6-ft apart to allow for social distancing between multiple coolers. Cups available (where allowed) or bottles refilled by participants one at a time, while next participant waits at least six feet away. Sanitizer wipes provided to participants to sanitize hands after contacting cooler spout. Trash Bags placed away from coolers for disposal of cups and wipes. Note: Hydrations stops may include a total of 2-4 coolers.

Post-Run

Pace groups should continue their attention to social distance as they complete their runs:

- As pace groups complete their runs, participants must maintain social distance.
- Pace groups that choose to complete post-run stretching or wrap ups must spread out and maintain social distance.
- Participants should be reminded to avoid traditional physical contact (high fives, hugs, handshakes, etc.).
- Organized post-run activities at the training site that gather multiple pace groups should not occur.
- Organized post-run activities at the training site that serve or share food that is not prepackaged should not occur.



These plans have been developed by CARA staff, in consultation with the RRCA, CARA training site coordinators, along with other leaders and experts.

Please direct questions to info@cararuns.org