



## Return to Play Guidelines

N.A.S.C. Softball remains committed to the safety of the softball community in Ontario. While we are anxious for the return of our game, we must take into consideration and remain within the context of the general reopening from COVID-19 closures occurring within the province. We do not want to compromise the health and welfare of our players, coaches, officials, volunteers, and parents. This will provide guidelines on how softball can return once it is deemed safe to do so by the Province of Ontario, municipal governments, and public health authorities.

The purpose of this document is to outline plans, guidelines, and procedures in contemplation of a Return to Play, addressing major areas of concern with respect to physical distancing and to provide a certain level of comfort to participants by outlining steps to be taken to help maximize their safety and well-being.

The items listed in this document are suggestions of recommended safeguards for restarting Softball Activity in Ontario by Softball Canada, Softball Ontario, PWSA and OASA. Provincial/Territorial Associations, Leagues, Tournament Hosts, staff, players, coaches, parents, and spectators must continue to follow Federal, Provincial and Local Governmental guidelines. Remember that information and recommendations during the pandemic are very fluid and are subject to change. It is strongly recommended that all participants (players, coaches, umpires, volunteers) and their parents/guardians in the case of minors should read these requirements and recommendations contained in this document.

### **ENTRY**

At no point will a softball event exceed the number of attendees (including players, coaches, umpires, association officials, volunteers, parents, and other family members) noted as the maximum number by the Province of Ontario, or any relevant municipality or public health authority. The number of participants should be kept down to the absolute essential (e.g. Team members, Umpires, Officials, Volunteers). Limit the number of non-participants attending (e.g. siblings, parents, and friends). All persons entering park must agree to be screened, if not, no admission. Pre-screening from all participants re COVID-19 exposure must be validated with roster/contract through the City of Oshawa's pre-screening tool. If this is not done, a participant or attendee will be denied access to the event, practice, or game. Signage must be well displayed in the entry area regards to the spreading of the virus, proper hygiene, information on physical distancing and what to do if you have any symptoms.

### **ON-FIELD**

COVID-19 signage should be in park on fencing. There will possibly be a limit on the number of diamonds in use, depending on the size of the complex/park, the proximity to each other and

the mass gathering numbers. A person, who is identified as part of an at-risk group, but otherwise passes the screening questions is discouraged from participating in, in-person softball activities, but they are not considered to have failed the screening protocol. Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with any person having COVID-19 in the previous 14 days MUST not attend any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and MUST notify their local public health authority. Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 must be cleared by appropriate medical authorities prior to attending any in-person softball activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to the Member Organization. During this process individuals may also be asked if they are experiencing any other symptoms (new or existing cough, fever, sore throat, respiratory illness, difficulty breathing, have you been in contact with anyone who had COVID-19 and have they travelled outside the country in the past 14 days) to make a determination to help ensure the safety of all individuals involved.

### **SPECTATORS**

Spectators wishing to attend the games or practices are not to be near the diamond, benches or bleacher areas. If spectators wish to watch the games or practices, they must be away from the playing area (ie. outfield, or up the baselines in the outfield) and must follow the protocol outlines by the City of Oshawa.

### **HAND SANITIZATION**

Should be done consistently throughout the game.

### **COIN TOSS/RULES AND EXCHANGE of LINE UP CARDS**

- Ground rules procedure with the umpire will consist of one representative from each team at home plate with 6-foot distance maintained by all parties.
- There will not be a coin toss. Home and away team will be predetermined.
- Line up cards must be prepared but will not be physically shared. Photos may be taken by scorekeepers.

### **BATS**

- Sharing of bats is strongly discouraged and each player is encouraged to have their own bat. However, in cases where this is not possible and a team bat is used, the bat will be cleaned after each use.
- Only the offensive team will remove a bat from the field, i.e. the batter is unsuccessful at bat or a designated team person with appropriate PPE.
- No bat boys/girls allowed
- Picking up the hitter's bat will be the responsibility of the bench coach and must be cleaned after each use.
- In the event there is a bat near home plate that poses a danger for the players the umpire will kick it out of the way.

## **PLAYER'S EQUIPMENT**

- Players are not to share helmets, gloves, masks and must keep each individual's equipment isolated. Player's equipment bags will be distanced at least 6 feet apart.
- Players are to keep a 6-foot distance and reduce contact with the equipment of other players.
- Catcher equipment; each catcher may have their own and should be disinfected after each game. If the catcher's equipment must be shared it must be cleaned/sanitized between player use.
- Pitchers must wear their own pitching mask. Exception is in the minor mite division where pitchers may wear their batting helmet when pitching.
- Sharing of water bottles is not allowed. Label all water bottles and personal equipment so there is no confusion.
- Make it a priority to provide your team with essentials to stay healthy – Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, disinfecting spray, etc. Also, make it mandatory for players to disinfect everything that was used during participation.
- AT ALL TIMES disinfect and sanitize your own personal equipment

## **MASKS (non-protective)**

- Face masks for the purpose of reducing potential virus transmission will be a required stipulation for entering the park/complex/facility.
- When on the field during a game or practice, social distancing must be maintained. A player may wear a mask on the field at their discretion but it will not be mandatory.
- When off the field during innings and stoppages of play, all participants are to wear a mask.

## **BALLS**

- Each team supplies their own balls while in the field to reduce contact with individuals on the opposing team. No one on the offensive team is to retrieve or touch a ball.
- Consideration should be made for safe ball retrieval (homeruns, foul balls) defensive team only.
- Balls will be consistently sanitized by each team every half inning.

## **CATCHER AND UMPIRE**

Will need to maintain 6-foot distance, when possible. May need different conditions dependent on the size of the field/backstop.

## **BATTER**

- Players should line themselves first with the batter, then on deck, then in the hole outside dugout, then the batting order would have to be spread out at 6-foot intervals behind the dugout.
- Each player must provide their own chair to sit on and maintain the six-foot distance.

- Sanitizer should be provided on benches to allow for frequent hand sanitization ... in between innings/after at bats.
- No contact with coaches at 1st, 3rd, after home run etc.
- Every attempt needs to be made to reduce any unnecessary contact with other players.

### **GENERAL PROTOCOLS**

- Handshakes, team huddles, high fives, etc. are not allowed. Suggest a new show of respect for the opposition at safe distance.
- Medals will be given directly to coaches in original packaging, no handshakes or presentations will be done.
- Protest is to be held at a safe distance, any coach/umpire getting heated, and yelling will be removed from the venue.
- Conferences with the pitcher are limited to one person who must remain the six feet distance.
- Mound visits with catcher/coach both must remain the six feet distance, catcher must have glove in front of face.
- No sunflower seed, gum chewing or spitting, both on and off the field.

### **LIGHTNING/INCLEMENT WEATHER**

All persons must return to the vehicle in which they arrived at the park, no congregating under tents, shelters etc.

### **CAPACITY OF PLAYERS ON BENCH**

- No players or parents are allowed on the bench. The bench can be used as a sanitation station.
- Make it a priority to provide your team with essentials to stay healthy – Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, disinfecting spray, etc. Also, make it mandatory for players to disinfect everything that was used during participation.
- AT ALL TIMES disinfect and sterilize your own personal equipment.
- This will allow players and coaches to have the option to feel like they have the resources they need quickly and safely without having to leave the diamond.

### **INJURED PLAYER**

- If medical personnel are on hand, injured players should be dealt with primarily by these individuals, unless further assistance is requested.
- The number of individuals attending to an injured player should be limited to the number necessary based on the severity of the injury. Sufficient first-aid kits should be provided that include latex gloves and facemasks to help increase the safety of their interaction with the injured player.
- Players injured during the game must be positioned in safe area or at the other end of the dugout, younger ages the parent will need to remove the child from the field and place them in a safe place respecting the social distancing rules. (Recommend the bleachers since they will be off limits to any spectators).

## **FINAL GAME SHEET/LINEUP CARDS**

- Scorebooks DO NOT need to be signed.
- Scores will be submitted electronically.

## **POST GAME BENCH/DUGOUT CLEANING**

Emphasis will be placed on mandatory cleaning and sanitization of the bench area following the completion of the game. Access to extra garbage/recycling containers may be a request made to specific parks/municipalities.

## **EXIT FROM THE PLAYING FIELD**

- During the game, players entering and exiting the playing field should do so in an orderly fashion that allows a 6-foot distance to be maintained between players as much as possible.
- Any player not required to be on the field should not enter the playing surface (e.g. homerun celebrations).

**\*\*RULES COVERED UNDER THESE RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT ANY POINT DUE TO UPDATED GUIDELINES FROM THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO, THE REGION OF DURHAM & THE CITY OF OSHAWA\*\***